Board of Behavioral Sciences

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MEMORANDUM

DATE	November 1, 2026
TO	Board Members
FROM	Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
SUBJECT	Consideration or Requiring Coursework in Perinatal Mental Health and Alzheimer's, Dementia, and Caregiving

Background

The Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board) has been asked by two stakeholder groups to consider whether it should require coursework in two separate and distinct topic areas: perinatal mental health, and Alzheimer's, dementia, and caregiving.

This discussion began with the passage of AB 2581 (Chapter 836, Statutes of 2024), which requires the Board to consider whether coursework in perinatal mental health should be included within its continuing education (CE) requirements for licensees.

The Board has considered similar requests for coursework requirements in the past. In evaluating such requests, the Board has generally sought to balance the importance of emerging practice areas with the need to maintain flexibility in educational and continuing education requirements. The Board has historically expressed caution regarding mandating specific topic areas for the following reasons:

1. **Relevance Varies by Licensee**
   Not all licensees necessarily serve populations affected by proposed areas of study. Mandating specific topic areas may not be applicable to all practitioners and could limit their ability to pursue areas of study more directly relevant to their practice.

2. **Precedent for Future Mandates**
   Mandating coursework in specific areas may set a precedent that encourages additional requests for topic-specific requirements. While many topics may warrant consideration, an increasing number of mandated subject areas could reduce flexibility.

3. **Current Educational Framework Already Supports These Topics**
   The Board's existing educational framework already accommodates these subject areas. Licensees may complete continuing education in perinatal mental health, Alzheimer's, dementia, and caregiving if such training is relevant to their practice and is offered by an approved provider. Such courses are already eligible for CE credit under current law.

Subject Matter Expert Discussion

The Board has engaged a team of three subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide guidance on the LMFT education review project. Each is a highly credentialed licensee and educator in the LMFT and/or LPCC professions. 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.

Staff requested that the SMEs evaluate the requests for new coursework requirements and provide their professional perspectives. They have provided the following statement.

"When considering requests to add new mandated coursework topics, the Board should consider that LMFT programs are already very full, and any additional mandate inevitably requires programs to reduce emphasis elsewhere in order to meet new obligations. The Board's education requirements are designed to ensure broad, foundational preparation to practice as an LMFT, rather than in-depth training in every important practice topic. Therefore, mandating in-depth coverage of specific topics as requirements sets precedence for advocates of similarly compelling subject areas, such as working with veterans, immigrants, or those with disabilities, to request their own coursework as well. This would place schools in the position of continually redistributing limited instructional time, potentially diluting essential core preparation. To balance these considerations, the Board may instead wish to add language encouraging programs to incorporate training in these important areas where feasible. The expectation should be that practitioners, as lifelong learners, will pursue specialized training throughout their careers to meet the needs of their clients."

Discussion

The Board discussed the perinatal mental health request at its November 2025 Board meeting. It directed staff to bring the issue to the Workforce Development Committee for further discussion.

Alzheimer's Los Angeles presented its request to the Workforce Development Committee at its June 16, 2026 meeting.

The Workforce Development Committee is currently conducting a comprehensive review of LMFT educational requirements to determine whether they should be streamlined or modernized. Part of that effort includes a review of master's level core degree requirements, and supplemental requirements (requirements that can be completed

through continuing education coursework if not included within the degree program.) At its September 16, 2026 meeting, the Workforce Development Committee discussed the possibility of adding these topics as supplemental coursework requirements for licensure. The Committee directed staff to bring that discussion back to the full Board for a decision.

Presentations

Representatives from the California Chapter of Postpartum Support International and Alzheimer's Los Angeles will each provide a brief overview of the importance of these topics and the rationale for their respective requests.

Recommendation

After reviewing stakeholder input, existing educational requirements, and the perspectives of the subject matter experts, staff recommends that the Board not establish separate supplemental coursework requirements in perinatal mental health or in Alzheimer's, dementia, and caregiving.

Instead, staff recommends that the Board direct staff to continue partnering with stakeholders to promote awareness of these important topic areas through educational outreach to educational programs, applicants, registrants, and licensees. Staff has already begun this effort by developing a website resource on perinatal mental health, available here.

Following stakeholder presentations and Board discussion, the Board should determine whether to adopt this recommendation or provide alternative direction to staff.