

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE DIVISION[645]

Adopted and Filed

Rulemaking related to continuing education

The Board of Behavioral Science hereby rescinds Chapter 32, “Continuing Education for Marital and Family Therapists and Mental Health Counselors,” Iowa Administrative Code, and adopts a new chapter with the same title.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code chapters 17A, 147, 154D and 272C.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code chapters 17A, 147, 154D and 272C.

Purpose and Summary

This rulemaking sets forth continuing education requirements for mental health counselors and marital and family therapists. It includes definitions related to continuing education, the required number of hours of continuing education that licensees are required to obtain, the standards that licensees need to meet in order to comply with the rules, and the types of continuing education courses that are permissible. The intended benefit of continuing education is to ensure that mental health counselors and marital and family therapists maintain up-to-date practice standards and, as a result, provide high-quality services to Iowans.

Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on January 24, 2024, as **ARC 7294C**. Public hearings were held on February 13 and 14, 2024, at 9:40 a.m. at 6200 Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. No one attended the public hearings.

The Board received two comments. The Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association expressed no concerns with the proposed revisions. A licensee proposed a revision to replace “approved by the board” with “meets the requirements of this chapter.” The suggested edit provides clarity that continuing education courses do not have to have a Board approval process and that the courses only need to meet the requirements in Chapter 32.

The Board revised subrule 32.2(1) to replace “approved by the board” with “meets the requirements of this chapter.”

Adoption of Rulemaking

This rulemaking was adopted by the Board on March 14, 2024.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the Board for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 645—Chapter 18.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its [regular monthly meeting](#) or at a special meeting. The Committee's meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

Effective Date

This rulemaking will become effective on June 5, 2024.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

ITEM 1. Rescind 645—Chapter 32 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 32
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR MARITAL AND
FAMILY THERAPISTS AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

645—32.1(272C) Definitions. For the purpose of these rules, the following definitions will apply:

“Active license” means the license is current and has not expired.

“Approved program/activity” means a continuing education program/activity meeting the standards set forth in these rules.

“Audit” means the selection of licensees for verification of satisfactory completion of continuing education requirements during a specified time period.

“Board” means the board of behavioral science.

“Continuing education” means planned, organized learning acts designed to maintain, improve, or expand a licensee's knowledge and skills in order for the licensee to develop new knowledge and skills relevant to the enhancement of practice, education, or theory development to improve the safety and welfare of the public.

“Hour of continuing education” means at least 50 minutes spent by a licensee in actual attendance at and completion of approved continuing education activity.

“Inactive license” means a license that has expired because it was not renewed by the end of the grace period. The category of “inactive license” may include licenses formerly known as lapsed, inactive, delinquent, closed, or retired.

“Independent study” means a continuing education program or activity that a licensee pursues autonomously that includes a posttest and meets the general criteria in subrule 32.3(1).

“License” means license to practice.

“Licensee” means any person licensed to practice marital and family therapy or mental health counseling in the state of Iowa.

645—32.2(272C) Continuing education requirements.

32.2(1) The biennial continuing education compliance period shall extend for a 25-month period beginning on September 1 of the even-numbered year and ending on September 30 of the next even-numbered year. Each biennium, each person who is licensed to practice as a licensee in this state is required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of continuing education that meets the requirements of this chapter.

32.2(2) Requirements of new licensees. Those persons licensed for the first time shall not be required to complete continuing education as a prerequisite for the first renewal of their licenses. Continuing

education hours acquired any time from the initial licensing until the second license renewal may be used. The new licensee will be required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of continuing education per biennium for each subsequent license renewal.

32.2(3) Hours of continuing education credit may be obtained by attending and participating in a continuing education activity. These hours must be in accordance with these rules.

32.2(4) No hours of continuing education will be carried over into the next biennium except as stated for the second renewal. A licensee whose license was reactivated during the current renewal compliance period may use continuing education earned during the compliance period for the first renewal following reactivation.

32.2(5) It is the responsibility of each licensee to finance the cost of continuing education.

645—32.3(154D,272C) Standards.

32.3(1) General criteria. A continuing education activity which meets all of the following criteria is appropriate for continuing education credit if the continuing education activity:

- a. Constitutes an organized program of learning which contributes directly to the professional competency of the licensee;
- b. Pertains to subject matters which integrally relate to the practice of the profession;
- c. Is conducted by individuals who have specialized education, training and experience by reason of which said individuals should be considered qualified concerning the subject matter of the program. At the time of audit, the board may request the qualifications of presenters.
- d. Fulfills stated program goals, objectives, or both; and
- e. Provides proof of attendance to licensees in attendance including:
 - (1) Date(s), location, course title, presenter(s);
 - (2) Number of program contact hours; and
 - (3) Certificate of completion or evidence of successful completion of the course provided by the course sponsor.

32.3(2) Specific criteria. Continuing education hours of credit may be obtained by completing the following:

- a. Attendance at workshops, conferences, symposiums and webinars.
- b. Academic courses. Official transcripts indicating successful completion of academic courses which apply to the field of mental health counseling or marital and family therapy, as appropriate, will be necessary in order to receive the following continuing education credits:
 - 1 academic semester hour = 15 continuing education hours
 - 1 academic quarter hour = 10 continuing education hours
- c. Completion of independent study courses that meet the general criteria in subrule 32.3(1).
- d. A maximum of 20 hours of continuing education credit may be granted for any of the following activities not to exceed a combined total of 20 hours:
 - (1) Presenting professional programs which meet the criteria in rule 645—32.3(272C). Two hours of credit will be awarded for each hour of presentation. A course schedule or brochure must be maintained for audit. Presentation at a professional program does not include teaching a class at an institution of higher learning at which the applicant is regularly and primarily employed. Presentations to lay public are excluded.
 - (2) Scholarly research or other activities, the results of which are published in a recognized professional publication such as a refereed journal, monograph or conference proceedings. The scholarly research must be integrally related to the practice of the professions.
 - (3) Publication in a refereed journal. The article in a refereed journal for which the licensee is seeking continuing education credit must be integrally related to the practice of the professions.
 - (4) Teaching in an approved college, university, or graduate school. The licensee may receive credit on a one-time basis for the first offering of the course.
 - (5) Authoring papers, publications, and books. The licensee will receive 5 hours of credit per page with a maximum of 20 hours of credit.

(6) Serving on a state or national professional board. The licensee will receive a maximum of three hours of credit.

32.3(3) Required specific criteria:

- a. Three hours of the 40 continuing education hours will be in ethics.
- b. Effective with the biennial continuing education compliance period that begins October 1, 2022, persons serving in a supervisory role must complete three hours of continuing education in supervision.
- c. Effective July 1, 2019, a licensee who regularly examines, attends, counsels or treats adults in Iowa shall complete, within six months of employment or prior to the expiration of a current certification, an initial two-hour course in dependent adult abuse training for mandatory reporters offered by the department of health and human services. Thereafter, all mandatory reporters shall take a one-hour recertification training every three years, prior to the expiration of a current certification.
- d. Effective July 1, 2019, a licensee who regularly examines, attends, counsels or treats children in Iowa shall complete, within six months of employment or prior to the expiration of a current certification, an initial two-hour course in child abuse training for mandatory reporters offered by the department of health and human services. Thereafter, all mandatory reporters shall take a one-hour recertification training every three years, prior to the expiration of a current certification.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 272C.2 and chapter 154D.

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