



[townhall.virginia.gov](http://townhall.virginia.gov)

## Final Regulation Agency Background Document

<b>Agency name</b>	Board of Counseling, Department of Health Professions
<b>Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) Chapter citation(s)</b>	18VAC115-20 18VAC115-50 18VAC115-60
<b>VAC Chapter title(s)</b>	Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling Regulations Governing the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy Regulations Governing the Licensure of Substance Abuse Practitioners
<b>Action title</b>	Issuance of a resident license
<b>Date this document prepared</b>	2/5/21

This information is required for executive branch review and the Virginia Registrar of Regulations, pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (APA), Executive Order 14 (as amended, July 16, 2018), the Regulations for Filing and Publishing Agency Regulations (1VAC7-10), and the *Form and Style Requirements for the Virginia Register of Regulations and Virginia Administrative Code*.

### Brief Summary

*Provide a brief summary (preferably no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs) of this regulatory change (i.e., new regulation, amendments to an existing regulation, or repeal of an existing regulation). Alert the reader to all substantive matters. If applicable, generally describe the existing regulation.*

Regulations implement the statutory mandate for issuance of a temporary license for a residency in counseling. The amendments set fees for initial and renewal of a resident license, qualifications for the issuance of a license and for its renewal, limitations on the number of times a resident may renew the temporary license, and a time limit for passage of the licensing examination. Amendments in Chapter 20 for professional counselors are duplicated in Chapter 50 for marriage and family therapists and in Chapter 60 of licensed substance abuse treatment practitioners.

**Acronyms and Definitions**

*Define all acronyms used in this form, and any technical terms that are not also defined in the "Definitions" section of the regulation.*

---

N/A

**Statement of Final Agency Action**

*Provide a statement of the final action taken by the agency including: 1) the date the action was taken; 2) the name of the agency taking the action; and 3) the title of the regulation.*

---

On February 5, 2021, the Board of Counseling adopted amendments to:

- 18VAC115-20 - Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling
- 18VAC115-50 - Regulations Governing the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy
- 18VAC115-60 - Regulations Governing the Licensure of Substance Abuse Practitioners

**Mandate and Impetus**

*List all changes to the information reported on the Agency Background Document submitted for the previous stage regarding the mandate for this regulatory change, and any other impetus that specifically prompted its initiation. If there are no changes to previously reported information, include a specific statement to that effect.*

---

This action implements the statutory mandate (Chapter 428 of the 2019 General Assembly) to promulgate regulations for the issuance of temporary licenses to residents in counseling. The second enactment on HB2282 required the Board to promulgate regulations within 280 days of enactment, so the Board adopted emergency regulations to comply with the mandate. This action replaces the emergency regulations. There are no changes to the previously reported information.

**Legal Basis**

*Identify (1) the promulgating agency, and (2) the state and/or federal legal authority for the regulatory change, including the most relevant citations to the Code of Virginia and Acts of Assembly chapter number(s), if applicable. Your citation must include a specific provision, if any, authorizing the promulgating agency to regulate this specific subject or program, as well as a reference to the agency's overall regulatory authority.*

---

Regulations are promulgated under the general authority of Chapter 24 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia. Section 54.1-2400, which provides the Board of Counseling the authority to promulgate regulations to administer the regulatory system:

**§ 54.1-2400 -General powers and duties of health regulatory boards**

*The general powers and duties of health regulatory boards shall be:*

- 1. To establish the qualifications for registration, certification or licensure in accordance with the applicable law which are necessary to ensure competence and integrity to engage in the regulated professions.*
- 2. To examine or cause to be examined applicants for certification or licensure. Unless otherwise required by law, examinations shall be administered in writing or shall be a demonstration of manual skills.*
- 3. To register, certify or license qualified applicants as practitioners of the particular profession or professions regulated by such board.*
- 4. To establish schedules for renewals of registration, certification, licensure, permit, and the issuance of a multistate licensure privilege.*
- 5. To levy and collect fees for application processing, examination, registration, certification, permitting, or licensure or the issuance of a multistate licensure privilege and renewal that are sufficient to cover all expenses for the administration and operation of the Department of Health Professions, the Board of Health Professions, and the health regulatory boards.*
- 6. To promulgate regulations in accordance with the Administrative Process Act (§ 9-6.14:1 et seq.) which are reasonable and necessary to administer effectively the regulatory system. Such regulations shall not conflict with the purposes and intent of this chapter or of Chapter 1 (§ [54.1-100](#) et seq.) and Chapter 25 (§ [54.1-2500](#) et seq.) of this title. ...*

Specific authority for issuance of a temporary resident license counseling is found in Chapter 35 of Title 54.1:

**§ 54.1-3505. Specific powers and duties of the Board.**

*In addition to the powers granted in § [54.1-2400](#), the Board shall have the following specific powers and duties:*

- 1. To cooperate with and maintain a close liaison with other professional boards and the community to ensure that regulatory systems stay abreast of community and professional needs.*
- 2. To conduct inspections to ensure that licensees conduct their practices in a competent manner and in conformance with the relevant regulations.*
- 3. To designate specialties within the profession.*
- 4. To administer the certification of rehabilitation providers pursuant to Article 2 (§ [54.1-3510](#) et seq.) of this chapter, including prescribing fees for application processing, examinations, certification and certification renewal.*
- 5. [Expired.]*

6. To promulgate regulations for the qualifications, education, and experience for licensure of marriage and family therapists. The requirements for clinical membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), and the professional examination service's national marriage and family therapy examination may be considered by the Board in the promulgation of these regulations. The educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for marriage and family therapists shall not be less than the educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for professional counselors.

7. To promulgate, subject to the requirements of Article 1.1 (§ [54.1-3507](#) et seq.) of this chapter, regulations for the qualifications, education, and experience for licensure of licensed substance abuse treatment practitioners and certification of certified substance abuse counselors and certified substance abuse counseling assistants. The requirements for membership in NAADAC: the Association for Addiction Professionals and its national examination may be considered by the Board in the promulgation of these regulations. The Board also may provide for the consideration and use of the accreditation and examination services offered by the Substance Abuse Certification Alliance of Virginia. The educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for licensed substance abuse treatment practitioners shall not be less than the educational credit hour, clinical experience hour, and clinical supervision hour requirements for licensed professional counselors. Such regulations also shall establish standards and protocols for the clinical supervision of certified substance abuse counselors and the supervision or direction of certified substance abuse counseling assistants, and reasonable access to the persons providing that supervision or direction in settings other than a licensed facility.

8. To maintain a registry of persons who meet the requirements for supervision of residents. The Board shall make the registry of approved supervisors available to persons seeking residence status.

9. To promulgate regulations for the registration of qualified mental health professionals, including qualifications, education, and experience necessary for such registration, and for the registration of persons receiving supervised training in order to qualify as a qualified mental health professional.

10. To promulgate regulations for the registration of peer recovery specialists who meet the qualifications, education, and experience requirements established by regulations of the Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services pursuant to § [37.2-203](#).

**11. To promulgate regulations for the issuance of temporary licenses to individuals engaged in a counseling residency so that they may acquire the supervised, postgraduate experience required for licensure.**

### Purpose

Explain the need for the regulatory change, including a description of: (1) the rationale or justification, (2) the specific reasons the regulatory change is essential to protect the health, safety or welfare of citizens, and (3) the goals of the regulatory change and the problems it's intended to solve.

The purpose of this action is to ensure persons who are granted a temporary license for the purpose of completing a residency in counseling are qualified to provide mental health services to vulnerable individuals and groups. Qualifications for issuance of a resident license will ensure minimal competency to begin supervised practice, and requirements for renewal will ensure that residents have further knowledge of the ethics and standards of practice governing the behavioral health professions in order to protect health, safety, and welfare of the citizens they serve.

## Substance

*Briefly identify and explain the new substantive provisions, the substantive changes to existing sections, or both. A more detailed discussion is provided in the "Detail of Changes" section below.*

Regulations implement the statutory mandate for issuance of a temporary license for a residency in counseling. The amendments set fees for initial and renewal of a resident license, qualifications for the issuance of a license and for its renewal, limitations on the number of times a resident may renew the temporary license, and a time limit for passage of the licensing examination. Amendments in Chapter 20 for professional counselors are duplicated in Chapter 50 for marriage and family therapists and in Chapter 60 of licensed substance abuse treatment practitioners.

## Issues

*Identify the issues associated with the regulatory change, including: 1) the primary advantages and disadvantages to the public, such as individual private citizens or businesses, of implementing the new or amended provisions; 2) the primary advantages and disadvantages to the agency or the Commonwealth; and 3) other pertinent matters of interest to the regulated community, government officials, and the public. If there are no disadvantages to the public or the Commonwealth, include a specific statement to that effect.*

- 1) The advantage of a resident license to the public is greater accountability and information about the residency; there are no disadvantages. There may be an advantage to residents and the licensees or organizations for whom they work under supervision in that some third-party payors may reimburse for their services as a "licensed" professional.
- 2) The primary advantage to the agency is greater awareness of any disciplinary history prior to issuance of a license. There are no disadvantages; fees are established with the intent of covering expenditures directly related to the licensing and discipline of persons with a resident license.
- 3) The Director of the Department of Health Professions has reviewed the proposal and performed a competitive impact analysis. The Board is authorized under § 54.1-2400 "To promulgate regulations in accordance with the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) which are reasonable and necessary to administer effectively the regulatory system..." The rules for issuance of a resident license are mandated by the Code and are intended to protect the public receiving such services. Therefore, the proposed amendments are a foreseeable result of the statute requiring the Board to protect the safety and health of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

**Requirements More Restrictive than Federal**

*List all changes to the information reported on the Agency Background Document submitted for the previous stage regarding any requirement of the regulatory change which is more restrictive than applicable federal requirements. If there are no changes to previously reported information, include a specific statement to that effect.*

There are no changes to previously reported information.

