Board of Behavioral Sciences

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Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California | Business and Consumer Services Agency | Department of Consumer Affairs

MEMORANDUM

DATE	August 8, 2026
TO	Workforce Development Committee
FROM	Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
SUBJECT	Discussion and Possible Recommendations Regarding Proposed LMFT Education Requirements: Graduate-Level Core Content

Background

Today's discussion continues the Board's effort to streamline and modernize the education requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs).

Because the LMFT education requirements are complex and require in-depth examination, the Committee has broken down the effort into several small pieces, as follows:

- Step 1: Qualifying Degree, Accreditation, Core Content, and Practicum Requirements
- Step 2: Graduate-Level Course Content and Allowable Remediation
- Step 3: Supplemental Coursework Requirements (Content Allowed as Continuing Education Courses)
- Step 4: National Attainability and Unintended Consequences
- Step 5: Pre-Degree Hours
- Step 6: Provisional Associate Registration Concept
- Step 7: Formal Approval of School Programs

To support the Committee and staff throughout this process, a team of three subject matter experts was chosen to provide expertise and guidance. These individuals are highly credentialed licensees and educators in the LMFT and LPCC fields. They are as follows:

- Dr. Leah Brew, LPCC, and Professor in the Department of Counseling at California State University, Fullerton. She is also a subject matter expert reviewing LMFT and LPCC programs and a former BBS LPCC Board member,

- Benjamin E. Caldwell, PsyD, LMFT, adjunct faculty in the MFT program at California State University Northridge.

- Diana Herweck, PsyD, LMFT, LPCC, LPC (CT), NCC, ACS; Director of Clinical Training, Palo Alto University. She is also a former BBS LPCC Board member.

Key Project Assumptions

While discussing potential changes, it is important to keep in mind that this proposal will depart from existing law in two major ways:

Course Timing: Current law allows remediation of certain coursework at various times throughout the licensing process, with some courses needing remediation prior to licensure and some needing remediation prior to associate registration. Course remediation requirements are inconsistent across license types. In an effort to streamline the law and promote public protection by ensuring competency in all required subjects, this proposal will require all courses that are permitted to be remediated to be remediated prior to associate registration.

School Location: Current law sets licensing requirements based on whether the degree was earned at an "in-state" versus an "out-of-state" school. This is increasingly problematic with the increase of online schools, and schools who may have sites in California but that are headquartered elsewhere.

This proposal will eliminate separate requirements for "in-state" and "out-of-state" schools, instead establishing one uniform set of education requirements for all applicants.

This distinction matters because California schools primarily serve students intending to obtain California licensure and, as a result, are more likely to design their programs to meet the Board's requirements. Schools located outside California, however, are less likely to tailor their curricula to align specifically with California licensure standards.

Today's Discussion: Step 2: Graduate-Level Course Content and Allowable Remediation

Today's discussion is a continuation of a discussion that the Committee began at its June 16, 2026 meeting regarding Step 2 of the project: defining the graduate-level course content required for licensure. This includes identifying required core content areas, determining what the coursework should encompass, establishing unit requirements, and determining the appropriate scope and limits of remediation of deficiencies. Examples of graduate-level content areas include assessment, diagnosis, and human development.

Graduate-level coursework should generally focus on broad, foundational MFT principles. More narrowly defined California-specific topic areas that the Board wishes to emphasize can also be addressed as required supplemental coursework that may either be included in the degree program or remediated by completing a specified number of hours of coursework post-degree, either at a graduate level or from a CE provider. (This includes courses such as suicide risk assessment and intervention, human sexuality, California child abuse assessment and reporting, and potentially such topics as perinatal mental health and Alzheimer's/dementia/caregiving.) This will be discussed as a separate agenda item at today's meeting.

At its June meeting, the Committee discussed the core master's level topic requirements shown in **Chart 1**. Staff was directed to continue refining the course descriptions with the subject matter experts (SMEs), discuss remediation allowances with the SMEs, and draft proposed legislative text incorporating the core master's level requirements.

Attachment A shows the proposed content area requirements drafted in legislative format.

Course Content Changes

Since the last meeting, adjustments to the required course content have been made for the Psychopharmacology, Crisis and Trauma, Human Development Across the Lifespan, and Addictions courses. These were mainly minor adjustments based on feedback from the SMEs.

Psychopharmacology Course Units

The proposal requires all core content coursework to be 3 semester or 4 quarter units, except for one. The Psychopharmacology course is only required to be 2 semester units or 3 quarter units.

At the last meeting, the Committee asked why Psychopharmacology is the only core content area proposed at fewer than 3 semester units. After consulting with the subject matter experts, the reasoning is as follows:

1. Not all applicants complete Psychopharmacology as part of their degree, and some will need to remediate it after graduation. Because remediation courses are often shorter and more narrowly focused, setting the requirement at 2 semester units allows applicants to meet the standard in a realistic and consistent way.

2. The Board's licensees are not prescribers. The intent of the course is not to train clinicians to use or manage medications, but rather to understand them at a level appropriate for non-prescribing professionals.

3. Overly intensive Psychopharmacology courses can drift outside the scope of practice. The objective for the Board's licensees is limited: they must be able to recognize common side effects, understand how medication interactions may affect treatment, and know when to refer clients to prescribing professionals. A focused 2-unit course aligns with what is appropriate and necessary for their role.

For these reasons, Psychopharmacology remains as a 2-semester-unit requirement.

Remediation

The proposed language permits the following remediation:

- Up to 4 of the 14 required core courses may be remediated.

- The Family Systems course may not be remediated, as it is considered an essential part of an MFT-qualifying degree.

- If the Law and Ethics and Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences courses have been taken and meet unit and content requirements generally, but do not contain California specific content, applicants can remediate them by taking a 12-hour California-specific CE course for each one. If this remediation is required, it will not count as one of the allowable 4 content deficiencies.

Resource Material

In examining the MFT education requirements, staff and the SMEs utilizing the following when conducting their review:

Attachment B summarizes the COAMFTE and CACREP (with MFT specialty) foundational coursework requirements for their programs.

Attachment C shows the coursework requirements for Oregon, Ohio, and Texas. Arizona, which has new MFT coursework requirements for degree programs beginning January 1, 2030, has also been added.

Attachment D summarizes the current education requirements for LMFT licensure in California, based on when the degree was obtained and whether it was obtained from an in-state school or an out-of-state school.

Recommended Next Steps

Conduct an open discussion regarding the possible graduate-level course content requirements and remediation allowances shown in **Chart 1** and **Attachment A.**

Attachments

Chart 1: Graduate-Level Course Content Requirements

Attachment A: Core Content Requirements: Draft Language

Attachment B: Foundational Coursework Requirements: COAMFTE and CACREP with MFT Specialty)

Attachment C: Coursework Requirements in Other States (Oregon, Ohio, Texas, and Arizona)

Attachment D: California LMFT Education Pathway Comparison

Chart 1
Core Master's Level Requirements (Must be Gained as Graduate-Level Units)

Content Area	Units Semester/ Quarter	Possible Requirement Description
Family Systems	3 semester/4 quarter units	Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations directly related to marriage and family systems approaches to treatment, and their application and demonstration within family systems in a culturally responsive way.
Intimate & Romantic Partners	3 semester/4 quarter units	Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with intimate and romantic partners, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.
Children and Adolescents	3 semester/4 quarter units	Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with children and adolescents and consulting with parents, teachers, and others, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.
Groups	3 semester/4 quarter units	Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with groups, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.
Clinical Skills	3 semester/4 quarter units	Foundational training in counseling and psychotherapy competencies for marriage and family therapists, emphasizing the development of core therapeutic skills for work with individuals as well as the application of diverse treatment modalities with intimate and romantic partners, families, children, adolescents, and groups. Integrates theory with practice through experiential learning, case-based application, and structured skills development to prepare students for effective, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate clinical work.
Diagnosis	3 semester/4 quarter units	Diagnosis, prognosis, treatment planning, and treatment of mental disorders, including severe mental disorders and promising mental health practices that are evidence-based. This shall include utilizing the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
Appraisal and Assessment	3 semester/4 quarter units	Assessment and psychological testing methods used by marriage and family therapists, including types of instruments, their administration, and hands-on practice with commonly used tools. Addresses validity, reliability, and culturally responsive considerations in selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment instruments.
Psychopharmacology	2 semester/3 quarter units	An introduction to the fundamentals of psychopharmacology, including a broad understanding of brain functioning, neuropsychology, biological basis for behavior and psychotropic medications, recognizing potential side effects, consulting with medical professionals, and making appropriate referrals.
Crisis and Trauma	3 semester/4 quarter units	Training in crisis intervention and trauma-informed practice for marriage and family therapists. Instruction includes basics of crisis theory and models; types of traumas including abuse and neglect and their potential impact on people cognitively, affectively, behaviorally, and neurobiologically; assessment, evidence-based treatments, and stabilization for clients who have experienced trauma or crises; knowledge of how people with mental and emotional disorders are impacted by crises or trauma; case management; public and private community resources and referrals.
Human Development Across the Lifespan	3 semester/4 quarter units	Examines human development from infancy through late adulthood, emphasizing developmental processes, caregiving, and the ways biopsychosociocultural development shape development across the lifespan.

