
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7132 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATES AND MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPIST ASSOCIATES.

SUMMARY

This bill creates a new associate licensure category for licensed professional counselors (LPCs) and marital and family therapists (MFTs) that allows them to practice under professional supervision while pursuing full licensure. To qualify for an associate license, the applicant must meet certain educational and clinical training requirements.

The bill also prohibits anyone who is unlicensed from using the title (1) "licensed professional counselor associate" or "professional counselor" or any title, words, letters, or abbreviations that may reasonably be confused with licensure or (2) "licensed marital and family therapist associate." Existing law similarly prohibits unlicensed people from using a title that indicates that they are fully licensed LPCs and MFTs.

For LPCs, the associate license must be renewed annually. The initial license fee is \$220 and the renewal fee is \$195. For MFTs, the associate license is valid for two years and may be renewed once. The initial license fee is \$125 and the renewal fee is \$220.

The bill allows the Department of Public Health (DPH) to take disciplinary actions against associate LPC and MFT licensees under the same grounds for which she may take action against other LPC and MFT licensees (e.g., fraud or deceit in obtaining the license).

Current law allows students who graduate with advanced degrees in professional counseling and marital and family therapy to practice without a license in order to complete the supervised work experience

required for full licensure, but only (1) if supervised by someone licensed in their respective profession and (2) for up to two years after completing the supervised work experience, if they failed the respective licensing examination. The bill eliminates these provisions for both professional counseling and MFT graduates.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

*House Amendment "A" makes clarifying changes by (1) removing a provision from the existing MFT statutes on graduate students practicing without a license and (2) specifying that DPH may take disciplinary action against associate LPC licensees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2019

§§ 1-6 — LPC ASSOCIATE LICENSE

Initial Licensure Requirements

To obtain an LPC associate license, an applicant must submit to the DPH commissioner satisfactory evidence of having earned a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling as part of a higher education program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, or its successor. Alternatively, the bill allows an applicant to complete:

1. at least 60 graduate semester hours in counseling or a related mental health field at a regionally accredited higher education institution that included coursework in (a) human growth and development; (b) social and cultural foundations; (c) counseling theories and techniques; (d) group, career, addiction and substance abuse, and trauma and crisis counseling; (e) appraisals or tests and measurements to individuals and groups; (f) research and evaluation; (g) professional orientation to mental health counseling; and (h) diagnosing and treating mental and emotional disorders;
2. a 100-hour counseling practicum and a 600-hour clinical mental health counseling internship each taught by a faculty member licensed or certified as a professional counselor or its equivalent

in another state; and

3. a graduate degree in counseling or a related mental health field from a regionally accredited higher education institution.

Licensure by Endorsement

As with LPC licenses under existing law, the bill allows DPH to grant an LPC associate license by endorsement to LPC associates licensed or certified in another state or jurisdiction with requirements substantially similar to or higher than Connecticut's. Applicants must have no pending disciplinary actions or complaints.

License Scope

The bill generally prohibits an LPC associate from practicing professional counseling unless he or she is under the supervision of a:

1. LPC;
2. licensed psychiatrist certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology;
3. licensed advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) certified as a psychiatric and mental health clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner by the American Nurses Credentialing Center; or
4. licensed psychologist, MFT, or clinical social worker.

License Renewal

To renew a license, the bill requires LPC associates to submit satisfactory evidence to DPH that they completed continuing education requirements the commissioner sets in regulations. Such continuing education must include at least:

1. one contact hour (i.e., 50 minutes) of education or training in cultural competency;
2. two contact hours of training or education in mental health conditions common to veterans and their family members, during the first renewal period and every six years thereafter;

and

3. three contact hours of training or education in professional ethics.

§§ 7-12 — MFT ASSOCIATE LICENSE

Initial Licensure Requirements

To obtain an MFT associate license, an applicant must provide DPH satisfactory evidence of having:

1. completed a (a) graduate degree program specializing in marital and family therapy offered by a regionally accredited higher education institution or (b) postgraduate clinical training program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education and offered by a regionally accredited higher education institution and
2. verification from a supervising licensed MFT that the applicant is working toward completing the postgraduate experience requirements for an MFT license.

Licensure Without Examination

As with MFT licenses under existing law, the bill allows DPH to grant an MFT associate license without examination to MFT associates licensed or certified in another U.S. state, territory, or commonwealth. An applicant can obtain a license in this way if the other jurisdiction's licensing standards are at least as strict as Connecticut's. Applicants must also have no pending disciplinary actions or complaints.

License Renewals

The MFT associate license is valid for two years and is renewable once during the applicant's birth month. The applicant must submit evidence that he or she is working to complete the postgraduate experience requirements for an MFT license and can successfully do so during the two-year renewal period.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 21 Nay 0 (03/22/2019)