



Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Who should join NYMHCA?

NYMHCA is a professional organization for all counselors, students, and counselor educators who want to or who currently work clinically, regardless of work setting or area of specialization. Other mental health professionals whose education and training are comparable to that of clinical counselors are also very welcome!

There shall be no discrimination against any individual on the basis of ethnic group, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age and/or disability!

2. What services does NYMHCA provide for counselors?

NYMHCA currently provides the following services to members:

- the *NYMHCA Quarterly* (emailed to members)
- the *Counselor Educator Newsletter*
- the NYMHCA 800# (1-800-4-NYMHCA)
- legislative initiatives including advocacy for the profession with legislators, governmental agencies, and national and state professional organizations
- continuous up-to-date information on licensure issues, organization info and other information pertinent to the profession
- a link to liability insurance information from this site
- regional chapters so counselors can come together to network, and continue their professional education,
- the development of working relationships with the counselor education programs, their faculty and students.
- our Speaker's Bureau to help our members to increase their exposure as professionals to the general public
- **Find a Counselor** online directory so counselors can advertise their services to consumers
- **Find a Supervisor** online directory so counselors can enhance their clinical skills after completion of their graduate degree
- a statewide convention offered every other April in Albany
- a meeting for Counselor Educators held every other April in Albany
- Our dental and vision plans just for NYMHCA members!

3. What additional services are planned for the future?

Some of what is planned are the following:

- ongoing work with the licensure regulatory board and the State Education Department
- advocating for/protecting the licensure law!!!
- marketing MHC services to clinics, agencies, hospitals and managed care companies
- assisting regional chapters in developing continuing education opportunities as well as workshops which will help to prepare counselors to obtain licenses
- regional conferences
- work on the drafting and passing of any legislation necessary for our profession!

4. What is the name of our Regulatory Board and what board members represent mental health counselors?

Our regulatory board is called the Mental Health Practitioners Board.

5. Who is licensed under the licensure law?

There are 4 "new" professions. They are: Mental Health Counselors (this title will apply to *all* counselors who wish to be licensed to work clinically), Marriage and Family Therapists, Psychoanalysts, and Creative Arts Therapists. Due to the wording under the mental health counselor part of the law, Rehabilitation Counselors can be licensed to practice their profession but with the license title of Mental Health Counselor.

6. What are the educational and experiential requirements of the licensure law?

Mental health counselors need a master's degree of at least 60 graduate hours to be licensable. Counselors also need at least 3000 hours of post-Master's supervised experience in order to be licensed. Although it is advised that counselors wait until they have at least 2,000 hours of experience before sitting for the licensure exam, the law does not prohibit taking the exam at any time after they have obtained their Master's degree.

7. What does the law allow counselors to do?

Under the law, counselors are authorized to test, assess (diagnose), evaluate and treat clients. Clients can be individuals, couples, families and groups. We are allowed to use the DSM and other diagnostic criteria. This is one of the most comprehensive licensure laws in the country.

8. What exam is the state using to test counselors for this license?

Since the license is for counselors who work in clinical settings the exam is the Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE). We suggest that counselors not take the exam until they have accrued at least 2,000 hours of experience, so that if they fail the exam they can take it again before their limited permit runs out.

NYMHCA is offering individual, small and large group examination preparation training for the exam. Check the Licensure Examination Workshop page on this website for more information.

9. What are the educational requirements to be licensed?

The educational requirements in our licensure law are:

- 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 a minimum of 1 year supervised internship or practicum in mental health counseling

**This is a general outline and it is to be expected that many grad programs will have variations on each of these courses.*

10. How can I get a licensure application?

You can:

- call the State Education Department at: 518-474-3817
- email SED at: op4info@mail.nysed.gov
- go to the Office of Professional website and download an application:
www.op.nysed.gov/mhpcontact.htm#lic

11. How do I apply for a limited permit while I accrue my 3,000 hours?

Please read through the entire application packet. In it is the application for the limited permit. You must send in your licensure application minus the limited permit application a few months before you have graduated with your Master's or doctoral degree. Once the state has approved your education, you are then eligible for a limited permit. As soon as you obtain employment you must immediately send in your limited permit application for approval by the state. The clock will start on your permit on the day your permit is issued.

12. Is my limited permit renewable?

Your limited permit is for 2 years and is renewable for an additional year.

