

Requirements, Responsibilities and Qualifications for Supervisors of Associates and Trainees in Marriage & Family Therapy

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Who needs supervision?

There are many conditions under which a therapist must receive supervision for the services s/he provides. The most common reason for a clinician to be supervised is to fulfill the requirements for licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist. The designation of the supervisee depends on the level of education and licensure status that the supervisee currently holds.

Trainee Supervised Professional Experience

After a graduate student has completed twelve (12) academic semester hours or eighteen (18) quarter units, s/he can begin accruing SPE. The term Trainee refers to the supervisee who is currently enrolled in a Master's or Doctoral program in Marriage & Family Therapy and is receiving supervision as a part of the requirements of that program.

Post-graduate Supervised Professional Experience

The term "Associate" refers to the unlicensed, but registered, individual who has completed a Master's or Doctoral program in Marriage & Family Therapy and is receiving supervision as a part of the requirements for eventual licensure as a Marriage & Family Therapist.

Other clinicians who may be required to receive supervision

Occasionally, clinicians make choices that result in Disciplinary Action. In many of those situations, clinicians are required to receive supervision for some period of time following the resolution of the Action.

When is supervision required?

Supervision is required for professional experience accrued during the completion of a graduate degree (e.g. trainee) or during the accumulation of post-graduate experience (e.g. associate). Additionally, supervision may be required for Disciplinary Action by the Board of Behavioral Sciences.

What are the conditions that apply to supervision?

In accordance with law and with California's Board of Behavioral Sciences' Statutes and Regulations Relating to the Practice of Professional Clinical Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Educational Psychology and Clinical Social Work:

All applicants, trainees, and registrants shall be at all times under the supervision of a supervisor who shall be responsible for ensuring that the extent, kind, and quality of counseling performed is consistent with the training and experience of the person being supervised, and who shall be responsible to the board for compliance with all laws, rules, and regulations governing the practice of marriage and family therapy. 4980.43.10(c)

Appropriate for services being provided

Supervisees must be under immediate supervision for the type, extent, and quality of clinical services provided during the course of their supervised experience. Group supervisors should ensure the extent and quality of supervision is fitting for each supervisee ([AB 93](#)).

Consistent with the skills and competencies of the supervisor

The limited services provided by the supervisee must be in concert with the competencies and skills of the supervisor at all times. For example, if a supervisee desires supervision of Family Systems Therapy techniques, a person adequately educated and trained in the use of those specific techniques must supervise him.

Who can supervise an MFT Trainee or Associate?

The supervisor may be a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist or other licensed professional approved by the Board. Other licensed professionals include Licensed Clinical Social Worker,

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, Psychologists, and physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

What are the qualifications for serving as a Clinical Supervisor?

Qualifications for supervisors of MFT trainees and associates depend on the licensure level and type of the supervising clinician. As such, these are described below by category.

Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) supervisors:

- Must possess a current and valid California license for at least two years prior to the commencement of supervision.
- Have completed 6-hour supervision training within the two-year period prior to commencement of supervision or within 60 days of commencement of supervision if never taken previously.
- Must take 6-hour supervision training during every renewal period while serving as a supervisor.
- Maintain documentation of course completion.
- Provide documentation of course completion if requested by the Board.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision of ASWs, Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) Trainees or Associates who performed psychotherapy in two of the past five years immediately preceding the commencement of supervision.
- According to the BBS Rules and Regulations, “A supervisor who is not licensed as a Marriage and Family Therapist, shall have sufficient experience, training, and education in marriage and family therapy to competently practice marriage and family therapy in California... The supervisor keeps himself or herself informed of developments in marriage and family therapy and in California law governing the practice of marriage and family therapy.... The supervisor has and maintains a current license in good standing and will immediately notify the trainee or associate of any disciplinary action, including revocation or suspension, even if stayed, probation terms, inactive license status, or any lapse in licensure that affects the supervisor's ability or right to supervise.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) supervisors:

- Must possess a current and valid California license for at least two years prior to the commencement of supervision.
- Have completed a 6-hour supervision training within the two-year period prior to commencement of supervision or within 60 days of commencement of supervision if never taken previously.
- Must take a 6-hour supervision training during every renewal period while serving as a supervisor.
- Maintain documentation of course completion.
- Provide documentation of course completion if requested by the Board.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision of ASWs, Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) Trainees or Associates who performed psychotherapy in two of the past five years immediately preceding the commencement of supervision.