Content Area	Units Semester/ Quarter	Possible Requirement Description
CA Law & Ethics	3 semester/4 quarter units	Instruction in California law and professional ethics for marriage and family therapists, including California statutes, regulations, and relevant court decisions; the ethical standards of at least one recognized marriage and family therapist professional organization; and the application of legal and ethical principles across diverse clinical settings. Instruction shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: 1)Differences between laws and ethics and the standard of care 2) Legal and ethical decision-making 3) Licensing, scope of practice and scope of competence 4)Self-care 5) Personal values, culture, and non-discrimination 6) Malpractice and unprofessional conduct 7) Supervision and consultation 8) Informed consent and limits of confidentiality 9) Tele-mental health 10) Boundaries 11) Fees, gifts, and advertising 12) Assessment and diagnosis 13) Group leadership 14) Intimate and romantic partners, families, and children 15) Documentation, including letter writing 16) Relationship with other professionals 17) Advocacy
Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences in California	3 semester/4 quarter units	Instruction in cultural responsiveness to build clinical efficacy through (a) lifelong critical self-reflection of the psychotherapists' own cultural values and implicit biases and (b) a dedicated, ongoing exploration of the diverse identities and experiences necessary to effectively serve California's diverse communities. Culturally responsive praxis shall include understanding different identities, their corresponding values, and experiences among the varying social locations of: race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship and immigration status, language, spirituality and religion, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual/affectual/romantic orientations, gender and gender identity, gender expression, age/generation, and intersectionality. Integration of the following content and constructs shall be included: brief history and construction of race, racism, and immigration in the United States (U.S.); cultural humility; acculturation and cultural identity development; systemic and institutional oppression, marginalization, and privilege including dominant U.S. narratives, discourses, and values; harms of essentializing groups and discrimination; cultural values including individualism and collectivism; broaching culture, identity, and cultural experiences with clients; and client strengths and support systems including community cultural wealth.

Content Area	Units Semester/ Quarter	Possible Requirement Description
Addictions	3 semester/4 quarter units	Instruction in and definitions of behavioral addictions and substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, and addiction through a comprehensive, whole-person framework. Study of addiction through a biopsychosociocultural lens including: -Legal, medical and psychological aspects, including etiologies and the effects of use, abuse and addicition; -Evidence-based treatment models; -Relapse prevention; -Public and private community resources and referrals to support individuals and families. .
Research	3 semester/4 quarter units	Focuses on critically evaluating research and applying evidence-informed findings to clinical decision-making, with emphasis on interpreting study quality, understanding methodological strengths and limitations, and appropriately integrating research into treatment planning.
Total	**41 semester/55 quarter units**	

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ATTACHMENT A
4980.36 DRAFT LANGUAGE AS AMENDED (PARTIAL)

ADD BPC §4980.36 REQUIRED EDUCATION FOR LICENSE OR REGISTRATION *(PARTIAL)*

(a) This section shall apply to all applicants for registration or licensure as a marriage and family therapist in California. Qualifying applicants shall possess a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or in a related mental health field that contains no less than 60 semester units or 90 quarter units of graduate level instruction, and that meets the requirements of subsections (b) through (e).

(b) **Accreditation.** The qualifying degree required by subdivision (a) shall be from an educational institution that is accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the United States Department of Education or approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. If the qualifying degree program is additionally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Education or by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs with the specialization in Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling, then Board shall accept that it meets all requirements of subdivisions (c) and (xx)

(c) **Program Structure.** The qualifying degree required by subdivision (a) shall be a single, integrated program that meets all of the following criteria:

(1) Shall be a planned course of study grounded in systemic theory and systemic approaches that is primarily designed to train a person to provide direct therapeutic services to assist individuals, families, and intimate or romantic partners in resolving cognitive, affective, behavioral, or relational dysfunctions within the context of marriage and family systems.

(2) Shall specify in institutional catalogues, brochures, or official program descriptions that the intent of the degree program is to educate and train marriage and family therapists. This includes but is not limited to, statements indicating that the program prepares students to pass the national marriage and family therapy examination, or statements that the program prepares students for marriage and family therapy state licensure.

(3) Shall integrate marriage and family therapy principals throughout its curriculum.

(4) Shall develop its students' abilities to explore and apply culturally responsive skills and interventions.

(d) **Practicum.** The qualifying degree shall include a minimum of six semester or nine quarter units of supervised clinical practicum that provides and supports supervised fieldwork experience in order to develop psychotherapeutic skills, as follows:

(1) For applicants who begin their qualifying degree program on or after January 1, 203x, the practicum shall meet all of the following:

(A) Provide a minimum of 240 hours of direct face-to-face psychotherapy or clinical counseling experience with individuals, intimate or romantic partners, families or groups. For purposes of this section, "face-to-face" means in-person or synchronous, two-way audiovisual telehealth.

(B) For experience gained providing services to clients located California, the site supervisor of the practicum hours shall be a licensed mental health professional that meets the requirements to supervise pursuant to subdivision (g) of section 4980.03,

(C) For experience gained by lawfully providing services to clients in another state or territory of the United States, the supervisor must meet both of the following:

(i) During the entire period of supervision, the supervisor shall have maintained an active license in good standing at the highest level for independent clinical practice in the jurisdiction where the supervised experience was obtained, as a licensed clinical social worker, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed professional clinical counselor, licensed psychologist, or board-certified psychiatrist, or under a license type in that jurisdiction that is substantially equivalent in scope and independent practice authority to one of these license types.

(ii) The supervisor shall have held an active license in good standing as a licensed clinical social worker, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed professional clinical counselor, licensed psychologist or board-certified psychiatrist, or under a license type that is substantially equivalent in scope and independent practice authority to one of these license types, for at least two years of the five-year period immediately preceding the commencement of supervision. For purposes of this subparagraph, the required two years of licensure may be satisfied by licensure held in any jurisdiction, and is not required to have been held in the jurisdiction where the supervised experience was obtained.

Programs shall verify supervisor licensure and qualifications are consistent with the applicable statute and regulations before a trainee accrues hours at the site

(D) The school approves each practicum site and evaluates all practicum placements, including the clinical appropriateness of services offered and site compliance with program standards.

(E) Have a written agreement with the school program, site where the hours are being accrued, and the student. The written agreement shall specify learning objectives, the responsibilities of each party, the scope of clinical

services, provisions for regular progress reports and evaluations of student performance at the site, and supervision methods.

(F) Make provisions for the site or school program to monitor clinical work, including direct observation or review of audio or video recordings at least once for each trainee. If observation or recording is not permissible under law or site policy, the site or school program shall conduct and evaluate a standardized clinical simulation.

(G) Require trainees to demonstrate clinical tasks, including:

i. Case notes and case conceptualizations grounded in evidence-based theory, with explicit attention to culture, diversity, and social determinants.
ii. Treatment plans with measurable goals.
iii. Documenting ethical decision making; and
iv. Applied assessment and diagnostic practice using current nationally recognized resources (such as the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or the International Classification of Diseases).