13. How do I count my hours of experience?

Counselors are allowed to count all of the time required in the counseling of clients (1500 hours at least). They can also count the time for note-taking, scheduling of sessions and other tasks related to the therapeutic process. No hours accrued during your internship or work done before you received a graduate degree can count toward licensure. You can use hours accrued in a volunteer (unpaid) position as long as you are being supervised by a licensed mental health professional. You cannot work in your own private practice and receive outside supervision in order to qualify for licensure. You CAN work for someone else's private practice and receive supervision from them.

14. Who can supervise me as I accrue my hours?

Counselors can be supervised by any licensed mental health professional in New York State. That includes: psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and social workers, in addition to licensed mental health counselors.

15. When I receive my license will I be able to admit clients to a hospital?

Our licenses do not include hospital privileges at this time.

16. How often do I have to renew my license? Do I have to have continuing education hours in order to maintain and renew my license?

Your license will require renewal every 3 years. The state will notify you when the renewal is coming due. No continuing education requirement is in place right now for LMHC's but it is likely that continuing education/competency will be required in the near future.

17. What is the difference between a license and a national certification?

Licenses are offered by a state government and a national credential (NCC, ACS, CRC) is offered by national professional credentialing bodies. The national counselor exam is used in some states as a licensure exam, but in New York we have the clinical mental health counselor exam as our licensure exam.

18. I understand that in our licensure law it says that we have to refer clients to a physician if we believe them to have serious mental illnesses. Do they need to be referred to a psychiatrist? What if the client refuses to go?

The standards of practice and code of ethics for mental health counselors include the need for referral for an evaluation when serious physical or mental illness is suspected. The client can be referred to either a physician or a psychiatrist depending upon the presenting problem. If the client refuses it is required that we end the treatment process until such time as they comply. You should inform your clients about this legal requirement when they begin the counseling process with you.

19. Can licensed mental health counselors diagnose? Can I use diagnostic testing?

Our law does not include the word "diagnose" but does include the synonyms: assess, evaluate and test. It also says we can use diagnostic criteria such as the DSM as approved by the State Education Department. The SED supports our use of the DSM as we are prepared for diagnosing with our education and training.

LMHC's who want to use diagnostic testing need to have been adequately trained to do so. If you are unsure if you have the expertise to use diagnostic tests, go to: <http://aac.necat.edu/resources.html> and scroll down to where it says "Key Documents." There you will find the standard for our profession for testing expertise.

20. Will my license allow me to be eligible to receive 3rd party reimbursements from insurance companies?

At this writing almost all of the major insurers doing business in New York State accept LMHC's into their networks. NYMHCA is working to gain acceptance into the networks of those companies that still don't accept us.

21. Will LMHC's be considered qualified providers for Medicaid?

Mental health counselors are Medicaid reimbursable when working in state agencies.

22. What is the difference between the boundaries of professional competence and the scope of practice for LMHC's?

Our scope of practice is the the section of the licensure law that explains what LMHC's are allowed to do by law if they are competent to do so. That means you can test, diagnose and treat, individuals, couples, families and groups if you have the education and training required. Only you will be able to determine if you can and will be competent to provide the services listed above. If you provide services for which you have not been adequately trained you could put your license and career in jeopardy.

23. I am a certified school counselor. Can I be licensed as a mental health counselor? Can I use my experience as a school counselor toward licensure?

School counselors can be eligible for licensure but will need to take additional courses as a matriculated student in a mental health counselor master's program. They would also need to take an additional internship in a clinical setting. A clinical setting is one where clients are diagnosed and treated. It is also a setting where a licensed mental health professional is providing on-site supervision.

24. When I receive my license should I register with national registries in order to enhance my acceptance onto provider panels?

All counselors wishing to be providers for insurance companies will need to have a national provider number to be in

compliance with HIPAA. To obtain that number (once you are licensed) go to: www.nppes.cms.hhs.gov, and apply online. It takes about a day to get the number.

If you are thinking about moving to or practicing in a different state in addition to being accepted onto provider panels, go to the CAQH.org website and register with them too. The CAQH is a registry established by national insurance companies so they can share information about providers. This too can increase the likelihood that you will be accepted on provider panels. Unfortunately you must be accepted by at least one insurance company as a provider and have a CAQH# before you can apply to the CAQH registry.

25. Who can help me with my licensure application?

Several of our NYMHCA regional chapters have licensed counselors willing to help with the application process, or are offering application help workshops. Go to our [Regional Chapters](#) page for a list of all of NYMHCA's chapters and interest groups.

The New York State Education Department's Office of Professions website is very user friendly. Go to: OP.NYSED.GOV. To do a search click on the "Find Answers" link.

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