

State Licensure Response Paper

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Over the last few years, we have been experiencing what one might call the destigmatization of mental health disorders and going into therapy. Subsequently, more people have become open to counseling, and having a therapist has become more normalized. As such, the demand for Licensed Mental Health Therapists has skyrocketed

A Licensed Mental Health Counselor is authorized to provide clinical counseling to clients which includes individuals, couples, families, and groups by helping them identify the problem or disorder and underlying causes that have brought on psychological and emotional distress and have impaired their day-to-day lives or activities. The concerns addressed by a mental health counselor range from mental health, relationship dynamics, and emotional disorders, to behavioral challenges. They provide counseling to aid clients with the skills, tools, and resources needed to address whatever problem or disorder they are facing. In addition, a mental health counselor can provide education counseling and career counseling.

A License Mental Health Counselor also works with other service providers to determine what is the best course of action for the client. Overall, they conduct clinical interviews and assessments of their client to verify presenting problems, determine a diagnosis, and decide which treatment modalities are best for each client.

A License Mental Health Counselor combine their education and personal attributes and skills such as apathy, patience, and active listening to develop a working alliance with their client to effectively treat their clients and produce the best clinical outcome (Neukrug, 2022)

Although a License Mental Health Counselor has been professionally educated and trained, he or she Is expected to stay within the domains of the protected scope of practice that they have been trained for including diagnosis and treatment in accordance with the theories and techniques of a specific counseling method and established practice standards. This includes

identifying the presenting problem, providing the right evaluation, and making the appropriate assessment and treatment protocol. Also, within the scope of practice is helping the client to develop new skills to adjust to life situations. It is extremely important that when the License Mental Health Counselor recognizes that what the client needs is out of his or her scope of training or practice, they refer the client to another service provider who is trained to assist the client.

To be a License Mental Health Counselor in New York State you must meet various educational and experience requirements. To satisfy the educational requirements one must have acquired a master's or a doctoral degree, or the equivalent thereof in a clinical health counseling program that is accredited and consists of 60 semester hours. The accreditation must be by the Commission on the Accreditation of Counseling-Related Education Programs, (CACREP) and the program must be registered as licensure qualifying. The coursework must include various studies in counseling theory and practice, assessment, psychopathology, ethical practice, and clinical instruction, such as human growth and development, foundations of mental health counseling and consultation, social and cultural foundations of counseling, and group dynamics, (*Office of the Professions, 2022*)

Evidenced must also be presented of receiving a completed supervised internship and practicum in mental health counseling which should be a part of the accredited program and must be a minimum of 600 clock hours for internship and 100 clock hours for a practicum—a total of 700 hours.

In addition, to be a candidate for licensure, the individual should also have post-graduate

practicum or field experience of no less than 3,000 clock hours, half of which should be comprised

of direct contact with clients. Both the direct and indirect contact of this field experience are to be under the same supervisor and not under two separate supervisors. The indirect contact should include experience with recordkeeping, research, case management, professional development, and supervision (*Office of the Professions, 2022*).

The completed 3,000 clock hours should be the accumulated hours of a 40-45 work week and should be under a limited permit. The limited permit should be applied for either at the same time as the submission of the application for licensure or after. It is good for two years and can only be issued under a licensed supervisor (*Office of the Professions, 2022*). It is important to obtain this permit because any experience gained without this permit will be deemed unacceptable for licensure. Also, hours that the individual earned through their internship and practicum while in graduate school that exceeds 700 hours can also be applied to the post-graduate 3,000 clock hours.

Moreover, the supervisor must be a licensed supervisor who is registered in New York State to practice mental health counseling. His or her supervision should entail the evaluation, assessment, and treatment of clients, and delegating some of these tasks to the individual based on the level of their competency.

It is significant that a License Mental Health Counselor “be of good moral character, not having any criminal records or pending disciplinary cases. To “be of good moral character” the individual who is applying for licensure must show that they have no record of breaking the law. He or she must demonstrate that they have values, principles, and ethics that are in good standing

with society, and should not pose any risk to public welfare, health, or safety. They must be willing to have a background check to substantiate their 'good moral character' claim.

To become a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in New York State you are required to take the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE). The NCMHCE exam is administered by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) (*Office of the Professions, 2022*). You can sit for the exam once you have been evaluated and are considered eligible. To be evaluated you must complete and submit all required forms and supplementary documents to the Office of Profession. The first form (Form 1) is the actual application for licensure and the second and third form are to verify your education and experience requirements which are to be submitted by a third party. Form 1 is to be completed and sent in by the applicant with the registration fee. However, the Office of Profession will not accept the second form (Form 2) which is to verify your Certification of Professional Education if it is directly submitted by you the applicant. This form must be submitted by the school or institution where you obtained your education. The Certification of supervised internship and practicum must also be sent to the Office of Profession by the school or institution where you underwent supervised internship as a part of your graduate program (*Office of the Professions, 2022*).

