

A Few Facts About Getting Licensed

Almost every state in the United States has a regulating agency within a branch of the state government that provides oversight and licensing for mental health clinicians.

While each state has unique requirements, and there is no national standard or regulating agency, there are many similarities between states' requirements for licensing as professional counselors.

Most states have a credential called "LPC" which stands for Licensed Professional Counselor. Some states use "LCPC" (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor), and some states use "LMCH" (Licensed Mental Health Counselor).

There are three general steps that need to be completed to become a Licensed Counselor:

1. Education
2. Examination
3. Supervised work experience after completing the Masters degree

1. Education Requirements for Licensure as a Counselor:

In order to become a Licensed Counselor, the counselor must complete a pre-determined amount of coursework hours, usually in a Master's Level counseling program. Many states list specific content areas in which they require applicants to have completed coursework. Some states are very specific about the number of credit hours needed in each content area; other states do not specify credit hours as long as the content knowledge can be demonstrated. State licensing applications usually include forms that require applicants to list the course(s) on their transcript that fulfill each content area required.

In addition to academic coursework, most states also require an internship and/or practicum as part of the degree program. The requirements for the internship and/or practicum vary widely. Some states require a specific number of credit hours, while other states require a minimum number of clock-hours.

Some states require specific coursework that can only be taken within that state, so anyone who completes a Masters degree out-of-state must complete that particular coursework in that state before they can be licensed.

2. Exam Requirements for Licensure as a Counselor:

Most states have a standardized test that applicants must pass before they can be licensed as a counselor. Some states use the National Counselor Exam (NCE), some states use the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE), and some states have other exams that they require, such as the Jurisprudence Exam in Colorado.

3. Additional Training Requirements for Licensure as a Counselor:

Most states require supervised counseling work experience after completing the Masters degree in order to become licensed. Generally, states require two years and 1,500 to 3,500 hours of post-Masters degree work experience that is supervised by someone who is licensed.

A few notes:

1. No university can guarantee that any student will be able to get licensed. Every state has different requirements, and states update their requirements frequently. Even if a program offers a curriculum that meets current standards in a specific state, by the time a student graduates and completes the post-masters supervised hours, there may be additional requirements an applicant must fulfill.

2. Since states do have different requirements, all of Naropa's graduate psychology students are careful to research the current requirements of the state(s) they think they will live in after graduation, to be as best prepared as possible. See <http://www.nbcc.org/stateboardmap> to find the website for the state(s) you are researching.

3. The three Naropa departments that provide Counseling education have based their curricula on the range of fields that states typically expect of their licensed professionals. Our experience is that our students have been licensed in a variety of states across the country, though in some cases they needed to meet additional education requirements.

Common questions:

1) *Can I get paid for the work that I do for my post-masters supervised hours?*

YES! Once you have your masters degree you can get jobs at agencies, and in some states you can open a private practice before you have your license. For the states that allow private practice, you will have to pay someone to meet with you regularly as your supervisor. If you work at an agency, the agency typically provides supervision as part of your working hours.

2) *I heard California doesn't have an LPC. Can people who get degrees from Naropa get licensed in California?*

YES! California currently does not have a LPC credential, but does have a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) license. Naropa graduates have gotten the MFT in California by taking some additional coursework.

3) *What do I do if I don't know where I'm going to live after I get my degree?*

All Naropa Counseling programs are designed to prepare students for careers as licensed mental health professionals. As noted throughout this document, our experience is that some students may need to take additional courses if they move to states that have requirements that were not part of their degree programs; taking these additional courses, if necessary, can only add to your skill set as a good therapist.