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC) supervisors:

- Must possess a current and valid California license.
- Have completed a 6-hour supervision training within the two-year period prior to commencement of supervision or within 60 days of commencement of supervision if never taken previously.
- Must take a 6-hour supervision training during every renewal period while serving as a supervisor.
- Maintain documentation of course completion.
- Provide documentation of course completion if requested by the Board.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision of ASWs, Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) Trainees or Associates who performed psychotherapy in two of the past five years immediately preceding the commencement of supervision.
- Complete the following additional training and education:
 - One of the following:
 - Six semester units or nine quarter units specifically focused on the theory and application of marriage and family therapy; OR
 - A named specialization or emphasis area on the qualifying degree in marriage and family therapy; marital and family therapy; marriage, family, and child counseling; or couple and family therapy.

- At least 500 hours of documented supervised experience, working directly with couples, families, or children.
- Minimum of 6-hours of continuing education specific to marriage and family therapy, completed in each license renewal cycle.
- Approved Couples and Families status from the Board:
 - [FAQs - LPCC Treatment of Couples and Families](#)
 - [Couples and Families \(Qualifying Coursework\)](#)
 - [Request for Confirmation to Assess and Treat Couples and Families](#)

Psychologist supervisors:

- Must possess a current and valid California license.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision of ASWs, Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) Trainees or Associates who performed psychotherapy in two of the past five years immediately preceding the commencement of supervision.
- **Psychologists are exempt from the 6-hour supervision-training requirement.**

Physician supervisors:

- Must possess a current and valid California license.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision of ASWs, Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) Trainees or Associates who performed psychotherapy in two of the past five years immediately preceding the commencement of supervision.
- **Physicians are exempt from the 6-hour supervision-training requirement.**

Additional qualifications of all clinicians supervising trainees, associates and licensed MFTs receiving supervision following Board Action:

- The supervisor may not be related by blood, marriage, intimate bond, or business to the supervisee as any and all of these relationships would impair the effectiveness of the supervision, as well as the perception of authority of the supervisor.
- The supervisee may have no proprietary interest in the business of the supervisor.
- Supervisors must follow the appropriate guidelines and regulations regarding the employment of and location in which their trainees or associates provide service and receive supervision.
 - Only in a private practice setting does a supervisor need to be employed by, and practice at, the same site as the registrant's employer. In a setting that is not a

private practice, the supervisor may be employed by the Trainee's, Associate's, or applicant's employer on either a paid or voluntary basis.

- If such employment is on a voluntary basis, the supervisor and the employer prior to commencement of supervision must sign a written agreement that addresses the supervisor's and employer's legal responsibilities.
 - The agreement must contain an acknowledgement by the employer that the employer:
 - Is aware of the licensing requirements that must be met by the associate or trainee and agrees not to interfere with the supervisor's legal and ethical obligations to ensure compliance with those requirements; and
 - Agrees to provide the supervisor access to clinical records of the clients counseled by the associate or trainee.
- An MFT Associate working for a governmental entity; school, college, or university; or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable may obtain supervision via live two-way videoconferencing. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the client confidentiality is preserved. **Trainees are not permitted to receive supervision in this manner.** Individual or group supervision may not be provided over the telephone, as supervision must consist of face-to-face contact.
- Supervisors are restricted in the number of associates or trainees they supervise at a single time.
- According to the List Serve feed from the Board of Behavioral Science in California, as of January 1, 2012, an eligible supervisor of MFT associates, an associate clinical social worker (ASW), or a professional clinical counselor associate (PCC Associate) in a private practice setting may supervise or employ, at any one time, "no more than a total of three individuals registered as an MFT associate, ASW, or PCC Associate. A marriage and family therapy corporation, a licensed clinical social worker's corporation, or a professional clinical counselor corporation may employ, at any one time, no more than a total of three individuals registered as an MFT associate, ASW, or PCC associate for each employee or

shareholder who has satisfied the requirements stipulated in law. Any of the previously mentioned corporations may not employ, at any one time, more than a total of 15 individuals registered as an MFT associate, ASW, or PCC associate.

- The supervisor must provide supervision at the rate of one hour per 5 hours worked if the supervisee is a trainee. If the supervisee is a registered associate, the supervisor must provide one hour of supervision for every 10 hours worked by the supervisee, in not less than 104 weeks. The associate must receive at least one hour of face-to-face supervision for 52 weeks. *Note, face-to-face triadic supervision may also count toward these hours.*
 - A two-hour supervision group (with 8 or less supervisees) counts as one hour of direct supervision contact.
 - Supervisors may provide group supervision, but may not provide such supervision to more than eight trainees or associates in the same group.

What are the additional responsibilities of a Clinical Supervisor?

