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State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners Law

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45:8B-1. Declaration relative to practice of marriage and family therapy

The practice of marriage and family therapy in the State of New Jersey is hereby declared to affect the public safety and welfare, and to be subject to regulation and control in the public interest in order to protect the public from the unprofessional, improper, unauthorized and unqualified practice of marriage and family therapy, and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice marriage and family therapy. This act shall be liberally construed to carry out these objects and purposes.

L.1968, c.401, s.1; amended 1995, c.366, s.1.

45:8B-2. Definitions

As used in this act, unless the context clearly requires otherwise and except as in this act expressly otherwise provided:

(a) "Licensed marriage and family therapist" means an individual who holds a current, valid license as a licensed marriage and family therapist pursuant to the provisions of this act.

(b) The "practice of marriage and family therapy" means the rendering of professional marriage and family therapy services to individuals, couples and families, singly or in groups, whether in the general public or in organizations, either public or private, for a fee, monetary or otherwise. "Marriage and family therapy" is a specialized field of therapy which includes premarital counseling and therapy, pre- and post-divorce counseling and therapy, and family therapy. The practice of marriage and family therapy consists of the application of principles, methods and techniques of counseling and psychotherapy for the purpose of resolving psychological conflict, modifying perception and behavior, altering old attitudes and establishing new ones in the area of marriage and family life. In its concern with the antecedents of marriage, with the vicissitudes of marriage, and with the consequences of the failure of marriage, marriage and family therapy keeps in sight its objective of enabling clients to achieve the optimal adjustment consistent with their welfare as individuals, as members of a family, and as citizens in society.

(c) "Board" means the State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners acting as such under the provisions of this act.

(d) "Recognized educational institution" means any educational institution which grants the bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees, or any one or more thereof, and which is recognized by the Commission on Higher Education or by any accrediting body acceptable to the State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners.

(e) "Licensed associate marriage and family therapist" means an individual who holds a current, valid license as a licensed associate marriage and family therapist pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-1 et seq.) and P.L.2017, c.350 (C.45:8B-18.1 et al.).

L.1968, c.401, s.2; amended 1995, c.366, s.2; 2017, c.350, s.1.

45:8B-2.1. Terms refer to "State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners," marriage and family therapist"

Whenever the term "State Board of Marriage Counselor Examiners" or "marriage counselor" occurs or any reference is made thereto in any law, contract or document, the same shall be deemed to refer to

the "State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners" and "marriage and family therapist," respectively.

L.1995, c.366, s.24.

45:8B-3. Recognition of educational institutions

No educational institution shall be denied recognition as a recognized educational institution solely because its program is not accredited by any professional organization of marriage and family therapists, and nothing in this act or in the administration of this act shall require the registration with the board of educational institutions of departments of sociology, psychology, social work, marriage and family life or any other specialty or doctoral programs in any of these professional fields.

L.1968, c.401, s.3; amended 1995, c.366, s.3.

45:8B-4. Practice of medicine and surgery not authorized by act

Nothing in this act shall authorize the practice of medicine and surgery by any person not licensed so to do pursuant to chapter 9 of Title 45 of the Revised Statutes.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 4, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-5. Licensure required for advertising, use of titles

Except as provided in sections 6 and 8 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-6 and 8), a person who is not licensed under this act, shall not advertise the performance of marriage and family therapy services or represent himself to be a licensed practicing marriage and family therapist, use a title or description, including the following titles: marriage and family therapist, counselor, advisor or consultant; an associate marriage and family therapist, counselor, advisor or consultant; a family counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; a family guidance counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; a marriage guidance counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; a family relations counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; a marriage relations counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; a marriage counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; or any other name, style or description denoting that the person so engages in marriage and family therapy. Except as otherwise specifically provided in sections 6 and 8 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-6 and 8), only a person licensed under this act shall advertise the performance of marriage and family therapy or counseling services; use a title or description such as marriage and family therapist, counselor, advisor or consultant; an associate marriage and family therapist, counselor, advisor or consultant; a family guidance counselor, therapist, advisor, or consultant; a family relations counselor, therapist, advisor, or consultant; a marriage counselor, therapist, advisor or consultant; or any other name, style or description denoting that the person is a licensed marriage and family therapist; or licensed to practice marriage and family therapy. The use by a person who is not licensed under this act of such terms, whether in titles or descriptions or otherwise, is not prohibited by this act except when in connection with the offer to practice or the practice of marriage and family therapy as defined in subsection (b) of section 2 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-2). Use of such terms in connection with professional activities other than the rendering of professional marriage and family therapy services to individuals for a fee, monetary or otherwise, shall not be construed as implying that a person is licensed under this act or as an offer to practice or as the practice of marriage and family therapy.

