

# Mental Health Counselor License Requirements

[Chapter 18-225 RCW](#)

[Chapter 246-809 WAC](#)

## **Credentialing Requirements:**

A master's or doctoral degree in mental health counseling or master's in behavioral science, or doctoral degree in a field relating to mental health counseling.

Behavioral science in a field relating to mental health counseling includes a core of study relating to counseling theory and counseling philosophy.

Either a counseling practicum, or a counseling internship, or both, must be included in the core of study. Exclusive use of the internship or practicum used for qualifications must have incorporated supervised direct client contact.

This core of study must include 7 content areas from the entire list in subsections (1) through (17) of this section, 5 of which must be from content areas in subsections (1) through (8) of this subsection:

- Assessment/diagnosis
- Ethics/law
- Counseling individuals
- Counseling groups
- Counseling couples and families
- Developmental psychology (may be child adolescent, adult or life span).
- Psychopathology/abnormal psychology
- Research and evaluation
- Career development counseling
- Multicultural concerns
- Substance/chemical abuse
- Physiological psychology
- Organizational psychology
- Mental health consultation
- Developmentally disabled persons
- Abusive relationships
- Chronically mentally ill

Complete a minimum of 36 months of full-time counseling or 3,000 hours of postgraduate mental health counseling under the supervision of an approved licensed mental health practitioner in an approved setting.

At least 100 hours must be in immediate supervision with an approved licensed mental health counselor or equally licensed mental health practitioner.

At least 1,200 hours must be direct counseling with individuals, couples, groups, or families.

Completion of 36 hours of continuing education, six of which is in professional law and ethics.

**State license verification:**

Applicant lists all states where credentials are or were held, including where applicant has applied but a credential was not granted.

**Exam requirements:**

- Either of the following National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) exams are accepted.
- National Counselor Exam (NCE)
- National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE)

**Personal Data Statement:**

- physical and mental health status
- lack of impairment due to chemical dependency/substance abuse
- history of loss of license, certification or registration
- felony convictions
- loss or limitations of privileges
- disciplinary actions
- professional liability claims history.

**Additional Information/Documents Required**

- HIV/AIDS training – 4 hours
- If already taken the NCE or NCMHCE examination, verification of scores need to come from NBCC directly or may be verified by another state in which the applicant was licensed.

**Process for Approving/Denying Applications**

Credentialing staff review the application and supporting documents to make an initial determination on eligibility. The recommendation is based upon the requirements outlined in [RCW 18.225](#) and [WAC 246-809](#). Credentialing supervisors approve applications that don't have positive answers to personal data questions, have questionable verifying documents or are otherwise "red flag" applications. "Red flag" applications are forwarded to the exception application process for determination by the appropriate disciplining authority. An applicant will be formally notified of a denial and has the opportunity for a hearing to appeal the decision.

## **Renewal and Continuing Education Requirements**

Social workers must renew their license every year on or before their birthday. Thirty-six hours of continuing education (CE) with six hours in law and ethics, is due every two years. Social workers are required to submit the appropriate fee, renewal card and an affidavit of compliance with the continuing education requirement.

Beginning with the first full CE period after January 1, 2014, social workers must complete six hours of training in suicide assessment, treatment and management. The training must be repeated once every six years.