(H) Ensure that direct client contact hours used to satisfy subparagraph (A) are psychotherapy or clinical counseling in nature. For purposes of this paragraph, these terms have the following meanings:

i. Psychotherapy means treatment, diagnosis, testing, assessment, or counseling delivered within a professional relationship to alleviate behavioral and mental health disorders; resolve emotional, relationship, or attitudinal conflicts; understand motivation; or modify behaviors interfering with functioning. Psychotherapy follows a planned procedure of intervention and may occur over time or as a single brief intervention when clinically indicated.

ii. Clinical counseling means advanced, regulated practice focused on the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions, addressing distress and adjustment issues, and facilitating wellness for individuals, intimate or romantic partners, families, and groups.

(I) An applicant may count supervised experience obtained prior to the award date of the qualifying master's or doctoral degree only if the applicant has satisfactorily completed the law and ethics coursework specified in paragraph xxx of subdivision xxx before commencing any supervised practicum experience.

(2) For applicants who begin their qualifying degree program before January 1, 203x but who do not fall within the timeline specified in paragraph (3), the qualifying degree shall include a minimum of 150 hours of face-to-face experience counseling individuals, intimate or romantic partners, families or groups, plus an additional 75 hours of either client centered advocacy, as defined in section 4980.03, or face-to-face experience counseling individuals, intimate or romantic partners, families or groups, or a combination thereof. The practicum shall provide training in applied use of theory and psychotherapeutic techniques, assessment, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment planning, treatment of clients, professional writing, and connecting clients with community resources.

(3) For applicants who began graduate study before August 1, 2012, and completed that study on or before December 31, 2018, the qualifying degree shall meet the practicum requirements specified in section 4980.37.

(4) Trainees subject to paragraphs (1) or (2) above shall be enrolled in a practicum course while counseling clients who are located in California, except as specified in subdivision (b) of section 4980.42.

(e) **Required Graduate-Level Content.** The qualifying degree shall include at least 3 semester units or four quarter units, unless otherwise specified, in all of the following:

1) **Family Systems** - Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations directly related to marriage and family systems approaches to treatment, and their application and demonstration within family systems in a culturally responsive way.

2) **Intimate and Romantic Partners** - Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with intimate and romantic partners, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.

3) **Children and Adolescents** - Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with children and adolescents and consulting with parents, teachers, and others, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.

4) **Groups** - Theories, principles and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations specific to working with groups, and their application and demonstration in a culturally responsive way.

5) **Clinical Skills** - Foundational training in counseling and psychotherapy competencies for marriage and family therapists, emphasizing the development of core therapeutic skills for work with individuals as well as the application of diverse treatment modalities with intimate and romantic partners, families, children, adolescents, and groups. Integrates theory with practice through experiential learning, case-based application, and structured skills development to prepare students for effective, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate clinical work.

6) **Diagnosis** - Diagnosis, prognosis, treatment planning, and treatment of mental disorders, including severe mental disorders and promising mental health practices that are evidence-based. This shall include utilizing the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

7) **Appraisal and Assessment** - Assessment and psychological testing methods used by marriage and family therapists, including types of instruments, their administration, and hands-on practice with commonly used tools. Addresses validity, reliability, and culturally responsive considerations in selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment instruments.

8) **Psychopharmacology** – (2 semester units/3 quarter units) An introduction to the fundamentals of psychopharmacology, including a broad understanding of brain functioning, neuropsychology, biological basis for behavior and psychotropic medications, recognizing potential side effects, consulting with medical professionals, and making appropriate referrals.

9) **Crisis and Trauma** - Training in crisis intervention and trauma-informed practice for marriage and family therapists. Instruction includes basics of crisis theory and models; types of traumas including abuse and neglect and their potential impact on people cognitively, affectively, behaviorally, and neurobiologically; assessment, evidence-based treatments, and stabilization for clients who have experienced trauma or crises; knowledge of how people with mental and emotional disorders are impacted by crises or trauma; case management; public and private community resources and referrals.

10) **Human Development Across the Lifespan** - Examines human development from infancy through late adulthood, emphasizing developmental processes, caregiving, and the ways biopsychosociocultural development shape development across the lifespan.

11) **California Law and Ethics**- Instruction in California law and professional ethics for marriage and family therapists, including California statutes, regulations, and relevant court decisions; the ethical standards of at least one recognized marriage and family therapist professional organization; and the application of legal and ethical principles across diverse clinical settings. Instruction shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

A. Differences between laws and ethics and the standard of care
B. Legal and ethical decision-making
C. Licensing, scope of practice and scope of competence
D. Self-care
E. Personal values, culture, and non-discrimination
F. Malpractice and unprofessional conduct
G. Supervision and consultation
H. Informed consent and limits of confidentiality
I. Tele-mental health
J. Boundaries
K. Fees, gifts, and advertising
L. Assessment and diagnosis
M. Group leadership
N. Intimate and romantic partners, families, and children
O. Documentation, including letter writing
P. Relationship with other professionals
Q. Advocacy

12) **Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences in California -** Instruction in cultural responsiveness to build clinical efficacy through (a) lifelong critical self-reflection of the psychotherapists' own cultural values and implicit biases and (b) a dedicated, ongoing exploration of the diverse identities and experiences necessary to effectively serve California's diverse communities.

Culturally responsive praxis shall include understanding different identities, their corresponding values, and experiences among the varying

social locations of: race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship and immigration status, language, spirituality and religion, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual/affectual/romantic orientations, gender and gender identity, gender expression, age/generation, and intersectionality.

Integration of the following content and constructs shall be included: brief history and construction of race, racism, and immigration in the United States (U.S.); cultural humility; acculturation and cultural identity development; systemic and institutional oppression, marginalization, and privilege including dominant U.S. narratives, discourses, and values; harms of essentializing groups and discrimination; cultural values including individualism and collectivism; broaching culture, identity, and cultural experiences with clients; and client strengths and support systems including community cultural wealth.

13) **Addictions** - Instruction in and definitions of behavioral addictions and substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, and addiction through a comprehensive, whole-person framework. Study of addiction through a biopsychosociocultural lens including:

A. Legal, medical and psychological aspects, including etiologies and the effects of use, abuse and addicition;

B. Evidence-based treatment models;

C. Relapse prevention;

D. Public and private community resources and referrals to support individuals and families.

14) **Research** - Focuses on critically evaluating research and applying evidence-informed findings to clinical decision-making, with emphasis on interpreting study quality, understanding methodological strengths and limitations, and appropriately integrating research into treatment planning.

(f) **Remaining Coursework.** The remaining courses needed to meet the 60 semester unit or 90 quarter unit qualifying degree requirement shall be in marriage and family therapy or a related mental health field directly supporting the development of an applicant's professional marriage and family, individual, or group therapy skills.

(g) **Remediation.** An applicant whose qualifying degree is deficient in no more than four of the required areas of study listed in paragraphs (2) to (14), inclusive, of subdivision (e), may satisfy these deficiencies by successfully completing post-master's or postdoctoral degree coursework at an accredited institution, as defined in Section

4980.03. An applicant shall not be deficient in the required area of study specified in paragraph (1) of subdivision (e).

