

Volume 18

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Board Office Hours

The Board Office is closed to visitors;
board staff is currently working remotely,
so please email or leave a voicemail.

Monday 8:30–5 pm

Tuesday 8:30–5 pm

Wednesday 8:30–5 pm

Thursday 8:30–5 pm

Friday 8:30–5 pm

Saturday Closed

Sunday Closed

Message From the Board Chair

On behalf of the North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors (NCBLCMHC), welcome to the Summer Edition of the Board Insider.

Summer often represents a season of momentum. The seeds planted in earlier seasons begin to produce visible results, and we are reminded that meaningful growth is sustained through consistency, dedication, and purposeful action. While many associate summer with rest and recreation, it also serves as an opportunity to celebrate progress, strengthen our commitments, and prepare for the work that lies ahead.

As Clinical Mental Health Counselors, we understand that progress is rarely measured in dramatic moments alone. More often, it is reflected in the quiet victories, the client who finds hope after despair, the family that begins to heal, the student who gains confidence, or the community that becomes

stronger because compassionate professionals chose to serve. These moments remind us why our profession continues to be indispensable to the health and wellbeing of North Carolina.

This quarter has also been one of significant activity for the Board. We have continued our commitment to strengthening our organization through strategic planning, ongoing rule implementation, operational improvements, and one of the busiest renewal seasons in our history. These efforts are all guided by a common purpose: ensuring that the Board continues to protect the public while supporting a profession that continues to grow in both size and impact.

As the Counseling profession continues to evolve, so too must our leadership. Emerging technologies, expanding access to care, increasing demand for behavioral health services, and changing regulatory landscapes require us to remain informed, adaptable, and committed to excellence. Each of us has a responsibility to uphold the ethical standards that define our profession while embracing thoughtful innovation that enhances the care we provide.

Summer also offers an opportunity to pause, not to stop growing, but to appreciate how far we have come. Take time to recognize your accomplishments, invest in your own wellness, and reconnect with the purpose that first called you to this profession. The work you do each day changes lives, and sustaining that work begins with caring for yourself as intentionally as you care for others.

As we look ahead to the remainder of the year, I encourage each of you to continue leading with integrity, serving with compassion, and pursuing excellence in every aspect of your professional practice. Together, we strengthen not only our profession but also the communities that depend on us. Thank you for your continued dedication to the people of North Carolina and for the professionalism you bring to this important work each day.

Stay Inspired. Stay Growing. Stay Amazing.



Dr. Yasmin Gay
Board Chair

Yasmin E. Gay

Best,

Dr. Yasmin Gay

LCMHCS, CCJP, LCAS, CRC, CCTP, MAC, CCS

NCBLCMHC Mission

The mission of the Board under NC GS Article 24 section 90-329 states that it is declared to be the public policy of this State that the activities of persons who render counseling services to the public be regulated to insure the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare.

Meet the Board

Dr. Yasmin Gay

Board Chair
LCMHCS
Congressional District 6

Dr. Nicole Stargell

Vice Chair
LCMHC
Congressional District 14

Dr. Ximena Franco Jenkins

Public Member
Congressional District 13

Dr. Levette Scott

LCMHC
Congressional District 2



Impaired Professionals Program

Nicole A. Stargell, PhD, NCC, BC-TMH, LCMHC, LS

The North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors (the Board) has an Impaired Professionals Program to ensure that professional counselors licensed or privileged in our state have resources available to address a range of mental health and related conditions and are fit to practice and safe to the public. "Impairment" means a condition or disorder caused by substance use, burnout, compassion fatigue, or other mental health issue that hinders professional competence or the ability to provide or supervise clinical mental health counseling services with reasonable skill and safety. The North Carolina Professionals Health Program (NCPHP) is the selected provider for the Board's Impaired Professionals Program.

Individuals might wish to self-refer to NCPHP if they want support with managing any concerns that could affect their fitness to practice. Those who are in the process of applying for licensure with the Board and those currently licensed by the Board can also choose to self-refer to NCPHP. Self-referrals will remain confidential to the Board, unless NCPHP determines that the participant is an imminent danger, is not safe to practice, or refuses to cooperate with the Program.