**Agencies, Localities, and Other Entities Particularly Affected**

*List all changes to the information reported on the Agency Background Document submitted for the previous stage regarding any other state agencies, localities, or other entities that are particularly affected by the regulatory change. If there are no changes to previously reported information, include a specific statement to that effect.*

There are no changes to previously reported information.

**Public Comment**

*Summarize all comments received during the public comment period following the publication of the previous stage, and provide the agency response. Include all comments submitted: including those received on Town Hall, in a public hearing, or submitted directly to the agency. If no comment was received, enter a specific statement to that effect.*

Proposed regulations for licensure of residents in counseling were published on September 14, 2020 with comment accepted through November 13, 2020. A public hearing was conducted on October 23, 2020; no comment was received at the hearing.

The following comments were received through the Virginia Regulatory Townhall:

<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Bob Horne	Requests hours provided via audio (telephone) be counted towards required residency hours.
Sandy Irby	Same as above
Kathryn Anderson	Same as above
Danyell Collins-Facteau	Same as above
Dr. Stacey Fernandes	Same as above
Andrea	Same as above
Dr. Melanie Burgess	Same as above
Jodie Burton	Same as above
Dillon Woods	Same as above
Jordan Frijas	Same as above; emergency regulations should allow for issuance of temporary licenses



M. Phillips, PhD	Same as above
Kristy Walker	Same as above
Andrew Leonard LCSW	Same as above

The Board considered the comment at the time of adoption of final regulations and concluded that promulgation of an amended regulation is a lengthy process that will likely not be completed until sometime later in 2021. Therefore, the Board has requested the Department issue a waiver of the current regulation to allow licensed residents, during the state of emergency, to count a maximum of **10%** (200 hours) of their hours providing clinical services via audio communication (that does not have a visual component) toward the 2,000 hours of face-to-face client contact. If and when the waiver of regulations is approved by the Office of the Attorney General and the Director, the Board will post that information for all licensees.

**Detail of Changes Made Since the Previous Stage**

*List all changes made to the text since the previous stage was published in the Virginia Register of Regulations and the rationale for the changes. For example, describe the intent of the language and the expected impact. Describe the difference between existing requirement(s) and/or agency practice(s) and what is being proposed in this regulatory change. Explain the new requirements and what they mean rather than merely quoting the text of the regulation. \* Put an asterisk next to any substantive changes.*

There were no changes made since the previous stage.

**Detail of All Changes Proposed in this Regulatory Action**

*List all changes proposed in this action and the rationale for the changes. For example, describe the intent of the language and the expected impact. Describe the difference between existing requirement(s) and/or agency practice(s) and what is being proposed in this regulatory change. Explain the new requirements and what they mean rather than merely quoting the text of the regulation. \* Put an asterisk next to any substantive changes.*

<b>Current section number</b>	<b>Current requirement</b>	<b>Change, intent, rationale, and likely impact of new requirements</b>
10	Sets out definitions for words and terms used in the chapter	The term “residency” is amended because the Board will be licensing the resident rather than registering the residency. The term “resident” is amended to change Board approval to issuance of a temporary license. The word “submitted” is deleted because resident do not submit the contract; they do provide information about their supervisor, work site, and nature of services. The term “supervisory contract” is defined because it is used in the chapter; the definition clarifies the meaning of such a contract.
20	Sets fees for the resident license in counseling	Some fees in this section are rearranged for more logical order. The <u>new</u> fees are:

