

**Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors 835-00**

**5-Year Strategic Plan  
FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2021 – 2025**

## **Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors 835-00 5-Year Strategic Plan, FY 2021 – FY 2025**

### **1. Our Mission**

The Mississippi Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors (Board) purpose is to provide for the regulation and practice of counseling as well as the use of the title "Licensed Professional Counselor" and "Provisional Licensed Professional Counselor" to ensure the protection of the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the State of Mississippi.

### **2. Our Philosophy**

The Mississippi Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors is committed to the continued safeguard of the public health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians. The philosophy of the Board is to adhere to the highest professional standards and to indiscriminately enforce licensing and regulation of any person who presents himself/herself to the public as a licensed professional counselor or psychotherapist and who offers professional counseling or psychotherapy services to individuals, groups, organizations, corporation, intuitions, government agencies or the general public.

### **3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks**

**Statewide Goal #1.:** To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health-related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives.

Relevant Benchmarks #1: *Access to Care*

- Number of health professional shortage areas
- Number of practitioners needed to remove health professional shortage area designations, by type of practitioner
- Percentage of population lacking access to mental health care
- Percentage of population lacking access to community-based mental health care

**Statewide Goal #2.:**

To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmarks #1: *Cost of Government*

- Total state spending per capita
- Number of government employees per 10,000 population

Relevant Benchmarks #2.: *Government Efficiency*

- Administrative efficiency: Expenditures on state government administrative activities as a percentage of total operational expenditures
- Average wait time for state government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies
- Number and average cost of regulatory actions taken, by regulatory body and type of action
- State dollars saved by providing government services online (e.g., document retrieval, issuance of new business permits, license renewal)

#### **4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan:**

The Mississippi Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors has targeted five priorities for the next five years. First, with the successful passage of the new law, HB 708, effective July 1, 2018, a new step license was established in Mississippi, Provisional Licensed Professional Counselor. While this new law greatly benefits the access to quality mental health counseling and psychotherapy, it significantly impacted the policies and procedures and workflow of the Board's office. Based on this new path to licensure for counselors, the Board recognizes the need to ensure the long-term viability of the office and to take proactive steps to establish a state position to serve as administrative and licensing support to the Agency. Despite the diligent efforts of the Board's Executive Director, and only employee, the workload generated by the passage of the new law has increased dramatically. When comparing FY 2018 and FY 2019, the Board saw a 64% increase in the volume of Applicants and an 42% increase in the volume of complaints. To prevent delays in licensing or hearing of complaints, the volunteer Board met 21 times in FY 2019. The increased number of meetings places much more responsibilities on a staff of one; therefore, the Board will try to supplement with a contract worker for FY 2020 with the intent to establish a state position to serve as administrative and licensing support beginning FY 2021. The Board foresees the continual increase of applicants for licensure via this new path.

Secondly, the Board will continue to enhance communication and licensing options through its online database of Licensed Professional Counselors and Provisional Licensed Professional Counselor. The Board will continue to utilize this secure online database to further develop "Board Books" to allow for virtual Board meetings, remote application review, and streamlined Board communications. This enhancement will decrease meeting costs and office costs, decrease processing time of license renewals thereby promoting efficiency and convenience to licensees, decrease processing time of application review, provide more timely means in getting qualified applicants through the licensure process to allow greater access to professional counseling and psychotherapy, provide immediate deposits of funds into State Treasury account, and streamline communication systems with licensees and applicants.

Thirdly, the Board will continue to regulate the practice of counseling in Mississippi by addressing its legal and ethical concerns by conducting numerous hearings involving denied licensure, practicing without a license, and disciplinary hearings of complaints to ensure the protection of the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Mississippi. With the passage of the new law, effective July 1, 2018, the Board requires each first-time applicant for licensure and applicants for renewal to apply for a national fingerprint background check. This new law also includes means to recover investigation, prosecution and adjudication costs.

Fourthly, the new law the Board has implemented a step license to allow the Board to more closely monitor supervisees as they complete the three thousand (3,000) supervised hours of counseling in a clinical setting under direct supervision by a Board approved supervisor bearing the Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor (LPC-S) credential. The plan for supervision with the LPC-S is to be approved by the Board prior to any actual performance of counseling on the part of the supervisee. The Board will strive to implement a quarterly evaluation process for each Supervisee by their Supervisor. Any supervisee, after meeting the requirements specified in Board Rules and Regulations, may petition the Board for licensure as a Professional Counselor. This step license will further protect the public from unlawful counseling practice and ensure protection of public health, safety, and welfare of citizens of Mississippi with access to quality counseling and psychotherapy from well monitored supervisees through their licensing process by enforcing qualification standards or all levels of licensure.

Fifthly, the Board will monitor the competency, effectiveness and excellence of the Licensed Professional Counselors through monitoring of continuing education for renewal of licenses as well as develop and administer juris prudence examination to ensure applicants and licensees are staying abreast of the Rules and Regulation of the Board, *Miss Code Ann.* § 73-30-1, et. (Rev. 1985), and the Board adopted *American Counseling Association Code of Ethics*.

