



## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Licensure**

### **1. What is Professional Counseling?**

Professional counseling is defined in the Connecticut licensing statute as:

“[T]he application, by persons trained in counseling, of established principles of psycho-social development and behavioral science to the evaluation, assessment, analysis, diagnosis and treatment of emotional, behavioral or interpersonal dysfunction or difficulties that interfere with mental health and human development. ‘Professional counseling’ includes, but is not limited to, individual, group, marriage and family counseling, functional assessments for persons adjusting to a disability, appraisal, crisis intervention and consultation with individuals and groups.”

“Professional counseling” may only be practiced by those who are validly licensed as professional counselors (LPCs) or professional counselor associates (LPCAs). The Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA) represents, advocates for and promotes the vital work of these dedicated counselors throughout the state.

### **2. What is the LPCA? Can you explain the recent change in the licensing law?**

As of October 1, 2019, professional counselors in Connecticut will be licensed under a structure that provides for two tiers of licensure with the passage of Public Act 19-117. The exact language of these changes can be found here, beginning on page 196 (section 162) through 205 (section 166):

[House Bill No. 7424 Public Act No. 19-117](#)

The two tiers are referred to in the statute as “professional counselors” and “professional counselor associates.” In this FAQ we will use the shorthand “LPC” and “LPCA.” LPCA is the new designation and is considered the “first tier” of licensure. While we will periodically refer to the LPC as “full” licensure, this is intended only as a descriptive term for the purposes of this FAQ to distinguish from “associate” licensure. Practitioners at *both* levels of licensure should be considered as state-approved licensed mental health care providers, though of course with different rights and responsibilities.

This change to two tiered licensure comes as a result of a multi-year effort by CCA to secure legislation that allows professional counselors to become licensed upon completing graduate

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school, rather than having to work as unlicensed practitioners while completing the 3000 hours of counseling experience needed for full licensure. This change puts professional counselors in line with their social work colleagues in Connecticut, as well as with their counseling colleagues in approximately forty other states. Along with professional counselors, our colleagues in the marital and family therapy profession achieved tiered licensure during this legislative term.

**If you have received your graduate degree and are currently working as a counselor toward your LPC, apply NOW for your LPCA.** See Question 7 for a discussion of this important issue.

### **3. Where can I find information on how to apply for the LPC or LPCA?**

Counselor licensure in Connecticut is overseen by the Department of Public Health. Unlike other states, Connecticut does not have a specific counselor licensure board or committee. Instead, the DPH's Health Care Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section ("DPH Health Care PLIS") oversees licensure of professional counselors along with all other licensed health care providers and related fields. You can access the DPH Health Care PLIS website at:

[Practitioner Licensing Investigations Section](#)

Once on this page, find the link for information relating to "Professional Counselors." Here you will find the links to the LPC requirements for those counselors who were matriculating in a graduate program on or *prior* to July 1, 2017, the LPC requirements for those matriculating *after* July 1, 2017, and the LPCA requirements.

***The portal for applying online for the LPCA can be accessed at:***

[Professional Counselor Associate](#)

CCA will continue to provide updated information on all licensing related matters on the CCA website, but you should *always* check the official Health Care PLIS website to ensure accuracy.

### **4. Am I eligible to become an LPCA?**

To be granted a license as an LPCA:

(i) you must demonstrate to DPH that you earned a degree in clinical mental health counseling from a CACREP accredited program

OR, for those who do not have such a degree, demonstrate that you completed the curricular and fieldwork requirements that are specifically set forth in the statute (see Question 10 for more information).

OR, for those who have earned their graduate degree prior to July 1, 2022 and do not meet these education and fieldwork requirements, demonstrate accrual of 3000

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hours of supervised postgraduate experience (see Question 12 for more information);  
AND

(ii) pay a fee of \$220.

The DPH Health Care PLIS website has recently been updated to include information regarding the LPCA. It lists the documentation requirements as follows:

An applicant for licensure shall arrange for the submission of the following documentation directly from the source:

An official transcript and course of study form sent directly from each educational institution attended verifying all graduate level coursework completed and degree conferred;

A completed application and fee in the amount of \$220. Applications are only accepted online. ***The requirements and portal for applying online for the LPCA can be accessed at: [Professional Counselor Associate](#)***

*Please consult the DPH website for all official information regarding the LPCA. Once you have submitted your application for the LPCA online, your portal will be updated with any change in your status. Please remember to consult the portal before trying to get in touch directly with DPH.*

## **5. Do I need to pass an exam to become an LPCA?**

No. In order to become an *LPC*, you will need to pass an “examination prescribed by the commissioner [of DPH].” The exams that are currently accepted are the National Counselor Exam (NCE) and the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE). The LPCA, however, does *not* require passage of the exam. It should be noted that, as a matter of course, many graduates of the state’s counseling programs take the exam [usually the NCE] during their final semester or shortly thereafter. So it may be the case that you will have passed the exam by the time you apply for your LPCA, but it is not necessary.

