



South Carolina Institute of
Medicine & Public Health



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Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Care Providers in South Carolina



South Carolina Institute of
Medicine & Public Health

About the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH)

The South Carolina Institute of Medicine & Public Health (IMPH) is an independent entity serving as an informed nonpartisan convener around the important health issues in our state, providing evidence-based information to inform health policy decisions.

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Introduction

A lack of access to behavioral^a health care is a well-documented deficit experienced by Palmetto State residents for many years. Data demonstrate that many communities across South Carolina cannot meet the behavioral health needs of their residents. According to Mental Health America's 2021 report, "The State of Mental Health in America," South Carolina ranks 40th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia in "mental health workforce availability."^{1,b} Limited access to mental health care is cross-cutting throughout all sectors of society. The ripple effect of these circumstances impact patients' children, families and communities; limiting productivity and creating a cycle of mental health illnesses for those impacted. With the stressors caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic, the need for access to services is at an all-time high.² According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, "The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession have negatively affected many people's mental health and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders."³ In a July poll, 53% of U.S. adults "reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the coronavirus. This is significantly higher than the 32% reported in March."⁴

Another factor increasing demand for mental health providers is the school mental health program developed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (DMH), which matches master's-level mental health practitioners with participating schools.⁵ In 2018, DMH and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) created a "joint vision" to expand the school mental health program to provide access to these services to students in all South Carolina schools by 2022.⁶

Moreover, a lack of access to mental health care impacts every member of a community. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

In a mental health crisis, people are more likely to encounter police than get medical help. As a result, 2 million people with mental illness are booked into jails each year. Nearly 15% of men and 30% of women booked into jails have a serious mental health condition. The vast majority of the individuals are not violent criminals—most people in jails have not yet gone to trial, so they are not yet convicted of a crime. The rest are serving short sentences for minor crimes. Once in jail, many individuals don't receive the treatment they need and end up getting worse, not better. They stay longer than their counterparts without mental illness. They are at risk of victimization and often their mental health conditions get worse. After leaving jail, many no longer have access to needed healthcare and benefits. A criminal record often makes it hard for individuals to get a job or housing. Many individuals, especially without access to mental health services and supports, wind up homeless, in emergency rooms and often re-arrested. At least 83% of jail inmates with a mental illness did not have access to needed treatment. Jailing people with mental illness creates huge burdens on law enforcement, corrections and state and local budgets. It does not protect public safety. And people who could be helped are being ignored.⁷

^a According to the Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Behavioral health is defined as mental health care and substance use disorder treatment.

^b Mental health workforce availability is the ratio of the county population to the number of mental health providers including psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists and advanced practice nurses specializing in mental health care. In 2015, marriage and family therapists and mental health providers that treat alcohol and other drug abuse were added to this measure. Survey data year: 2018.

According to the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium's (AHEC's) Office for Healthcare Workforce 2019 Health Professions Data Book, 17 of the 46 counties in the Palmetto State do not have any psychiatrists available to provide care to residents. The highest proportion of psychiatrists to patients in South Carolina is 4.6 to 10,000 county residents. Counties with a low rate of psychiatrists to residents must rely on other providers to take on the increased caseload. In these cases, companion providers such as psychiatric nurse practitioners and physician assistants may be available to residents seeking assistance with prescriptions, but for those who need access to counseling, social workers, counselors and therapists are critical to meeting the behavioral health needs of area residents.

Furthermore, service-delivery organizations across South Carolina are experiencing significant barriers to adequately staffing behavioral health clinicians, specifically licensed social workers (LSWs), Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs). These organizations identify worker shortages, licensure portability and a lengthy credentialing process as some of the obstacles to maintaining an adequate behavioral health workforce and pipeline.

LSWs, LPCs and LMFTs each play an essential role in the behavioral health care system – in South Carolina and across the country. Each discipline focuses on patient-centered care and forms an important link between medical care and wraparound community-based care. South Carolina needs more providers practicing these disciplines to meet the behavioral health needs of its residents. However, barriers to licensing and credentialing for LSWs, LMFTs and LPCs have limited patient access to these essential providers. These barriers and limitations are extremely complex, and in some cases specific to the degree program. The following report provides a high-level overview of these roles and an assessment of licensing and credentialing practices that limit their ability to practice in South Carolina.

Social Workers

According to 2019 data from the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium's (AHEC's) Office for Healthcare Workforce, 2,362 clinical social workers (CSWs) practice in the state.⁸ These providers deliver important services to the public including counseling, coordinating and administering social services, improving services at the community level and providing research, supervision and education in the field.⁹ The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the accrediting agency for social work education.¹⁰ The organization “sets and maintains national accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master’s degree programs in social work.”¹¹

Social work licensure was developed piecemeal on the state level. This origin is responsible, in part, for the differences among states in the titles of social workers, licensure requirements and licensure portability.¹² Despite this lack of standardization, all social workers in the U.S. must pass the same exam to become licensed. In South Carolina, individuals who want to become social workers can pursue the following levels of licensure:

1. Licensed Baccalaureate Social Work (LBSW)

Individuals who hold a BSW from a CSWE-accredited school may apply to become LBSWs in South Carolina. The LBSW license allows a social worker to practice generalist, non-clinical social work within an organization and under supervision (in other words, not privately or independently).¹³

2. Licensed Master Social Work (LMSW) ^c

In South Carolina, you can apply to become an LMSW once you have earned an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program. Like an LBSW, an LMSW is required to work under supervision once licensed. However, they are able to engage in more advanced social work practice and can practice clinical social work.¹⁴

3. Licensed Independent Social Work (LISW)



Independent Level Licensure - Clinical Practice

Once of the two South Carolina social work licenses that allows social workers to practice independently is the LISW-CP. This license enables a social worker to independently provide clinical services such as diagnosis and therapy; however, they must be supervised for any non-clinical social work practice. To become an LISW-CP, you must hold an MSW or doctorate in social work (DSW) from a CSWE-accredited school.¹⁵



Independent Level Licensure - Advance Practice

The other license that allows a social worker to practice independently in South Carolina is the LISW-AP license. Once issued, this allows a social worker to provide a full range of non-clinical social work services without supervision. However, LISW-APs must be supervised if they want to practice clinical social work. LISW-AP candidates must hold a CSWE-accredited MSW or a doctoral degree in social work.¹⁶

Not all states offer the same levels of licensure, and often the titles of the social workers practicing in different states vary depending on where the social worker practices. However, substantial similarities exist amongst the licensing levels.

Data on the number of clinical social workers (CSWs) practicing in each county of South Carolina show that the county with the lowest rate of CSWs with a primary practice is McCormick, which has only one subsidiary practice of clinical social workers available to county residents. The area with the highest rate of clinical social workers with a primary practice is Richland County. However, data do not indicate how many of these clinical social workers provide behavioral health care.

^c Forty states share South Carolina's LMSW licensure requirements. Ten states require an extra course (such as psychopathology).

TABLE 1

Clinical Social Workers Reporting Primary or Secondary Practice Sites by County^{d,17}

County	Primary Practice	Subsidiary Practice	County	Primary Practice	Subsidiary Practice
Abbeville	5	2	Greenwood	34	1
Aiken	56	2	Hampton	2	0
Allendale	3	0	Horry	92	2
Anderson	58	3	Jasper	7	0
Bamberg	2	0	Kershaw	24	0
Barnwell	3	0	Lancaster	18	0
Beaufort	70	1	Laurens	11	0
Berkeley	26	2	Lee	4	0
Calhoun	1	0	Lexington	148	1
Charleston	344	10	Marion	5	0
Cherokee	8	0	Marlboro	3	0
Chester	2	1	McCormick	0	1
Chesterfield	7	0	Newberry	13	0
Clarendon	3	0	Oconee	18	1
Colleton	10	1	Orangeburg	39	0
Darlington	11	0	Pickens	18	0
Dillon	6	0	Richland	558	12
Dorchester	49	2	Saluda	3	0
Edgefield	4	0	Spartanburg	104	0
Fairfield	10	0	Sumter	36	0
Florence	57	0	Union	1	0
Georgetown	22	1	Williamsburg	7	0
Greenville	346	4	York	107	2