Individuals might be referred to NCPHP by the Board if evidence or information indicates that an applicant or licensee might be impaired. Examples of information that might lead to an NCPHP referral include recent legal convictions or a reliable complaint or referral from various sources, such as a supervisor, colleague, or client.

The first step when an individual is referred or self-referred to NCPHP is an initial screening. A trained professional meets with the individual to gather information about substance use, burnout, compassion fatigue, or other mental health issues. The screening might determine that the individual is not impaired; if the screening indicates some potential impairment, the individual will be recommended for an in-depth assessment. The assessment might indicate that the individual is not impaired; if the assessment indicates some impairment, the individual can be recommended for treatment. NCPHP will monitor such treatment until the individual is no longer impaired.

NCPHP communicates to the Board if they ever believe that a referred individual is not fit to practice. Otherwise, as long as individuals are in compliance with NCPHP's recommendations, they may continue with their application or licensure processes with the Board, which might include additional requirements such as continuing education or ongoing supervision.

Learn more about the Board's Impaired Professionals Program here:

<https://www.ncblcmhc.org/Licensure/Applying/IPP>

SAVE TIME BY RENEWING ONLINE!

The 2027 license renewal window opens on Jan. 1

Licensure renewal procedures apply to LCMHC Associates, LCMHCs, and LCMHC Supervisors. Renewals may be submitted as early as Jan. 1 of the renewal year. All licensees shall complete requirements before renewal can be issued.

The deadline for renewal is June 20 of the renewal year.
You must renew prior to June 30 to avoid a lapse.

Click Here to
Renew Now 

Tip: Add a recurring event to your phone's calendar to remind you when renewals are due.

Be sure to keep your contact information updated to avoid missing important emails from the board.

Counseling, Ethics, and High-Conflict Divorces: Protecting Your License as You Work With Families in Crisis

M. Bruce Garris, MAEd, LCMHCS, NCC

As a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor, working with families experiencing a high-conflict divorce dictates that you navigate a complex intersection of emotional intensity, legal pressures, and ethical obligations. These cases heighten every professional risk, making ethical clarity essential for protecting your clients, maintaining the integrity of the therapeutic process, and protecting your professional license!

An initial ethical priority is maintaining neutrality. High-conflict divorces often pull professionals into parental battles, with each parent hoping the Counselor will validate their perspective. We must avoid even the appearance of siding with one parent. Neutrality requires consistent documentation, balanced communication, and the careful structuring of sessions so that no family member feels marginalized or weaponized in the process.

Informed consent also becomes more complicated in these situations. It's important to clearly state who the "identified" client is, the purpose of treatment, and how information will be shared. When minors are involved, North Carolina law requires verifying which parent has legal authority to consent to treatment. In high-conflict cases, custody agreements may be contested or misunderstood, so you need to review legal documents before initiating services and ask to be notified of any changes to agreement should they occur. When both parents share joint custody, you must communicate in a way that is neutral, transparent, child-focused, and consistent with the custody order as it is written (not based on what a parent may tell you!). Your role is not to mediate legal disputes but to ensure that both parents receive the same information, that no parent is given preferential access, and that the child's therapeutic privacy is protected within legal limits. Clear, early communication prevents misunderstandings and reduces the risk of being drawn into parental disputes.

Confidentiality is another big consideration. Parents may pressure you for information that could influence custody decisions. We are obligated to explain the limits of confidentiality at the outset and reinforce them throughout treatment. Protecting the therapeutic space (especially for children!) is essential to preserving trust and ensuring that therapy does not become an extension of the parents' legal conflict.

High-conflict divorce cases also demand strict role clarity. As a person's therapist, you should not also serve in any way as a custody evaluator, parenting coordinator, or expert witness. The *ACA Code of Ethics* warns against dual relationships that impair objectivity or risk harm. Even the most well-intentioned comments can be misinterpreted or misused in court, so remain firmly within your therapeutic role.

