



To: Counselor Professional Standards Committee

From: Brian Carnahan

Re: Use of NBCC Exams

Date: 9/11/2025

Prior to the full implementation of the reciprocity legislation, and also before passage of the Counseling Compact legislation, the Counselor Professional Standards Committee (CPSC) discussed the possibility of reducing to one the number of exams required for licensure as an LPCC in Ohio. At that time, around May of 2023, no firm decision was made.

With pending full implementation of the Compact, and with a number of LPCCs licensed via reciprocity, the Board has an opportunity to again reconsider how many exams are required to qualify for the LPCC.

Most states require only one exam to obtain an independent counselor license, generally applicants in the single exam states may take either the NCE or NCMHCE. Ohio is in the minority of states that require passage of two exams for full, independent licensure.

Ohio's reciprocity law requires us to issue a license to applicants with an active out of state license, provided the person has passed a "national" exam and has not disqualifying criminal convictions. As of 9/1/2025 we have 1211 Counselors who have been issued a license via reciprocity. Of those 1211, 954 were issued an LPCC. These numbers may drop as the Compact takes effect. The Counseling Compact legislation and rules only require an independent license in good standing that was issued based on passing an exam. By the end of 2025, Ohio will have counselors practicing in the State using a privilege issued by the Counseling Compact.



My recommendation is to allow the issuance of the LPC on the basis of passing either the NCE or NCMHCE. Once an Ohio LPC demonstrates they have completed the required training supervision hours, an LPCC could be issued, provided no background check issues emerge from a new check.

Making this change helps align Ohio with national standards for counselor licensure. Over 80% of states and the District of Columbia require counselors to complete only one exam for full, independent licensure.

	<u>NCE</u>	<u>NCMHCE</u>	<u>Either Exam</u>	<u>Both (Two Tier Model)</u>	<u>Other (CRCE)</u>
#	11	7	23	10	5
%	21.6%	13.7%	45.1%	19.6%	9.8%

The role of the Board is to set rules that establish a minimum level of competence. It is difficult to argue that public protection is diminished with the elimination of an exam. Currently MFTs are licensed via a single exam. Social Workers must pass two exams for independent licensure. However, one can argue that owing to the fact that social workers can be licensed via a BSW or MSW, and the generalist track of social work, two exams are appropriate.

There is no evidence that counselors in states where only one exam is used for licensure violate the code of ethics more frequently than those who take two exams. Anecdotally, reciprocal license holders, many of whom were licensed via a single exam, are not responsible for more ethical lapses than Ohio Counselors licensed by taking two exams.



Eliminating a second exam results in cost savings to licensees and facilitates career progression, admittedly not a public protection issue, but a topic of current interest. It also will generate some processing efficiencies internally as the Board will not have to process exam approvals and reapprovals and can issue an LPCC based on completed supervision and a background check.

The decision to transition to one exam could be made via a vote of the Committee. The OAC indicates that the LPCC is issued based on an exam required by the Board. The exam is not named in the rules or the Revised Code. A similar decision was made by the SWPSC regarding the use of the Advanced Generalist Exam. If the Committee decides to transition to a one exam standard, an announcement of the change could be made, establishing a date 60-90 days in the future. Unfortunately, the Board cannot reimburse applicants who have paid for the NCMHCE and have not yet taken it.