State Licensure Statutes, Regulations, Forms, and Policies not only change on a regular basis, but may contain contradictory information. It is the responsibility of any individual who may review this document to check with their licensure board regarding all requirements and policies regarding the licensure process. For more information please refer to your state licensing board, click here to find your state licensing board website aamftrc.org

California: Starting degree program before 8.1.12 and finishing before 12.31.2018

Does this State require a degree program to include a specific number of credit hours (e.g. 45, 48 or 60 semester credits)? If so, how many credit hours are required?
Yes, California requires a minimum of 48 semester hours in integrated program primarily designed to train marriage and family therapists.

What type of institutional or programmatic accreditation is required?
An applicant for MFT licensure in California must earn a doctor’s or master’s degree in marriage, family, and child counseling, marriage and family therapy, couple and family therapy, psychology, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, or counseling with an emphasis in either marriage, family, and child counseling or marriage and family therapy, obtained from a school, college, or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. The board has the authority to make the final determination as to whether a degree meets all requirements, including, but not limited to, course requirements, regardless of accreditation or approval.

Does the state require the program to have COAMFTE or CACREP Accreditation?
No, California does not require these accreditations.

Does the State accept a COAMFTE accredited degree without requiring the applicant to list specific courses on the license application?
Yes.

What courses does the State require an applicant to have taken in order to have met this educational requirement for licensure?
California has several requirements:
• No less than 12 semester units of coursework in the areas of marriage, family, and child counseling, and marital and family systems approaches to treatment. The coursework shall include all of the following areas:
• The salient theories of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations directly related to marriage and family therapy, and marital and family systems approaches to treatment.
• Theories of marriage and family therapy and how they can be utilized in order to intervene therapeutically with couples, families, adults, children, and groups.
• Developmental issues and life events from infancy to old age and their effect on individuals, couples, and family relationships. This may include coursework that focuses on specific family life events and the psychological, psychotherapeutic, and health implications that arise within couples and families, including, but not limited to, childbirth, child rearing, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, divorce, blended families, step parenting, abuse and neglect of older and dependent adults, and geropsychology.
• A variety of approaches to the treatment of children.

The doctor's or master's degree program shall contain not less than six semester units of supervised practicum in applied psychotherapeutic technique, assessments, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of premarital, couple, family, and child relationships, including dysfunctions, healthy functioning, health promotion, and illness prevention, in a supervised clinical placement that provides supervised fieldwork experience within the scope of practice of a marriage and family therapist.

* A two semester or three quarter unit course in California law and professional ethics for marriage and family therapists, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas of study:
  A. Contemporary professional ethics and statutory, regulatory, and decisional laws that delineate the profession's scope of practice.
  B. The therapeutic, clinical, and practical considerations involved in the legal and ethical practice of marriage and family therapy, including family law.
  C. The current legal patterns and trends in the mental health profession.
  D. The psychotherapist/patient privilege, confidentiality, the patient dangerous to self or others, and the treatment of minors with and without parental consent.
  E. A recognition and exploration of the relationship between a practitioner's sense of self and human values and his or her professional behavior and ethics.

* For persons who began graduate study on or after January 1, 1986, a master's or doctor's degree qualifying for licensure shall include specific instruction in alcoholism and other chemical substance dependency as specified by regulation. When coursework in a master's or doctor's degree program is acquired to satisfy this requirement, it shall be considered as part of the 48 semester or 72 quarter unit requirement contained in Section 4980.37.

* For persons who began graduate study during the period commencing on January 1, 1995, and ending on December 31, 2003, a master's or doctor's degree qualifying for licensure shall include coursework in spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection, and intervention. For persons who began graduate study on or after January 1, 2004, a master's or doctor's degree qualifying for licensure shall include a minimum of 15 contact hours of coursework in spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection, and intervention strategies, including knowledge of community resources, cultural factors, and same gender abuse dynamics. Coursework required under this subdivision may be satisfactory if taken either in fulfillment of other educational requirements for licensure or in a separate course. The requirement for coursework shall be satisfied by, and the board shall accept in satisfaction of the requirement, a certification from the chief academic officer of the educational institution from which the applicant graduated that the required coursework is included within the institution's required curriculum for graduation.
How many client contact hours must a student obtain during practicum, and how many of these must be relational hours?
California requires 150 Hours Direct Client Contact, and the number of required relational hours is not specified.

How many supervision hours must a student obtain during practicum?
As a Trainee (someone who enrolled in a qualified program), an individual needs to receive at least “one unit” of supervision contact for every five hours of psychotherapy or counseling performed.

California defines one “unit” if supervision equals one hour of individual supervision or two hours of group supervision.

A trainee may be credited with pre-degree supervised practicum and field study experience completed in a setting that meets all of the following requirements:
   a. Lawfully and regularly provides mental health counseling and psychotherapy.
   b. Provides oversight to ensure that the clinical counselor trainee's work at the setting meets the practicum and field study experience and requirements set forth in this chapter and is within the scope of practice for licensed professional clinical counselors.
   c. Is not a private practice.
   d. Experience may be gained by the clinical counselor trainee solely as part of the position for which the clinical counselor trainee volunteers or is employed.

Trainees are not permitted to earn supervision hours via videoconferencing.

What is the required length of practicum in this state?
Students in California are required to have two (2) semesters of practicum.

POST-GRADUATE REQUIREMENTS

What are the minimum number of years of clinical experience a graduate needs to obtain a license, the minimum number of client contact hours, and how many of these hours must be relational hours?