One particularly challenging ethical area involves responding to subpoenas and court orders. These are frequently associated with high-conflict divorce cases. A subpoena is an attempt to require you to appear or produce records, but it does not automatically override confidentiality. First, verify its validity, then notify the client or guardian, and seek your own legal consultation. When appropriate, you may assert therapist—client privilege to protect confidential information. A court order, however, is issued by a judge and must be followed. Even then, you should disclose only what is specifically required and avoid offering opinions outside the scope of your treatment. Clear documentation and adherence to ethical boundaries help prevent misuse of therapeutic information in litigation.

Finally, we have to always prioritize the best interests of the children! While remaining neutral between parents, we have an ongoing ethical obligation to safeguard every child's emotional well-being. This may involve helping parents understand the impact of conflict on their children, supporting and encouraging healthier communication patterns, and when possible, ensuring that the child is not placed in the middle of adult disputes.

License Renewal: What You Need to Know

Renew Early

Each renewal cycle, the North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors processes thousands of renewal applications. Understanding the renewal timeline, important deadlines, and what to expect after submitting your application can help ensure your renewal is processed as efficiently as possible while minimizing unnecessary delays.

The renewal period opens each year on January 1st, and although licensees have until June 30th to submit a timely renewal, the Board strongly encourages renewing as early as possible. Early submission provides time to address any missing documentation or application deficiencies before the deadline. Historically, the highest volume of renewal applications is received between May 1st and June 30th, resulting in longer processing times. Please remember that your renewal is considered timely only when both your renewal application and the required renewal fee have been submitted by June 30th.

Understanding the June 30th Deadline

One of the most common misconceptions during renewal season is that June 30th is also the Board's deadline to process renewal applications. It is not. June 30th is the statutory deadline for licensees to submit a complete renewal application and payment in order to renew on time. Because thousands of applications are submitted near the deadline, it is not possible for every timely renewal to be reviewed and approved by June 30th.

Administrative Extension for Timely Renewals

To ensure licensees who renew on time may continue practicing while Board staff complete the review process, eligible licensees who submit both their renewal application and renewal fee by June 30th are automatically granted an administrative extension through September 30th. No action is required to receive this extension. Your Counselor Gateway account and the online license verification system will automatically reflect the administrative extension, allowing you to continue practicing while your renewal remains under review. Once your renewal has been approved, your license expiration date will automatically update to reflect the full renewal period.

What Happens After You Submit Your Renewal?

After you submit your renewal, it is important to understand that your application has not been immediately reviewed. Renewal applications are processed in the order they are received and cannot be expedited. Likewise, documents uploaded through Counselor Gateway do not immediately appear as "Received" or "Complete." Every document must first be reviewed by Board staff before your checklist is updated. It is normal for uploaded documents to appear as outstanding for a period of time after submission. Please do not upload duplicate documents simply because your checklist has not yet changed. If additional documentation or corrections are needed, Board staff will contact you directly.

Understanding Your Checklist

Your application checklist reflects only documents that have been reviewed and accepted by Board staff, not simply documents that have been uploaded. Until staff complete their review, uploaded documents may continue to appear as outstanding, and statuses such as "Received" or "Complete" will not display. Unless the Board contacts you requesting additional information, no further action is required. Your confirmation email serves as verification that your document was successfully uploaded.

Monitor Your Email

Throughout the renewal process, the Board communicates primarily by email. Licensees should carefully monitor both their inbox and spam or junk folders, read all Board correspondence thoroughly, respond promptly to requests for additional information, and ensure their email address in Counselor Gateway remains current. Many processing delays occur simply because requested information is not submitted after the Board has contacted the licensee.

Responding promptly to Board communications can help reduce processing times and support a smoother renewal process for everyone.

Renewal Processing Time frames

Due to the significant volume of renewal applications received each cycle, processing times will vary. Applications are reviewed in the order they are received, and staff cannot expedite renewals or guarantee completion based on employer deadlines, insurance credentialing, contracting requirements, or other third-party timelines. Before contacting the Board, licensees are encouraged to review their application status in Counselor Gateway. Repeated requests for status updates do not expedite processing and may contribute to longer response times during the renewal season.

If You Miss the Deadline

Licensees who do not submit both their renewal application and renewal fee by June 30th will enter lapsed status effective July 1st. A \$75 late renewal fee will apply, and under 21 NCAC 53 .0601, licensees must cease the practice of counseling until their renewal has been completed and their license has returned to active status. Practicing while a license is lapsed may constitute unlicensed practice.