According to a subject matter expert with the University of South Carolina, it routinely takes the South Carolina Board of Social Work 6-8 weeks to approve an individual to take an exam.¹⁸ Further, they often do not inform applicants that their applications are incomplete, rather the applicant is responsible for reaching out for information.¹⁹ However, the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation states that it should not take that

^d Social Workers may report up to 2 practice locations. The South Carolina Health Professions Data Book defines a clinical social worker as someone with a license status of CP, AP, Dual or LMSW employed in the settings approved by the regulatory board: non-profit social service agencies, government agencies, hospitals and other healthcare delivery entities as reported during the license renewal period ending 12/31/16.

long for approval if a complete application is received, and it is never the Agency's policy or expectation that a licensee would have to inquire about the status of their application in order to find out if it is incomplete.²⁰

A South Carolina social worker who has completed this process will find that, in some cases, classes that were electives in South Carolina are required for licensure in other states.²¹ For example, Florida requires licensed social workers to pass a psychopathology course. However, South Carolina does not require that course for graduation.²² Demonstrating the complexities of disparate licensure requirements, psychopathology is also not a degree requirement in Florida, only a requirement for licensure.²³

In Maryland, a student can become a licensed social worker (LSW) by earning a master's degree, or by earning a bachelor's degree and completing three years of experience under an approved supervisor. However, a Maryland LSW who has taken the bachelor's degree path would not be considered an LMSW in South Carolina and would not be able to earn or practice at that level in the state. Advanced social work licensure in South Carolina is achieved by completing two years or 100 hours of supervised work, three required classes and passage of the advanced clinical exam. Effective January 1, 2021, North Carolina is moving to the same process as South Carolina: they will require an LMSW followed by progression toward advanced licensure.²⁴

Like the nursing interstate compact, instituting one national set of licensure requirements and degree titles would ensure that licensed social workers have the freedom to choose the state in which they practice without facing undue, unforeseen challenges associated with practicing in the new state.²⁵ Reciprocal agreements among states offer another approach to maximizing licensure portability. According to the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), reciprocity is defined as "a system that would allow someone to obtain a license in a different state or province because you have a license in another province."²⁶

Reciprocal agreements and interstate compacts appear to offer obvious solutions to the disorganized, inefficient state-level licensure processes currently in place for social workers. However, a University of South Carolina subject matter expert noted that some states have resisted these options because of the unappetizing prospect of being the first state to move forward on a national initiative.²⁷ Other states are in favor of reciprocity but feel their state's licensure requirements should set the standard for the nation. Although the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation states that, "To our knowledge, the board has never been asked about reciprocal licensing or national licensure," others have found that South Carolina has been resistant to a national licensure process due to the perception that the language used to define the profession, prescribed by state social work boards, should be an inflexible standard.

Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations Coronavirus update for social workers:

In regards to social workers licensed outside of South Carolina, pursuant to S.C. Code Section 40-63-290(6): Social workers so licensed in another jurisdiction may, after notice to the Board, practice within the scope of their licenses during or immediately following a declared or recognized emergency for a period not to exceed 60 days.²⁸

Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and family therapists (MFTs) treat a wide range of behavioral health conditions including depression, marital discord, anxiety and child-parent relationship challenges.²⁹ In marriage and family therapy, treatment focuses on the family system and the set of relationships in which family members are involved.³⁰ LMFTs are trained in psychotherapy and family systems and licensed to diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders.³¹ LMFTs must earn a master's degree (two to three years) but may also elect to pursue a doctorate (three to five years) and a post-graduate clinical training program (three to four years).³² Doctorate level MFTs have a higher salary potential, more career advancement opportunities and may have more in-depth counseling expertise.³³ Individuals completing a program in marriage and family therapy gain skills that help them work with clients and colleagues in professional environments. These competencies include interpersonal, communication, listening, organizational and critical-thinking skills.³⁴ LMFTs come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including nursing, social work, education and psychiatry.³⁵

The National Credentialing Academy (NCA) serves marriage, couple and family counselors across the globe by granting certification that provides a standard that can be used to measure the level of expertise of these professionals by interested agencies, mental health groups, health providers and individuals.³⁶ LMFTs can benefit from certification because it:

- “Promotes professional accountability, visibility and helps recognize the practice of Family Counseling and Therapy;
- Identifies to the public and professional peers those professionals who have met specific recognized standards;
- Advocates among groups and agencies actively involved in managed health care;
- Encourages the continuing professional growth and development of individuals practicing in Marriage and Family Counseling and Therapy;
- Ensures a national standard.”³⁷

South Carolina LMFTs are regulated by the South Carolina Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists and Psycho-Educational Specialists.³⁸ The Board contracts with the Center for Credentialing and Education (CCE) for review of applications.³⁹ LMFTs in South Carolina must demonstrate at least 60 hours of coursework, including topics like theoretical foundations, individual development/family relations, clinical practice and legal and ethical issues.⁴⁰

Before Licensure, students must practice as an associate. According to South Carolina Code of Laws Article 1, Chapter 1, Title 40:

A professional counselor associate license, marriage and family therapy associate license, or addiction counselor associate license must be issued to an applicant who has satisfied the educational requirements, as specified by the board in regulation, for licensure but who has not yet completed the supervision or experience requirements and has passed the examination required for

licensure. An associate who has not completed the requirements for licensure within two years may apply to the board for an extension. A marriage and family therapy associate may practice only under the direct supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapist supervisor.⁴¹

Those applying for South Carolina Licensure from out-of-state face additional requirements. However, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) has developed a model of LMFT license portability that would standardize the process between states as well as promote more objectivity in assessing qualifications.⁴² The model is a “full endorsement model,” meaning that a state will license an applicant as an LMFT if the applicant has a valid and unrestricted license in another state. In this model, the licensure board will issue a full and unrestricted license if the applicant:

1. **“Has a valid and unrestricted license to practice as a licensed marriage and family therapist in another state or territory; and**
2. **Has completed an application for licensure and paid any required fees.”⁴³**

The following are requirements of southeastern states for MFT license portability:

South Carolina

Applicant must hold current, active, unrestricted license. Must meet all South Carolina requirements (degree/coursework and supervision hours).⁴⁴

North Carolina

Applicant can receive license through reciprocity as long as they have 1) been licensed for five continuous years and are currently licensed, 2) has an unrestricted license in good standing, 3) has no unresolved complaints and 4) has passed the National Marriage and Family Therapy exam.⁴⁵

Georgia

Licensure by endorsement is considered when applicant is fully licensed and in good standing and 1) license is in specialty of MFT, 2) license is substantially equivalent to and/or exceed those of Georgia.⁴⁶

Tennessee

Board may issue a license to an individual who holds a current clinical certification by the AAMFT; however, an applicant for licensure by endorsement will be required to take the oral section of the exam.⁴⁷

Mississippi

If an applicant has been licensed in another state, licensure may be issued via reciprocity as long as regulatory standards and qualifications are substantially equivalent to those required in Mississippi and the applicant has been in good standing for 5 consecutive years.⁴⁸

Alabama

Applicants are reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that Alabama standards are met.⁴⁹

West Virginia

An individual may apply for reciprocity review if the individual is currently licensed in another state where licensing requirements are greater than or equal to the requirements in this rule as determined by the Board.⁵⁰

Licensed Professional Counselors

Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), also known as licensed clinical professional counselors or licensed mental health counselors, are mental health service providers that are trained to work with individuals, families and groups to treat mental, behavioral and emotional problems or disorders.^{51,52} LPCs practice in many capacities including diagnosis and treatment, psychoeducational techniques, consultation to individuals or groups and research.⁵³ LPCs offer individually based mental health counseling that relies on a more collaborative approach than other methods of counseling.⁵⁴ By analyzing a client’s economic status, societal situation and home environment, LPCs are able to work with clients on what is manageable for them at the individual level.⁵⁵

Many career options are available to LPCs, including private practice, crisis intervention, telemedicine, serving as a certified school counselor and/or counseling within community-based agencies, state agencies and residential treatment facilities.⁵⁶ LPCs are often confused with Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs).^{e,57} Both are licensed, provide counseling services, treat individuals and groups and can diagnose and treat mental and emotional health problems and disorders.⁵⁸

Comparing LCSWs and LPCs ⁵⁹

LCSWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master’s in social work• Implement services to assist clients• Primary role is to refer client to other resources	LPCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master’s in counseling• Provide direct patient therapy• Can counsel in a private practice
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South Carolina currently has two levels of licensure for LPCs under the South Carolina Board of Examiner for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors and Psycho-Educational Specialists. These levels include the LPC – Intern (LPC/I) and LPC.⁶⁰ Steps to becoming an LPC in South Carolina include the following:

1. Complete educational requirements of a Master of Counseling,
 2. Complete a practicum and internship,
 3. Take the National Counselor Exam that is administered by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC),
4. Apply for the LPC/I license with the South Carolina Department of Financial and Professional Regulation,
 5. Gain supervised experience,
 6. Take the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam that is administered by the NBCC, and
 7. Apply for the LPC license.⁶¹

^e The Licensed Clinical Social Worker or LCSW, is a sub-sector within the field of Social Work. LCSW’s work with clients in order to help deal with issues involving mental and emotional health. There are a wide variety of specializations available to LCSWs, including mental health, substance abuse, public health, school social work, medical social work, marriage counseling or children and family therapy. Some may choose to work purely in a research, policy-making or administrative capacity.








