



Increase Access to Mental Health Professionals: Support HB 76

HB 76 updates current licensure requirements for Marriage and Family Therapists to bring Georgia current with national accreditation standards and in line with supervised practice requirements in neighboring states. HB 76 will increase access to skilled mental health practitioners in the field.

HB 76 updates the courses required for Master's and PhD education programs for Marriage and Family Therapists at Georgia Universities to meet the standards of the national educational accrediting body, the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) that were amended in 2022. Georgia law regarding MFT licensure requirements has not been revised in almost 20 years, and the coursework specified in the current law is out of date.

HB 76 brings the requirements for clinical hours of practice at each level of training in line with the requirements in our neighboring states. These changes apply to the student practicum and the master's and doctorate (PhD) degree marriage and family therapist clinical experience.

HB 76 will bring Georgia in line with the clinical practice hours required by other states in the southeast and bring coursework requirements in line with updated national accreditation standards in order to increase access to badly needed mental health care. Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Council (GORRC) review unanimously supported these changes.

Why does it matter to Georgia?

Georgia has a very serious problem with access to mental health care and a shortage of qualified mental health professionals at a time when demand for services is high and increasing. [The House Rural Development Council 2021 Final Report and Recommendations](#) found that Georgia's licensing requirements exceeded those in surrounding states, thus making it difficult for new and incoming out-of-state therapists to be licensed. The Council recommended that the "licensing board...review and reform the existing requirements that prudently accelerate the placement of professionals in the field while maintaining professional standards and patient safety, [and to assemble] any necessary Code revisions for recommendation to the General Assembly." in order to reduce unnecessary barriers. (*Id.* at p. 12)

HB 76 strengthens and protects the quality of care provided by marriage and family therapists licensed in Georgia and increases access to critically needed mental health professionals.

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