Effective January 1, 2010
California requires a minimum of 2 years, 3,000 hours supervised work experience, At least 1,700 received after degree has been granted, At least 500 hours must be relational (Up to 150 of these hours will count double, totaling 300 hours), Not more than 40 hours in any seven consecutive days, Hours gained more than six years prior to date of application will not be accepted (500 Hours Gained During Graduate Practicum is Exempt from this), Not more than 1,250 hours may come from direct supervisor contact, professional enrichment activities (workshops, seminars, training sessions, or conferences related to MFT) & client centered advocacy (Not more than 250 hours may come from professional enrichment activities, Not more than 100 hours may come from personal psychotherapy [these hours will count triple, totaling 300 hours]), Not more than 500 hours may come from group therapy/group counseling, Not more than 375 hours may come from providing personal psychotherapy, crisis counseling, or other counseling services via telemedicine, Not more than 250 may come from
administering and evaluating psychological tests of counselees, writing clinical reports, writing progress notes, or writing process notes.

**Additional Notes:** Effective January 1, 2012. No more than 1,000 hours of experience in the following areas:

- Direct Supervisor Contact
- Professional Enrichment Activities
- For hours gained on or after January 1, 2012, no more than 500 hours of experience in the following areas
- Administering/evaluating psychological tests
- Writing clinical reports, progress notes, and/or process notes
- Client centered advocacy

**What is the minimum number of experience hours required by this State?**
As noted above, California requires 3000 total hours of experience. Of these 3000 hours, no more than 1300 can be earned prior to the degree being granted. Other requirements include:

- Not more than 40 hours can be earned in any seven consecutive days
- 500 of these hours must be relational hours- Not more than 750 hours may come from counseling and direct supervisor contact
- Not more than 250 hours of professional enrichment activities excluding personal psychotherapy
- Not more than 100 hours may come from personal psychotherapy (These hours will count triple totaling 300 hours)
- No hours may be completed before completing 12 semester units of graduate study
- No hours gained more than 6 years prior to application date will be counted with the exception of 500 practicum hours.

**What is the minimum number of post-graduate supervision hours required by this State, and how many of these hours must be individual supervision?**
California requires that supervision include at least one (1) hour of direct supervisor contact in each week for which experience is credited in each work setting, as specified:

1. A trainee shall receive an average of at least one hour of direct supervisor contact for every five hours of client contact in each setting.
2. An individual supervised after being granted a qualifying degree shall receive at least one additional hour of direct supervisor contact for every week in which more than 10 hours of client contact is gained in each setting. No more than five hours of supervision, whether individual or group, shall be credited during any single week.

California defines one “unit” if supervision equals one hour of individual supervision or two hours of group supervision.

**What are the State requirements for an individual to be qualified as a supervisor?**
California requires that only licensed mental health professionals can supervise Trainees and Interns. Licensed mental health professionals include licensed marriage and family therapists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed psychologists, and licensed physicians certified in psychiatry by the American
The supervisor must maintain a current valid California license. The supervisor must have held that license for at least two (2) years and practiced psychotherapy or directly supervised trainees, interns, or associate clinical social workers that perform psychotherapy as part of their clinical practice for at least two years within the last five-year period immediately preceding supervision. The Board requires supervisors of Trainees and Interns to complete a minimum of six (6) hours of supervision training or coursework within two years immediately preceding supervision (or within 60 days of commencement of supervision) and every renewal period thereafter. Psychologists and physicians certified in psychiatry are exempt from supervision training.

**Does the state require the National Examination offered by the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB)?**

California does not require the National Examination offered by the AMFTRB. Instead, applicants are expected to pass a board administered written or oral examination or both types of examinations, except that an applicant who passed a written examination and who has not taken and passed an oral examination shall instead be required to take and pass a clinical vignette written examination.

**Does the State have specific training requirements beyond the graduate degree?**

- Aging & Long Term Care - 10 Contact Hours for those starting after 1/1/2004 (On or After 1/1/12 this coursework shall include instruction on the assessment and reporting of, as well as treatment related to, elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect)
- Child Abuse Assessment & Reporting - 7 Hours or coursework
- Human Sexuality - 10 Hours or coursework

**Can an individual with a criminal history request board review before actually having to apply for licensure?**

While California does not review these requests for applicants to an MFT program or for students in programs, when an individual graduates from a qualified program, they must register within 90 days of when the degree was conferred to become a registered Intern. During the registration process, these individuals will undergo a Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal history background check. It is at this point an individual will know if they qualify for licensure in California.

The California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Section 1813 states: "When considering the denial of a license or registration under Section 480 of the Code, the board, in evaluating the rehabilitation of the applicant and his or her present eligibility for a license or registration shall consider the following criteria:(a) The nature and severity of the act(s) or crime(s) under consideration as grounds for denial.(b) Evidence of any act(s) committed subsequent to the act(s) or crime(s) under consideration as grounds for denial which also could be considered as grounds for denial under Section 480 of the Code.(c) The time that has elapsed since commission of the act(s) or crime(s) referred to in Section 480 of the Code.(d) The extent to which the applicant has complied with any terms of probation, parole, restitution, or any other sanctions lawfully imposed against the applicant.(e) Evidence, if any, of rehabilitation submitted by the applicant."
How can someone contact the Board in this state?
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Every state has a "definitions" section of their rules and/or statutes. Are there any definitions that might be important for an applicant to pay attention? (Note: this is not a complete list; please review definitions in your state)

“Intern” means an unlicensed person who has earned his or her master’s or doctor’s degree qualifying him or her for licensure and is registered with the board.

“Trainee” means an unlicensed person who is currently enrolled in a master’s or doctor’s degree program, as specified in Sections 4980.36 and 4980.37, that is designed to qualify him or her for licensure under this chapter, and who has completed no less than 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of coursework in any qualifying degree program.