Please see Question 15 for more information on licensure exams.

## **6. I am currently an LPC. Does the change in the law affect me?**

No. If you are currently licensed as a professional counselor you do not need to do anything differently as a result of the new law. You may, however, want to ensure that you are up to date on the continuing education requirements, which were changed as a result of new legislation in 2017. Please see the response to Question 8 for a more detailed discussion of the continuing education requirements.

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## **7. I am not yet licensed. Do I need to become an LPCA or can I just wait and apply for the LPC?**

**As we will explain in more detail below, you need to become an LPCA. If you are currently working in the field as a pre-licensed counselor, apply as soon as possible for your LPCA.**

In order to become an LPC, you will have to meet certain requirements, including demonstrating to DPH that you have acquired three thousand hours of supervised postgraduate experience “in the practice of professional counseling.” Prior to the recent change in the statute, pre-licensed counselors who were working toward their three thousand hours did so under an *exemption* to the law that otherwise requires a license to practice professional counseling.

The exemption for pre-licensed counselors has now been eliminated. Additionally, the statute states that “no person may practice professional counseling unless licensed” and further states that holders of the LPCA may practice “professional counseling under professional supervision.” Thus, any counselor working toward full licensure as an LPC will *need to be licensed as an LPCA* to engage in the practice of professional counseling, and will need to work under supervision while licensed as an LPCA.

The path to “full” licensure as an LPC has not otherwise been changed by the new statute. Applicants for the LPC must demonstrate passage of the exam (see Question 5) and acquire “three thousand hours of postgraduate experience under professional supervision, including a minimum of one hundred hours of direct professional supervision, in the practice of professional counseling, performed over a period of not less than two years.” “Direct professional supervision” is defined as requiring “face-to-face consultation between one supervisor. . . and one person receiving supervision that consists of not less than a monthly review with a written evaluation and assessment by the supervisor of such person's practice of professional counseling.”

As set forth in the new statute, “an individual licensed as a professional counselor [LPC] . . . may [engage] in the independent practice of professional counseling.”

## **8. Are there continuing education requirements for LPCAs?**

Yes. LPCAs are subject to the same continuing education requirements as LPCs.

Current regulations require that licensees applying for license renewal shall complete a minimum of 15 hours of qualifying continuing education during the one-year period for which the license is being renewed.

Continuing education requirements include that: **(A)** at least one contact hour of training or education each registration period must be on the topic of cultural competency, **(B)** “not less than two contact hours of training or education during the first renewal period in which continuing education is required and not less than once every six years thereafter [the training or education must be] on the topic of mental health conditions common to veterans and family members of veterans, including (i) determining whether a patient is a veteran or family member

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of a veteran, (ii) screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief, and (iii) suicide prevention training, and **(C)** not less than three contact hours of training or education each registration period be on the topic of professional ethics. The ethics requirement was added effective for renewals after January 1, 2018 with the passage of PA 17-94, however it should be noted that this information has not been updated on the DPH website.

The statute for current continuing education requirements for both LPCs and LPCAs can be found here on page 200 (section 164):

[House Bill No. 7424 Public Act No. 19-117](#)

Regulations regarding continuing education are established by the DPH commissioner. You should always consult the Health Care PLIS website to determine the current regulations and whether you are in compliance.

## **9. Is the LPCA renewable? Is there a time limit on how long I can hold the LPCA license?**

The LPCA may be renewed annually and there is no statutory limit on the number of times license holders can renew. (Renewals are subject to the same fee of \$195 that applies to LPCs.) Accordingly, the LPCA license has been structured in such a way that it might be held indefinitely. You should note, however, that the statute specifically prohibits LPCAs from engaging in the “independent practice of professional counseling” and specifically requires LPCAs to practice under professional supervision.

## **10. I heard there were recent changes to the curriculum and fieldwork requirements for licensure. What are these changes and where can I find this information?**

In 2017, with the passage of Public Act 17-94, the counseling licensure statute was revised to greatly strengthen the educational and fieldwork requirements for licensure. The primary change to the law established two educational routes to counseling licensure depending on whether the applicant was a graduate of a CACREP accredited clinical mental health program or not.

The changes that were made in 2017 are now also part of the new legislation establishing tiered licensure. Please note that the *post*-graduate requirements for the LPCA and LPC are the same regardless of the degree earned.