- Prior to the provision of any supervision, the supervisor must ensure that the intended supervisee has applied to the Board to be an associate or trainee and has submitted the Responsibility Statement for that supervision experience **prior to the onset of employment or supervision.**
- Whether a supervisor is required to be on site depends on the situation. Supervisors must consider their responsibilities as defined in the LMFT statutes and regulations, which includes taking responsibility for, and control of, the quality of services being provided. Among other responsibilities, supervisors are required to do all of the following, whether they are on site or off site:
 - Ensure that the extent, kind and quality of counseling performed by the associate or trainee is consistent with the education, training and experience of the person being supervised.
 - Review client/patient records and monitor and evaluate assessment, diagnosis and treatment decisions of the associate or trainee.
 - Monitor and evaluate the ability of the associate or trainee to provide services at the site(s) where he or she will be practicing and to the particular clientele being served.

- Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations governing the practice of marriage and family therapy.
- The supervisor must obtain the name, address and phone number of the most recent prior supervisor and employer (if any exists).
- The supervisor must provide the supervisee with the pamphlet, "Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of Marriage, Family and Child Counselor Trainee or Associate." A sample of this statement is available on the website for the Board of Behavioral Sciences at <http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/mft/mfrespon.pdf>
- The supervisor must review with the supervisee the manner in which all emergencies will be managed.
- According to new guidelines placed in effect in January, 2012, an unlicensed marriage and family therapist associate or trainee must provide each client or patient, prior to performing any professional services, with the following information (BPC §4980.44(c)):
 - That he or she is an unlicensed marriage and family therapist registered associate or trainee (current law);
 - His or her registration number (new provision);
 - The name of his or her employer (new provision); and
 - Indicate whether he or she is under the supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed clinical social worker, licensed psychologist, or a licensed physician and surgeon certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (current law, but now the MFT associate must indicate the type of supervising licensee).
- The supervisor is responsible for the collection of fees from the supervisee's clients. The supervisee may not collect monies directly from his/her clients.
- While there has been significant debate about whether or not a supervisor may charge for supervision, *the BBS made the following statement during its October 10, 2009 Board Meeting:*

"The Board's laws generally contemplate that associates should be paid for their work as

employees. To the extent that associates are paid as employees, their employer may not require such associates to pay for the required supervision."

➤ According to new guidelines placed in effect in January, 2012, any advertisement by or on behalf of a marriage and family therapist associate or trainee must include, at a minimum, all of the following (BPC §4980.44(d)):

- That he or she is a marriage and family therapist registered associate or trainee;
- The registration number of the associate or trainee;
- The name of his or her employer; and
- That he or she is supervised by a licensed person.

The use of the abbreviation "MFTI" in an advertisement is prohibited unless the title "marriage and family therapist registered associate" appears in the advertisement. (BPC §4980.44(d)(2)). The text of this is available at

https://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/regulation/2012/advertising_not.pdf

➤ The supervisee must maintain a supervision log of all hours worked. The supervisor must sign the log weekly. A sample of the weekly supervised experience log is presented on the Board of Behavioral Sciences website at

https://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/mft/mfwkylog_37a-525_option1.pdf

➤ The supervisor must give at least one week's notice of intent to cancel supervision agreement.

How does one begin supervision?

During the course of graduate studies in Marriage and Family Therapy, trainees will likely be assigned to clinical supervisors who work at the site in which the trainee receives clinical training. Following completion of the degree, clinicians will continue to accrue experience as MFT associates. While in many cases, unlicensed clinicians are assigned to primary supervisors; sometimes associates will meet prospective supervisors at professional meetings, through colleagues or even through professional associations. In these cases, the supervisee must ensure that the prospective supervisor has met all of the requirements to serve as a supervisor, and that the position itself qualifies for SPE. Once these conditions are met, the

supervisor must sign a Supervisory Responsibility Statement *prior to the commencement of the experience*. Failure to sign an agreement could result in the denial of the experience. The form available through the CA Board of Behavioral Sciences is available at <http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/mft/mfrespon.pdf>.

For those who are being supervised in a Volunteer setting, a Supervision Agreement must be signed between the parties prior to the onset of counseling and/or supervision. Such an Agreement is available through the BBS at http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/mft/lmft_sample_letter_agreement.pdf.

Updates or Additional Information Regarding Supervised Experience

In 2016, the Board of Behavioral Science revised the options available for accruing Supervised Experience (*Per Senate Bill 620, Chapter 262, Statutes of 2015). Hours gained after January 1, 2010 qualify under either Option 1 (new streamlined categories) or Option 2 (pre-existing multiple categories) as described below. Applicants must fully qualify under Option 1 OR Option 2. There is no “mixing and matching” between the two categories. Individuals who wish to qualify under Option 2 must submit an Application for Licensure and Examination postmarked no later than December 31, 2020. Otherwise the applicant must qualify under Option 1. The below verbatim text can be found at https://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/publications/mft_faq.pdf

LMFT OPTION 1 (streamlined categories)

Under Option 1, the supervised work experience categories break down into just two overall types:

- Direct counseling experience (*Minimum 1,750 hours*)
 - A minimum of 500 of the above hours must be gained diagnosing and treating couples, families and children.
- Non-clinical experience (*Maximum 1,250 hours*)
 - May consist of direct supervisor contact, administering and evaluating psychological tests, writing clinical reports, writing progress or

process notes, client centered advocacy, and workshops, seminars, training sessions, or conferences directly related to marriage, family, and child counseling.