L.1968, c.401, s.5; amended 1995, c.366, s.4; 2017, c.350, s.2.

45:8B-6. Unlicensed persons, certain activities permitted.

An individual who is not a licensed practicing marriage and family therapist or a licensed associate marriage and family therapist shall not be limited in his activities:

(a) As part of his duties as an employee of:

(1) an accredited academic institution, a federal, State, county or local governmental institution or agency, or a research facility while performing those duties for which he was employed by the institution, agency or facility;

(2) an organization which is nonprofit and which is, in the opinion of the board, a bona fide community agency, while performing those duties for which he was employed by the agency;

(3) a proprietary organization while performing those duties for which he was employed by the organization, provided his marriage and family therapy duties are under the direct supervision of a licensed practicing marriage and family therapist.

(b) As a student of marriage and family therapy, marriage and family therapy intern or person preparing for the practice of marriage and family therapy under qualified supervision in a training institution or facility recognized by the board, provided he is designated by such titles as "marriage and family therapy intern," or others, clearly indicating the training status.

(c) As a practicing marriage and family therapist for a period not to exceed 10 consecutive business days or 15 business days in any 90-day period, if he resides outside and his major practice is outside of the State of New Jersey, and gives the board a summary of his qualifications and a minimum of 10 days' written notice of his intention to practice in the State of New Jersey under this subsection, provided he (1) is certified or licensed in another state under requirements the board considers to be the equivalent of requirements for licensing as a marriage and family therapist under this act, or (2) resides in a state which does not certify or license marriage and family therapists and the board considers his professional qualifications to be the equivalent of requirements for licensing under this act; and is not adjudged and notified by the board that he is ineligible for licensing under this act.

(d) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2005, c.49.)

(e) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2017, c.350)

L.1968, c.401, s.6; amended 1995, c.366, s.5; 2005, c.49, s.1; 2017, c.350, s.3.

45:8B-7. Persons not entitled to assert exceptions

The exceptions specified in subsection (c) of section 6 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-6) shall not be available to any person who has been found by a court of this or any State of the United States to have been convicted of, or engaged in acts constituting, any crime or offense involving moral turpitude or relating adversely to the activity regulated by the board. For the purposes of this section, a judgment of conviction or a plea of guilty, non vult, nolo contendere or any other such disposition of alleged criminal activity shall be deemed a conviction. An action to determine whether any person asserting an exception under subsection (c) of section 6 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-6) has committed one or more of the acts listed in this section may be brought by the Attorney General on behalf of the board.

L.1968, c.401, s.7; amended 2005, c.49, s.2; 2017, c.350, s.4.

45:8B-8. Construction of act

Nothing in this act shall be construed to prevent a person from doing work of a marriage and family therapy nature, or advertising those services, when acting within the scope of the person's profession or occupation and doing work consistent with the person's training, including physicians, clinical social workers, psychologists, members of the clergy, nurses or any other profession licensed by the State, or students within accredited programs of these professions, if the person does not hold himself out to the public as possessing a license or certificate issued pursuant to this act.

L.1968, c.401, s.8; amended 1995, c.366, s.6.

45:8B-9. State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners created

There is hereby created in the Division of Consumer Affairs of the Department of Law and Public Safety, the State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, which shall consist of 12 members, who are residents of this State and citizens of the United States, six of whom shall be licensed practicing marriage and family therapists, one of whom shall be a licensed professional counselor currently serving on the Professional Counselor Examiners Committee, one of whom shall be a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor currently serving on the Alcohol and Drug Counselor Committee, and three of whom shall be public members, including the public member appointed pursuant to the provisions of section 2 of P.L.1971, c.60 (C.45:1-2.2), and one of whom shall be a State executive department member appointed pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1971, c.60 (C.45:1-2.1 et seq.).

L.1968, c.401, s.9; amended 1993, c.340, s.18; 1995, c.366, s.7; 1997, c.331, s.19.

45:8B-10. Qualifications of board members

Each member of the board, except the public members, the State executive department member and the licensed professional counselor, shall have the following qualifications:

(a) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1995, c.366).

