

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1995 RECONVENED SESSION

CHAPTER 820

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 54.1-3500, 54.1-3501, and 54.1-3503 through 54.1-3506 of the Code of Virginia, relating to professional counseling and marriage and family therapy.

[S 1024]

Approved April 6, 1995

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 54.1-3500, 54.1-3501, and 54.1-3503 through 54.1-3506 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

CHAPTER 35.

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING AND MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY.

§ 54.1-3500. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Appraisal activities" means the exercise of professional judgment based on observations and objective assessments of a client's behavior to evaluate current functioning, diagnose, and select appropriate treatment required to remediate identified problems or to make appropriate referrals.

"Board" means the Board of Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

"Certified substance abuse counselor" means a person certified to provide substance abuse counseling in a state-approved public or private substance abuse program or facility.

"Counseling" means the therapeutic process of: (i) conducting assessments and diagnoses for the purpose of establishing treatment goals and objectives and (ii) planning, implementing, and evaluating treatment plans using treatment interventions to facilitate human development and to identify and remediate mental, emotional or behavioral disorders and associated distresses which interfere with mental health.

"Counseling treatment intervention" means those cognitive, affective, behavioral and systemic counseling strategies, techniques and methods common to the behavioral sciences that are specifically implemented in the context of a therapeutic relationship. Other treatment interventions include developmental counseling, guidance, and consulting to facilitate normal growth and development, including educational and career development.

"Marriage and family therapist" means a person trained in the assessment and treatment of cognitive, affective, or behavioral mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage and family systems through the application of therapeutic and family systems theories and techniques.

"Marriage and family therapy" means the assessment and treatment of cognitive, affective, or behavioral mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage and family systems through the application of therapeutic and family systems theories and techniques and delivery of services to individuals, couples, and families, singularly or in groups, for the purpose of treating such disorders.

"Practice of counseling" means rendering or offering to render to individuals, groups, organizations, or the general public any service involving the application of principles, methods or procedures of the counseling profession, which shall include appraisal, counseling, and referral activities.

"Practice of marriage and family therapy" means the assessment and treatment of cognitive, affective, or behavioral mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage and family systems through the application of therapeutic and family systems theories and techniques, which shall include assessment, treatment, and referral activities.

"Professional counselor" means a person trained in counseling interventions designed to facilitate an individual's achievement of human development goals and remediating mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders and associated distresses which interfere with mental health and development.

"Referral activities" means the evaluation of data to identify problems and to determine advisability of referral to other specialists.

§ 54.1-3501. Exemption from requirements of licensure.

The requirements for licensure in this chapter shall not be applicable to:

1. Persons who render services that are like or similar to those falling within the scope of the classifications or categories in this chapter, so long as the recipients or beneficiaries of such services are not subject to any charge or fee, or any financial requirement, actual or implied, and the person rendering such service is not held out, by himself or otherwise, as a licensed practitioner.

2. The activities or services of a student pursuing a course of study in counseling or marriage and family therapy in an institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Board or under the supervision of a practitioner licensed or certified under this chapter, if such activities or services constitute a part of his course of study and are adequately supervised.

3. The activities, including marriage and family therapy or counseling, of rabbis, priests, ministers or

clergymen of any religious denomination or sect when such activities are within the scope of the performance of their regular or specialized ministerial duties, and no separate charge is made or when such activities are performed, whether with or without charge, for or under auspices or sponsorship, individually or in conjunction with others, of an established and legally cognizable church, denomination or sect, and the person rendering service remains accountable to its established authority.

4. Persons employed as salaried employees or volunteers of the federal government, the Commonwealth, a locality, or of any agency established or funded, in whole or part, by any such governmental entity or of a private, nonprofit organization or agency sponsored or funded, in whole or part, by a community-based citizen group or organization. Any person who renders psychological services, as defined in Chapter 36 (§ 54.1-3600 et seq.) of this title, shall be subject to the requirements of that chapter. Any person who, in addition to the above enumerated employment, engages in an independent private practice shall not be exempt from the requirements for licensure.

5. Persons regularly employed by private business firms as personnel managers, deputies or assistants so long as their counseling activities relate only to employees of their employer and in respect to their employment.

6. *Persons regulated by this Board as professional counselors or persons regulated by another board within the Department of Health Professions who provide, within the scope of their practice, marriage and family therapy or counseling to individuals or groups.*

§ 54.1-3503. Board of Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

The Board of Professional Counselors *and Marriage and Family Therapists* shall regulate the practice of counseling *and marriage and family therapy*.

The Board shall consist of nine members, ~~seven~~ six of whom shall be professional counselors *and one of whom shall be a marriage and family therapist* licensed in Virginia, who shall represent the various specialties recognized in the profession. The professional members of the Board shall include two full-time faculty members engaged in teaching counseling *or marriage and family therapy* in an accredited college or university in this Commonwealth, two counselors engaged in full-time private practice and one certified substance abuse counselor. *However, the marriage and family therapist initially appointed to the Board shall not be required to be licensed, shall not be licensed by another board in the Department of Health Professions, and shall be a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.* In addition, two citizen members shall be appointed to the Board.

The terms of the members of the Board shall be four years.

§ 54.1-3504. Nominations.

Nominations for professional members may be made from a list of at least three names for each vacancy submitted to the Governor by the Virginia Counselors Association ~~and~~ the Virginia ~~Mental Health Counselors~~ Association of Clinical Counselors, *and the Virginia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*. The Governor may notify such organizations of any professional vacancy other than by expiration. In no case shall the Governor be bound to make any appointment from among the nominees.

§ 54.1-3505. Specific powers and duties of the Board.

In addition to the powers granted in § 54.1-2400, the Board shall have the following specific powers and duties:

1. To cooperate with and maintain a close liaison with other professional boards and the community to ensure that regulatory systems stay abreast of community and professional needs.

2. To conduct inspections to ensure that licensees conduct their practices in a competent manner and in conformance with the relevant regulations.

3. To designate specialties within the profession.

4. To administer the certification of rehabilitation providers pursuant to Article 2 (§ 54.1-3510 et seq.) of this chapter, including prescribing fees for application processing, examinations, certification and certification renewal.

5. (Effective until July 1, 1999) To promulgate regulations for the voluntary certification of licensees as sex offender treatment providers. In promulgating such regulations, the Board shall consider the standards recommended by the Advisory Committee on Certified Practices pursuant to § 54.1-3610. The provisions of this subdivision shall expire on July 1, 1999.

6. *To promulgate regulations for the qualifications, education, and experience for licensure of marriage and family therapists. The requirements for clinical membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), and the professional examination service's national marriage and family therapy examination may be considered by the Board in the promulgation of these regulations. The educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for marriage and family therapists shall not be less than the educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for professional counselors.*

§ 54.1-3506. License required.

In order to engage in the practice of counseling *or marriage and family therapy* as defined in this chapter it shall be necessary to hold a license; *however, no license shall be required to practice marriage and family therapy until six months after the effective date of regulations promulgated by the*

Board under subdivision 6 of § 54.1-3505. The Board of Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists may issue a license, without examination, to practice marriage and family therapy to persons who hold a current and unrestricted license as a professional counselor within the Commonwealth who meet the clinical and academic requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist. The applicant for such license shall present satisfactory evidence of qualifications equal to those required of applicants for licensure as marriage and family therapists by examination in the Commonwealth.