LMFT OPTION 2 (multiple categories)

This option expires on December 31, 2020

- A. Individual Psychotherapy (*No minimum or maximum hours required*)
- B. Couples, Families, and Children (*Minimum 500 hours-up to 150 may be double-counted*)
- C. Group Therapy or Counseling (*Maximum 500 hours*)
- D. Telehealth Counseling (*Maximum 375 hours*)
- E. Administering and evaluating psychological tests of counselees, writing clinical reports and progress or process notes; client-centered advocacy (*Maximum 500 hours*)
- F. Workshops, seminars, training sessions, or conferences directly related to marriage, family, and child counseling (*Maximum 250 hours**)
- G. Personal Psychotherapy received (*Maximum 100 hours, triple counted**)
- H. Individual, Triadic and Group Supervision*

** Hours earned in categories F, G and H are limited to a total combined maximum of 1,000 hours*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION APPLICABLE TO BOTH OPTIONS

Limitations on Experience Hours:

- Maximum 1,300 hours gained pre-degree
- Maximum 750 hours of counseling and direct supervisor contact gained pre-degree
- Maximum 40 hours of experience earned in any week between all settings
- Maximum six (6) hours of individual, triadic or group supervision in any week

104 Supervised Weeks Required:

These 104 weeks must contain:

- One (1) hour of individual or triadic supervision, or two (2) hours of group supervision during **any** week in which experience is claimed
- 52 weeks in which the applicant received at least one (1) hour of **individual or triadic** supervision

An applicant for licensure cannot be approved to sit for the clinical exam without completing both the 3,000 hours of experience AND 104 supervised weeks.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.43 and 4980.43.2; Regulation cited: Title 16 CCR section 1833

Changes in 2019:

The BBS is now authorized to and may audit clinical supervisors to ensure compliance with the above detailed qualifications. An audit may occur at any time during supervision or for 7 years thereafter. Thus, supervisors must maintain records for each supervisee for 7 years following termination ([AB 93](#)).

Supervised Experience ([AB 93](#))

- The 15 supervisee per corporation limit was removed
 - *No change to the 3-supervisee per supervisor limit*
- Triadic supervision is now permitted, which is face-to-face supervision by one supervisor to two supervisees. This form of supervision may go toward to the 52-week supervision requirement. These hours may now be completed via individual or triadic supervision, or a combination thereof. Prior supervision categories were limited to individual and group.
- It was elucidated that consultation and peer-to-peer encounters do not count as supervision
- It was elucidated that upon completion of required supervisory hours and prior to licensure, a supervisee must continue to engage in an hour of weekly supervision in each setting direct clinical work is facilitated. This is not required for non-clinical work.
- At minimum, supervisees must be provided with an hour of supervision for every 5 hours of direct clinical contact per week

Change Effective January 1, 2020:

For all applicants of the 90-day rule (ASW, AMFT, and APCC) whose graduate degree completion is after January 1, 2020, there will be a change—they must prove Live Scan fingerprinting was administered by the employer prior to experience hours being claimed. Proof thereof must be submitted with application ([AB 456](#)).

Changes Effective July 1, 2020:

In regards to criminal convictions among applicants, a license may only be denied on the basis of this conviction/ discipline if one of the below criteria are met ([AB 2138](#)):

- The conviction occurred within 7 years of application and correlates with the “qualifications, functions, or duties of the profession.” This 7-year rule does not pertain

to serious felony convictions (Penal Code §1192.7) or registered sex offenses (Penal Code §290(d)(2) or (3)).

- A licensing board formally disciplined the applicant in the previous 7 years for misconduct “substantially related” to the professional role and which would have resulted in disciplinary action by the Board. *This does not include previously dismissed or expunged convictions.*

Changes Effective January 1, 2021:

Marriage and Family Therapy applicants must complete 6 hours of coursework or supervised experience on suicide risk assessment and intervention ([AB 1436](#)). This can be obtained via:

- A degree program; the applicant must provide the board with written certification from the school’s registrar or training director if experience is gained through academic programming.
- Clinically supervised experience; the applicant must provide the board with written certification by the clinical supervisor if experience is gained through supervision.
- Completion of a qualifying continuing education course; a certificate of completion must be provided to the board.

Existing licensees must sign (under penalty of perjury) a statement of compliance with the above coursework requirement upon renewal (or reinstatement/ reactivation of licensure). Note, existing licensees will not be required to provide written verification of coursework to the board, but should maintain this verification in the instance of a board audit.