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Governor

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DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL
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Anne L. Head
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

From: Anne L. Head
Department of Professional and Financial Regulation

Subject: Preliminary Information on licensing process of Maine Board of Counseling Professionals Licensure Application Process (FY22-23 Biennial Budget for DPFR)

Date: March 4, 2021

The Maine Board of Counseling Professionals Licensure issues the following licenses:

- Conditional Professional Counselor
- Professional Counselor
- Conditional Clinical Professional Counselor
- Clinical Professional Counselor
- Marriage and Family Therapist
- Conditional Marriage and Family Therapist
- Pastoral Counselor
- Conditional Pastoral Counselor

Each type and level of licensure has requirements that must be met before the license can be issued. Conditional licenses are typically the first level of licensure to be held. During the license term, the licensee gains supervised experience and knowledge in order to take an exam for the next level of licensure.

An application must be filed and include all required documentation for each type of license.

OFFICES LOCATED AT: 76 NORTHERN AVENUE, GARDINER, MAINE

Initial Application

- When an application is received, an electronic license record for the applicant is opened. If the application does not contain all required documentation, it is considered incomplete. As documentation is received, it is added to the file. If all required documentation is not received with the application, an email is sent to the applicant describing the items needed to complete the application. Once the email about missing items is sent, staff waits for the applicant to submit what is needed. If the application is submitted too early when all documentation is not yet available, it is the applicant's responsibility to complete the file.

Examination Application (Assumes initial application is complete)

- If the application for approval to take an exam is complete with all required documents, and the applicant qualifies to take the exam pursuant to board rule, board staff sends an email to the applicant containing the necessary information to register with the National Board for Certified Counselors to take the exam and provides the applicant's information to NBCC. The applicant must then contact NBCC to register for the exam. The Maine Board contracts with NBCC which schedules exams for this profession.
- When an applicant is approved for examination, it is the applicant's responsibility to schedule themselves for the exam with NBCC. If the applicant passes the relevant exam, a score report is uploaded to a secure portal by the exam organization within a month after the exam date so board staff can retrieve the score. Board staff sends the applicant his or her score result by email and if the applicant has passed the exam, the email contains instructions to submit a license application.
- If the exam is not passed, the applicant may re-register with the NBCC to take the exam at the next available exam date. An applicant has up to one year to take an exam after qualifying to take it. For various reasons, applicants have taken the exam from one to eleven months after board approval.

License Application

- After passing the relevant exam, the applicant must submit a license application. This application can be submitted at any time after passage of the exam. If the license application is for a conditional license, a supervisor must be identified by the applicant before the license can be issued. A proposed supervision plan signed by the applicant and supervisor must be submitted. In many instances, the applicant has taken the exam and passed the exam but does not yet have a supervisor, so the license cannot be issued immediately. Conditional licensees may provide counseling services under the direct supervision of a board approved licensed supervisor.

Examples:

The following examples explain how the licensing process for this profession can be prolonged by various circumstances:

- An applicant files an incomplete application for a conditional clinical counseling exam and licensure on May 14, 2018. Correspondence is sent to the applicant requesting the information needed to complete the application. On July 3, 2018, the information is received, the application is complete, and the exam approval is sent to the applicant. On November 7, 2018, the applicant passes the exam. The applicant is notified of the passing score and is asked for the proposed supervision plan so the license can be issued. The proposed supervision plan is received on April 8, 2019 and the license is issued. In this example it may look like it took 11 months to issue a license but because the initial application was incomplete, the exam could not be approved until approximately 6 weeks after the incomplete application was received. Once the applicant received notice of approval to take the exam, the applicant passed the exam four months later. Five months after passing the exam, the applicant submitted the proposed supervision plan needed to issue the license.
- A conditional clinical counselor has completed the required supervision hours and files an incomplete application on August 13, 2020 for the clinical exam. Correspondence is sent to the applicant requesting the information needed to complete the application. The information is received on October 23, 2020 and the exam is approved. The applicant passes the exam on November 2, 2020. The applicant does not file an application for licensure after passing the exam because she thought the license would be sent as soon as she passed. *(The following information is on the application for exam "Please note: Once you have passed the examination, you must submit an application for licensure" The same information is also on the correspondence that is sent to the applicant when they pass the exam and are instructed to apply for the license.)* The applicant contacts staff and they assist her with filing the license application on February 9, 2021 and the license is issued that day.
- An applicant files an incomplete application for a clinical exam on May 16, 2019. Correspondence is sent to the applicant requesting the required documentation to complete the application. The information is received September 19, 2019 and the applicant is approved to take the exam. The applicant passes the exam on February 12, 2020. An application for clinical license is filed on February 15, 2020 and the license is issued on February 21, 2020. It took 4 months for the applicant to submit the documentation to complete the application and another 5 months for the applicant to take the exam once approved.

There are many instances in which staff communicates multiple times by phone and email with individual applicants both before the application is submitted and again during the application process to explain the requirements of licensure and answer questions.

A more complete response to the Committee's stated concerns about this licensing process will be submitted next week.

LICENSES ISSUED PER YEAR

BOARD	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 as of 3/3
ALCOHOL & DRUG Emergency temp	62	98	108	163	215	210 27	50 4
COUNSELORS Emergency temp	78	108	126	131	173	143 345	34 12
PSYCHOLOGISTS Emergency temp	27	24	14	33	26	31 569	1 11
SOCIAL WORKERS Emergency temp	230	295	302	513	626	532 526	102 15

EXAM APPROVALS

ALCOHOL & DRUG	115	20
COUNSELORS	51	1
PSYCHOLOGISTS	11	4
SOCIAL WORKERS	129	22