## **5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment**

- 1) As more professionals find themselves required to obtain proper licensure in order to obtain employment in the State of Mississippi, the LPC Board incurs additional expenses. However, the ability to license counselors in turn means more revenue from collection of fees to cover expenses.
- 2) Increased propensity of the public to file formal complaints and the Board's pro-active nature to pursue persons practicing as a counselor without proper license as well as hearings for denial of licensure of persons not meeting requirements impacts the budget necessary to pay expenses of Board members, hearing officers, and court reporters for participation in hearings as well as takes time away from the Board's ability to review license application files during monthly face to face meetings.
- 3) Increased amount of time required by volunteer Board members impacts the expediency of Board action.
- 4) Automated documentation by interactive website will impact personnel and Board productivity. Maintaining agency website in line with recommendations from the PEER committee will impact expenses for the continued web design, data migration and on-going management. Changes in technology can be used to enhance the productivity of the Board outside of face to face meetings and even provide opportunity for virtual meetings.

5) Agency is reliant upon collection of fees.

The Board is a 100% Special Fund Agency with one full time employee. The implementation of a step license, the increase in number of administrative and informal hearings, the online database management, and the website enhancements has necessitated the agency's need to establish a state position to serve as administrative and licensing support for the agency. Fees collected by the agency for licensing of Licensed Professional Counselors will cover the added expenses (retirement, health coverage, life coverage, FICA) of the additional state PIN.

The duties of the five appointed Board members, made up of representatives from each Congressional District plus one at-large member with an elected Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer, are to develop guidelines and implement procedures for granting state licenses to professional counselors, including required candidate testing and investigating all forms of formal complaints about the professional, ethical and legal practices of licensed professional counselors in the State of Mississippi.

The Board is only required to hold two regular meetings per year as pursuant to statute, however, the growing number of applicants with the implementation of a step license, increase in number of complaints and other administrative needs makes it necessary to meet more often in person for 1-2 days and via teleconference if the need for supplemental meetings arises. (The Board met 21 times in FY2019.) These meetings allow the Board to make decisions on requests, provide direction for the Executive Director, review applications, hear complaints, set forth policies and rules and regulations as needed, and provide educational programs for Licensed Professional Counselors and Board qualified supervisors (LPC-S) via presentations at state and regional conferences. At these meetings Board members evaluate the progress made toward established goals and objectives and make changes when appropriate. With the advancements in technology and online licensee database, the development of "Board Books" and the purchase of iPads for each of the 5 board members, Executive Director and the Attorney to assist with Board Meetings, Compliance Reviews, and Hearings of Licensed Professional Counselors regulated by the agency will increase Board and personnel productivity and efficiency.

The Board, through its regularly and special called board meetings, discusses agency performance, priorities for the upcoming quarter and any additional issues that may affect the agency and/or the practice of Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Mississippi and addresses deficiencies in the process. The Board continues an on-going process of evaluating all aspects of duties and responsibilities under the Board's mandate. This includes contracted services, standards set forth in the Rules & Regulations, Statutes, and standards/processes for license renewal.

## **6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program**

### **6.1 Agency Goals by Program**

#### **Program 1: Licensure & Regulation**

**GOAL A: Issue licenses to individuals who satisfactorily meet set standards and qualifications** (*Miss. Code Ann. Section 73-30-1 & 73-30-7 & 73-30-9 & 73-30-21*)

**Objective A.1.** Develop and impose standards which must be met by individuals in order to receive a license as a professional counselor or a step license as a supervisee

- Outcome:* Qualified Licensed Professional Counselors
- Outcome:* Change in number of complaints against Licensed Professional Counselors
- Outcome:* Change in number of persons not meeting minimum requirements for licensure
- Efficiency:* Average cost per administrative hearing for Board travel, administration, and other fees

**A.1.1. STRATEGY:** Provide a comprehensive application that requires proof of good moral character and satisfactorily meeting minimum requirements to become licensed as a professional counselor

- Output:* Number of applications completed online
- Output:* Number of state and national fingerprint background checks received
- Output:* Number of complaints filed for persons practicing without a license or not practicing in a competent and ethical manner
- Output:* Number of qualified supervisees registered and monitored
- Efficiency:* Online access to application reduces office costs
- Efficiency:* Online access to application for review by the Board
- Efficiency:* Costs of Board travel, administration, and other fees for complaint hearings

**A.1.2. STRATEGY:** Board review and approve each individual based on acceptable completed applications and supporting documentation

- Output:* Number of applications received
- Efficiency:* Cost per application reviewed based on costs of Board travel and office expenses offset by fee

**A.1.3. STRATEGY:** Implement juris prudence exam to reflect applicant and licensee's knowledge and understanding of Rules and Regulations, applicable statutes, and Board approved Code of Ethics and any changes in board policy, federal mandate or state mandate

- Output:* Number of exams administered
- Efficiency:* Cost per exam administered

**Objective A.2.** Develop and implement educational program to train Licensed Professional Counselors who are Board qualified supervisors