Attachment B
Foundational Coursework Requirements: COAMFTE and CACREP with MFT Specialty

COAMFTE Foundational Curriculum Areas	CACREP With Marriage, Couple & Family Counseling Specialized Practice Area
1) Foundations of Relational/Systemic Practice, Theories & Models (6 sem/8qtr): Includes foundations and critical epistemological issues of MFT, including history of MFT relational philosophy.	**1) Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice:** Includes history and philosophies, roles and responsibilities, advocacy, law and ethics.
2) Clinical Treatment with Individuals, Couples and Families (6 sem/8 qtr): Includes competencies in treatment approaches used in diverse individuals, couples, and families. Must include crisis intervention.	**2) Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences:** Includes theories of multicultural counseling, social justice, advocacy, and influence and effects of various socio-cultural influences.
3) Diverse, Multicultural and/or Underserved Communities (3 sem/4 qtr): Understanding and applying knowledge of diversity, privilege and oppression as related to a variety of factors including race, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or other relevant social identities. Includes practice with these communities.	**3) Lifespan Development:** Includes individual and family development across the lifespan, theories of cultural identity development, personality, psychological adjustment, sexual development, and crisis, stress, grief, and trauma effects across the lifespan.
4) Research & Evaluation (3 sem/4 qtr): Develops competencies in MFT research and evaluation methods, evidence-based practice.	**4) Career Development:** Includes theories and models of career development and counseling, interrelationships between work, socioeconomic status and other life roles and factors, and strategies for assessing abilities, interests and other factors that contribute to career development.
5) Professional Identity, Law, Ethics, & Social Responsibility (3 sem/4 qtr): MFT identity and socialization, develop ethics competency, AAMFT code of ethics and legal responsibilities.	**5) Counseling Practice and Relationships:** Includes skills for clinical judgement in the counseling process, conceptualization skills using a variety of models and approaches, applying technology and law/ethics across delivery modalities, adaptation and accommodating to client culture/abilities, collaborative decision making, record keeping, caseload management, psychopharmacological effects, suicide prevention models, and crisis/trauma strategies.
6) Biopsychosocial Health & Development Across the Life Span (3 sem/4 qtr): Includes individual and family development, human sexuality, and health across lifespan.	**6) Group Counseling and Group Work:** Includes group dynamics and development, therapeutic factors of group work, and ethics and legal considerations of group counseling.

COAMFTE Foundational Curriculum Areas	CACREP With Marriage, Couple & Family Counseling Specialized Practice Area
7) Systemic/Relational Assessment & Mental Health Diagnosis and Treatment (3 sem/4 qtr): Includes competencies in psychopharmacology, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of major mental health issues as well as common problems including addiction, suicide, trauma, abuse, intra-family violence, and therapy for those managing acute chronic medical conditions. Uses an MFT relational/systemic philosophy.	**7) Assessment and Diagnostic Processes:** Includes historical perspectives of assessment/testing in counseling, basics of standardized and non-standardized testing, statistical concepts, reliability and validity, cultural and developmental considerations, ethical and legal considerations. Also includes diagnostic process, differential diagnosis, diagnostic classification systems, procedures for identifying substances use, addiction, cooccurring disorders, suicide risk, trauma, abuse, and neglect.
8) Contemporary Issues (Required but no min.): Emerging challenges at the interface of MFT practice and the broader local/regional/global context. Examples: immigration, same-sex marriage, violence in schools.	**8) Research and Program Evaluation:** Includes research in advancing the counseling profession, evaluating evidence base for theories/interventions/practices, research designs, statistical tests, ethical and legal considerations for research and program evaluation.
9) Community Intersections & Collaboration (Required but no min.): Develops competencies in practice with defined context, such as schools, military, or private practice settings. Includes developing competency in multidisciplinary collaboration.	**MFT Specialization**
10) Preparation for Teletherapy Practice (Required but no min.): Develops competencies in teletherapy, including emerging legal/ethical requirements, documentation, response to crises, appropriate interventions.	M1) Family sociology and family of origin theories
	M2) Aging and intergenerational influences

COAMFTE Foundational Curriculum Areas	CACREP With Marriage, Couple & Family Counseling Specialized Practice Area
	M3) Impact of interpersonal violence on marriage/couples/families
	M4) Career, life and gender roles in marriage/couples/families
	M5) Impact of changes in socioeconomic standing/unemployment on marriage/couples/families
	M6) Migration impact on family functioning
	M7) Theories and models of marriage, couple, and family counseling
	M8) Assessment and case conceptualization from a systems perspective
	M9) Family assessments
	M10) Techniques and interventions of marriage, couple and family counseling
	M11) Conceptualizing and implementing treatment, planning and intervention strategies in marriage, couple, and family counseling
	M12) Service delivery modalities and networks in the continuum of care
	M13) Legal system strategies relevant to marriage, couple, and family counseling
	M14) Third party reimbursement and other practice/management issues in marriage, couple and family counseling.

[1] Source: COAMFTE Accreditation Standards Version 12.5, Effective January 1, 2022.
[2] 2024 CACREP Standards

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Attachment C
Coursework Requirements in Other States

Oregon Education Requirements

Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists - Chapter 833

Division 40: REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

Educational Requirements for Licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist

To qualify for licensure as a marriage and family therapist under ORS 675.715(1)(b), an applicant must hold a graduate degree from one of the following:

(1) A marriage and family therapy program approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) or a marital and family therapy program fully accredited by the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP);

(2) A program at an institution of higher learning that was accredited by a regional accrediting agency as of the date the degree was conferred; or

(3) A foreign program that has been evaluated by a credentialing body recognized by the Board. Submission of foreign degree evaluation and cost of the foreign degree qualification determination are the responsibility of the applicant.

(4) A graduate degree under section (1) must have included at least two semester credit hours or three credit quarter hours of coursework in the diagnosis of mental disorders.

(5) A graduate degree under sections (2) or (3) must have included all of the following requirements:

(a) For graduate degrees granted before October 1, 2014:

(A) At least two years in duration, including at least 48 semester credit hours or 72 quarter credit hours;

(B) At minimum, the following coursework:

(i) Human Development- four semester hours or six quarter hours;

(ii) Marital and Family Theoretical Foundation Studies- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(iii) Marital and Family Therapy Diagnosis and Assessment, Treatment, Principles and Techniques Studies- eight semester hours or 12 quarter hours;

(iv) Professional Studies- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(v) Research Methods or Statistics- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(vi) Supporting Coursework Focusing on the Systems Paradigm for Specialty Areas- 16 semester hours or 24 quarter hours; and

(C) A supervised clinical practicum or internship experience of at least 240 direct client contact clock hours.

(b) For graduate degrees granted on or after October 1, 2014:

(A) At least two years in duration, including at least 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate-level credit;

(B) At minimum, the following graduate-level coursework:

(i) Individual and Family Development- four semester hours or six quarter hours;

(ii) Couple and Family Theoretical Foundation Studies- six semester hours or nine quarter hours;

(iii) Couple and Family Therapy, Treatment, and Techniques Studies- six semester hours or nine quarter hours;

(iv) Diagnosis of mental disorders- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(v) Diversity studies that include issues related to diversity, power and privilege- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(vi) Ethical and Professional Studies- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(vii) Research Methods or Statistics- two semester hours or three quarter hours;

(viii) Supporting coursework focusing on counseling and/or systems approaches- 36 semester hours or 54 quarter hours; and

(C) A supervised clinical practicum or internship experience of at least 280 hours of direct client contact.

(c) The program's clinical practicum or internship experience must have:

(A) Had supervisory staff with a minimum of a master's degree in the program emphasis and with pertinent professional experience;

(B) Made provision for faculty monitoring of operations;

(C) Kept records of student-client contact hours including summary of student progress by the supervisor;

(D) Had a written agreement with the program and student specifying learning objectives; and

(E) Had a mechanism for program evaluation.

(d) Deficiencies in the credit hour requirements of sections (a) or (b) may be remedied by completing graduate level coursework in the deficient area(s) at a regionally accredited institution.

(e) Deficiencies in the supervised experience requirement of section (c) may be remedied by completion of:

(A) Post-degree clinical experience completed in a Board-approved associate registration pursuant to OAR Chapter 833, Division 50, credited on an hour-for-hour basis for up to the full 280 required hours of direct client contact, with at least 40% of the deficient hours working with couples and families in the same session. This remedial experience is in addition to, and not a substitute for, the experience requirements (clock hours and duration) set forth in OAR 833-040-0021 or OAR 833-050-0071; or

(B) At least five years of active licensure issued by another state credentialing entity to practice marriage and family therapy.

(f) For reciprocity applicants only, three years or more of active licensure to practice marriage and family therapy in another U.S. state may substitute for the requirements of Sections (a) through (c) above.

Ohio Education Requirements

RULE 475-25-01 Education requirements for admission to the examination for marriage and family therapist.

The requirements for licensure are generally set forth in section 4757.30 of the Revised Code.