Upgrade Applications and the 120-Day Window

Licensees applying to upgrade their license should also be aware of the Board's 120-day upgrade policy, which was designed to prevent eligible applicants from paying both an upgrade fee and a renewal fee during the same renewal cycle. To qualify, upgrade applications must be submitted by March 2 of the renewal year, with all required documentation received by June 30th. Applications submitted outside this window are processed as standard upgrade applications. If a lower-level license lapses, it must first be renewed and restored to active status before the upgrade can be finalized. Please note that upgrade application fees cannot be transferred or applied toward renewal fees, and upgrade applications remain active for up to 2 years while outstanding requirements are completed.

Refund Policy

Licensees are encouraged to carefully review all application requirements before submitting payment. Application and renewal fees are generally non-refundable, including when an application is submitted in error, the incorrect application type is selected, a licensee later decides not to proceed, or an application ultimately does not qualify for approval.

Help Us Process Renewals Faster

By renewing early, submitting complete and accurate documentation only once, reviewing Counselor Gateway before contacting the Board, and responding promptly to Board communications, licensees can help reduce processing times and support a smoother renewal process for everyone.

Don't Miss Important Messages About Your License!

Reminder to LCMHSs!

Quarterly Supervision Reports (QSRs) MUST be submitted in a timely manner. Doing so helps to ensure that supervision is properly documented and that your supervision contract was approved. QSRs cannot be submitted by the supervisee; they must be submitted by the Supervisor.

Quarterly report due dates are:

Q1 (Jan. 1–March 31) report must be submitted by April 30
Q2 (April 1–June 30) report must be submitted by July 31
Q3 (July 1–Sept. 30) report must be submitted by Oct. 31
Q4 (Oct. 1–Dec. 31) report must be submitted by Jan. 31

The Board does not require the submission of hours on QSRs.
All hours are to be reported to the Board on Final Supervision Reports (FSRs).

Note:

All Supervisors are required to submit QSRs and FSRs. Parties agree to submit these documents as a part of the supervision contract submitted to the Board. These documents must not be withheld for any reason. Issues that may arise during the supervision relationship must be reported on QSRs and submitted to the Board.

Supervision Contracts must be submitted to and approved by the Board before supervision begins. The Board will not backdate Supervision Contracts, retroactively approve supervision hours accrued without a Board-approved contract, or consider requests to approve hours obtained before an approved supervision arrangement was in place. Supervision obtained prior to Board approval of the supervision arrangement may not satisfy licensure requirements.

Accessing Your Counselor Gateway

Check the status of your renewal, view your supervision documents, and manage your contact information via the Counselor Gateway online portal.

<https://portal.ncblcmhc.org/>

Note: Documents uploaded through Counselor Gateway will not immediately display as "Received." Documents are marked received only after they have been reviewed by Board staff. Your confirmation email serves as verification that your document was successfully uploaded.

What's New

Renewal Clarifications for LCMHC Supervisors

LCMHC Supervisors will only need to submit a total of 40 contact hours. However, of those 40 hours, 10 must be related to clinical supervision. There are no changes to the approved providers, content areas, types of activities, or documentation requirements.

What Has Changed?

Previously, LCMHC Supervisors had to complete 40 contact hours plus 10 additional hours specific to supervision, for a total of 50. Beginning with 2025 renewals, this has been reduced to 40 hours total, with 10 hours specifically focused on supervision.

What Has Not Changed?

- approved continuing education providers
- required content areas for CEUs
- types of activities to meet requirements for supervision
- documentation requirements to demonstrate supervision has occurred
- requirement to meet the minimum continuing education in order to renew



120-Day Licensure Upgrade Option

The NCBLCMHC offers a 120-day courtesy upgrade window for licensees within their renewal period (Jan. 1–June 30 of the renewal year).

This applies to:

- LCMHCAs → LCMHC
- LCMHCs → LCMHCS

To Qualify:

- By March 2: Initiate the upgrade application and pay the application fee.
- By June 30: Submit all required documentation and finalize the application.

If not completed by June 30:

- The courtesy policy does not apply.
- The current license must be renewed with all applicable fees.
- The upgrade will be processed as a standard application.

