

Applicants Licensed in Another United States Jurisdiction for at Least Two Years: Portability of License to California

With the passage of SB 679 (Chapter 380, Statutes of 2019), effective January 1, 2020, if you are applying for licensure in California as a marriage and family therapist (LMFT), clinical social worker (LCSW), or professional clinical counselor (LPCC), you may be eligible for a new streamlined pathway to licensure if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You already hold a license in another United States jurisdiction that is the same license type as the one you are applying for in California. The existing license must permit you to practice your profession in the other jurisdiction at the highest level for independent clinical practice;
- Your license in the other jurisdiction must be, and must have been current, active, and unrestricted for at least two years immediately before the date the Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board) receives your application;
- You disclose any past restrictions or disciplinary action on your license to the Board. The Board will consider these actions in determining whether to issue your license;
- The degree that qualified you for your license was a master's or doctoral degree that was obtained from an accredited or approved educational institution¹ (You will need to submit transcripts as proof);
- You comply with the Board's fingerprint requirement;
- You complete certain California-specific coursework (see below for more detail); and
- You pass the Board's California Law and Ethics examination.

¹ For LCSW applicants, the qualifying degree must be a master's degree from a school or department of social work that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education. For LMFT and LPCC applicants, the qualifying degree must be a master's or doctoral degree obtained from a school accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or approved by a school approved by California's Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education.

If you don't meet the above requirements, see Question #7 below for information about how to proceed.

1. What California-Specific Coursework Must I Take?

You must complete the following coursework:

- a. **California Law and Ethics.** A minimum of 12 hours of coursework in California law and professional ethics that includes, but is not limited to, instruction in advertising, scope of practice, scope of competence, treatment of minors, confidentiality, dangerous clients, psychotherapist-client privilege, recordkeeping, client access to records, state and federal laws relating to confidentiality of patient health information, dual relationships, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, online therapy, insurance reimbursement, civil liability, disciplinary actions and unprofessional conduct, ethics complaints and ethical standards, termination of therapy, standards of care, relevant family law, therapist disclosures to clients, the application of legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings, and licensing law and the licensing process. *(Please note that this course must focus on California-specific law and professional ethics, not general law and ethics in the profession, or law and ethics from the jurisdiction where you previously practiced.)*
- b. **California Cultures.** At least one semester unit, or 15 hours, of instruction that includes an understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socioeconomic position.

The two courses listed above must be taken from either a school accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (courses may not be undergraduate courses), or from a continuing education provider that is acceptable to the Board. For information on acceptable continuing education providers, please visit the following link on the Board's website: https://bbs.ca.gov/licensees/cont_ed.html

- c. **Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting.** At least 7 hours of documented California-specific training or coursework in child abuse assessment and reporting. This must include detailed knowledge of California's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, as well as the study of the assessment and method of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. It also must include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults. The coursework may be obtained from an accredited or approved school, a continuing education provider that is

acceptable to the Board, or a course sponsored or offered by a professional association or a local, county, or state department of health or mental health.

- d. **Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention.** If you apply on or after January 1, 2021, you will need at least 6 hours of coursework or supervised experience in suicide risk assessment and intervention. This does not need to be California-specific, and if you have already had this and can show appropriate proof, you will not need to take this again. (See the [Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention FAQ](#) for ways to demonstrate you have met this requirement.)

If you apply for a license before 1/1/2021, you will not have to show this upon application for licensure. Instead, when your license is up for its first renewal, that is when you will have to have met this requirement.

2. What if I Have Already Taken Coursework in Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting?

The required 7 hours of coursework must be California-specific and it must include detailed knowledge of California's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act.

3. Do I Need to Pass the Clinical Examination?

No. The clinical examination is waived for applicants who qualify to use this pathway to licensure. You will only need to pass the California law and ethics examination.

4. When Can I Submit My Application to use the new Streamlined Pathway?

You may submit your application beginning on January 1, 2020.

5. What if I think I Qualify Using the new Streamlined Pathway but Have Already Submitted My Application to the Board?

If you already have a pending application but wish to instead apply using the new streamlined pathway, you will need to submit a new application and a new application fee.

6. For LPCCs Only: Can I Assess or Treat Couples and Families?

California permits LPCCs to assess or treat couples and families only if they meet certain additional coursework and supervised experience requirements. (This requirement includes an additional education component, 500 supervised experience hours working directly with couples, families, or children, and 6 hours of continuing education specific to marriage and family therapy, completed in each license renewal cycle. These requirements are detailed in Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section [4999.20](#))

All out-of-state LPCC applicants will need to obtain a written confirmation of qualifications to assess and treat couples and families from the Board before they are able to engage in this type of practice. (Link [here](#) for FAQs and [here](#) for the request form)

If the state in which you are currently licensed as an LPCC already permits you to treat couples and families as part of your licensed scope of practice without restrictions or additional coursework, then you do not need to meet the additional education and experience requirements specified in BPC §4999.20. You will, however, need to complete 6 hours of continuing education specific to marriage and family therapists in each renewal cycle, as part of your required 36 hours of continuing education.

If your state of current licensure does not permit you to treat couples and families as part of your scope of practice without restrictions or additional coursework, then in order to treat couples and families in California, you will need to meet all of the additional requirements specified in BPC Section [4999.20](#).

7. What if I Don't Qualify for Licensure Using the new Streamlined Pathway?

If you do not qualify for a license using the new streamlined pathway, you can still apply for a license or registration as an out-of-state applicant just as before. You will need to meet all of the Board's education and supervised experience requirements for licensure. (This can be found on the Board's website [here](#).) A couple of significant changes have been made to this pathway for licensure:

- If you are an applicant for LMFT or LPCC licensure who holds a valid license in good standing in the same profession in another state or country at the highest level for independent clinical practice, you are exempt from the Board's practicum requirement.
- Effective January 1, 2021, you will be required to show proof of completion of at least 6 hours of coursework or experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. (See Question #1.d. above for more information.)