The two different graduate program “paths” toward licensure are:

(i) A degree in clinical mental health counseling as part of a program of higher learning accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (“CACREP”); OR

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(ii) A graduate degree (and completion of at least sixty graduate semester hours) in counseling or a related mental health field (defined as “social work, marriage and family therapy or psychology”) at a regionally accredited institution of higher education. For these degree holders, the educational and fieldwork requirements have been spelled out in greater detail to ensure that all licensed counselors in Connecticut have graduate-level training comparable to that provided by CACREP-accredited programs. Accordingly, licensure applicants in this category must demonstrate completed coursework in each of the following areas: Human growth and development; social and cultural foundations; counseling theories; counseling techniques; group counseling; career counseling; appraisals or tests and measurements to individuals and groups; research and evaluation; professional orientation to mental health counseling; addiction and substance abuse counseling; trauma and crisis counseling; and diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

Applicants without clinical mental health counseling degrees from CACREP programs must also demonstrate completion of a one-hundred-hour practicum in counseling taught by a faculty member licensed or certified as a professional counselor or its equivalent in another state, and completion of a six-hundred-hour clinical mental health counseling internship taught by a faculty member licensed or certified as a professional counselor or its equivalent in another state.

Please refer to [Public Act No. 17-94](#) for more information.

## **11. I did not graduate from a CACREP counseling program. Am I still eligible for licensure in CT?**

Yes, if certain conditions are met. If you did not receive a degree in clinical mental health counseling from a CACREP accredited program, you may still be able to become licensed (LPCA/LPC) as a counselor in Connecticut. You will have to demonstrate to DPH that you have met certain curricular and fieldwork requirements, and your degree must be in counseling or a related mental health field (social work, marriage and family therapy, or psychology). See the response to Question 10 for a more complete description of these requirements.

## **12. My graduate degree does not meet the requirements for LPCA. Am I still eligible to apply?**

Yes, if certain post graduate supervised clinical experience requirements have been met. In June 2021, the passage of HB6666 (Public Act 21-121, Department of Public Health Various Revisions Bill) enacted legislation allowing for those masters level counselors who graduated prior to July 1, 2022 and have also completed at least 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience to apply for the LPCA, even if their graduate degree does not meet the requirements. This is essentially substituting post graduate experience for missing course and fieldwork. It should be noted, however, that this information has not currently been updated on the DPH website. Information on this exception can be found here beginning on page 26 (section 18):

[Substitute House Bill No. 6666 - Public Act No. 21-121](#)

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### **13. Who can supervise LPCAs for the supervision hours needed to earn full licensure?**

The Connecticut professional counselor licensing statute contains a definition of the term “Under Professional Supervision” which includes a list of those licensed professionals from whom counselors may receive the supervision required to practice as an LPCA. That list includes: licensed professional counselors, physicians certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, advanced practice registered nurses who are certified as a psychiatric and mental health clinical nurse specialists or nurse practitioners by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, psychologists, licensed marital and family therapists, and licensed clinical social workers.

### **14. Can LPCAs bill insurance?**

There are a few commercial insurances that will allow for services provided by LPCAs under supervision by a fully licensed provider to be reimbursed by billing through a solo practitioner contract or group practice contract. Counselors should refer to their specific insurance contracts for requirements and restrictions.

Also, effective no later than October 1, 2022, services rendered by LPCAs under supervision of a fully licensed practitioner in private solo or group practice can be reimbursed by Husky/Medicaid. See more specific information about this Husky/Medicaid change here:

[Substitute Senate Bill No. 2 - Public Act No. 22-81](#) (page 20, section 25)

[https://www.ctdssmap.com/CTPortal/Information/Get-Download-File/fbclid/IwAR3SDHBVnzzVB OGn17iu8UJ0uA38bPPkfF3Qs\\_PCNp-ZxCbzbWd3g-yYpJE?Filename=pb22\\_67.pdf&URI=Bulletins%2Fpb22\\_67.pdf](https://www.ctdssmap.com/CTPortal/Information/Get-Download-File/fbclid/IwAR3SDHBVnzzVB OGn17iu8UJ0uA38bPPkfF3Qs_PCNp-ZxCbzbWd3g-yYpJE?Filename=pb22_67.pdf&URI=Bulletins%2Fpb22_67.pdf)

### **15. Where can I find information on registering for the National Counselor Exam (NCE) and the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE)?**

Information about both exams can be found on the website of the National Board for Certified Counselors: [NBCC | National Board for Certified Counselors](#)

### **16. What is the NCC credential? Is it the same as licensure?**

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The National Board for Certified Counselors provides a process by which counselors can receive board certification as National Certified Counselors (NCC). Certification as an NCC is *not* the same as holding a state-sanctioned license. The NBCC website has an excellent description of the distinction between certification and licensure under the tab “Board Certification and Licensure” here: [Board Certification](#). Information on NCC eligibility can also be found here.

**Any questions about these materials may be directed to CCA at [cca\\_exec\\_dir@msn.com](mailto:cca_exec_dir@msn.com)**