Licensure as an LPC in South Carolina requires either a master’s or doctoral degree that includes 48 graduate semester hours in counseling or a related discipline. Students take courses such as social and cultural foundations, lifestyle and career development, psychopathology and professional orientation.⁶² The internship requires a 150-hour practicum and 600 hours at an internship.⁶³ These hours must be supervised and involve assessment and treatment of individuals.⁶⁴ Once licensed as an LPC/I, individuals must complete a minimum of 1,500 hours of supervised direct client contact in no less than two years.⁶⁵ The supervision plan must be submitted to the board for approval. After becoming an LPC in South Carolina, individuals are required to complete continuing education hours. LPCs must accrue 40 hours during each two-year renewal period in order to renew their license.⁶⁶

Out-of-state individuals applying to practice as an LPC in South Carolina may receive “licensure by endorsement” if the South Carolina Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage & Family Therapists, and Psycho-Educational Specialists finds that the state has the same or higher licensure requirements than South Carolina.⁶⁷ These applicants must hold a current license issued from their state’s board and submit an application to South Carolina’s board to be approved.⁶⁸ No interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements exist for LPCs in the U.S.

Varying renewal requirements for LPCs to remain in good standing in each state increase the complexity of moving between states.⁶⁹

TABLE 2

Renewal Requirements for LPCs in Southeastern States ⁷⁰

State	Licensure Renewal Timeframe	Contact Hours Required	Date License Expires
 South Carolina	Every 2 years	40	August 31
 North Carolina	Every 2 years	50 (LPCS), 40 (LPCA & LPC), new licensees are required 40 or 30 respectively	June 30
 Georgia	Every 2 years	35	September 30 on even years
 Tennessee	Every 2 years	Dependent on number of certifications/licensure	Birthday
 Mississippi	Every 2 years	24	June 30
 Alabama	Every 2 years (LPC), annually (ALC)	40 (LPC), 10 (ALC)	July 31 (LPC), Anniversary Date (ALC)
 West Virginia	Every 2 years	35	June 30 on odd years

Additionally, each state defines LPCs' scope of practice differently. For example, North Carolina defines the "practice of counseling" as "holding oneself out to the public as a professional counselor offering counseling services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal activities, consulting, referral activities, and research activities."⁷¹

Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations Coronavirus Update for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors and Psycho-Educational Specialists:

- The South Carolina Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors and Psycho-Educational Specialists voted on July 21, 2020, to allow licensees to obtain 100% of their required continuing education hours for the 2021 renewal online, provided that the hours are obtained from a Board-approved continuing education provider.
- Associate License renewal fees have been waived.
- During the period of public emergency, approved CEU providers, who have not previously been approved to provide their CEU courses online, may offer their courses online, if the provider has a system set up to do so. The provider will need to include a test at the end of the course, and the participant must receive a passing score of 80% or better for a CE certificate to be provided. The provider must also include an evaluation of the CEU program to be completed by the participant.
- During the period of the declared public health emergency, the Board has determined that appropriately licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, addiction counselors, and psychoeducational specialists, who are licensed out-of-state, and who are in a current established relationship with a client who now resides in South Carolina, may continue their therapeutic relationship via telecommunication.

Credentialing

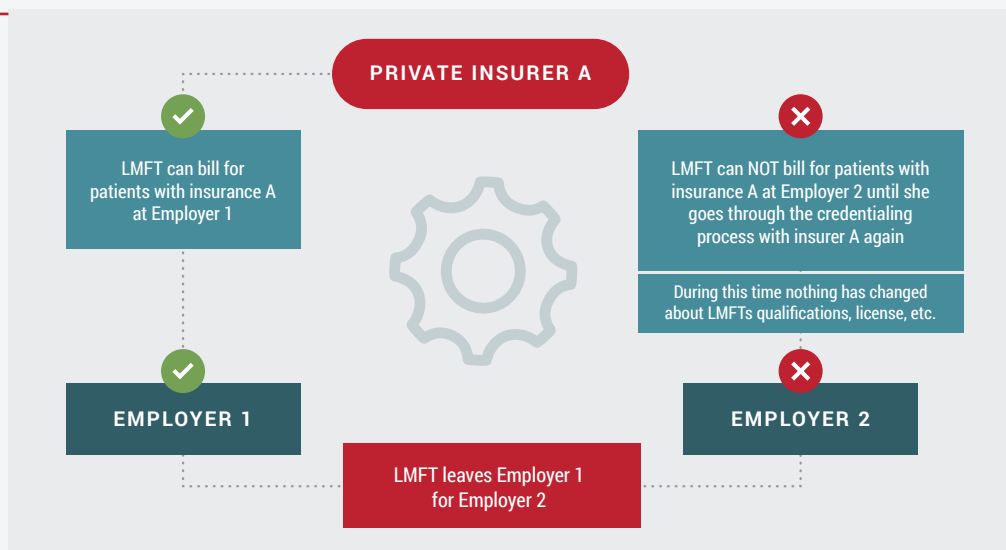
The term "credentialing" can represent several different processes for health providers. In terms of providers employed by for-profit and non-profit organizations, it is the process that providers are required to undertake to obtain approval to bill insurers when they see patients covered by that insurer. This is also referred to as being "paneled" or being "in-network." Health systems and government agencies can also credential providers.

The timeline for credentialing varies widely across insurer types, with some payers approving providers for reimbursement within 30 days and others taking six months or longer to bring a provider in-network.⁷² In some cases, payers will provide back-pay for patients seen after the initial credentialing application was submitted, but few practitioners can afford to provide months of unpaid services to patients.⁷³

Case Study

An LMFT decided to change employers. When making this transition she was unable to bill the same insurers for the same patients she had billed for when services were rendered under her previous employer. This was the case until she was credentialed for a second time by the same payers under her new organization.⁷⁴ See the figure below for an illustration of this case:

Example of Credentialing Barriers⁷⁵



Not only must credentialing be undertaken by each new employer, but the potential length of the process means organizations must sometimes find a candidate 6 months in advance of their official start date to ensure they can bill for the candidate's services when they begin practicing. One non-profit has seen well-qualified candidates rescind their acceptance of employment when the paneling process lasts longer than expected.⁷⁶

However, credentialing practices vary by employer and insurer. According to a representative from the South Carolina Department of Mental Health,

The credentialing office works closely with the Human Resource Office at each center to determine if a person is qualified to work for DMH. [To] license an individual, such as a physician, DMH ensures that they have a degree in Psychiatry and experience in Mental Health Facilities. The same applies to a Social Worker; DMH ensures that they also have certain coursework that they have completed too. DMH looks for assessment, ethics, psychodiagnostics and psychopathology. This is to make sure that they have knowledge of Mental Health patients. DMH also ensures they have 5 years of work history. We follow the Guidelines from DHHS and we also follow the accreditation from NCQA. DMH uses a standardized credentialing process for all providers for outpatient clinicians. For example, Mental Health Professionals, MHPs, they must have a master's in a field that is related to the Mental Health field, like social work, counselor, or education with a focus on counseling. Then DMH evaluates whether they would qualify to be hired by checking for the courses listed above. But our rule is, if they are seeing patients, then they need to be credentialed. No exceptions.⁷⁷