In addition, the licensed supervisor who supervised your experience must directly submit the required form, confirming that you have met your required hours for supervision. All other supplementary documents must also be sent to the Office of Profession. Once all the documents and forms have been evaluated and verified, then you will be notified as well as the examination administrators.

The National Clinical Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) which was developed and administered by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) is administered on a

computer and is made up of 10 clinical simulations. The exam assesses the applicant's supervision, consultation, and administrative abilities, as well as experience in counseling and psychotherapy and assessment and diagnostic skills. The examination consists of approximately 14 case studies, each of which is followed by 10 multiple-choice questions regarding the case study. It includes questions on the intake and assessment phases and the two follow-up counseling sessions.

As a mental health counselor, it is important to join counseling associations and organizations, such as the American Counseling Association, The American Association of Christian Counselors, and The American Mental Health Counselors Association to receive various benefits helpful to one's counseling profession.

The American Academy of Christian Counselors (ACA) was established in 1952 and is the world's largest association that represents professional counselors. The ACA is a nonprofit organization that specializes in the educational and professional growth of the counseling profess. This includes promoting the development of counselors, as well as advocating for the profession. A membership fee of \$105 is required for graduate students to join the ACA. Membership affords benefits such as award-winning publications, network connections, discounts on insurance, travel costs, and earning continuation education hours through their online professional development program and by attending their education and professional development events (*American Counseling Association, 2022*).

The ACA has several divisions with specific structures to help enhance professional identity and assist with meeting the various needs of the counseling community. The divisions I believe would be of most interest to me are the International Association of Addiction and Offender Counselors, the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling, and the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors. I believe that more advocacy is needed for juvenile offenders. I believe that a large amount of them are in

need of counseling and that mandatory counseling should be put in place to reduce prison sentencing for some offenders to help them deal with the emotional or psychological adversities or traumas that may have led them to a life of crime. I currently have a nephew who is incarcerated. His life took a drastic turn at the age of approximately 13 years old when his older brother died in a car accident. I still can remember my nephew's face and demeanor at his brother's funeral. It was very apparent that he had shut down emotionally. Then later his parents got divorced. That anger, grief, and perhaps depression, turned into rebellion, and that smart middle school student with great ambition began to act out in school, hung out with the wrong crowd, and began to commit burglary. His family was reluctant to get him into counseling, and the judges never mandated it. He continued to harden his heart and became more involved in burglary crimes. Under the 'three strikes you're out' policy, he was sentenced to 17 years and has completed about 8 years of his sentencing and has never received the counseling needed to deal with the loss of his brother and of his family.

The American Association of Christian Counselors, (AACC) is one of the leading organizations for professional, pastoral, and lay counselors. The AACC has an estimated 50,000 members who have instant access to over 15 valuable benefits which provide support, education, resources, and encouragement to its members. Its primary focus is on being practical, Biblical-based, and clinically excellent.

The AACC offers two types of membership with or without insurance for students that offers great resources such as Christian Counseling Today eMagazine and eNews, online resource catalog, monthly video-based webinars on counseling, and discounts on resources and conference registrations. The membership is \$129.00 (*The American Association of Christian Counselors, 2022*).

I am interested in four of the nine divisions of AACA, which are the Biblical Counseling Network, Addiction Recovery Network, Marriage and Family Network, and the International Christian Coaching Network. It is important for me to maintain and improve my understanding of the biblical approach to counseling and to be a part of a biblical counseling network. Because I also do want to work with youth in the criminal justice system, there's a high likelihood that I will encounter those who are struggling with

addiction or those who addiction played a role in their criminal behavior. Having biblical knowledge of addiction counseling and being a part of the Addiction Recovery Network is definitely essential to add to my counseling approach to also help to spiritually guide them in getting obtaining the recovery they need.

The American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA) strives to advance mental health services and advocacy, as well as provide professional development, education, and training for mental health counselors. Once you join the AMHCA, you are automatically included in their Open Forum. There are other communities that you can join as it relates to your interest, including the Graduate Student Community, and the Military Culture and Veterans Community. Members can blog on the platform and share their ideas and experiences with each other. In addition, through the Ethics Committee, members can receive consultation on ethics to guide them in making certain decisions, (*The American Mental Health Counseling Association*).

Student membership with the AMHCA is \$84. This is a three-year eligibility without any ability to vote. The AMHCA advocacy includes Affordable Care Act Reform and Mental Health Policy Reform. On November 7 to 10 the American Mental Health Counselors Association will be having its annual Fall summit, discussing ethical considerations and balancing the risk and benefits regarding telehealth (*The American Mental Health Counseling Association*).

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