An Overview of California’s New Mental Health License
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC)

California Business and Professions Code 4999.10 - 4999.122

SB 788 (Wyland, Steinberg) became law January 2010. Applications became available from California’s Board of Behavioral Sciences in July 2011 and the first LPCCs became licensed in early 2012.

California is the 50th state to license Professional Counselors. There are more than 120,000 LPCs in the other 49 states. Licensed Professional Counselors are commonly called LPCs, but California includes the word “clinical” in the license title to recognize additional clinical standards and the clinical exam.

**Scope of Practice:**  B & P code 4999.20

“Professional clinical counseling” means the application of counseling interventions and psychotherapeutic techniques to identify and remediate cognitive, mental and emotional issues, including personal growth, adjustment to disability, crisis intervention, and psychosocial and environmental problems.

Counseling interventions and psychotherapeutic techniques” means the application of cognitive, affective, verbal or nonverbal, systemic or holistic counseling strategies that include principles of development, wellness, and maladjustment.”

**Requirements**
The requirements for licensure as a Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) are comparable to those of Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) in California and to those of Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) in 49 states.

**Education:**  B & P code 4999.32 and 4999.33

To qualify for a license or registration, applicants shall possess a master’s or doctoral degree with at least 48 units, that is counseling or psychotherapy in content. A degree is “counseling or psychotherapy in content,” if it contains the coursework in nine core content areas, which include counseling and psychotherapeutic theories and techniques, human growth and development, career development, group counseling, assessment and testing, multicultural counseling, principles of the diagnostic process, research and evaluation, and law and ethics in counseling. A qualifying degree must include six semester-units or nine quarter-units of supervised practicum.

In addition to, or as part of the degree, applicants shall also complete coursework or training in alcoholism and chemical substance dependency, human sexuality, psychopharmacology, spousal/ partner abuse assessment, child abuse assessment and
Those beginning graduate study on or after August 1, 2012 must complete a 60-unit degree and four additional core content areas: Advanced counseling and psychotherapeutic theories and techniques, addictions counseling, psychopharmacology and crisis/trauma counseling, as well as integration of the principles of mental health recovery-oriented care and the understanding of various cultures.

**Supervision:** B & P code 4999.42 - 4999.48, 4999.100
Completion of 3,000 post-degree hours of supervised clinical mental health experience related to the practice of professional counseling, performed over a period of not less than two years under the supervision of an approved supervisor.

**Examination:** B & P code 4999.52, 4999.53, 4999.55, 4999.64
Successful passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) and the California LPCC Law & Ethics Examination.

**Grandparenting:** The grandparenting period closed on December 31, 2011.

**Reciprocity:** B & P code 4999.57, 4999.58, 4999.59, 4999.60, 4999.61, 4999.62
Professional counselors, who have held a valid license in another jurisdiction of the United States for at least two years, may qualify to be licensed in California, if their license allowed them to provide clinical mental health services independently, if their education and supervised experience are substantially equivalent, if they complete 18 contact hours in California law and ethics and if they successfully complete the examinations required by the Board.

**Exemptions:** B & P 4999.22
This law will not apply to members of the clergy, lawyers, physicians, or employees of governmental entities, educational institutions, or nonprofit and charitable agencies. Nothing in this article shall prevent qualified persons from doing work of a psychosocial nature consistent with the standards and ethics of their respective professions, however, they shall not hold themselves out to the public as “licensed professional clinical counselors.”

This law will not constrict, limit, or withdraw provisions of the Medical Practice Act, the Social Work Licensing Law, the Nursing Practice Act, the Psychology Licensing Law, or Marriage and Family Therapy licensing laws.

**Oversight:** B & P code 4999.12, 4999.14, 4999.50 - 51, 4999.80, 4999.114 - 116
The existing Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS), which regulates master’s-level LMFTs and LCSWs, will regulate LPCCs. Applicants will successfully pass state and federal criminal background checks through the Department of Justice.

**Insurance Reimbursement:** California State Plan Amendment (SPA) approved December 18, 2012 by the Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
California LPCCs and PCCIs have been approved as providers for Medi-Cal through the county mental health system and will have the same requirements and privileges as LMFTs, MFTIs, LCSWs and ASWs in California.

Many private insurance companies accept California LPCCs as providers.