Licensure

Licensure presents a different set of barriers to employment for behavioral health workers. LSWs, LPCs and LMFTs must apply for and receive their license to practice in South Carolina before they can apply to be credentialed. According to the American Mental Health Counselor Association, any counselor licensed at the highest level of licensure for independent practice available in his or her state may obtain licensure in any other state or territory of the United States if all of the following criteria are met:

- The licensee has engaged in ethical practice, with no disciplinary sanctions, for at least five years from the date of application for licensure endorsement.
- The licensee has possessed the highest level of counselor licensure for independent practice for at least three years from the date of application for licensure endorsement.
- The licensee has completed a jurisprudence or equivalent exam if required by the state regulatory body.
- The licensee complies with ONE of the following:
 - » Meets all academic, exam and post-graduate supervised experience standards as adopted by the state counseling licensure board.
 - » Holds the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential, in good standing, as issued by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).
 - » Holds a graduate-level degree from a program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP).⁷⁸

A license is a state's grant of legal authority to practice a profession within a designated scope of practice. It is required in order to practice or to call oneself a licensed professional. Some states have a single license and some have a tiered system, and the names of licenses, as well as requirements, vary from state to state.

Licensing can also be thought of as mandatory certification. Under a licensure system, states define by statute the tasks and function or scope of practice of a profession and provide that these tasks may be legally performed only by those who are licensed.

U.S. states require individuals to meet a set of minimum standards of practice to work as a substance use disorder counselor or clinical supervisor. These requirements are in place because substance use disorder counselors and clinical supervisors have a unique relationship with their clients. Substance use disorder clients bring multiple health, economic and family concerns into the treatment setting, requiring counselors and, by extension, their clinical supervisors to address many personal and confidential issues. Without demonstrated practice competencies and adherence to a code of professional ethics, such relationships have the potential to become harmful or inappropriate.⁷⁹

For social workers and counselors who do not meet the endorsement criteria, the limited portability or lack of reciprocity between states in the U.S. limits the ability of South Carolina to meet its behavioral health workforce needs. Interstate compacts and reciprocal agreements are two approaches to improving licensure portability that would allow providers from other states to more easily relocate and practice in South Carolina.

Interstate Compacts

Interstate compacts offer states the opportunity for multistate cooperation and the ability to avoid federal intervention. These contracts create an agreement between two or more states to simplify the process of transferring licensure from state to state. South Carolina already participates successfully in many interstate compacts.

The South Carolina General Assembly reviewed House Bill 3101 introduced in the 123rd legislative session in 2019 to enter the state into the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC). The legislation was not passed but may be re-introduced in 2021.⁸⁰ This licensure is an agreement among participating states to work together to streamline the licensing process to physicians who want to work in multiple states and increases access to health care – particularly in underserved areas. Currently, the compact includes 29 states, and physicians are licensed by 43 different medical and osteopathic boards. IMLC enables physicians within compact states to move between participating states more easily, whether they are moving or expanding a practice, working in telemedicine or working locum tenens assignments.⁸¹ About 80 percent of U.S. physicians meet the criteria for licensure through the IMLC, and 3,426 medical licenses have been issued by the compact.⁸²

Some of the interstate compacts that currently exist in South Carolina include:

- **The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC):** An agreement among 31 states, including South Carolina, that allows registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical/vocational nurses (LPN/VNs) to carry a multistate license in their primary state of residence in order to practice in other states within the compact agreement.⁸³ This compact allows for “mutual recognition” of a nursing license between member states.⁸⁴ South Carolina has been a member of the NLC since 2006, and in 2017 became one of 33 states to join as a member of the Enhanced NLC (eNLC), signed into legislation by Governor McMaster.⁸⁵ The eNLC ensures that South Carolina licensees will continue to have the privilege to obtain the multistate license and allows the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administration to draft new rules and regulations for the updated licensure.⁸⁶ States that want to become members of the eNLC must pass legislation to join.⁸⁷ The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) increases access to care while also maintaining public protection at the national level and is also cost effective as professionals are not required to obtain additional licenses when moving between states in the compact.⁸⁸
- **The Physical Therapy Licensure Compact (PTLC):** Creates a pathway for Physical Therapists (PTs) and Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) to practice and work in multiple states.⁸⁹ This interstate agreement provides a state-developed structure to increase consumer access to physical therapy services.⁹⁰ To participate, a state must opt in by adopting the PTLC legislation.⁹¹ South Carolina signed the bill into legislation in 2018.⁹² There are currently 21 states that have adopted the PTLC legislation.⁹³

- **The Interstate Commission for EMS (Emergency Medical Service) Personnel Practice:** A compact that facilitates the daily movement of EMS personnel across state boundaries to perform their duties, as well as coordinating the transfer of licensed personnel to other member states for relocation.⁹⁴ To be approved as a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in South Carolina, an individual must hold a valid credential, including either Basic Emergency Medical Technician, Advanced Emergency Medical Technician or Intermediate 85 or Paramedic.⁹⁵ With these credentials, individuals from out of state can work as a certified EMT in South Carolina. The individual must register to use the state's Credentialing Information System (CIS), follow all certification instructions and pass a criminal background check.⁹⁶ In South Carolina, the Recognition of Emergency Medical Services Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact Act (REPLICA) legislation was signed into law in 2017.⁹⁷ This made South Carolina the 14th state to enact the EMS Compact.

For health professionals, these compacts allow individuals to provide telehealth services to patients located across the country, as well as improve access to health care for individuals in remote or isolated areas.⁹⁸

Policy Opportunities in South Carolina

Some states are introducing legislation to ease licensure and credentialing processes for residents. Arizona's House Bill 2569 allows anyone with an out-of-state occupational license or certificate in good standing for at least one year to obtain an equivalent licensure in Arizona without taking an exam.⁹⁹ When signing the bill into law in April 2019, Governor Ducey noted, "With this bill, Arizona's sending a clear message to people across the country: if you're moving to Arizona, there's opportunity waiting for you here. There's dignity in all work. And we know that whether you make your living as a plumber, a barber, a nurse or anything else, you don't lose your skills simply because you moved here. [This bill] protects public health and safety while eliminating unnecessary and costly red tape."¹⁰⁰

Pennsylvania's House Bill 533 allows providers to use the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare® (CAQH)^f credentialing application (or other form) as designated by the Insurance Department for credentialing purposes.¹⁰¹ The credentialing application is deemed complete if submitted by the provider electronically with all required information. The insurer will then provide credentialing determination within 60 days of receiving the completed application.¹⁰² The legislation is with the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee as of August 2020.

Many health experts believe that South Carolina can permanently improve access to behavioral health providers through several policy opportunities:

1. **Make permanent the temporary modifications to policies to reimburse telehealth and telephonic services for established patients put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.**¹⁰³

^f CAQH is a non-profit alliance of health plans and trade associations, developing and leading initiatives that positively impact the business of health care.

As the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic continues, many states have temporarily expedited the licensing process to allow out-of-state health care professionals to practice within their borders. The March 13th COVID-19 National Emergency Declaration temporarily waived Medicaid requirements that out-of-state providers be licensed within a state where they are providing services. As of July 23rd, all 50 states and Washington, D.C., have introduced licensure flexibilities through the end of the public health emergency, which is currently projected through October 2022.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SC DHHS) announced temporary modifications to policies to reimburse telehealth and telephonic services for established patients throughout the duration of the current declared public health emergency.¹⁰⁵ These modifications have proven to be invaluable during this pandemic, as they reduce the risk of infection by allowing patients to attend virtual behavioral health appointments with their providers. Changes to these policies also allow patients to meet with behavioral health providers remotely at a time when this component of health care is needed more urgently across the state.

These temporary licenses, expansion of scope of practice laws and new telehealth policies enacted in 2020 demonstrate the benefits of easing restrictions on providers to increase access to care.

2. Create a standardized credentialing process for South Carolina that allows behavioral health providers to maintain their credentials so they can maintain payor reimbursement when they change employers within the state.

3. Participate in reciprocal agreements with neighboring states to allow behavioral health providers to work in South Carolina when the demand for providers outstrips supply.