(A) Pertaining to the educational requirements, the board further prescribes that: a "graduate degree in marriage and family therapy" is defined as a degree that meets all of the following criteria:

(1) The program or concentration shall clearly be identified as marriage and family therapy (also referred to as "MFT"), shall include a minimum of ninety quarter hours or sixty semester hours of graduate level course work in marriage and family therapy training grounded in systemic theory and systemic approaches that is acceptable to the committee. Such a program shall specify in pertinent institutional catalogues and brochures its intent to educate and train marriage and family therapists. Examples of this include statements explaining the distinction between MFT and other human service areas, statements that the program prepares students to pass the national MFT examination, or statements that the program prepares students for MFT state licensure.

(2) The marriage and family therapy curriculum shall stand as a recognized entity within the institution and have a marriage and family therapy faculty. Marriage and family therapy faculty identify with the MFT profession by having a doctoral degree in "Marriage and Family Therapy," holding a state license in MFT, being clinical members of the AAMFT, and/or being AAMFT approved supervisors.

(3) The marriage and family therapy coursework shall have a major focus on marital and family systems and systemic therapeutic interventions. Program coursework must include content on crisis intervention. Marriage and family therapy coursework shall include at least two graduate courses in paragraph (A)(3)(a) and paragraph (A)(3)(b) of this rule and at least one graduate course in paragraphs (A)(3)(c) to (A)(3)(g) of this rule of the following areas of marriage and family therapy :

(a) Marriage and family therapy theory studies: Courses in this area should present a fundamental introduction to marriage and family studies, including the historical development of the relational/systemic perspective and empirical foundations of the field of marriage and family therapy. This area facilitates students developing knowledge of the early and contemporary theories of MFT. It should provide a substantive understanding of the major theories of systems change and the applied practices evolving from each theoretical orientation. Major MFT theories include but are not limited to:

strategic, structural, contextual, Bowenian, narrative, solution-focused, object relations, experiential, emotion focused, and internal family.

(b) Clinical treatment of individuals, couples and families: Courses in this area facilitate students developing competencies in systemic hypotheses, treatment planning and interventions specifically designed for use with a wide range of diverse individuals, couples, and families, and includes a focus on evidence-based practice and empirically supported treatment modalities. The courses in this category may focus on areas such as:

(i) Couples therapy: theories and skills in providing therapy with couples, including family of origin issues, new marriages, marriage preparation, multi-cultural issues, partnerships, and divorce.

(ii) Family therapy with children, adolescents, or young adults: training in unique diagnostic and treatment considerations in working with children, adolescents, or young adults, including collaboration with medical providers and educational systems.

(iii) Sexuality and family therapy: the physiological, psychological, and sociocultural variables associated with sexual identity and sexual behavior including sexual dysfunctions.

(iv) Substance abuse and addictive disorders in marriage and family therapy: This course covers the physical and psychological aspects of psychotropic medication, alcohol, and other substances on relationships and behavior as well as systemic treatment approaches to substance use disorders.

(c) Research: This course facilitates students developing competencies in marriage and family therapy research and evaluation methods and in evidence-based practice, including becoming an informed consumer of couple, marriage, and family therapy research.

(d) Professional ethics: Courses in this area shall include the "American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy" (AAMFT) code of ethics, confidentiality and liabilities of clinical practice and research, professional ethics as a marriage and family therapist, professional socialization, and the role of the professional organization, licensure, state and federal legislation, independent practice and inter professional cooperation. Religious ethics courses and moral theology courses do not meet this requirement.

(e) Individual and family development: This course shall address individual and family development and biopsychosocial health across the lifespan from a systemic perspective.

(f) Appraisal of individuals and families: Course content shall address from a relational/systemic perspective, psychopharmacology, physical health and illness, traditional psycho diagnostic categories, and the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of major mental and emotional disorders, including the appropriate use of the current edition of the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders."

(g) Family therapy with diverse, multicultural and/or underserved communities: This course facilitates students developing competencies in understanding and applying knowledge of diversity, power, privilege and oppression as these relate to race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, health status, religious, spiritual and/or beliefs, nation of origin, immigration status, housing status, or other relevant social categories, in the practice of marriage and family therapy. This includes developing competencies in working with sexual and gender minorities and their families as well as anti-oppressive practices.

(h) Practicum: Includes a supervised training experience consisting of the provision of marriage and family therapy to clients and is acceptable to the board as defined in paragraphs (A)(3)(f)(i) to (A)(3)(f)(v) of this rule.

(i) Applicants, who begin their program after January 2015, shall have a minimum of two semesters or three quarters of qualified supervised clinical practicum and/or qualified internship with five hundred hours of direct face-to-face client contact with individuals, couples, and families and one hundred hours of supervision. Applicants, who begin their program before January 2015, shall have a minimum of two semesters or three quarters of qualified supervised clinical practicum and/or qualified internship with three hundred hours of direct face-to-face client contact with individuals, couples, and families and sixty hours of supervision.

(ii) Applicants, who begin their program after January 2015, shall have two hundred fifty hours of the five hundred hours of direct client contact with couples and/or families present. Applicants, who begin their program before January 2015, shall have one hundred fifty hours of the three hundred hours of direct client contact with couples and/or families present.

(iii) The clinical practicum and internship experience must be under the supervision of an independently licensed marriage and family therapist with supervision designation, an AAMFT approved supervisor, an AAMFT supervisor candidate, or an independently licensed mental health practitioner who shall have demonstrated competence in the area in which he/she is supervising and have training in legal and ethical issues relevant to marriage and family therapy.

(iv) Applicants from non-COAMFTE accredited programs shall document their practicum and internship experience on a form prescribed by the board. The form shall be completed by the supervisor or supervisors and shall document the student's competency, client contact hours, and supervision hours in all areas designated on the form. The form shall be completed and submitted by the student at the time of examination request.

(4) Programs accredited by the "Commission On Accreditation Of Marriage And Family Therapy Education" (COAMFTE) at the time of applicant's degree conferral are recognized as meeting the requirements for a graduate degree in marriage and family therapy.

(5) Applicants who possess a degree from a program not accredited by the "Commission On Accreditation Of Marriage And Family Therapy Education" (COAMFTE) shall submit a request to this board for approval in meeting the educational requirements for admission to the examination for the marriage and family therapy license. Program approval may be obtained by the applicant submitting to the board written evidence that the degree meets the requirements set forth in paragraphs (A)(1) to (A)(3) of this rule.

(B) Supplemental coursework, including supplemental clinical practicum/internship experience, taken after the completion of the degree program may be acceptable if the applicant meets either of the following:

(1) Holds a conferred degree in marriage and family therapy as defined in paragraphs (A)(1) and (A)(2) of this rule, acceptable to the board, and achieved both of the following:

(a) Completes the necessary coursework and/or clinical practicum/internship experience from a marriage and family therapy program as defined in this rule,

(b) Obtains written permission for each supplemented course and/or practicum/internship experience from the board prior to the beginning of the course and/or practicum/internship experience and completes said course(s) and/or practicum/internship experience within five years of approval.

(2) Applicants, who possess a master's degree and are enrolled in a COAMFTE accredited doctoral program having completed all coursework except for dissertation.

(C) Post-graduate supervised direct client contact hours obtained out of state may satisfy a deficit in the number of practicum/internship hours as specified in paragraph (A)(3)(f)(v) of this rule. These substituted hours shall not be counted toward the two years of required supervised practice for IMFT licensure.

(D) Applicants who are denied admission to the examination shall be afforded an opportunity for a hearing pursuant to Chapter 119. of the Revised Code.

Texas Education Requirements

TEXAS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RULES

TEXAS STATE BOARD OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

Subchapter C. Applications and Licensing

801.112. General Academic Requirements.

(a) An applicant must submit an official transcript showing:

(1) a master's or doctorate degree in marriage and family therapy from a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE);

(2) a master's degree from a program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling (MCFC) specialization which meets the requirements of §801.114(b)(8) of this title (relating to Academic Course Content) and starts on or after January 1, 2017, (the earliest class reported on one of an applicant's official transcripts denotes the start of a program); or

(3) a master's or doctorate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education in marriage and family therapy or in a related mental health field with a planned course of study in marriage and family therapy as described in §801.113(b), (c), and (d) of this title (relating to Academic Requirements) with the required minimum course content as described in §801.114 of this title.

