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Application Process to Apply for Initial Licensure as a Professional Counselor

The Rules and Regulations can be located on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social.

These FAQs are not intended to substitute for reading the Rules and Regulations.

Q: Where can I find the application for licensure as a professional counselor?

A: The application is available on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social, then click on “Licensure Information” and then click on “Board Forms”, then click on “Application for a License by Examination to Practice as a Professional Counselor”.

Please note that it is important to review the application as many questions can be answered on the instructions as well as the forms provided.

Q: How do I know if my education meets Pennsylvania’s requirements?

A: Meet **ONE** of the following education requirements under Section 7(f) (2) Act 136 – 1998 (on website www.dos.state.pa.us/social - click on Rules and Regulations, Chapter 49 (Licensure of Professional Counselors). Request the school to send an official transcript of your educational degree and other graduate level coursework **DIRECTLY** to the Board.

- a. **By March 2, 2007 (On May 14, 2012, the deadline date is extended to June 30, 2009, as per Act 17 of 2012)**, has completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework in counseling or a field closely related to the practice of professional counseling, including a master’s degree in counseling or a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of professional counseling, from an accredited educational institution, and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 49.2.
- b. Has successfully completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework in counseling or a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of professional counseling, including a 48-semester-hour or 72-quarter-hour master’s degree in counseling or a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of professional counseling, from an accredited educational institution, and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 49.2.
- c. Holds a doctoral degree in counseling from an accredited educational institution or holds a doctoral degree in a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of professional counseling from an accredited educational institution, and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 49.2

Q: What coursework must my degree contain?

A: The following coursework is required as per Section 49.2 of the regulations (the regulations may be located on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social):

- (1) **Human growth and development** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental stages.

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- (2) **Social and cultural foundations** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society.
- (3) **Helping relationships** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of counseling and consultation processes.
- (4) **Group Work** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of group development, dynamics, counseling theories, group counseling methods and skills and other group approaches.
- (5) **Career and lifestyle development** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of career development and related life factors.
- (6) **Appraisal** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.
- (7) **Research and program evaluation** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of types of research methods, basic statistics, and ethical and legal considerations in research.
- (8) **Professional orientation** (2 semester or 3 quarter hours) studies that provide an understanding of all aspects of professional functioning, including history, roles, organizational structures, ethics, standards and credentialing.
- (9) **Clinical instruction** (Includes 100 clock hours of supervised practicum experience and 600 clock hours of supervised internship experience). The supervised internship experience shall begin after completion of the supervised practicum experience. Until March 2, 2007, this requirement may be satisfied by completion of a total of 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours of practicum/internship experience.

Q: I hold less than a 48 semester credit or 72 quarter credit masters degree. Am I eligible for licensure?

A: No, you are not unless **By March 2, 2007 (On May 14, 2012, the deadline date is extended to June 30, 2009, as per Act 17 of 2012)**, you have successfully completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework counseling or a field closely related to the practice of professional counseling as defined in Section 49.1 (relating to definitions), including one of the following:

- (A) A master’s degree in professional counseling from an accredited educational institution.
- (B) A master’s degree in a field closely related to the practice of professional counseling as defined in Section 49.1 from an accredited educational institution.

To be eligible for licensure after March 2, 2007 (On May 14, 2012, the deadline date is extended to June 30, 2009, as per Act 17 of 2012), you would need to complete a 48 semester credit or 72 quarter credit master's degree as defined in Section 49.13(a)(3)(ii) or complete a doctoral degree in counseling as defined in Section 49.13(a)(3)(iii) or 49.13(a)(3)(iv) of the regulations (regulations may be located on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social).

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Q: What examination do I have to take and pass in order to be eligible for licensure as a professional counselor?

A: The Board accepts 7 acceptable examinations as listed in Section 49.11 of the regulations.

- (1) The National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) give by NBCC.
- (2) The Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) Examination given by CRCC.
- (3) The Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB) Certification Examination given by ATCB.
- (4) The Board Certification Examination given by CBMT.
- (5) The practice examination of psychological knowledge given by the NorthAmerican Association of Master’s in Psychology (NAMP).
- (6) The Advanced Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Counselor Examination (AAODA) given by the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium/Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Inc. (IC & RC/AODA).
- (7) The Examination for Master Addictions Counselors (EMAC) given by NBCC.

Q: When may I begin my 3,600 hours (**On May 14, 2012, the 3,600 hours will be reduced to 3,000 hours, as per Act 17 of 2012**) of supervised clinical experience?

A: The 3,600 hours (**On May 14, 2012, the 3,600 hours will be reduced to 3,000 hours, as per Act 17 of 2012**) of supervised clinical experience shall be obtained after the completion of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours of graduate coursework (Section 49.13(a)(4)(i) of the regulations). **Please be advised that the practicum and internship are part of the educational requirements and cannot be counted towards the 3,600 hours of supervised clinical experience.**

Q: How many hours of supervised clinical experience are required and how long do I have to complete my hours for licensure as a professional counselor?

A: 3600 hours (**On May 14, 2012, the 3,600 hours will be reduced to 3,000 hours, as per Act 17 of 2012**) of supervised clinical experience are required. Under Section 49.13(b)(9) of the regulations: The supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2 years and no more than 6 years, except that no less than 600 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.

Q: How many hours per week must I work in order for the supervised clinical experience to be accepted?

A: Under Section 49.13(b)(8) of the regulations; supervised work activity will be counted toward satisfying the experience requirement only if it takes place in a single setting for at least 30 hours per week but no more than 40 hours per week during at least a 3 month period or at least 15 hours per week for a period of at least 6 months.