For example, Tennessee has participated in a reciprocal agreement with Kentucky for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) since March 2015.¹⁰⁶ Despite slightly different titles, the states agreed that the Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) license issued by Kentucky and the Licensed Professional Counselor with Mental Health Service Provider designation (LPC/MHSP) license issued by Tennessee are “substantially equivalent.”¹⁰⁷ Tennessee and Kentucky have statutes in place that allow for reciprocity for these mental health professionals. South Carolina may consider passing similar statutes and regulations to partner with nearby states to allow licensed social workers, counselors and marriage and family therapists to practice throughout the Southeast with minimal barriers to licensure portability.

4. Collaborate with other states to create one licensure process for each of the following disciplines: LMFTs, LSWs and LPCs.

Instituting one national set of licensure requirements and degree titles would ensure that providers have the freedom to choose the state in which they practice without facing undue, unforeseen challenges associated with practicing in a new state.¹⁰⁸




Appendices

Appendix A. Licensing Requirements for Licensed Professional Counselors in Selected States ^g

<div data-bbox="181 489 289 573"></div> <div data-bbox="337 478 500 573">South Carolina</div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="154 625 381 688">CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="154 720 235 745">Exam:</div> <div data-bbox="154 762 544 861">National Counselor Examination (NCE) or National Clinical Mental Health Counseling (NCMHCE)</div> <div data-bbox="154 882 219 907">Fees:</div> <div data-bbox="154 924 544 955">\$170, application and education review</div>	<div data-bbox="649 468 873 531">EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="649 573 1006 846">A master's, doctorate, or specialized degree in counseling or a related discipline with a minimum of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours of graduate-level coursework, coursework in 10 content areas and 150 hours supervised counseling practicum.</div>	<div data-bbox="1092 468 1317 531">EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="1092 573 1445 709">Completion of at least 1,500 hours of supervised clinical experience, including 120 hours under an LPC supervisor.</div>
<div data-bbox="181 1050 289 1161"></div> <div data-bbox="337 1087 492 1140">Georgia</div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="154 1203 381 1266">CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="154 1297 235 1323">Exam:</div> <div data-bbox="154 1339 329 1371">NCE or NCMHCE</div> <div data-bbox="154 1392 219 1417">Fees:</div> <div data-bbox="154 1434 365 1465">\$100 application fee</div>	<div data-bbox="649 1050 873 1113">EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="649 1155 1023 1528">A master's degree in counseling or a related subject accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) or the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CRE) as approved by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), coursework in nine content areas and 600 hours supervised counseling practicum or internship.</div>	<div data-bbox="1092 1050 1317 1113">EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <div data-bbox="1092 1155 1474 1392">Completion of 2,400 hours of directed experience under supervision acquired within the sixty months prior to the date of the application or 1,800 hours of direct experience if completing the 600 hours of practicum or internship.</div>

^g Data collected from each state's LPC application.

Appendix A. Licensing Requirements for Licensed Professional Counselors in Selected States

 Tennessee <hr/> <p>CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Exam: NCE and the Tennessee Jurisprudence Exam</p> <p>Fees: \$400 privilege tax every year</p>	<p>EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>60 graduate semester hours based upon a program of studies with a major in counseling, completed from an institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and School, the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), or a comparable body and coursework in 10 content areas.</p>	<p>EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>A minimum of two 2 years of supervised post-master's professional experience consisting of not less than 10 hours per week and 50 contact hours of supervision per year.</p>
 Alabama <hr/> <p>CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Exam: NCE</p> <p>Fees: \$200 application fee</p>	<p>EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>A master's degree in counseling consisting of a minimum of 48 graduate semester hours or 72 graduate quarter hours at a regionally accredited college or university. All applicants shall have a master's degree from a CACREP or CORE accredited program, or the content equivalent of CACREP or CORE. Content equivalent is minimally defined as graduate course work in nine content areas.</p>	<p>EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Practicum must be taken through a regionally accredited institution, for a total of 100 clock hours. A minimum of 40 clock hours must be direct service work with clients appropriate to the program emphasis. A minimum of 1 clock hour per week must be of individual supervision by program faculty, and a minimum of 1 & 1/2 clock hours per week must be group supervision.</p>
 Kentucky <hr/> <p>CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Exam: NCE or NCMHCE</p> <p>Fees: \$150 application fee</p>	<p>EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>A master's, specialist, or doctoral degree in counseling or a related field from a regionally accredited institution and completed 60 graduate semester hours, coursework in nine content areas and 400 hours supervised counseling practicum or internship.</p>	<p>EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Completed a minimum of 4,000 hours of supervised experience after obtaining the master's degree which includes 1,600 hours of direct counseling and a minimum of 100 hours of face-to-face clinical supervision.</p>



North Carolina

CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Exam:

NCE, NCMHCE, or the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Examination (CRC) and the state Jurisprudence Exam

Fees:

\$238 application and background check

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Must have earned a master's degree in counseling or related field from an institution of higher education that is either regionally accredited or accredited by an organization both recognized by the CHEA and CACREP. Applicants will need 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours. Graduate coursework in counseling for 9 areas of study – 3 semester hours or 5 quarter hours per course area of study.

EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants who enroll in a master's program after July 1, 2015: one or more courses in practicum totaling at least three semester hours or five quarter hours; one or more courses in internship totaling at least three semester hours or five quarter hours; and at least 17 hours of graduate counseling supervision (individual clinical supervision and group clinical supervision). Supervised graduate counseling shall consist of a minimum of 300 hours of experience at a rate of not less than one hour of clinical supervision per 40 hours of graduate counseling experience. At least 180 hours of this counseling experience shall be direct counseling experience.



Mississippi

CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Exam:

NCE and NCMHCE

Fees:

\$100 licensing fee

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS


Either 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate study. For degrees conferred after January 1, 2017, the Board will only accept 60 semester hours or 90 quarter-hour master's degree programs. Those programs shall be either CACREP degree programs or degree programs with the word counseling in its title and meet the structure of CACREP as it specifically pertains to the 12 courses specified, as part of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours that are required for completion of the degree or having earned a doctoral or educational specialist degree primarily in a counseling, guidance, or related field, which meets similar standards as specified above. Completion of a 3-hour semester course in 12 specified areas.

EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

A total of 3,000 supervised hours in not less than 18 months of counseling in a clinical setting post master's degree comprised of the following:

- A maximum of 40 supervised hours may be obtained per workweek.
- A maximum of 25 hours of direct service may be obtained per workweek.
- A minimum of 1,200 supervised hours must be in direct services with clients and/or psychotherapy service to clients.
- 100 hours of individual face-to-face supervision are required.
- Group supervision will be acceptable for not more than 50 hours of the required 100 hours of individual supervision. 2 hours of group supervision is equivalent to 1 hour of individual supervision.

Appendix A. Licensing Requirements for Licensed Professional Counselors in Selected States

<div data-bbox="151 275 310 380"></div> <div data-bbox="331 300 480 352">Virginia</div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="144 420 373 485">CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>Exam: NCMHCE</p> <p>Fees: \$175 application fee</p>	<div data-bbox="638 264 865 329">EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>Degree must be either CACREP or CORE accredited or be a graduate degree from a program that prepares individuals to practice counseling which is offered by a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency and which meets the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic study with the expressed intent to prepare counselor. • Identifiable counselor training faculty with an identifiable body of students. • ~ Have clear authority and primary responsibility for the core and specialty area. • Additionally, the regulations require completion of 60 graduate semester hours or 90 graduate quarter hours that include 13 core content areas. 	<div data-bbox="1081 264 1308 329">EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>Supervised internship of at least 600 hours to include 240 hours of face-to-face direct client contact.</p> <p>A 3,400-hour supervised residency in counseling practice with various populations, clinical problems and theoretical approaches in specified areas.</p> <p>Within the 3,400-hour residency, 2,000 hours of face-to-face client contact must be documented. The remaining 1,400 hours may be spent in the performance of ancillary counseling services.</p> <p>A minimum of 200 hours of supervisory sessions.</p> <p>Residency must be completed in no less than 21 months and no more than 4 years.</p>
<div data-bbox="164 1276 302 1381"></div> <div data-bbox="334 1310 467 1360">Florida</div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="144 1430 376 1495">CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>Exam: NCMHCE</p> <p>Fees: \$180: application fee, initial licensure fee, and unlicensed activity fee</p>	<div data-bbox="638 1274 865 1339">EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>Minimum of an earned master's degree from a mental health counseling program accredited by CACREP that consists of at least 60 semester hours or 80 quarter hours of clinical and didactic instruction, including a course in human sexuality and a course in substance abuse. OR Minimum of an earned master's degree from a program related to the practice of mental health counseling that consists of at least 60 semester hours or 80 quarter hours and meet a minimum of 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours in 12 content areas.</p>	<div data-bbox="1081 1274 1308 1339">EXPERIENTIAL REQUIREMENTS</div> <p>The equivalent of at least 1,000 hours of university-sponsored supervised clinical practicum, internship, or field experience as required in the standards for CACREP accredited mental health counseling programs. 2 years of post-master's supervised experience under the supervision of a Board approved qualified supervisor. At least 100 hours of supervision in no less than 100 weeks; 1,500 hours of face-to-face psychotherapy with clients; and 1 hour of supervision every 2 weeks.</p>