(b) He shall be at the time of his appointment, and shall have been for at least five years prior thereto, actively engaged as a marriage and family therapist in rendering professional services in marriage and family therapy, or in the education and training of students of marriage and family therapy or in marriage and family therapy research, and shall have spent the major portion of the time devoted by him to such activity, during the two years preceding his appointment, in this State.

(c) He shall hold at least a master's degree in marriage and family therapy, social work, marriage or pastoral counseling, psychology, sociology of the family, marriage and family life education, or in a closely allied field or a doctor of medicine; from a recognized educational institution.

L.1968, c.401, s.10; amended 1993, c.340, s.19; 1995, c.366, s.8.

45:8B-11. Appointment, terms of board members

The members of the board shall be appointed by the Governor. The terms of the first seven members of the board shall expire as follows: two members, June 30, 1970; two members, June 30, 1971; three members, June 30, 1972. Thereafter, except for the State executive department member, each member of the board shall be appointed for a term of three years. A term shall expire on June 30 of the third year

of the appointment. If before the expiration of his term, any member shall die, resign, become disqualified or otherwise cease to be a board member, the vacancy shall be filled by the Governor by appointment for the unexpired term. Each appointee shall, upon accepting appointment to the board, take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation prescribed by law and file same in the office of the Secretary of State. Except for the State executive department member, a member shall not serve more than two full terms.

The first appointees, other than the citizen members, shall be deemed to be and shall become licensed practicing marriage counselors immediately upon their appointment and qualification as members of the board.

L.1968, c.401, s.11; amended 1995, c.366, s.9.

45:8B-12. Removal; grounds; hearing

The Governor shall have power to remove from office any member of the board for incompetence, neglect of duty, unprofessional conduct or moral turpitude; but no board member may be thus removed until after a public hearing of the charges against him, and at least 30 days' prior written notice to such accused member of the charges against him and of the date fixed for such hearing.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 12, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-13. Powers, duties of board

The board shall, at its first meeting, to be called by the Governor as soon as may be following the appointment of its members, and all annual meetings, to be held in June of each year thereafter, organize by electing from among its members a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary whose election shall be subject to the approval of the Attorney General. The officers shall serve until the following June 30 and until their successors are appointed and qualified. The board shall adopt a seal which shall be affixed to all licenses issued by the board. The board shall administer and enforce the provisions of this act. The board shall hold at least one regular meeting each year; but additional meetings may be held upon call of the chairman or at the written request of any two members of the board. Six members of the board shall constitute a quorum and no action at any meeting shall be taken without at least four votes in accord. The board shall from time to time adopt rules and regulations and amendments and supplements as it may deem necessary to enable it to perform its duties under and to carry into effect the provisions of this act. The board shall examine and pass on the qualifications of all applicants for permits or licenses under this act, and shall issue a permit or license to each qualified successful applicant therefor, attesting to his professional qualifications to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy.

A member of the board shall be reimbursed for actual expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of his duties as a member of or on behalf of the board.

Subject to the approval of the Attorney General, the board shall be empowered to hire such assistance as it may deem necessary to carry on its activities. All expenditures deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of this act shall be paid by the State Treasurer from the license fees and other sources of income of the board, within the limits of available appropriations according to law, but in no event shall expenditures exceed the revenues of the board during any fiscal year. The board, through its chairman or secretary, may issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses to testify before the board and produce relevant books, records and papers before the board and may administer oaths in taking testimony, in any matter pertaining to its duties under this act (including, without limitation, any hearing authorized or required to be held by the board under any provisions of this act), which subpoenas shall issue under the seal of the board and shall be served in the same manner as subpoenas issued out of the

Superior Court. Every person who refuses or neglects to obey the command of any subpoena, or who, after hearing, refuses to be sworn and testify, shall, in either event, be liable to a penalty of \$50 to be sued for in the name of the board in any court of competent jurisdiction, which penalty when collected shall be paid to the secretary of the board.

L.1968, c.401, s.13; amended 1995, c.366, s.10.

45:8B-14. Application for license.

A person desiring to obtain a license as a practicing marriage and family therapist or as an associate marriage and family therapist shall make application therefor to the board upon such form and in such manner as the board shall prescribe and shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the board that he:

- (a) Is at least 21 years of age;
- (b) Is of good moral character;
- (c) Is not engaged in any practice or conduct which would be a ground for refusing to issue, suspending or revoking a license issued pursuant to this act; and
- (d) Qualifies for licensing by an examination of credentials or for admission to an assembled examination to be conducted by the board.