An active license is required.

Upgrade applications will not be accepted after a license has lapsed.

No exceptions, appeals, or special consideration are granted outside the renewal window.

Fees

During the renewal window:

No \$200 renewal fee required.

Pay only:

\$238 application fee

Criminal background check fee

You do not pay both fees if completed within the 120-day timeframe.

Processing:

Applications are processed within 6–12 weeks.

April–September is a high-volume period. Applications are not penalized due to administrative processing time.

2026 Renewal Notes (DEADLINE HAS PASSED)

If you already submitted your 2026 renewal and wish to upgrade:

- Initiate the upgrade application.
- Email LCMHCinfo@ncblcmhc.org.
- Do not submit the upgrade fee until instructed.

For full details, visit the [Applying](#) or [Renewals](#) section of the NCBLCMHC website.

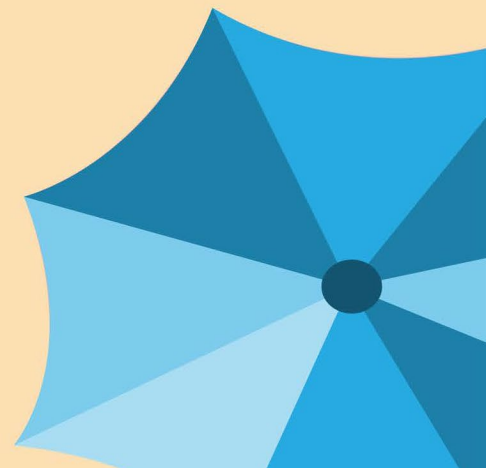
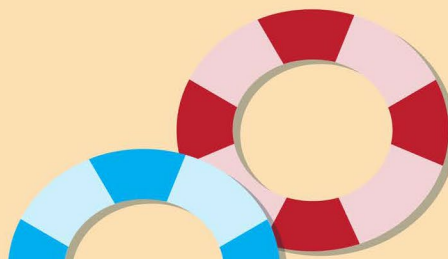
Mark Your Calendars

2026

July 30–31
Board Meeting

Sept. 4
Board Hearing

Please visit
ncblcmhc.org/boardinfo/calendar
to view the full Board calendar.



Are You in Compliance?

A Quick Supervision Quiz – Test your knowledge:

1. When must a Supervision Contract be submitted to the Board?

- A. within 30 days after supervision begins
- B. before supervision begins
- C. at the time of licensure application
- D. at the end of the supervision period

2. True or False

The Board may approve supervision hours earned before a Supervision Contract was submitted and approved if both the supervisor and associate agree.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

3. Which statement is correct regarding supervision hours?

- A. All 3,000 hours may be direct counseling.
- B. At least 2,000 of the required 3,000 hours must be direct counseling practice.
- C. Direct and indirect hours are not tracked separately.
- D. Only 1,000 total hours are required before licensure.

4. How much supervision is required while completing the 3,000 hours of supervised professional practice?

- A. one hour of supervision every 80 hours of practice
- B. one hour of individual supervision or two hours of group supervision for every 40 hours of practice
- C. two hours of individual supervision every month regardless of hours worked
- D. one hour of supervision each week

5. Which of the following is the best practice?

- A. Begin supervision immediately and submit the contract later.
- B. Wait until you've accumulated several supervision hours before submitting the contract.
- C. Ensure the Supervision Contract is approved by the Board before supervision begins.
- D. Submit the contract only when applying for licensure.

Answer Key

1. **B** – Before supervision begins.
 2. **False** – The Board does not backdate Supervision Contracts or retroactively approve supervision hours earned before the supervision arrangement has been approved.
 3. **B** – At least 2,000 of the required 3,000 hours must be direct counseling practice.
 4. **B** – Associates must receive one hour of individual supervision or two hours of group supervision for every 40 hours of professional practice.
 5. **C** – A Supervision Contract must be submitted to and approved by the Board before supervision begins.
-

How did you do?

If you missed a question, visit the Board's website to review licensure requirements, supervision rules, and professional standards.

Understanding licensure requirements, ethical standards, and Board rules helps ensure compliance and protects the clients and the profession.