Appendix B. Endorsement, Reciprocity and Interstate Compacts for Licensed Professional Counselors in Selected States^h



South Carolina

South Carolina **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state; however, applications of licensees from other states are considered on the basis of endorsement. An applicant for licensure must hold a current, active and unrestricted license under the laws of another state before it can be considered on the basis of endorsement. All applicants must meet the licensure requirements that are currently in place in South Carolina at the time they make application. This includes both degree and coursework requirements and the required supervision hours. The educational requirements are outlined in the LPC application packet and the LMFT application packet. As states differ in requirements for degrees and coursework, some applicants may need to take additional coursework in order to meet the South Carolina requirements. Post-licensure experience cannot be substituted for required coursework.



Georgia

Georgia **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state; however, endorsement is considered on a state-by-state basis – the Board will determine if the licensure requirements of the issuing state meet or exceed those of Georgia. Currently, the only approved states are AL, AR, KY, LA, ME, MD, NE, OH, OK and PA.



Tennessee

Tennessee **DOES** have a reciprocity agreement with Kentucky, in place since March 2015. The two states acknowledge that the Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) license issued by Kentucky and the Licensed Professional Counselor with Mental Health Service Provider designation (LPC/MHSP) license by Tennessee are substantially equivalent licenses, which allow the holder to diagnose and treat mental health disorders. The states acknowledge that their respective statutes allow them to grant a reciprocal license under certain conditions. The states agree to reciprocally recognize and accept a valid, unrestricted, undisciplined LPCC or LPC/MHSP license from the home state as grounds to grant a reciprocal license in the reciprocating state under certain conditions. Tennessee **DOES NOT** allow licensing by endorsement.



Alabama

Alabama **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state.

^h Data collected from each state's LPC application.

Appendix B. Endorsement, Reciprocity and Interstate Compacts for Licensed Professional Counselors in Selected States



Kentucky

Kentucky **DOES** have a reciprocity agreement with Tennessee, in place since March 2015. The two states acknowledge that the Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) license issued by Kentucky and the Licensed Professional Counselor with Mental Health Service Provider designation (LPC/MHSP) license by Tennessee are substantially equivalent licenses, which allow the holder to diagnose and treat mental health disorders. The states acknowledge that their respective statutes allow them to grant a reciprocal license under certain conditions. The states agree to reciprocally recognize and accept a valid, unrestricted, undisciplined LPCC or LPC/MHSP license from the home state as grounds to grant a reciprocal license in the reciprocating state under certain conditions.

Kentucky also had a reciprocity agreement with Ohio that was in effect from December 1, 2015, to November 30, 2017. Licensure through reciprocity: The board shall grant the appropriate credential to an applicant who has received a master's, specialist's, or doctoral degree in counseling or related field from a regionally accredited institution with a minimum of sixty (60) hours of specific graduate coursework; holds an active valid license or certificate from another state to practice as a professional counselor; is in good standing with the certifying or licensing board of that state; is of good moral character; has provided the board with evidence of a minimum of 5 years' experience as a certified or licensed professional counselor; and has paid the application fee to the board. Applicants are exempt from the required hours of supervised experience in the practice of counseling and the examination requirement.



North Carolina

North Carolina **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state. The North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors is pleased to offer current licensees from other states the option to apply for licensure in North Carolina through an endorsement process, if they meet the following requirements, under rule 21 NCAC 53 .0304:

- Have a minimum of 5 years of full-time counseling experience, or 8 years of part time counseling experience, or a combination of full time and part time counseling experience equivalent to 5 years of full-time counseling experience, within 10 years directly prior to application;
- Have a minimum of 2500 hours of direct client contact;
- Have an active independent license that does not require supervision, and be in good standing as a licensed professional counselor in another state for a minimum of 2 years directly prior to application;
- and comply with all other applicable rules for licensure as a licensed professional counselor.



Mississippi

Mississippi **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state. An individual interested in providing counseling services in Mississippi must obtain licensure through the Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors' application process. Licensure criteria met by the applicant in other states may be honored by the Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors if he/she substantially meets the requirements for licensure in the State of Mississippi. Each criterion will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. See Rule 4.7

Mississippi, however, **DOES** allow licensure by comity. For applicants who have held an equivalent independent counseling license with at least 5 years of professional work experience as a counselor since the date of their initial licensure shall apply for Licensure by Comity.

Applicant must present:

- Online Application
- License Verification from State(s)
- License in Good Standing for 5 years
- Curriculum Vitae
- Three Work References
- License File from Other State
- Background Check



Virginia

Virginia **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state. Virginia can license out-of-state individuals by endorsement. Every applicant for licensure by endorsement shall submit in one package the following:

- A completed application;
- The application processing fee;
- Verification of all professional licenses or certificates ever held in any other jurisdiction. In order to qualify for endorsement, the applicant shall have no unresolved action against a license or certificate. The board will consider history of disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis;
- Documentation of having completed education and experience requirements substantially equivalent to those in effect in Virginia at the time of initial licensure as verified by an official transcript and a certified copy of the original application materials;
- Verification of a passing score on a licensure examination in the jurisdiction in which licensure was obtained; and
- An affidavit of having read and understood the regulations and laws governing the practice of professional counseling in Virginia.







Florida

Florida **DOES NOT** have a reciprocity agreement with any state. Florida can license out-of-state individuals by endorsement. An applicant must:




- Hold an active valid license to practice and has actively practiced the profession for which licensure is applied in another state for 3 of the last 5 years
- Active license in good standing that is not under investigation or found to have committed any act which would constitute a violation of Chapter 491, F.S.
- A master's or doctoral degree and coursework in specific content areas
- A supervised clinical practicum, internship, or field experience
- Passing score on the national clinical examination
- Complete a Board approved 8-hour continuing education Laws & Rules Course
- Complete a 3-hour course on HIV/AIDS from an approved CE provider

Appendix C. Licensing and Education Requirements for Marriage and Family Therapists in Southeastern States