Q: How many hours per week must I meet with my supervisor?

A: Under Section 49.13(b)(5) of the regulations; the supervisor, or one to whom supervisory responsibilities have been delegated, shall meet with the supervisee for a minimum of 2 hours for every 40 hours of supervised clinical experience. At least 1 of the 2 hours shall be with the supervisee individually and in person, and 1 of the 2 hours may be with the supervisee in a group setting and in person. A total of 180 hours of supervision is

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required. At least 90 hours must be individual supervision and the other 90 hours may be group supervision. **(On May 14, 2012, the total of 150 hours of supervision must be completed. At least 75 hours must be individual supervision and the other 75 hour may be group supervision.)**

Example: For every 40 hours of clinical experience you must have at least 1 hour of individual supervision and 1 hour may be group supervision. Example: If working 20 hours per week – 1 week you must have 1 hour of individual supervision and the next week you may have one hour of group supervision.

Q: How long do I have to complete my 3600 hours **(On May 14, 2012, the 3,600 hours will be reduced to 3,000 hours, as per Act 17 of 2012)** of supervised clinical experience?

A: Under Section 49.13(b)(9) of the regulations – The supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2 years and no more than 6 years, except that no less than 600 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.

Q: What duties must my supervised clinical experience contain?

A: Under Section 49.13(b)(1) of the regulations: At least one-half of the experience (1,800 hours) shall consist of providing services in one or more of the following areas:

- (i) Assessment
- (ii) Counseling
- (iii) Therapy
- (iv) Psychotherapy
- (v) Other therapeutic interventions (psycho-education)
- (vi) Consultation
- (vii) Family therapy
- (viii) Group therapy

Please note the above 8 experiences should involve direct client contact. The remainder of the clinical experience must be related to work with clients. **Example: case documentation and recordkeeping activities; supervision of another mental health professional related to practice; group or peer supervision related to practice; court testimony related to work with client(s); advocacy on behalf of client(s); other activities that involve, support or enhance work with clients.**

Please be advised that administrative duties cannot be counted towards the 3600 hours of supervised clinical experience. Example: administrative supervision of another individual, completing human resource and/or budget documentation, etc.

Please refer to Section 49.13(b) of the regulations for the supervised clinical experience requirements.

Q: What are the qualifications for a supervisor to supervise the 3600 hours **(On May 14, 2012, the 3,600 hours will be reduced to 3,000 hours, as per Act 17 of 2012)** of supervised clinical experience?

A: For supervised clinical experience completed prior to January 1, 2006, 1800 hours must be completed either under an individual who holds a current license as a professional counselor and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years as a professional counselor (Section 49.3(1)) OR under an individual who practiced as a professional counselor and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years as a professional counselor (Section 49.3(3)). The other 1800 hours may be completed under an individual

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who holds a current license and has at least a master’s degree in a related field and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 49.3(2)), as per Section 49.13(b)(2) of the regulations.

For supervised clinical experience completed after January 1, 2006, 1800 hours must be completed under an individual who holds a current license as a professional counselor and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years as a professional counselor (Section 49.3(1)) and the other 1800 hours may be completed under an individual who holds a current license and has at least a master’s degree in a related field and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 49.3(2)), as per Section 49.13(b)(2) of the regulations.

Supervised clinical experience completed in another state may be counted towards meeting the Pennsylvania supervised clinical experience requirements as long as the experience meets Pennsylvania requirements.

Please also refer to Section 49.14 of the regulations for the Standards for Supervisors.

- Q: What documentation am I required to maintain while I am completing my supervised clinical experience?
- A: You and your supervisor must maintain records as defined in Section 49.14(Standards for supervisors). You and your supervisor would devise a form to use to maintain your records. The Board may request these records if it becomes necessary.
- Q: How many individuals completing the supervised clinical experience requirements may a supervisor supervise?
- A: Under Section 49.13(b)(6) of the regulations – A supervisor shall supervise no more than 6 supervisees at the same time. If this provision creates an undue hardship on a supervisee, the supervisor and supervisee may request an exception to this provision. The request shall state, in writing, the reasons why this provision creates a hardship on the supervisee and why the supervisee is not able to obtain a supervisor who meets the requirements of this provision. **Please be advised that in certain circumstances the Board may require a personal appearance by the supervisee and supervisor.**
- Q: If I am unable to locate my supervisor or my supervisor is deceased, how do I have my supervised clinical experience verified?
- A: If you do not hold a professional counselor license in another state, you can have another individual who can attest to the fact that the supervised clinical experience has occurred, submit the following documentation:
- (1) A notarized statement by the applicant indicating why the supervisor cannot complete the supervised clinical experience forms.
 - (2) A notarized statement, by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating how that individual can verify that the supervised clinical experience occurred and indicating why that individual is completing the supervised clinical experience forms instead of your supervisor.

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- (3) The supervised clinical experience forms, completed by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating your supervisor’s name and qualifications and all other documentation.

If you hold a professional counselor license in another state, you may request that copies of the supervised clinical experience on file with the other State Board be forwarded to the PA State Board for review.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a professional counselor. What is the procedure for licensure?

A: The application is available on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social, then click on “Licensure Information” and then click on “Board Forms” and then click on “Application for a License by Endorsement without Examination to Practice as a Professional Counselor”. Follow the instructions for submitting the application form, required documentation and fees. **Please note that you must hold a license as a professional counselor in another state and have been actively engaged in the practice of professional counseling for 5 of the last 7 years immediately preceding the filing of this application for licensure by endorsement. If you do not meet the requirements for licensure by endorsement, you must complete the Application for a License by Examination to Practice as a Professional Counselor.**