(b) An applicant with foreign degree or coursework must comply with council rules, 22 Texas Administrative Code §882.11, (relating to Applicants with Foreign Degrees).

(c) An applicant must submit a course description from an official school catalog or syllabus for any course listed on the transcript with a title not self-explanatory or apparently relevant to academic requirements.

(d) The council will not accept any undergraduate courses as meeting any academic requirements unless the applicant's official transcript clearly shows that the course was awarded graduate credit by the school.

(e) The council will accept as meeting academic requirements only those courses shown on the applicant's transcript as:

(1) part of the applicant's program of studies and as completed with a passing grade or for credit; or

(2) taken outside the applicant's program of studies and completed with at least a "B" or "pass."

(f) The council will consider a quarter hour of academic credit as two-thirds of a semester hour.

801.113. Academic Requirements.

(a) An applicant for the licensure examination must have completed or be enrolled in a council-approved marriage and family therapy graduate internship.

(b) An applicant for LMFT Associate or LMFT must have a master's or doctorate degree in marriage and family therapy or a master's or doctorate degree in a related mental health field with course work and training determined by the council to be substantially equivalent to a graduate degree in marriage and family therapy from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or an institution of higher education approved by the council with (the earliest class reported on one of an applicant's official transcripts denotes the start of a program):

(1) at least 45 semester hours for an applicant who started a program before August 1, 2017; or

(2) at least 60 semester hours for an applicant who started a program on or after August 1, 2017.

(c) A degree or course work in a related mental health field must have been a planned course of study designed to train a person to provide direct services to assist individuals, families or couples in a therapeutic relationship in the resolution of cognitive, affective, behavioral or relational dysfunctions within the context of marriage or family systems.

(d) Examples of degrees in a related mental health field may include counseling, psychology, social work, or family studies with an emphasis on Marriage and Family Therapy. Degrees in fields other than those listed may be reviewed for eligibility toward course equivalency in accordance with council rules, 22 Texas Administrative Code, §882.1 (relating to Application Process).

801.114. Academic Course Content.

(a) An applicant who holds a graduate degree in a mental health-related field must have course work in each of the following areas:

(1) theoretical foundations of marriage and family therapy--three semester hours;
(2) assessment and treatment in marriage and family therapy--12 semester hours;
(3) human development, gender, multicultural issues and family studies--six semester hours;
(4) psychopathology--three semester hours;
(5) professional ethics--three semester hours;
(6) applied professional research--three semester hours; and
(7) supervised clinical internship--12 months or nine semester hours.

(b) An applicant who begins a graduate degree program in marriage and family therapy or a mental health-related field on or after August 1, 2017, must complete course work and the minimum required semester hours in each of the following areas (the earliest class reported on one of an applicant's official transcripts denotes the start of a program):

(1) theoretical knowledge and foundations of marriage and family therapy--three semester hours--including the historical development, theoretical and empirical foundations, and contemporary conceptual directions of the field of marriage and family therapy;

(2) assessment and treatment in marriage and family therapy--12 semester hours--including but is not limited to treatment approaches specifically designed for use with a wide range of diverse couples, families, and children, including sex therapy, same sex couples, young children, adolescents, interfaith couples, crisis intervention, and elderly;

(3) human development, gender, multicultural issues and family studies--six semester hours;

(4) psychopathology--three semester hours--including traditional psycho-diagnostic categories including knowledge and use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders;

(5) professional ethics--three semester hours--including professional identity of the marriage, couple, and family therapist, including professional socialization, scope of practice, professional organizations, licensure and certification; and ethical issues related to the profession of marriage, couple, and family therapy as well as the practice of individual therapy;

(g) applied professional research--three semester hours-- including research evidence related to MFT, becoming an informed consumer of research, and research and evaluation methods;

(h) treatment of addictions and management of crisis situations--no minimum requirements;

(i) supervised clinical internship--12 months or nine semester hours. During the supervised clinical internship, the applicant must have 300 hours of experience, of which:

(1) at least 150 hours must be direct client contact hours; and

(2) of the 150 direct client contact hours, at least 75 hours must be direct client contact with couples and families.

(c) The remaining courses needed to meet the 45 or 60 graduate semester hour requirement must be marriage and family therapy or related course work in areas directly supporting the development of an applicant's professional marriage and family, individual, or group therapy skills.

Arizona Education Requirements

Arizona Administrative Code

ARTICLE 6. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY
R4-6-601. Curriculum

A. An applicant for licensure as an associate marriage and family therapist or a marriage and family therapist shall have a master's or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university in a behavioral health science program that:
1. Is accredited by COAMFTE;
2. Was previously approved by the Board under A.R.S. § 32-3253(A)(14); or
3. Includes at least three semester or four quarter credit hours in each of the number of courses specified in the core content areas listed in subsection (B).
B. Through December 31, 2029, a program under subsection (A)(3) shall include:
1. Marriage and family studies: Three courses from a family systems theory orientation that collectively contain at minimum the following elements:
a. Introductory family systems theory;
b. Family development;

c. Family systems, including marital, sibling, and individual subsystems; and
d. Gender and cultural issues;
2. Marriage and family therapy: Three courses that collectively contain at a minimum the following elements:
a. Advanced family systems theory and interventions;
b. Major systemic marriage and family therapy treatment approaches;
c. Communications; and
d. Sex therapy;
3. Human development: Three courses that may integrate family systems theory that collectively contain at minimum the following elements:
a. Normal and abnormal human development;
b. Human sexuality; and
c. Psychopathology and abnormal behavior;
4. Professional studies: One course including at minimum:
a. Professional ethics as a therapist, including legal and ethical responsibilities and liabilities; and
b. Family law;
5. Research: One course in research design, methodology, and statistics in behavioral health science; and
6. Supervised practicum: Two courses that supplement the practical experience gained under subsection (F).

C. Beginning January 1, 2030, a program under subsection (A)(3) shall include:
1. Foundations of relational/systemic practice, theories, and models: Two courses that collectively contain at a minimum the following elements:
a. Historical development of the MFT relational/systemic philosophy;
b. Contemporary conceptual foundations of MFT; and
c. Evidence-based practice and the biopsychosocial framework;
2. Clinical treatment with individuals, couples, and families: Two courses that collectively contain at a minimum the

following elements:
a. Developing competencies in treatment approaches designed for use with a wide range of diverse individuals, couples, and families (i.e. same-sex couples and interfaith couples, and young children, adolescents, and the elderly);
b. Crisis and trauma intervention;
c. Sex therapy; and
d. Evidenced-based practice;
3. Biopsychosocial health and development across the life span: One course including at a minimum individual and family development, human sexuality, and biopsychosocial health across the life span;
4. Professional identity, law, ethics, and social responsibility: One course including at a minimum:
a. Development of a MFT identity and socialization;
b. Ethics in MFT practice, including understanding and applying the AAMFT Code of Ethics; and
c. Understanding legal responsibilities;
5. Research and evaluation: One course in research and evaluation methods and evidence based practice;
6. Systemic or relational assessment and mental health diagnosis and treatment: One course including at a minimum:
a. Understanding the traditional psycho-diagnostic categories;
b. Understanding psychopathology;
c. Assessing, diagnosing, and treating major mental health issues;
d. Using a MFT relational or systemic philosophy to address common presenting problems including addiction, suicide, trauma, abuse, and intro-familial violence; and
e. Providing therapy for individuals, couples, and families managing acute chronic medical conditions; and
7. Supervised practicum: Two courses that supplement the practical experience gained under subsection (F).
D. Beginning January 1, 2030, in addition to the core content areas specified in subsection (C), a MFT curriculum shall include the following. There is no minimum course require-