- Output:* Number of LPC-Supervisors
- Output:* Number of LPC-Supervisor applications submitted
- Outcome:* Equip Supervisors to provide acceptable supervision for persons seeking supervision hours to meet experience requirements

for licensure  
*Efficiency:* Cost of speaker(s), training materials, facility; administrative  
*Efficiency:* Cost of Board travel, administration, and other fees for training

**A.2.1. STRATEGY:** Provide on-going training to Board qualified supervisors  
*Output:* Number of Board qualified supervisors participating  
*Output:* Number of complaints filed for persons practicing without a license or not practicing in a competent and ethical manner  
*Efficiency:* Cost of speaker(s), training materials, facility; administrative  
*Efficiency:* Cost of Board travel, administration, and other fees for training

**GOAL B: Renew licenses biennially for individuals who satisfactorily meet requirements** (*Miss. Code Ann. Section 73-30-29*)

**Objective B.1.** Review and assess qualifications for renewal of Licensed Professional Counselors

*Outcome:* Qualified Licensed Professional Counselors  
*Outcome:* Decrease in number of complaints against Licensed Professional Counselors  
*Outcome:* Change in number of persons not meeting license renewal requirements

**B.1.1. STRATEGY:** Provide a comprehensive renewal application that requires proof of good moral character and satisfactorily meets continuing education requirements for a Licensed Professional Counselor

*Output:* Number of renewals applications received  
*Output:* Number of state and national background checks received  
*Efficiency:* Online access to renewal forms and continuing education reporting reduces office costs and increases customer service  
*Efficiency:* Decreased processing time of license renewals  
*Efficiency:* Immediate deposits of funds into State Treasury account  
*Explanatory:* Costs reduced through online renewal and payment; associated fee offsets costs

**B.1.2. STRATEGY:** Track compliance with continuing education requirement

*Output:* Number of licensees utilizing online CEH reporting log  
*Efficiency:* Administrative costs to process and report CEHs  
*Efficiency:* Cost to review online reporting  
*Explanatory:* Online tracking and reporting of continuing education reduces office cost to review and process  
Require 24 Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) per biennial renewal for Licensed Professional Counselors as well as for Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors

Six (6) of the twenty-four (24) each biennial renewal period must involve topics in professional ethics or legal issues in the delivery of counseling services

Limit CEH to pre-approved providers

**GOAL C: Regulate and enforce the laws governing Licensed Professional Counselors and Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors** (*Miss. Code Ann.* Section 73-30-1 & 73-30-13)

**Objective C.1.** Establish procedures to ensure compliance with standards, laws and rules

*Outcome:* Uniform qualifications of Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

*Outcome:* Change in number of complaints

*Outcome:* Change in number of qualified Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

**C.1.1. STRATEGY:** Update state statute when necessary to reflect changes in Board policy, federal mandate or state mandate.

*Output:* Board reviews on-going basis

*Output:* Board proposes changes to state statute through legislature

*Efficiency:* Costs of Board travel, report preparation, legislative education

**Objective C.2.** Regulate and enforce state laws and rules

*Outcome:* Uniform qualifications of Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

*Outcome:* Change in number of complaints

*Outcome:* Change in number of qualified Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

**C.2.1. STRATEGY:** Communicate changes and/or updates to state rules and regulations when necessary

*Output:* Number of notifications posted on website

*Output:* Number of direct mail pieces

*Output:* Number of email notifications

*Output:* Number of Board presentations

*Efficiency:* Online dissemination of information reduces costs

**C.2.2. STRATEGY:** Monitor best practices by participation in the national meetings

*Output:* Board member and Executive Director attend National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) meeting yearly

*Output:* Board member and Executive Director attend American Association of Counseling Boards yearly



*Efficiency:* Cost of attendance  
*Explanation:* National Board of Certified Counselors pays all travel costs for two Board members and one staff member to attend the NBCC meeting

**C.2.3 STRATEGY:** Monitor best practices by participation in the state association meetings

*Output:* Board members attend state association (Mississippi Counseling Association and Mississippi Licensed Professional Counselors Association) conferences

*Output:* Board invited to present at conference

*Output:* Active participation of state association liaison in open Board Meetings

*Output:* Board members attend regional meetings of the state association

*Output:* Board members present at regional meetings of the state association

*Efficiency:* Costs of attendance and travel for Board meeting

*Explanation:* Costs of audio-visual needs for presentation covered by association

**Objective C.3.** Conduct complaint investigations and hearings as needed

*Outcome:* Uniform qualifications of Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

*Outcome:* Change in number of complaints

*Outcome:* Change in number of qualified Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Professional Counselors

**C.4.1. STRATEGY:** Follow established statute, rules, and policy for investigating any complaint against a Provisional-Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor, or someone practicing without a license or applicant who has been denied licensure

*Output:* Number of complaints registered with the Board

*Efficiency:* Cost of investigation of complaint

*Efficiency:* Cost of administrative hearings of complaint or denials

**C.4.2. STRATEGY:** Take disciplinary action on licensees when it is determined it is necessary

*Output:* Number of complaints investigated by the Board

*Output:* Reduction of number of Professional Counselors

*Efficiency:* Cost of investigation and court costs of action