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	October 29, 2026
TO	Board Members
FROM	Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
SUBJECT	Amendments Related to Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting Coursework

Background

The Board requires applicants for licensure as marriage and family therapists (LMFTs), clinical social workers (LCSWs), and professional clinical counselors (LPCCs) to complete a seven-hour course in child abuse assessment and reporting. Licensed educational psychologists (LEPs) are also required to complete this training upon their first license renewal. Existing statutes specify the scope, content, and acceptable sources of these courses.

Last November, the Board approved the language shown in **Attachment A** for inclusion in the omnibus bill. However, it was later determined that the changes were too substantive for inclusion in that bill.

The Board is currently engaged in a broader effort to review and modernize the educational requirements for LMFT, LCSW, and LPCC licensure. Because this project is extensive and will take several years to complete across all license types, staff believes it would be beneficial to move forward with these specific updates now, within the bill the Board plans to sponsor in 2027.

Proposed Amendments

The proposed amendments to Business and Professions Code (BPC) section 4990.26.2 are shown in **Attachment A** and are as follows:

- Emphasize that the required 7-hour course in child abuse assessment and reporting must be California-specific. While the law currently references the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA), which is specific to California, the California-specific nature of that content is often overlooked, leading to confusion.

- Remove the provision allowing the course to be taken from a professional association or a local, county, or state department of health or mental health. The Board does not necessarily recognize these sources as continuing education providers (although these sources are free to seek that approval from a Board-recognized approval agency). For other education requirements, the Board only accepts coursework from

an accredited or approved educational institution, a continuing education provider that is approved by a Board-recognized approval agency, or a professional association that is recognized by the Board as a continuing education provider. This requirement should be applied consistently.

- Eliminate the exemption that allows applicants to opt out of this coursework by demonstrating it is not relevant to their current practice. Abuse can affect individuals across a wide range of settings, and a therapist's current practice may not reflect future practice needs. Ensuring all licensees receive this training supports public protection across all practice environments. (Staff has not received a request of this nature in recent memory; however, staff believes granting such a request if it were received would be contrary to public protection, and having this provision in the law is misleading.)

Recommendation

Conduct an open discussion of the proposed language shown in **Attachment A**. Direct staff to make any discussed changes, and any nonsubstantive changes, and direct staff to pursue the proposed language as a legislative proposal.

Attachment

Attachment A: Proposed Amendments: Coursework in Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting

ATTACHMENT A
Proposed Amendments
Coursework in Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting
(BOARD APPROVED 11/21/25)

AMEND BPC §4990.26.2.

(a) The Legislature finds that there is a need to ensure that professionals of the healing arts who have demonstrable contact with victims and potential victims of child, elder, and dependent adult abuse, and abusers and potential abusers of children, elders, and dependent adults are provided with adequate and appropriate training regarding the assessment and reporting of child, elder, and dependent adult abuse that will ameliorate, reduce, and eliminate the trauma of abuse and neglect and ensure the reporting of abuse in a timely manner to prevent additional occurrences.

(b) The board shall establish required training in the area of child abuse assessment and reporting for all persons applying for initial licensure and renewal of licensure as a clinical social worker, professional clinical counselor, or marriage and family therapist. This training shall be required one time only for all persons applying for initial licensure or for licensure renewal.

(c) All persons applying for initial licensure or renewal of a license as a clinical social worker, professional clinical counselor, or marriage and family therapist shall, in addition to all other requirements for licensure or renewal, have completed California-specific coursework or training in child abuse assessment and reporting that meets the requirements of this section, including detailed knowledge of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 11164) of Chapter 2 of Title 1 of Part 4 of the Penal Code). The training shall meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Be obtained from one of the following sources:

(A) An accredited or approved educational institution, as defined in Sections 4980.36, 4980.37, 4996.18, and 4999.12, including extension courses offered by those institutions.

(B) A continuing education provider, as specified by the board by regulation.

~~(C) A course sponsored or offered by a professional association or a local, county, or state department of health or mental health for continuing education and approved or accepted by the board.~~

(2) Have a minimum of seven contact hours.

(3) Include the study of the assessment and method of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. The training shall also include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults.

(4) An applicant shall provide the board with documentation of completion of the required child abuse training.

~~(d) The board shall exempt an applicant who applies for an exemption from this section and who shows to the satisfaction of the board that there would be no need for the training in the applicant's practice because of the nature of that practice.~~

(~~e~~d) It is the intent of the Legislature that a person licensed as a clinical social worker, professional clinical counselor, or marriage and family therapist have minimal but appropriate training in the areas of child, elder, and dependent adult abuse assessment and reporting. It is not intended that, by solely complying with this section, a practitioner is fully trained in the subject of treatment of child, elder, and dependent adult abuse victims and abusers.

(~~f~~e) The board is encouraged to include coursework regarding the assessment and reporting of elder and dependent adult abuse in the required training on aging and long-term care issues prior to licensure or license renewal.