

**New York State Licensure Requirements and Professional Organization**

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The role of a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC) is to provide mental health therapy services to individuals who have mental, emotional, or behavioral challenges. Regarding the scope of practice, the New York State Education Department states, "the practice of the profession of mental health counseling is defined as a) the evaluation, assessment, amelioration, treatment, modification, or adjustment to a disability, problem, or disorder of behavior, character, development, emotion, personality or relationships by the use of verbal or behavioral methods with individuals, couples, families or groups in private practice, group, or organized settings; and b) the use of assessment instruments and mental health counseling and psychotherapy to identify, evaluate and treat dysfunctions and disorders for purposes of providing appropriate mental health counseling services," (*Article 163, Mental Health Practitioners*).

### **Educational and Experience Requirements**

An application for mental health counselor licensure must have a master's or doctoral degree in counseling. Ideally, this would be from a CACREP-accredited college, but that is not a requirement. The Office of Professions can review the program to determine if the program is, "in accordance with the commissioner's regulations," (*Article 163, Mental Health Practitioners*). Graduate-level coursework must include human growth and development, social and cultural foundations of counseling, counseling theory and practice and psychopathology, group dynamics, lifestyle and career development, assessment and appraisal of individuals, couples and families and groups, research and program evaluation, professional orientation and ethics, foundations of mental health counseling and consultation, clinical instruction, and completion of a minimum one year supervised internship or practicum in mental health counseling. Once an applicant has graduated, they must complete three thousand hours of supervised experience

connected or related to mental health counseling practice. However, "satisfactory experience obtained in an entity operating under a waiver issued by the department pursuant to section sixty-five hundred three-a of this title may be accepted by the department, notwithstanding that such experience may have been obtained prior to the effective date of such section sixty-five hundred three-a and/or prior to the entity having obtained a waiver. The department may, for good cause shown, accept satisfactory experience that was obtained in a setting that would have been eligible for a waiver but which has not obtained a waiver from the department or experience that was obtained in good faith by the applicant under the belief that appropriate authorization had been obtained for the experience, provided that such experience meets all other requirements for acceptable experience," (*Article 163, Mental Health Practitioners*).

### **Good Moral Character**

New York State defines "be of good moral character" under Title VIII of the Education Law, which states that, "all information indicating that an applicant has been convicted of a crime, or has committed an act which raises a reasonable question as to the applicant's moral character, shall be referred to the director of the Office of Professional Discipline or his or her designee," (*Part 28, determination of good moral character in the profession*). The director of the Office of Professional Discipline will arrange for a full investigation of the instance under review. If a "reasonable question exists to the applicant's moral character," that information will be submitted to a panel of three or more members of the LMHC State Board for review. During this review, the panel can decide if the applicant's moral character is adequate or if there are still significant questions. If there are still significant questions, "upon the written request of the applicant, within 30 days after receipt of such notice, the department shall schedule a hearing on such question," (*Part 28, determination of good moral character in the profession*). During the

hearing, an administrative officer will rule on all motions and the panel of three or more members of the LMHC State Board will submit a written report reflecting the determination and recommendation to the Division of Professional Licensing Services and the applicant. An appeal process can occur if the applicant or the director of the Office of Professional Discipline chooses to appeal within 30 days after the service of the report (*Part 28, determination of good moral character in the profession*).

### **Licensing Exam and Application**

An applicant must pass the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) in order to obtain licensure in the state of New York, which is sponsored by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). The NBCC (2023) states, “the NCMHCE measures an individual’s ability to apply and evaluate knowledge in core counselor skills and competencies and to practice competently as a professional counselor. Specifically, it assesses an entry-level clinical mental health counselor’s ability to apply knowledge of theoretical and skill-based tenets to clinical case studies. The case studies are designed to capture a candidate’s ability to identify, analyze, diagnose, and develop plans for treatment of clinical concerns.” The NCMHCE includes eleven case studies with nine to fifteen multiple choice questions. Of these questions, one hundred will be scored. The NCMHCE has six areas of focus: professional practice and ethics; intake, assessment, and diagnosis; areas of clinical focus; treatment planning; counseling skills and interventions; and core counseling attributes (*National Board for Certified Counselors & Affiliates 2023*).

An applicant should complete the application for a limited permit upon fulfilling all of the educational requirements for an LMHC. Full licensure can be applied for once the applicant has passed the NCMHCE and completed three thousand hours of supervised experience connected or related to mental health counseling practice (*License requirements for mental health counselors*).

### **American Counseling Association**

“The American Counseling Association (ACA) is a not-for-profit professional and educational organization that is dedicated to the growth and enhancement of the counseling profession," (*American Counseling Association*). It was founded in 1952 and is the world's largest association that exclusively represents professional counselors in various practice settings.. Membership in ACA provides free publications and subscriptions, discounted rates on books through the ACA store, job searches and career consultations, advocacy regarding legislation and policy, discounted liability insurance, educational and professional resources, and access to continuing education resources, to name a few. The fee for master's degree students and new professionals to join ACA is \$105; the regular professional fee after that is \$189 (*American Counseling Association*).

ACA holds the ACA Conference and Expo annually, which is their flagship educational event that focuses on professional development. ACA also has a Government Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) team for ACA members (*American Counseling Association*).

### **American Mental Health Counseling Association**

The American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA) is a national organization dedicated to advancing the profession of clinical mental health counseling through collaboration, advocacy, research, ethical practice, education, training, and professional development. Membership in AMHCA includes networking opportunities and connection with other members, access to numerous AMHCA communities and their blogging platform, the opportunity to serve on a board or task force, ethical consultations, access to continuing education opportunities, and access to numerous digital publications, to name a few. Student and emerging professional memberships are \$84 annually; clinical and regular memberships are \$183 annually. The AMHCA has an Annual Conference that is, this year, being held in New Orleans.

It provides training, educational, and networking opportunities. AMHCA has state-affiliated chapters that provide more local resources, advocacy efforts, and training opportunities. It also has many committees and task forces, including the Multicultural and Social Justice Committee, which I would be interested in joining to learn how to help others create safe spaces for authentic multicultural skills development, communication, support, and empowerment (*American Mental Health Counselors Association*).

### **American Association of Christian Counselors**

The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) is the world's largest faith-based mental health organization. Membership benefits include access to numerous online publications, an online resource catalog, free continuing education credits, discounts on resources and conference registration, to name a few. The AACC has many different membership levels. Membership for a student without insurance is \$54 annually; for a student with insurance is \$74 annually; and for a premier membership is \$89 annually. AACC has many member divisions, including an addiction and recovery network, a marriage and family network, a multicultural division, a reproductive health and sexual trauma network, and a grief, crisis, and disaster network (*Become a member today!* 2023). I would be interested in joining the grief, crisis, and disaster network to further develop skills on how to manage crises and treat grief.

The AACC also offers many meetings, including the 2023 Mental Health Coaching Summit which offers workshops and keynote sessions, and the AACC 2023 Know Hope World Conference which includes plenary sessions, workshops, and exhibits (*Events*).

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