ment for these areas:
1. Contemporary issues in MFT: Developing awareness of emerging or evolving challenges, problems, or recent developments at the interface of MFT knowledge and practice and the broader local, regional, and global context;
2. Community intersections and collaboration: Practicing within defined contexts such as healthcare settings, schools, military settings, and private practice or nontraditional MFT practice using therapeutic competencies;
3. Telehealth practice: Developing competencies required to comply with R4-6-1106; and
4. Diverse, multicultural, and underserved communities:
a. Understanding and applying knowledge of diversity, power, privilege, and oppression as these relate to race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, health status, religion, spiritual beliefs, nation of origin, or other relevant social identities;
b. Practicing with diverse, international, multicultural, marginalized, or underserved communities;
c. Developing competencies in working with sexual and gender minorities and their families; and
d. Developing and implementing anti-racist practices.
E. In evaluating the curriculum required under subsections (B) and (C), the Board shall assess whether a core content area is embedded or contained in more than one course. The applicant shall provide information the Board requires to determine whether a core content area is embedded in multiple courses. The Board shall not accept a core content area embedded in more than two courses unless the courses are succession courses. The Board shall allow subject matter in a course to qualify in only one core content area.
F. A program's supervised practicum shall meet the following standards:
1. Provides an opportunity for the enrolled student to provide marriage and family therapy services to individuals, couples, families, or other systems under the direction of a faculty member or supervisor designated by the college or university;

2. Occurs over a minimum of two semesters of clinical practice;
3. Includes at least 300 client-contact hours, 100 of which are relational hours, provided under direct supervision; and
4. Includes clinical supervision provided by an AAMFT-approved supervisor or an LMFT licensed by the Board.

G. An applicant may submit a written request to the ARC for an exemption from the requirement specified in subsection (F)(4). The request shall include the name of the behavioral health professional proposed by the applicant to act as supervisor of the practicum, a copy of the proposed supervisor's transcript and curriculum vitae, and any additional documentation requested by the ARC. The ARC shall grant the exemption if the ARC determines the proposed supervisor is qualified by education, experience, and training to provide supervision.

H. The Board shall deem an applicant to meet the curriculum requirements for marriage and family therapist licensure if the applicant:

1. Holds an active and in good standing associate marriage and family therapist license issued by the Board; and
2. Met the curriculum requirements with a master's degree in a behavioral health field from a regionally accredited university when the associate marriage and family therapist license was issued.

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ATTACHMENT D: CA LMFT EDUCATION PATHWAY COMPARISON				
	PRE-2012	**POST-2012**	**OOS Pre-2012**	**OOS Post-2012**
ACCREDITATION	• Regional or National Institutional Accrediting Agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education • Approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education • Exempt if accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE)	• Regional or National Institutional Accrediting Agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education • Approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education	Accredited institution or approved institution.	Accredited institution or approved institution.
DEGREE	• Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling • Marriage and Family Therapy • Couple and Family Therapy • Psychology • Clinical Psychology • Counseling/Clinical Mental Health Counseling with an emphasis in either Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling or Marriage and Family Therapy • Exempt if accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family	• Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling • Marriage and Family Therapy • Couple and Family Therapy • Psychology • Clinical Psychology • Counseling/Clinical Mental Health Counseling with an emphasis in either Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling or Marriage and Family Therapy	Degree title does not need to be identical to that required by 4980.36.	Degree title does not need to be identical to that required by 4980.36.

	Therapy Education (COAMFTE)			
UNITS	48 Semester/72 Quarter units	60 Semester/90 Quarter Units	48 Semester/72 Quarter Units	48 Semester/72 Quarter Units (Can Complete 12 Semester Units/18 Quarter Units Prior to Approval for Licensure (During Registration)
REMEDIATION	Can Complete Additional Coursework Prior to Approval for Licensure (Registration)	None	Can Complete Additional Coursework Prior to Approval for Licensure (Registration)	Can Complete 12 Semester/18 Quarter Units of Coursework and Additional Coursework Prior to Approval for Licensure (Registration)
PRACTICUM	(BPC § 4980.37(c)(1)) 6 Semester/9 Quarter units	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(1)(B)(i)) 6 Semester/9 Quarter Units	6 Semester/9 Quarter Units	6 Semester/9 Quarter Units
PRACTICUM/FACE TO FACE	(BPC § 4980.37(c)(2)) 150 Hours	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(1)(B)(ii & vi)) 225 Hours Face to Face Counseling Experience (up to 75 hours may be Client Centered Advocacy)	225 Hours Face to Face Counseling Experience (up to 75 hours may be Client Centered Advocacy) or Holds a Current License in Good Standing in Another State or Country as an LMFT at the Highest Level	225 Hours Face to Face Counseling Experience (up to 75 hours may be Client Centered Advocacy) or Holds a Current License in Good Standing in Another State or Country as an LMFT at the Highest Level
MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND CHILD COUNSELING AND MARITAL AND FAMILY SYSTEMS APPROACHES TO TREATMENT	(BPC § 4980.37(b)) 12 Semester/18 Quarter Units	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(1)(A)) 12 Semester/18 Quarter Units	12 Semester/18 Quarter Units	12 Semester/18 Quarter Units
MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY ORIENTED CARE AND METHODS OF SERVICE DELIVERY			(BPC § 4980.78(b)(4)(A)) 3 Semester Units/45 hours	(BPC § 4980.78(b)(4)(A)) 3 Semester Units/45 hours
DIAGNOSIS, ASSESSMENT,	(BPC § 4980.37(e)(1)) Integrated	(BPC § 4980.36(e)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK**	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK**

PROGNOSIS, TREATMENT PLANNING AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS			(BPC § 4980.81(a)(1)) 2 Semester Units	(BPC § 4980.81(a)(1)) 2 Semester Units
CROSS CULTURAL MORES AND VALUES, INCLUDING A WIDE RANGE OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS	(BPC § 4980.37(e)(7)) Integrated	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(B)) Integrated		
CALIFORNIA CULTURES AND THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OR SOCIOECONOMIC POSTION	(BPC § 4980.37(e)(6)) Integrated	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(C)) Integrated	(BPC § 4980.78(b)(4)(B)) 1 Semester Unit/15 Hours Can be completed while registered.	(BPC § 4980.78(b)(4)(B)) 1 Semester Unit/15 Hours Can be completed when registered.
MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION		(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(D-G)) Integrated	(4980.78(b)(4)(A)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit Can be completed while registered.	(4980.78(b)(4)(A)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit Can be completed while registered.
ALCOHOLISM AND CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DEPENDENCY	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (16 CCR 1807.3) 15 Hours	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(I)) Integrated		
SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS			**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(7)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(7)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit
CO-OCCURING DISORDERS AND ADDICTION			**ADDITIOANAL COURSEWORK** (15 Hours)	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (15 Hours)
PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.41(a)(6)) 2 Semester/3 Quarter Units	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(A)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(2)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(2)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit
PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK**	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(A)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK**	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK**

	(BPC § 4980.41(a)(7)) 2 Semester/3 Quarter Units		(BPC § 4980.81((a)(2)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit	(BPC § 4980.81((a)(2)) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit
SPOUSAL/PARTNER ABUSE ASSESSMENT, DETECTION, AND INTERVENTION	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.41(a)(5)) No specific number of hours if began graduate study between 1/1/95 and 12/31/03, but course must cover assessment, detection, and intervention. 15 Hours if began graduate study on or after 1/1/94.	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(C)(ii)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (4980.81(a)(4)(A)(iii) 15 Hours	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (4980.81(a)(4)(A)(iii) 15 Hours
CHILD ABUSE AND ASSESSMENT	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 28) Minimum of 7 Contact Hours	(BPC § 28) Minimum of 7 Contact Hours	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 28) Minimum 7 Contact Hours	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 28) Minimum 7 Contact Hours
HUMAN SEXUALITY	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (16 CCR 1807) 10 Hours	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(H)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** **(BPC § 4980.81((a)(6)** 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** **(BPC § 4980.81((a)(6)** 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit
CALIFORNIA LAW AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.41(1)) 2 Semester/3 Quarter Units	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(J)) Integrated	(4980.78(2)) If Completed 2 Semester/ 3 Quarter Units of Law and Ethics, but no CA Content then 12 Hour Course Prior to Registration. If No Law and Ethics Course, then 2 Semester/3 Quarter Unit Course Prior to Registration	(4980.78(2)) If Completed 2 Semester/ 3 Quarter Units of Law and Ethics, but no CA Content then 12 Hour Course Prior to Registration. If No Law and Ethics Course, then 2 Semester/3 Quarter Unit Course Prior to Registration

