

FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS: HOW TO BECOME A LICENCED CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH THERAPIST

Step 1: Complete Your Master's Program

To qualify for licensure, you must earn a **master's or doctoral degree** in counseling, psychology, or a related field from a regionally accredited institution. Your coursework must meet the state's educational requirements.

Gonzaga University's School Counseling M.A. program is perfectly set up to transfer right to clinical licensure in Washington State because CACREP requirements align with this process!

Step 2: Apply for LMHCA (associate) Licensure

Before you can begin practicing as a LMHC, you'll need to apply for your **LMHCA** through the **Washington State Department of Health (DOH)**.

1. **Visit the DOH website:** <https://doh.wa.gov>
 - More DOH resources listed below
2. **Gather and submit the required documents:**
 - Completed **LMHCA application** (found on the DOH website)
 - **Official graduate transcripts** (sent directly from your school to DOH)
 - **Background check & fingerprints**
 - **Supervisor Agreement Form**
 - You must have a licensed, approved, supervisor
 - Know that you will likely need to pay your supervisor for their time
 - **Pay the application fee**
3. **Find a Clinical Position:** Secure a job at an agency or practice that allows you to **work under supervision** as an LMHCA.
 - You will go about finding this position the same way that your CMHC and MFC peers are finding their post-graduate positions, and you can access the resources at GU, and our Dept. of Counselor Education for support in navigating this process.
 - Use a spreadsheet or method for tracking clinical hours, you will need these throughout the entire process!

Step 3: Complete Supervised Experience

As an LMHCA, you must complete:

- ✓ **3,000 total supervised hours** (minimum of 2 years)
- ✓ **1,200 direct client contact hours**
- ✓ **100 hours of supervision** (at least 50 individual, the rest can be group supervision)

Because the program at Gonzaga University is accredited by CACREP:

- ✓ **Total required hours: Reduced from 3,000 to 2,500**
- ✓ **Direct client contact hours: 1,200 hours**
- ✓ **Supervision hours: Still 100 hours** (still at least 50 individual supervision)
- ✓ **Minimum duration: Still at least two years** of supervised experience

Step 4: Pass the National Counseling Examination

- Register for and pass the **National Counseling Examination (NCE)** through the **National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)** (www.nbcc.org).
- Submit your passing scores to the Washington DOH.
- *Many students take this towards their final semester in the program, and once it is completed, the passing score does not expire!*

Step 5: Apply for Full LMHC Licensure

Once you've completed your hours and passed the exam, submit your **LMHC application**, verified supervision hours, and the required fee to the DOH. After final approval, you will be fully licensed as an **LMHC**!

Step 6: Maintain Your LMHC License

- Renew your license annually.
- Complete **36 continuing education (CE) hours every 2 years**, including **6 hours of law & ethics** and **3 hours of suicide prevention training**.

IMPORTANT:

Keep **all documentation for the whole process**; a lot of what you submit for LMHCA will need to be resubmitted for the LMHC process

Additional Resource: DOH outline of Licensure requirements

<https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/professions-new-renew-or-update/mental-health-counselor/licensing-information>

Additional Resource: DOH Licensure FAQ Page

<https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/professions-new-renew-or-update/behavioral-health-professions-facilities-and-agencies/frequently-asked-questions>

Additional Resource: Scope of Practice Analysis for Mental Health Counselors

<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/2300/2020/SB5054-ScopeAnalysisMHC.pdf>