L.1968, c.401, s.14; amended 1995, c.366, s.11; 2017, c.350, s.5.

45:8B-15. Issuance of license without examination; educational and experience requirements

Any person who applies on or before January 1, 1970, may obtain a license to be issued by the board by an examination of credentials if he meets the qualifications set forth in section 14(a), (b) and (c) and provides evidence satisfactory to the board that he meets educational and experiential qualifications as follows:

- (a) Educational Requirement: At least a master's degree in social work, marriage or pastoral counseling, psychology, sociology of the family, family life education, or another field of study or a closely allied field of a doctor of medicine in which it is established by the applicant's transcripts that an appropriate course of study has been successfully completed; the degree to have been obtained from an accredited institution so recognized at the time of granting of such degrees.
- (b) Experience Requirements: Three years of full-time counseling experience, or its equivalent, of a character approved by the board, 2 years of which must have been in marriage counseling.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 15, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-16. Persons already licensed or certified in certain professional disciplines deemed qualified

Any person already licensed or certified by January 1, 1970 in the State in a professional discipline cited in section 15a, and under the provisions of section 15b is deemed qualified as a marriage counselor.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 16, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-18. Qualifications for admission to examination.

A person applying to the board to obtain a license as a practicing marriage and family therapist may be admitted to an examination if he meets the qualifications set forth in subsections (a), (b) and (c) of section 14 of P.L.1968, c.401 (C.45:8B-14) and provides evidence satisfactory to the board that he has met educational and experiential qualifications as follows:

(a) Educational Requirement:

To meet the educational requirements, an applicant shall have a minimum of a master's degree in marriage and family therapy, a master's degree in social work, or a graduate degree in a related field and shall demonstrate that he has completed course work content and training substantially equivalent to a master's degree in marriage and family therapy; and the degree shall have been obtained from an accredited institution so recognized at the time of granting of the degrees.

Pursuant to regulations adopted by the board, an applicant with a graduate degree in a related field which does not provide training and course work substantially equivalent in content to a master's degree in marriage and family therapy, shall be deemed to meet the educational requirements set forth in this section upon satisfactory completion of either a post graduate degree recognized by the board, or a program of training and course work at an institute or training program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education.

(b) Experience Requirements:

To meet the experience requirements, an applicant shall have three years of full-time counseling experience, or its equivalent, of a character approved by the board, two years of which shall have been in marriage and family therapy; two of the three required years shall have been under the supervision of a person holding a degree specified in subsection (a) of this section and who has himself had no less than five full-time years of professional experience or the equivalent. For those with a master's degree, two of the three required years shall occur after the applicant has earned the master's degree, and for those with a post-master's or doctoral degree, one of the three required years shall occur after the applicant has earned the post-master's or doctoral degree.

L.1968, c.401, s.18; amended 1979, c.425; 1995, c.366, s.12; 2005, c.49, s.3; 2017, c.350, s.6.

45:8B-18.1. License; fee

All associate marriage and family therapist licenses shall be issued for a two-year period upon the payment of the prescribed fee, and shall be renewed upon filing of a renewal application, the payment of the fee, and presentation of satisfactory evidence to the board that in the period since the license was issued or last renewed any continuing education requirements have been completed as specified by the board. An associate marriage and family therapist license shall be renewed no more than two times.

L.2017, c.350, s.9.

45:8B-18.2. Direct supervision for associate marriage and family therapist.

No licensed associate marriage and family therapist shall practice without direct supervision by a licensed marriage and family therapist or a supervisor acceptable to the board. The plan for supervision of the licensed associate marriage and family therapist shall be approved by the board prior to any actual performance of counseling by the licensed associate marriage and family therapist.

L.2017, c.350, s.10.

45:8B-19. Examinations

The board shall conduct examinations at least once a year at a time and place to be designated by it. Examinations shall be written and, if the board deems advisable, oral. In any written examination each applicant shall be designated by a number so that his name shall not be disclosed to the board until examinations have been graded. Examinations shall include questions in such theoretical and applied fields as the board deems most suitable to test an applicant's knowledge and competence to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy. An applicant shall be held to have passed an examination upon the affirmative vote of at least six members of the board.

L.1968, c.401, s.19; amended 1995, c.366, s.13.