		<p>Application and initial licensure for a resident - \$65  <i>This is the current fee for registration of supervision.</i></p> <p>Education only review - \$75  <i>The Board gets requests from potential applicants for a review of a person's educational credentials to see whether they meet the qualifications for licensure. Currently, the only way that can be done is for him to submit an application for licensure (which includes many other requirements). This new fee would allow for such a review, which is typically a review of the transcript – course by course – often with request for a syllabus to determine content and a review of the program itself to determine its concentration in counseling. If it is determined that the person's education does not qualify for licensure, he may be able to remedy the deficiency. If not, he is spared the expense of obtaining the hours of supervised experience and sitting for the examination.</i></p> <p>Annual renewal of a resident in counseling - \$30  <i>Amendments will eliminate the requirement for a resident to notify the board and pay a fee of \$30 every time he/she has a change or addition of supervisor or the work site for supervision. On average, a resident has 2 such changes each year and currently pays a \$30 fee for each.</i></p> <p>Late fee for renewal of a resident in counseling - \$10  <i>By policy, late fees are set at approximately 1/3 of the renewal fee.</i></p>
40	Sets the prerequisites for licensure by examination	There is an editorial change from "registration of supervision" to "board approval of a resident license."
52	Establishes the requirements for a temporary license as a resident and for the residency itself	<p>In subsection A, the requirements for a temporary resident license are similar to those currently required for board approval to register a residency. The forms require verification of a supervisory contract, identification of the clinical supervisor and location of practice, and an attestation that he will be providing clinical services.</p> <p><i>Since, the Board will be granting a license, there are additional requirements for a report from NPDB and verification of any other jurisdiction in which the applicant may be licensed, certified, or registered that he does not have disciplinary action.</i></p> <p>In subsection B on the residency, there is a clarifying statement that a resident must meet the requirements of section 100 in order to maintain a current, active license.</p> <p>Currently, there are requirements relating to disclosure of information about a person in a residency to ensure the client knows that the resident is not licensed for independent practice and that he has a supervisor to whom he is responsible. Currently, the regulation says the client must be informed about the resident's status,</p>



		but it was unclear what that meant. To clarify, the amended rule says that the disclosure must include a statement that the resident does not have authority for independent practice and is under supervision.
70	Sets the requirements for examination for licensure	<p>Subsection A is amended to specify that an applicant must pass the examination within six years of the date of initial issuance of a resident license.</p> <p><i>Current regulations require a residency to be completed within four years (or no less than 21 months). Current regulation also require an applicant to pass the examination within two years of approval to sit for the examination. If an applicant does not pass within that timeframe, he is allowed to reapply and must meet the requirements in effect at that time. Since a person must remain in a residency and practice under supervision until he has passed the examination (even if he has completed the 3,400 hours), and since the resident license is a "temporary" license, the Board has determined that six years should be more than ample time for an applicant to complete the residency and pass the examination. Residents are allowed to take the examination at any point during the residency, so they are encouraged to do so sooner rather than later.</i></p>
100	Sets the requirements for annual renewal of a resident license	<p>Subsection C is added to set the requirements for renewal to include:</p> <p>1) Renewal in the month of initial issuance and allowance to renew up to five times.</p> <p><i>Rather than establishing a set renewal date, which could give some applicants less than a full year of licensure, the Board will renew resident licenses of a rotating monthly basis. The limitation of five renewals is consistent with the nature of a <u>temporary</u> license and will prevent a person from becoming a permanent resident in counseling. The limitation of renewals is consistent with the timeframe for passage of the examination – so all requirements must be met within the six years one can remain in a residency.</i></p> <p>The Board has discussed the possibility of allowing reinstatement for a resident who has to take a break in the residency for good cause. That may be considered in the adoption of permanent regulation but is not necessary during the period when emergency regulations are in effect.</p> <p>2) On the annual renewal form, the resident will be required to attest that a supervisory contract is in effect with a board-approved supervisor for each of the locations at which he is currently providing clinical counseling services.</p> <p><i>Providing such information on an annual basis will be far less burdensome for residents who are currently required to notify the board each time there is an addition or change to their residency. It will also be less burdensome for staff who have to track that information.</i></p>

		<p>3) The resident will have to attest to completion of three hours of continuing education in ethics, standards of practice, or laws and regulations governing behavioral sciences.</p> <p><i>Supervisors often report that their biggest challenge is helping residents understand the standards of practice and the ethics of the profession. Continuing education in those areas is readily available and will enhance the supervised experience and improve the quality of licensees.</i></p>
<p>Chapter 50 governs marriage and family therapists. The amendments to this chapter are identical to those for professional counseling in chapter 20.</p>		
<p>Chapter 60 governs licensed substance abuse treatment practitioners. The amendments to this chapter are identical to those for professional counseling in chapter 20.</p>		

**Changes from the Emergency Regulation**

<p>Chapter 20, Section 52 B 10</p>	<p>Sets the requirements for the residency</p>	<p><i>The emergency regulation included a requirement to add the resident's license number on all written communication. In response to comment, the Board concurred that it was unnecessary and somewhat burdensome. Therefore, the amended language was deleted in the proposed regulations on requirements for a residency.</i></p>
<p>Chapter 50, Section 60 B 8</p>		
<p>Chapter 60, Section 80, Section C 7</p>		