

Mental Health Licensure

LPC

Licensed Professional Counselor

Job Scope

Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) are trained to provide mental health and emotional support to individuals, couples, families, and groups. They utilize talk therapy, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and other evidence-based modalities to address mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, trauma, relationship issues, grief, and stress. LPCs may specialize in areas such as substance abuse, school counseling, or career guidance.

Education Requirements

Master's degree in counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, or a closely related field. Programs typically require 60 graduate credit hours, including supervised practicum and internship experiences.

Postgraduate Requirements

Completion of 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience post-graduation. Must pass a national licensing exam, usually the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE). Many states also require a jurisprudence or ethics exam specific to their laws and regulations.

Work Settings

- Private practices
- Community mental health centers
- Hospitals and integrated health systems
- K-12 schools and universities
- Employee assistance programs (EAPs)
- Correctional and rehabilitation facilities

Scope of Practice

- May diagnose and treat mental health disorders (scope varies by state).
- Cannot prescribe medication.
- Can provide individual, couples, family, and group counseling.
- May work independently or as part of a clinical team
- In some states, LPCs may supervise associate-level or intern counselors after meeting additional supervisory training requirements.

Mental Health Licensure

LMFT

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

Job Scope

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) are trained to assess, diagnose, and treat mental and emotional disorders with a specific focus on interpersonal relationships, family dynamics, and couple functioning. Using a systemic perspective, LMFTs help clients address concerns such as marital conflict, parenting challenges, infidelity, divorce, communication problems, blended family issues, and major life transitions.

Education Requirements

- Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) or a closely related field (e.g., Counseling with MFT specialization).
- Typically includes 60 credit hours of graduate-level coursework, including supervised practicum and internship experiences focused on relational therapy.

Postgraduate Requirements

- Completion of 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience, usually over a 2–3 year period post-graduation.
- Must pass the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) national licensing exam.
- Some states also require a jurisprudence or ethics exam.

Work Settings

- Private practice
- Family service agencies
- Community mental health centers
- Hospitals and healthcare systems
- Schools and educational settings
- Court and correctional systems (e.g., family court evaluations, reunification therapy)

Scope of Practice

- Specializes in relational and systemic therapy, focusing on couples, families, and broader interpersonal systems.
- May diagnose and treat mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and trauma—as they relate to or affect relationships.
- Cannot prescribe medication.
- May work independently or as part of a multidisciplinary team.
- In some states, may provide clinical supervision to associate-level MFTs after meeting supervisory training requirements.

Mental Health Licensure

LCSW

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Job Scope

LCSWs provide clinical social work services such as psychotherapy, assessment, case management, crisis intervention, and advocacy. They help individuals, families, and groups adjust to social, emotional, and behavioral challenges.

Education & Postgraduate Requirements

- Educational: Master's in Social Work (MSW) from a CSWE-accredited program.
- Postgraduate Clinical Experience: Typically 3,000–4,000 supervised clinical hours.
- Exams: Must pass the ASWB Clinical exam and often a state-specific jurisprudence exam.

Work Settings

- Can work in a wide array of environments: private practices, mental health clinics, hospitals, schools, government agencies, community welfare organizations, correctional facilities, and more.

Scope of Practice

- Can diagnose and treat mental health disorders.
- Provide psychotherapy to individuals, families, groups.
- Practice independently and bill clients or insurers.
- May supervise associate-level social workers (depending on state)

Mental Health Licensure

LP

Licensed Psychologist

Job Scope

LPs (Licensed Psychologists) conduct psychological assessments, diagnose mental health conditions, provide therapy, and may engage in research, consultation, and teaching.

Education & Postgraduate Requirements

- Educational: Doctoral degree in Psychology (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) with some rare exceptions (e.g. master's being sufficient in some states).
- Postgraduate Clinical Experience: Typically, 1,500–6,000 supervised hours, depending on the state.
- Exams: Pass the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) and often a state jurisprudence exam.

Work Settings

- Work in clinical/private practice, hospitals, schools, research institutions, and consultation roles. May practice independently across various settings.

Scope of Practice

- Full independent practice for psychological diagnosis and therapy.
- Can supervise LPAs and other psychological associates.
- Administer and interpret advanced psychological assessments.

LPA

Licensed Psychologist Associate

Job Scope

LPAs are master's-level practitioners in psychology. They perform psychological testing, assessments, individual/group counseling, and behavioral observations under supervision—and in some cases may qualify for independent practice after meeting additional requirements.

Education & Postgraduate Requirements

- Educational: Master's degree in psychology (at least ~60 semester credit hours, including practicum/internship hours).
- Practicum/Internship: A minimum of around 6 (sometimes up to 12) semester credit hours of supervised practicum or structured experience during graduate training.

Exams: Must pass the EPPP (master's level) and a jurisprudence exam.

- Postgraduate Supervised Experience: To obtain independent practice authority (in states that allow it, like Texas), an LPA needs ~3,000 supervised post-grad hours over 24–48 months.

Work Settings

- LPAs work in hospitals, clinics, schools, private practices (under supervision), universities, community agencies, and research institutions.

Scope of Practice

- Provide psychological services under supervision.
- With independent practice authorization: may practice autonomously within their competency scope.
- Usually cannot supervise others unless meeting higher requirements.