45:8B-20. Failure of examination; waiting period for admission to subsequent examinations

Any person who shall have failed an examination conducted by the board may not be admitted to a subsequent examination for a period of at least 6 months.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 20, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-21. Licensing of person licensed out-of-State

The board may issue a license by an examination of credentials to any applicant who presents evidence that he is licensed or certified as a marriage and family therapist in another state with requirements for that license or certificate such that the board is of the opinion that the applicant is competent to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy in this State.

L.1968, c.401, s.21; amended 1995, c.366, s.14.

45:8B-24. Application for renewal; issuance of new license; fees for renewal of expired licenses

On or before April 15 in each year the secretary of the board shall forward to the holder a form of application for renewal thereof. Upon the receipt of the completed form and the renewal fee on or before June 30 the secretary shall issue a new license for the year commencing July 1. Any application for renewal of a license which has expired shall in addition require the payment of a reregistration fee, or in such cases as the board may by rule prescribe, by a new application fee.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 24, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-24.1. Continuing education requirements

a. The State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners shall require each marriage and family therapist, as a condition of biennial license renewal pursuant to section 1 of P.L.1972, c.108 (C.45:1-7) and each associate marriage and family therapist, as a condition of biennial license renewal pursuant to section 9 of P.L.2017, c.350 (C.45:8B-18.1), to complete any continuing education requirements imposed by the board pursuant to this section.

b. The board shall:

(1) Promulgate rules and regulations for implementing continuing education requirements as a condition of license renewal for licenses issued under its jurisdiction;

(2) Establish standards for continuing education, including the subject matter and content of courses of study, and the number and type of continuing education credits required of a licensee as a condition of biennial license renewal;

(3) Recognize the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the New Jersey Division of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and other organizations as providers of continuing education, and accredit educational programs, including, but not limited to, meetings of constituents and components of marriage and family therapy associations recognized by the board, examinations, papers, publications, presentations, teaching and research appointments, and shall establish procedures for the issuance of credit upon satisfactory proof of the completion of these programs. In the case of education courses or programs, each hour of instruction shall be equivalent to one credit; and

(4) Approve only those continuing education programs as are available to all marriage and family therapists in this State on a reasonable nondiscriminatory basis.

c. The continuing education required pursuant to this section shall include at least one credit of educational programs or topics concerning prescription opioid drugs, including the risks and signs of opioid abuse, addiction, and diversion.

L.2000, c.119, s.1; amended 2017, c.341, s.6; 2017, c.350, s.7.

45:8B-24.2. Waiver of continuing education requirement

The board may, in its discretion, waive requirements for continuing education on an individual basis for reasons of hardship, such as health or other good cause.

L.2000, c.119, s.2.

45:8B-24.3. Continuing education credits not required for initial registration

The board shall not require completion of continuing education credits for initial registrations. The board shall not require completion of continuing education credits for any registration periods commencing within 12 months of the effective date of this act. The board shall require completion of continuing education credits on a pro rata basis for any registration periods commencing more than 12 but less than 24 months following the effective date of this act.

L.2000, c.119, s.3.

45:8B-26. Application for reinstatement

Application may be made to the board for reinstatement, at any time after the expiration of one year from the date of revocation of a license. The application shall be in writing and shall be accompanied by the reinstatement fee. The board shall not reinstate any applicant, unless satisfied that he is competent to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy, and if the board deems it necessary for its determination, then it may require the applicant to pass an examination.

L.1968, c.401, s.26; amended 1995, c.366, s.15.

45:8B-29. Communication privileged, waiver

A communication between a marriage and family therapist, or an associate marriage and family therapist, and the person or persons in therapy shall be confidential and its secrecy preserved. This privilege shall not be subject to waiver, except where the marriage and family therapist is a party defendant to a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from the therapy, in which case, the waiver shall be limited to that action.

L.1968, c.401, s.29; amended 1995, c.366, s.16; 2017, c.350, s.8.

45:8B-30. Remission of fees, fines and penalties

All fees, fines, penalties and other moneys derived from the operation of this act shall be paid to the board and by it remitted to the State Treasurer.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 30, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-31. Severability

If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without such invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are declared to be severable.

L.1968, c. 401, s. 31, eff. Jan. 10, 1969.

45:8B-33. Short title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Practicing Marriage and Family Therapy Act."

L.1968, c. 401, s. 33, eff. Jan. 10, 1969; amended 1995, c.366, s.17.