<div data-bbox="172 363 279 447"></div> <div data-bbox="331 348 521 447"> South Carolina¹⁰⁹ </div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="144 510 246 539"> TITLES </div> <div data-bbox="144 583 500 701"> <p>LMFT (licensed marriage and family therapist) LMFT Associate</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="639 338 865 401"> EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS </div> <div data-bbox="639 443 1016 573"> <p>Minimum of 60 graduate semester hours in marriage and family therapy with a master's, specialist's or doctoral degree.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="639 615 1016 917"> <p>The coursework content in this area must include client contact and clinical supervision with individuals, couples and families in a clinical setting. The clinical experience must include a minimum of 300 hours of face-to-face client contact, one half of which must be relational.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1083 338 1385 401"> POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED </div> <div data-bbox="1083 443 1429 573"> <p>A minimum of 50 hours of clinical supervision must be provided by a marriage and family therapy supervisor.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1083 615 1468 1022"> <p>Please note: If, as an LMFT associate, an applicant would like to assess and treat the more problems as categorized in standard nomenclature, they must have completed an internship of at least 600 hours under the supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapy supervisor that included experience assessing and treating clients with the more serious problems as categorized in standard diagnostic nomenclature.</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="138 1144 310 1213"></div> <div data-bbox="331 1131 521 1230"> North Carolina¹¹⁰ </div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="144 1293 246 1323"> TITLES </div> <div data-bbox="144 1369 516 1486"> <p>LMFT LMFTA (licensed marriage and family associate)</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="639 1121 865 1184"> EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS </div> <div data-bbox="639 1226 1016 1392"> <p>LMFTA: master's or doctoral degree from a recognized institution in marriage and family therapy or related degree which is the equivalent in content.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="639 1434 1016 1564"> <p>LMFT: master's or doctoral degree from a recognized institution of marriage and family therapy or related degree.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1083 1121 1385 1184"> POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED </div> <div data-bbox="1083 1226 1445 1356"> <p>LMFTA: have 3 years from date of initial licensing to acquire the clinical and approved hours required to transition to LMFT.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1083 1398 1456 1667"> <p>LMFT: 1500 hours clinical experience in marriage and family therapy, not more than 300 hours of which were obtained while applicant was a student in a degree program, 1000 which were obtained after the degree was granted, plus a minimum of 200 supervision hours.</p> </div>

<div>  Georgia¹¹¹ </div> <hr/> <p>TITLES</p> <p>LMFT LAMFT (licensed associate marriage and family therapist)</p>	<p>EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Master's degree in marriage and family therapy. Completion of a 1-year practicum in marriage and family therapy under supervision before or after the master's degree, which includes 500 hours of direct clinical experience and 100 hours of supervision.</p>	<p>POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED</p> <p>Licensure as an associate marriage and family therapist and 2 years of full-time post-master's experience or equivalent. 2,000 hours of direct clinical experience and 100 hours of supervision of such experience and which is completed within a period of 2-5 years.</p>
<div>  Tennessee¹¹² </div> <hr/> <p>TITLES</p> <p>LMFT CMFT (Certified Marriage and Family Therapist)</p>	<p>EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Master's or doctoral degree, no less than 300 hours of supervised practicum/internship, specific course requirements.</p>	<p>POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED</p> <p>LMFT: 1,000 hours of post-grad clinical experience, 200 hours of direct supervision, 2 years of post-master's clinical experience consisting of no less than 10 hours/week. CMFT: meets educational requirements, working towards receiving documentation of completed supervised clinical experience.</p>
<div>  Mississippi¹¹³ </div> <hr/> <p>TITLES</p> <p>LMFT LMFTA</p>	<p>EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy from accredited program.</p>	<p>POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED</p> <p>12 consecutive months that provided face-to-face clinical practice with individuals, couples, and families. Minimum of 500 clinical contact hours and 200 hours of supervision (50 supervision hours must be individual).</p>


Appendix C. Licensing and Education Requirements for Marriage and Family Therapists in Southeastern States

 Alabama¹¹⁴ <hr/> TITLES LMFT MFT Intern LMFTA	EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS Graduate from an accredited institution with a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy (or similar with course work that relates). COAMFTE program graduates have met requirements.	POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED 2 years of post-degree full time MFT experience, 200 hours of supervision, 1,000 post-degree direct client hours (250 of them must be with couples or families present in the room).
 Kentucky¹¹⁵ <hr/> TITLES LMFT LMFTA	EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS Graduate degree in MFT or related field from an accredited program or be able to document completion of requirement coursework.	POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED 2 years of experience in practice of marriage and family therapy, with a minimum of 200 hours of clinical supervision.
 West Virginia¹¹⁶ <hr/> TITLES MFT Provisionally LMFT	EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS Master's or doctoral degree from accredited program, 300 hours of direct contact with individuals, couples, and families in a minimum of 12 months. (At least 150 hours must be in direct contact with couples and families.)	POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCE NEEDED Master's degree: 3,000 hours of supervised MFT post-grad work experience in a minimum of 2 years. Doctoral degree: 1,500 hours of supervised MFT post-grad work experience in a minimum of 1 year. Provisionally LMFT: meets education requirements and is working under supervision, has yet to submit documentation of supervised experience. Provisional license is valid for 36 months and may be renewed once for an additional 24 months.

Appendix D. Licensing and Education Requirements for Social Workers in Southeastern States

<div>  South Carolina¹¹⁷ </div> <div> LICENSE RECIPROCITY: SC does not have a license reciprocity with any other state. The Board does accept applications from out-of-state social workers. To apply, candidates must complete all the steps required for SC applicants or prove completion. All applications cost \$45. </div>			
TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW)	Bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) from a program that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). There are 77 colleges/universities in SC that offer this program.	Complete the Application for Licensure in Social Work and submit to the Board (with a \$45 fee) with a copy of an official BSW transcript.	Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Bachelor's exam (\$230). ¹¹⁸
Licensed Master's Social Work (LMSW)	Master's degree in social work (MSW) from a CSWE-accredited school. There are only 2 schools in SC that offer this program, but one can obtain an MSW anywhere in the US from an accredited program to practice in SC.	Complete and submit Application for Licensure in Social Work (\$45) with official MSW transcripts.	ASWB Master's exam (\$230). ¹¹⁹
Licensed Independent Social Workers-Clinical Practice (LISW-CP) or Licensed Independent Social Workers-Advanced Practice (LISW-AP)	Must hold an MSW or Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) from a CSWE-accredited school. Complete 45 hours of training in both psychopathology and psychodiagnostics.	Complete and submit Application for Licensure in Social Work (\$45) with complete Supervision Contract form that identifies the individual you will work under for supervised hours. Submit official transcripts with 45 training hours. Once approved, you the applicant can begin earning 3,000 required hours of supervised clinical/ advanced practice social work between two to four years while also earning 20 CE hours in professional ethics.	ASWB Clinical/ Advanced Generalist exam (\$260). ¹²⁰

Appendix D. Licensing and Education Requirements for Social Workers in Southeastern States

<div>  North Carolina¹²¹ </div>			
LICENSE RECIPROCITY: The North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board (NCSWCLB) offers licensure by comity or substantial equivalency (reviewed on a case-by-case basis).			
TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
Certified Social Worker (CSW)	Bachelor's degree in social work (BSW)	Submit an application packet, three forms from professional references, and a sealed transcript to the Board (\$115 fee).	After submitting the Exam Request Form (\$40), you applicant can register and sit for the ASWB Bachelor's exam (\$230).
Certified Master Social Worker (CMSW)	MSW, DSW, or PhD in social work	Submit an application packet, three forms from professional references, and a sealed transcript to the Board (\$115 fee).	After submitting the Exam Request Form (\$40), applicant can register and sit for the ASWB Master's exam (\$230).
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	MSW, DSW, or PhD in social work from a CSWE-accredited school. Must complete 3,000 hours of post-graduate paid employment in clinical social work in 2 to 6 years (as a LCSWA). At least 100 hours must be supervised.	Apply for a LCSW Associate in order to complete supervised clinical social work experience hours. To apply for the LCSWA credential, submit an application packet, three forms from professional references, and a sealed transcript to the Board (\$115 fee).	After submitting the Exam Request Form (\$40), you can register and sit for the ASWB Clinical exam (\$260). After, you can apply for the LCSW license (\$115).
Certified Social Workers Manager (CSWM)	BSW, MSW, DSW, or PhD in social work from a CSWE-accredited school. Must complete 3,000 hours of post-degree paid employment in administrative social work duties in 2 to 6 years. At least 100 hours must be supervised.	Submit an application packet, three forms from professional references, and a sealed transcript to the Board (\$115 fee).	After submitting the Exam Request Form (\$40), you can register and sit for the ASWB Advanced Generalist exam (\$260).




Georgia¹²²

LICENSE RECIPROCITY:

Georgia (GA) does not offer reciprocity licensure. If someone wishes to transfer their license to GA, they must have taken the ASWB Master's or Clinical exam. To be considered, you must meet GA criteria and have already passed the exam.

TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
LMSW	Minimum of an MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program	Submit application to the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists (\$100) which includes two professional references and transcripts.	ASWB Master's exam (\$230).
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Minimum of an MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program. An LMSW is highly recommended but is not required as a prerequisite to applying from a LCSW. Must complete 3,000 hours of supervised social work experience in three to nine years. Must complete 120 hours of documented supervision. Candidates with a DSW or PhD must demonstrate 2,000 hours of supervised, clinical experience within two to six years with 80 80 hours of supervision.	Submit application to the Board (\$100) which includes two professional references and transcripts. Clinical supervisors also need to submit forms verifying the required amount of supervised experience.	ASWB Clinical exam (\$260).

Appendix D. Licensing and Education Requirements for Social Workers in Southeastern States

 Tennessee ¹²³	LICENSE RECIPROCITY: Tennessee (TN) does offer reciprocity to social workers licensed in other states if they meet the Board of Social Workers' educational and training requirements for the TN license. Must complete appropriate application for level and submit to the Board (including supporting documents). Do not need to repeat exam or supervised experience (if Board determines you meet criteria for licensure).		
TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
LBSW	BSW from a CWSE-accredited school.	Submit an application (\$110) packet to the Board with declaration of citizenship form and mandatory practitioner profile questionnaire, criminal background check, and transcripts.	ASWB Bachelor's exam (\$230).
LMSW	MSW from a CSWE-accredited school.	Submit an application (\$160) packet to the Board with declaration of citizenship form and mandatory practitioner profile questionnaire, criminal background check, and transcripts.	ASWB Master's exam (\$230).
Licensed Advanced Practitioner Social Worker (LAPSW)	MSW from a CSWE-accredited program or doctoral degree in social work. Must also hold a valid LMSW license before beginning LAPSW process. Must complete 3,000 hours of non-clinical social work in 2 to 6 years. Must complete 100 hours of face-to-face supervision.	Submit application (\$235) packet to the Board with verification form/supervisor logs, copy of LMSW license, Mandatory Practitioner Profile Questionnaire, declaration of citizenship form, transcripts, and background check.	ASWB Advanced Generalist exam (\$260).
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	MSW from a CWSE-accredited school or a doctoral degree in social work. Must have completed supervised experience as an LMSW. 3,000 hours of direct clinical social work services in 2 to 6 years. For every 30 hours of clinical contact, there must be 1 hour of supervision.	Submit application (\$235) packet to the Board with supervised experience form, Mandatory Practitioner Profile Questionnaire, declaration of citizenship form, copy of LMSW license, background check, and transcripts.	ASWB Clinical exam.




Mississippi¹²⁴

LICENSE RECIPROCITY:

Mississippi (MS) offers licensure by reciprocity for individuals who are licensed and in good standing in other states. You must meet all criteria for the MS social work license, including completing of exam and supervised experience. Must complete Initial License Application and supplemental documentation in Reciprocity Application Checklist.

TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
LSW	BSW from a CSWE-accredited program.	Submit application (\$25 fee) to MS State Board of Examiners for Social Workers and Marriage & Family Therapists, with photo and Verification of Education form from BSW program. After passing exam, applicant must submit fingerprints with background check (\$50), as well as . To receive your license from the Board must pay \$70 fee.	ASWB Bachelor's exam.
LMSW	MSW from a CSWE-accredited program or a doctoral degree in social work.	Submit application (\$25 fee) to the Board with photo and Verification of Education form. After passing exam, applicant must submit fingerprints with background check (\$50), as well . To receive your license from the Board must pay \$100 fee.	ASWB Master's exam.
Licensed Social Worker	MSW from a CSWE-accredited program or a doctoral degree in social work.	Same requirements as the LMSW license but LCSW's must include supervision documentation with the Reciprocity form. Licensing requires 24 months of LCSW supervision before receiving approval to sit for the ASWB exam.	ASWB Clinical or Advanced Generalist exam.

Appendix D. Licensing and Education Requirements for Social Workers in Southeastern States

<div>  Alabama¹²⁵ </div> <div> LICENSE RECIPROCITY: Alabama does offer licensure by reciprocity, yet they are not under a reciprocal agreement with any state. To receive a license by reciprocity, the current license must be in good standing and the applicant must meet all of Alabama's requirements for the license they are trying to obtain. The Application for Social Work Licensure must be submitted along with the Verification of License form and past exam scores from ASWB. </div>			
TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
LBSW	Bachelor of Social Work degree from a CWSE accredited program.	Fill out application on the Alabama BSWE website and pay the \$75 fee. Will need 24 months of at least 4 hours per month of direct supervision by an LMSW or Licensed Clinical Social Worker within the same agency or a Private Independent Practice (PIP) if the supervisor is from an outside agency. Overall, 96 hours of supervised experience.	ASBW bachelor's level exam.
LMSW	Master of Social Work degree from a CWSE accredited program.	Fill out application on the Alabama BSWE website and pay the \$75 fee. Must fill out an immigration compliance form and a verification of licensure form.	ASBW master's level exam.
Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker	Same as LMSW.	Requirements are same as LMSW. Applicant must also fill out a proof of supervision form.	Same as LMSW.




Kentucky¹²⁶

LICENSE RECIPROCITY:

Kentucky does offer licensure to out-of-state applicants, although they are not under a reciprocal agreement with any other state. Kentucky has a detailed checklist out-of-state applicants must follow in order to be eligible for licensure.

TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
Licensed Social Worker (LSW)	Bachelor's in social work from CSWE accredited program.	Complete application and provide current employment information, official transcript and \$25 application fee.	ASBW bachelor's level exam.
Certified Social Worker (CSW)	Master's or doctorate in Social Work from CSWE accredited university.	Complete application, provide official transcript and \$25 application fee.	ASBW master's level exam.
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Same as CSW.	Complete application, provide official transcript, \$25 application fee, supervised experience form totaling 200 hours.	Same as CSW.

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<div>  <div>West Virginia</div> </div> <div> LICENSE RECIPROCITY: West Virginia does not have formal reciprocity with any other state. The Board will issue social work licenses to out-of-state applicants provided they meet the education and experience requirements for the level of licensure they are seeking. </div>			
TITLE	EDUCATIONAL/ PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS	APPLICATION PROCESS	EXAM REQUIRED
LSW	Bachelor of Social Work from a CSWE accredited program.	Complete application and appropriate fee, no post grad experience or supervision required.	ASBW bachelor's level exam.
Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW)	Master of Social Work from a CSWE-accredited program.	Complete application and appropriate fee, no post grad experience or supervision required.	ASBW master's level exam.
Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW)	Same as LMSW.	Same as LGSW except 2 years of post-graduate experience required.	ASBW advanced-generalist level exam.
Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)	Same as LGSW.	Same as LGSW except 2 years of post-graduate experience required.	ASBW clinical level exam.

Out-of-State Licensure for Social Workers in South Carolina

TITLE	
Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW)¹²⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baccalaureate degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). • Take and pass the bachelors level of the examination that is administered by a testing service through ASWB. • Submit an application and pay \$45 non-refundable fee. • Applicants that answered “Yes” to any of the questions in the application must provide a written explanation for the “Yes” answer, a copy of the formal complaint pleading (if applicable), a copy of the final action (if applicable), any further information requested from the Board office, and applicant you must agree to make a Board appearance if requested. • Must have official transcript reflecting degree in social work sent directly to the Board office. • Send the “Verification of Social Work License” form to each state if you applicant isare licensed, currently or were was previously licensed in another state. The Board will also accept another state board's verification form. • Test score sent to the Board office from ASWB if not already taken and passed the licensure examination.
Licensed Master’s Social Worker (LMSW)¹²⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master’s or doctorate degree from a social work program accredited by CSWE. • The applicant must take and pass the master’s level of the examination administered through ASWB. • All other requirements same as LBSW.
Licensed Independent Social Worker (AP or CP)¹²⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, the Board requires that an applicant for LISW take and pass the Clinical level or Advanced Generalist level of the examination that is administered by ASWB. • All other requirements same as LMSW.

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South Carolina Institute of Medicine & Public Health

The South Carolina Institute of Medicine & Public Health (IMPH) is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization working to collectively inform policy to improve health and health care in South Carolina. In conducting its work, IMPH takes a comprehensive approach to advancing health issues through data analysis and translation and collaborative engagement. The work of IMPH is supported by a diverse array of public and private sources. This policy brief was supported by the Fullerton Foundation. Please direct any questions to info@imph.org.

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