

Metro Marriage and Family Therapists Inc
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On behalf of Metro Marriage and Family Therapists, Maryland and Washington DC Metropolitan area's MFT professional membership association, we are delighted to collaborate with AAMFT in supporting HB 628 and SB 409 Health Occupations - Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists - Reciprocal Licensure Requirements.

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic and more urgently after the pandemic , our members have continuously requested we work with our Maryland Licensing Board and State Legislature to streamline the requirements for licensure by endorsement across neighboring states. We received complaints from our membership of experienced clinicians with many years or decades of practice who were finding the requirements to obtain licensure in each neighboring state very cumbersome and time consuming. With many clients choosing to use Telehealth, many clinicians had to refer out clients with whom they already established rapport and therapeutic relationship with to other jurisdictions when they were not able to obtain the other jurisdiction's license in a timely manner. This negatively impacted continuity of care that clients were receiving during an already difficult adjustment period out of the pandemic.

We as directors of the board can personally attest to the struggles that members have shared with MetroMFT about applying for licensure by endorsement. A barrier to the application process include finding a supervisor from many years or decades prior to sign a form for supervised hours that they are no longer legally required to save records for nor can they locate records for. Another barrier is needing additional graduate school coursework, even after being independently licensed and actively practicing for multiple years beyond graduation from a Master's level or higher degree.. One member shared that, after practicing as a fully licensed MFT in another state for 5 years, in order to be licensed in Maryland, she needed to take additional graduate coursework because the title of her graduate classes did not exactly match the coursework titles listed for Maryland licensing requirements. Others MFT clinicians who have practiced independently for decades and have retired or deceased supervisors would not be able to obtain signatures for supervised hours decades ago when they first completed their graduate degrees.

We have clients who frequently live and work across DMV jurisdictions. This means it can be difficult for continuity of client care, especially in a time when having a virtual care option is in high demand, when there are barriers to obtaining licensure from the neighboring state or district. What happens when a therapy client chooses to have their therapy session from the

privacy of their office in Virginia during their work day, rather than the clinician's office or client's home in Maryland? The clinician needs to be able to easily obtain licensure in both states. The licensing requirements for independent licensure of MFTs in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia are similar enough that one would think applying for licensure by endorsement in these regions would not be cumbersome. However, we have found that this has not been the experience of our MFT community.

The pandemic only heightened the need for fully licensed MFTs to be able to apply easily for licensure by endorsement in the DMV. Once the state of emergency expired and licensing waivers along with it, it left MFTs and consumers in a conflicted place in many cases. Does the client find another mental health provider because the provider has only virtual appointments and the client lives in a different state from the provider's license? Does the client drive to the neighboring state to have their therapy session from the car? Is it reasonable to expect consumers in this situation to change their location while a provider is working on their application to Maryland to become a licensed MFT by endorsement? These are the questions that have troubled providers and consumers in some cases.

In addition it has been very difficult for clients in Maryland to find licensed marriage and family therapists due to a workforce shortage. By breaking down barriers to obtain a Maryland License when one is fully licensed in another state, it will increase the number of therapists who can practice in our region.

We look forward to working together to ensure the bills are passed this 2024 legislative session.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Fang Brehm

President,

Metro Marriage and Family Therapists, Inc



Viviana Azar, MS, LCMFT

Advocacy Officer,

Metro Marriage and Family Therapists, Inc