Board of Examiners for Counselors and Marriage & Family Therapists

Presentation to the Interim Committee on Leveraging Telehealth and Telemedicine

August 27, 2019

Overview of Counseling Licenses

- Licensed Professional Counselors
  - Masters or doctorate in counseling
  - Passage of a national examination
  - 2,000 hours of post-graduate supervision with an approved supervisor (plan of supervision)
  - Full practice rights under the plan of supervision
- Licensed Professional Counselors – Mental Health
  - Masters or doctorate in counseling with an emphasis in mental health
  - Holds a license in professional counseling in South Dakota
  - 2,000 hours of post-graduate direct client contact under a plan of supervision
  - Passage of a national examination with mental health emphasis
  - Full practice rights under the LPC/plan of supervision

Overview of Counseling Licenses

- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
  - Masters or doctorate in counseling with an emphasis in marriage & family therapy
  - Passage of a national examination
  - 1,700 hours of post-graduate supervision with an approved supervisor (plan of supervision)
  - Full practice rights under the plan of supervision

Plan of Supervision Basics

- Plans of Supervision gives the holder the right to practice as a counselor or therapist, under the license of the approved supervisor.
  - Generally, weekly check-ins with the supervisor
  - Supervision may be done as a combination of in-person or electronic hours
  - Supervision may be done as a combination of individual or group hours
  - LPC under plan of supervision may not be able to bill all 3rd party payors
  - LPC-MH under plan of supervision is able to bill most 3rd party payors
  - LMFT under plan of supervision is able to bill some 3rd party payors
  - Other states issues licenses equivalent to our plan of supervision, but the practice rights are the same

Licensee Numbers - LPC

- Licensed Professional Counselors
  - 504 LPCs
    - Sioux Falls – 130 LPC (25%)
    - Rapid City – 51 LPCs (10%)
    - Aberdeen – 20 LPCs (3%)
    - Yankton – 15 LPCs (3%)
    - Brookings – 14 LPCs (2%)
    - Spearfish – 12 LPCs (2%)
    - Mitchell – 11 LPCs (2%)
    - Watertown – 10 LPCs (2%)
    - Pierre – 9 LPCs (1%)

    50% of licensees are in 9 cities in the State.

    99 open plans of supervision

Licensee Numbers – LPC-MH

- Licensed Professional Counselors – Mental Health
  - 323 LPC-MHs
    - Sioux Falls – 116 LPC-MHs (36%)
    - Rapid City – 50 LPC-MHs (15%)
    - Aberdeen – 20 LPC-MHs (6%)
    - Spearfish – 13 LPC-MHs (4%)
    - Brookings – 12 LPC-MHs (3%)
    - Mitchell – 11 LPC-MHs (3%)
    - Yankton – 10 LPC-MHs (3%)
    - Pierre – 9 LPC-MHs (2%)
    - Watertown – 7 LPC-MHs (2%)

    74% of licensees are in 9 cities in the State.

    100 open plans of supervision

Licensee Numbers – MFTs

- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapists
  - 95 MFTs
    - Sioux Falls – 46 LPCs (48%)
    - Rapid City – 9 LPCs (9%)
    - Aberdeen – 4 LPCs (4%)
    - Brookings – 2 LPCs (2%)
    - Spearfish – 2 LPCs (2%)
    - Mitchell – 1 LPCs (1%)

    66% of licensees are in 6 cities in the State.

    6 open plans of supervision

Licensee Overview

- 922 current licensees that can provide counseling services within their training, expertise and education
  - 106 applicants pending for licensure as an LPC or MFT
  - 100 applicants moving toward a higher level of licensure (LPC-MH)
- Approximately half of the licensees in each category are 50+ years of age
  - 224/504 LPCs are 50 years of age or older
  - 153/323 LPC-MHs are 50 years of age or older
  - 66/95 MFTs are 50 years of age or older
  - New applicants are continuing the location trend of current licensees (large communities versus small communities)
- Approximately 2/3 of all licensees are in one of 9 communities

Opportunities for Telehealth

- Electronic delivery of counseling is allowed within the ACA Code of Ethics and HIPAA
- 3rd party payments are generally available for counseling delivered by electronic means
- Supervision for licensure is allowed to take place electronically
  - Geography is a barrier to weekly supervision requirement (approved supervisors are not always where the applicant/patient is located)
  - 50% must be in person and 50% can be done electronically
  - Board is working to clarify this allowance so HIPAA compliant electronic options can be utilized for additional supervision hours
  - Board is also working to change the specific weekly supervision requirements to a timeframe to allow for supervisors to meet with supervisees on a less frequent basis, but still maintain the plan of supervision under the supervisor's license

Challenges for Telehealth Counseling

- Counseling via electronic means includes some unique challenges
  - Confirmation of patient identity
  - Provision of options if the distant patient becomes agitated or suicidal
  - Secure platforms for providing the services
- Counseling services for a patient located in the state are subject to licensure as a counselor or therapist in South Dakota
  - Public safety issue to make sure the patient is being served by a competent provider
  - Board is working to clarify opportunities for qualified licensees from other states to be licensed in South Dakota on a temporary basis and/or permanently to allow for counseling services to be provided electronically, where appropriate

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