

North Dakota Legislative Management  
Human Services Committee, October 8, 2014

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Chairman, Rep. Chuck Damschen, and members of the Human Services Committee,

I am Rev. Larry Giese. I have served on the North Dakota Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure Board (NDMFTLB) since the licensing bill passed the Legislative Assembly in 2005. I was appointed to the Board in 2006. I have served as Board President for the past four years. My appointed term has expired and now I serve as Board Administrator.

NDCC 43-53 and Administrative Title 111 rules govern the Board. The law and rules are rigorous and extensive to regulate the field of marriage and family therapy in North Dakota. This Board verifies the education, supervision, and supervised experience hours of the practicum and post-graduate experience of applicants for licensure. A national examination must be passed. Once licensed, licensees must complete Continuing Education to maintain competency in the practice of marriage and family therapy and follow a code of ethics, which if violated, the licensee is subject to discipline. The skill sets of licensees are similar to colleagues in the mental health field, however reflect the unique approach to diagnosis and assessment through implementing family and relational theory. A mandatory federal background check is conducted.

Education. A minimum of a Master's Degree or higher is required. The accreditation standards of the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs are employed. The Association of Marriage and Family Regulatory Boards has established a minimum of 48 semester credits for a Master's degree for portability of licenses between states. In North Dakota a graduate receives a minimum of 59 semester credits. Original transcripts must be sent from the university directly to the Board to comply with primary resource verification standards.

Supervision. Licensees are supervised by Board Approved Supervisors or American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy Approved Supervisors. Supervisors have completed the minimum standards or

higher for providing supervision at the university practicum and post-graduate work experience.

**Practicum and Post-graduate Supervised Experience.** While accruing experience for licensure, licensees have a 1:5 ratio of supervision hours to experience hours. The experience ranges for an onsite therapy center on the campus of the university or in local agencies and private practices. Licensees are approved for licensure upon accruing 2,000 hours, of which 1,500 hours are direct client contact with individuals, couples, and families in a minimum of two years to four years. These are face to face, client to therapist, in session hours, not just employment hours.

**Continuing Education.** 30 hours per licensure period are required to maintain competency. Of these 30 hours, 6 must be in coursework on ethics, and if a supervisor, 3 hours must be in coursework on supervision.

**Code of Ethics.** A strict code of ethics is followed by all licensees. If a licensee is found to be in violation disciplinary actions will be taken ranging from a fine to revocation of the license.

It is the Board's responsibility to assure the public that licensees have completed the education and experience requirements for licensed marriage and family therapy and maintain a core competency for the scope of practice as outlined in NDCC 43-53.

With rigorous and extensive classroom, practicum, and post-graduate supervision and experience hours noted, I invite this committee to consider amending existing law and include licensed marriage and family therapists into the NDCC definition of "Qualified Mental Health Professionals" in North Dakota and to be appropriated compensated by Medicaid guidelines and rules when providing such services to the residents of North Dakota who seek such services.

Thank you for this opportunity to bring this information before the Human Services Committee today.