AGING, LONG-TERM CARE AND ELDER/DEPENDENT ADULT ABUSE	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.39) 10 Hours	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(B)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK (80.81(a)(4)(A)(ii))** 10 Hours	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK (80.81(a)(4)(A)(ii))** 10 Hours
DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES FROM OLD AGE TO INFANCY			**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(3)(A) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit (If deficient in one topic, may remediate by taking 3 hour instruction in each missing topic.	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (BPC § 4980.81(a)(3)(A) 15 Hours/1 Semester Unit (If deficient in one topic, may remediate by taking 3 hour instruction in each missing topic.
MISCELLANEOUS*	Integrated	(BPC § 4980.36(d)(2)(C)) Integrated	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (No Specific Hours)	**ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK** (No Specific Hours)
TELEHEALTH	(BPC § 4980.395) 3 Hours of Training	(BPC § 4980.395) 3 Hours of Training	(BPC § 4980.395) 3 Hours of Training	(BPC § 4980.395) 3 Hours of Training
SUICIDE RISK AND ASSESSMENT	(BPC § 4980.396(a)) 6 Hours of Coursework or Applied Experience	(BPC § 4980.396(a)) 6 Hours of Coursework or Applied Experience	(BPC § 4980.396(a)) 6 Hours of Coursework or Applied Experience	(BPC § 4980.396(a)) 6 Hours of Coursework or Applied Experience

*Instruction must include:

- Childbirth, child rearing, parenting and step-parenting
- Marriage, divorce and blended family
- Cultural factors relevant to abuse or partners and family members
- Poverty and deprivation
- Financial and social stress
- Effect of trauma
- The psychological, psychotherapeutic, community and health implications of the matters and life events that arise in marriage and family relationships within a variety of California cultures.

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September 9, 2026

Wendy Strack, Chair
Workforce Development Committee
California Board of Behavioral Sciences
1625 North Market Boulevard, Suite S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834

cc: Steve Sodergren, Executive Officer
Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
Members of the Workforce Development Committee

Re: Agenda Item 4, September 17, 2026. Education Requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists: Graduate-Level Course Content Requirements (Business and Professions Code section 4980.36)

Dear Chair Strack and Members of the Committee:

The Sentio MFT program supports this project and most of what the Committee has built. Folding the in-state, out-of-state, and older-degree pathways into one set of rules ends a real unfairness between applicants. Dropping the fixed list of approved degree titles helps schools and students. Letting an applicant fix a gap with a course, instead of losing the degree over it, is the right call, and so is the allowance for students whose school closes.

We are writing about one question inside Chart 1: how the 41 required units get divided.

Thirteen of the fourteen subject areas, 38 units in all, are classes about a subject. One area, Clinical Skills, at three units, is training in how to actually do therapy. Add the six-unit practicum floor, and the Board would be deciding 47 of the 60 units in the degree.

That split is backwards. As written, this proposal will graduate therapists who know more and can do less. That is the opposite of what protects clients.

The research says the same thing over and over

In the last fifteen years, six separate research teams have gone back through the studies on how therapists are trained. All five reached the same conclusion. Classes, workshops, and reading raise what a therapist knows. They do not change what a therapist does with a client. What changes what a therapist does is practicing the skill and getting feedback on the attempt (Beidas & Kendall, 2010; Herschell et al., 2010; Hill & Lent, 2006; Rakovshik & McManus, 2010; Frank et al., 2020; Valenstein-Mah et al., 2020).

Two more research teams reviewed every controlled study of skill practice in therapy training. In every single study, the therapists who practiced the skill came out more skilled than the therapists who received traditional academic coursework (Nurse et al., 2025; Diamond et al., 2025).

The individual studies say it plainly. Clinicians who studied a therapy approach did not get measurably better at delivering it (Sholomskas et al., 2005). Trainees who took a suicide prevention course knew more afterward but were no better at working with a suicidal client (Cross et al., 2011). Therapists who sat through classroom-style trainings barely improved in skill, and what predicted their skill was how much hands-on coaching they got afterward (Beidas et al., 2012). Supervisors who demonstrated a skill and had their supervisees practice it got them using it with real clients, and supervisors who only discussed it did not (Bearman et al., 2013).

This is not a close call, and it is not new. It is one of the best-supported findings in mental health education research over the past fifty years. We would be glad to give the Committee many more studies than the ones named here.

Knowing is not doing

Knowing what a therapy model says, and being able to use it while a distressed client sits in front of you, are two different abilities. The first can be handed to a student in a lecture. The second is built by trying, getting it wrong, being corrected, and trying again (Bennett-Levy, 2006; Hatcher, 2015). That is how skill is built in every field anyone has studied, and the ingredient that makes it work is honest feedback on a real attempt (Ericsson et al., 1993; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Deliberate Practice, video-based observation and outcome data

The best evidence that a student is becoming a competent therapist comes from three places. Watching the student work, live or on video. Having the student practice a specific skill and correcting them while they do it. Looking at whether the student's clients actually got better. Exams, papers, and essays measure none of this. They measure whether a student can describe therapy, which is a different thing from whether a student can do therapy. A program can graduate a class of students who write well about treatment and cannot hold a session. Subject

areas like the thirteen in Chart 1 are usually taught and graded the traditional way, through lectures, reading, papers, and tests. Every hour spent that way is an hour not spent watching a student work, practicing a skill with them, or looking at how that student's clients are doing.

The accrediting bodies already require this

The Committee's own draft would accept COAMFTE or CACREP accreditation in place of some Board review. Both of those bodies, and every other major accreditor in the mental health professions, have already settled the question this comment raises.

COAMFTE requires that at least half of a student's supervision hours use recordings or live observation, not the student's own account of the session. CACREP requires that supervision of practicum and internship include recordings or live supervision of the student working with clients. The APA Commission on Accreditation requires direct observation at every practicum evaluation, and says plainly that watching a trainee work tells a supervisor things nothing else can. Social work accreditation requires that at least one measure of a student's competence be based on watching that student practice.

The certifying bodies for individual therapy models work the same way. To be certified in cognitive behavioral therapy by the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies, a clinician sends in a recording of a real session and has it rated. An EMDRIA-approved basic training in EMDR is 20 hours of instruction against 20 hours of supervised practice and 10 hours of case consultation. More than half of that training is practice.

A degree is only so big

Sixty units is a fixed space. Every unit the Board assigns to a subject is a unit that can no longer be spent on supervised practice, and Chart 1 assigns 38 of them.

Schools will comply. They will comply by taking the hours they now spend on practice, on reviewing recorded sessions, and on coaching students one at a time, and turning them into hours of lecture and reading. Lecture and reading are what the statute will count. The schools that have put the most into hands-on training will have the most to give up.

That is the result we are asking the Committee to avoid.

Recommendations

1. Set fewer unit minimums. Where the subject matter experts cannot point to evidence that a unit minimum in a subject area produces a better therapist, name the required content and leave the number off, as current law does. The Board keeps its authority to specify content and to review any degree, and schools keep the room to build skill.

2. Let one course count toward more than one subject area. Requiring a separate course for each area forces schools to take apart designs that work, for paperwork reasons alone.

3. If the Committee keeps unit minimums, put the weight on Clinical Skill development (deliberate practice) rather than on the knowledge areas. This moves units already in Chart 1 and does not add to the total.

4. Keep the remediation flexibility now in the draft. Letting an applicant fix a gap with coursework or continuing education, instead of losing the degree, protects students without lowering the standard.

The Board's job is to protect the public, and clients are protected by what their therapist can actually do. We would welcome the chance to take part in the educator outreach described for Step 4, and to share the Sentio MFT program's skill assessment and client outcome data with the Committee and the subject matter experts.

Respectfully submitted,

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