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Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) Agency Background Document

Agency name	Board of Counseling, Department of Health Professions
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) Chapter citation(s)	18VAC115-20 18VAC115-50 18VAC115-60
VAC Chapter title(s)	Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling Regulations Governing the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy Regulations Governing the Practice of Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Practitioners
Action title	Implementation of 2026 periodic review for chapters 20, 50, and 60
Date this document prepared	7/17/2026

This information is required for executive branch review and the Virginia Registrar of Regulations, pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (APA), Executive Order 19 (2022) (EO 19), any instructions or procedures issued by the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) or the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) pursuant to EO 19, the Regulations for Filing and Publishing Agency Regulations (1 VAC 7-10), 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 the subject matter, intent, and goals of this regulatory change (i.e., new regulation, amendments to an existing regulation, or repeal of an existing regulation).

Following a periodic review, the Board is amending chapters 20, 50, and 60 to implement identified amendments. These amendments include general cleanup of language, additions and eliminations for clarity, and substantive additions to better regulate the practice of counseling.

Acronyms and Definitions

Define all acronyms or technical definitions used in this form.

LPC – Licensed Professional Counselor
LMFT – Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
LSATP – Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Provider

Mandate and Impetus

Identify the mandate for this regulatory change and any other impetus that specifically prompted its initiation, (e.g., new or modified mandate, petition for rulemaking, periodic review, or board decision). For purposes of executive branch review, “mandate” has the same meaning as defined in the ORM procedures, “a directive from the General Assembly, the federal government, or a court that requires that a regulation be promulgated, amended, or repealed in whole or part.”

The impetus for this action is the periodic review conducted by the Board.

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 of the Board of Counseling are promulgated under the general authority of Chapter 24 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia. Virginia Code § 54.1-2400(6) specifically states that the general powers and duties of health regulatory boards shall be “[t]o promulgate regulations in accordance with the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) that are reasonable and necessary to administer effectively the regulatory system.”

Purpose

Describe the specific reasons why the agency has determined that this regulation is essential to protect the health, safety, or welfare of citizens. In addition, explain any potential issues that may need to be addressed as the regulation is developed.

The purpose of this action is to ensure the effective regulation of LPCs, LMFTs, and LSATPs. This action is essential to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens because the General Assembly has tasked the regulation of the profession of counseling to the Board and the Board has determined this action will help advance that mission. There are no anticipated issues that will need to be addressed.

Substance

Briefly identify and explain the new substantive provisions that are being considered, the substantive changes to existing sections that are being considered, or both.

Changes to be considered include the following:

- Update definitions to remove unused terms;
- Update descriptions of fees;
- Eliminate unnecessary references to other chapters;
- Update requirements for licensure for clarity and to reduce burdens;
- Update degree and coursework requirements;
- Update and reorganize residency requirements and supervision of residents;
- Update renewal requirements for clarity and eliminate passive voice;
- Update continuing competency regulations;
- Remove gendered voice throughout the Chapters;
- Eliminate copy and paste Code language;
- Update requirements for unprofessional conduct; and
- Make other changes as further identified by the regulatory committee

Alternatives to Regulation

Describe any viable alternatives to the regulatory change that were considered, and the rationale used by the agency to select the least burdensome or intrusive alternative that meets the essential purpose of the regulatory change. Also, include discussion of less intrusive or less costly alternatives for small businesses, as defined in § 2.2-4007.1 of the Code of Virginia, of achieving the purpose of the regulatory change.

There is no alternative to regulation. A regulatory action is required to amend currently existing regulations. There is no impact on small businesses.

Periodic Review and Small Business Impact Review Announcement

This NOIRA is not being used to announce a periodic review or a small business impact review.

Public Participation

Indicate how the public should contact the agency to submit comments on this regulation, and whether a public hearing will be held, by completing the text below. In addition, as required by § 2.2-4007.02 of the Code of Virginia, describe any other means that will be used to identify and notify interested parties and seek their input, such as regulatory advisory panels or general notices.

The Board of Counseling is providing an opportunity for comments on this regulatory proposal, including but not limited to (i) the costs and benefits of the regulatory proposal, (ii) any alternative approaches, and (iii) the potential impacts of the regulation.

Anyone wishing to submit written comments for the public comment file may do so through the Public Comment Forums feature of the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall web site at: <https://townhall.virginia.gov>. Comments may also be submitted by mail, email or fax to Matt Novak, Agency Regulatory Coordinator, 9960 Mayland Drive, Henrico, VA 23233 or matthew.novak@dhp.virginia.gov or by fax to (804) 915-0382. In order to be considered, comments must be received by 11:59 pm on the last day of the public comment period.