

## FDA/CE Certifications

### Certification of Professional Continuing Education Activities *for* Licensed Marriage & Family Therapists

#### **Massachusetts & Rhode Island Guidelines**

*(Updated: 4/1/2008)*

## I. AUTHORITY

**Massachusetts:** the Board of Registration of Allied Mental Health Professions regulates the profession of Marriage & Family Therapy. The Board was created in 1991 and authorized in legislation at MGL Chapter 13, Sections 88 – 90. The Rules and Regulations governing Allied Mental Health Professionals are at 262 CMR 1.00 – 9.00. Licensing provisions are at MGL Chapter 112, Sections 61 – 65 and Sections 163 – 172. Specific license renewal and continuing education regulations are found in these latter sections as well as on FDA/CE’s web site: [www.mfcea.com](http://www.mfcea.com). Additional policies of the Board are published on the Board’s web site.

In 1994 the Board identified the “entities” that would be responsible for certifying continuing education activities acceptable to meet license renewal requirements. The Massachusetts Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. (MAMFT), a division of the American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. was chosen as the entity for MFT’s. MAMFT published a request for proposals to subcontract the administration of its CE program. FDA/CE Certifications was chosen by MAMFT to design and implement the CE program. The following guidelines were drafted by MAMFT and FDA/CE jointly and presented to the Board. In 1994 the Board approved MAMFT’s program as designed, and also approved implementation by FDA/CE.

**Rhode Island:** the Board of Mental Health Counselors and Marriage & Family Therapists regulates the MFT profession in Rhode Island. The Board’s legislative authority is at Section 42 – 35 and 5-63.2 of the General Law of Rhode Island, as amended (2002). The Board’s regulations and policy are described at its web site and also in the document: “Rules and Regulations for the Licensing of Mental Health Counselors and Marriage & Family Therapists,” (R5-63.2-MHC/MFT), available in Adobe Acrobat format. The Rhode Island regulations identifies the Rhode Island Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc., (RIAMFT) a division of the American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. as the entity responsible for designating approved MFT CE activities. In 1999 the RIAMFT contracted with FDA/CE Certifications to design and implement its CE certification program.

## II. BACKGROUND

The guidelines that follow are provided by FDA/CE Certifications. They describe the policies and procedures for certification of professional continuing education programs (CE) that were designed in consultation with and approved by MAMFT and RIAMFT. MFT’s who attend FDA/CE certified activities will receive credit towards Massachusetts or Rhode Island MFT license renewal.

FDA/CE has administered the MFT continuing education program in Massachusetts since 1994. Between 1995 and 1999, FDA/CE also administered the MFT continuing education program for the Connecticut

Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. Since 1999, and continuing to the present, FDA/CE also administers the continuing education program for the Rhode Island Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc.

The guidelines and policies for certifying CE activities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island are identical. Application for certification by program sponsors can be made on one application form for approval for either or both states. Additional fees are charged for “second state” approval.

The goals of MAMFT’s and RIAMFT’s CE programs has been to provide MFT’s with topics essential for contemporary MFT practice, the widest possible geographic range of activity locations within each state and nationally, and encourage both individual practitioners and larger educational organizations to become MFT providers. To accomplish this, the CE approval process was designed to avoid the burden of unnecessary reporting, and to maintain the lowest possible fees. Since 1994, an average of 485 activities have been approved each year, sponsored by over 1100 unique providers.

### III. APPROVED ACTIVITIES

Professional education providers who want their activities approved for MFT CE must submit an application to FDA/CE Certifications for review. Criteria for approval are described below.

However, all educational activities sponsored and administered directly by The American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. are accepted as approved CE activities in both states, without the requirement of certification review.

### IV. INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY APPROVALS ONLY

All activities for LMFT CE certification in Massachusetts and Rhode Island are approved individually. Massachusetts and Rhode Island do not certify organizations. To be approved, an application for certification must be submitted for each separate activity. Providers are encouraged to submit applications for as many of planned activities as possible, in the same package. Make as many copies of the application form (see “Application by Program Sponsor”) as you need. All submitted applications must be listed on the “Cover Page”. If you are submitting more than 10 applications, make copies of the Cover Page as needed and number them in the space provided.

**NOTE:** Send only **one copy** of each completed application.

***Definition of “Individual Activity”:*** In some instances, it is not clear what constitutes an individual activity. Guidelines for conferences and multiple workshops in a series, are provided below. Generally, an individual activity is defined by your program’s registration policy. An individual activity is one which has one overall title, and for which one registration gives participants entry to the entire program. Also, single activities offer a fixed amount of CE credit. If variable CE credit is offered for attending varying numbers of workshops, multiple applications may be necessary.

**Example 1:** A one-day program with a morning keynote and a separate afternoon panel discussion, is considered a single activity if participants register for one program and can attend both AM and PM activities. If participants can choose from among a number of afternoon workshops, but the result is still one fixed amount of CE credits for the day, the entire program is still considered a single activity. In this case one application will cover the entire day. A single fixed amount of CE credit is offered.

**Example 2:** A course which meets weekly for an academic year, with one or more instructors, but which requires registration for the entire year, is considered one activity. Only a single application is needed which will cover the year's program because only one amount of CE credit is being offered.

**Example 3:** A conference offering a "pre-conference institute" as an option for attendees, will usually require two separate applications, one for the Pre-Conference and one for the main Conference. In this case, the registration policy of the sponsor allows for variable amounts of CE credit.

## V. COUNTING CONTACT HOURS

**Definition of contact hour:** 50 or 60 minutes of face-to-face educational activity, or 50 or 60 minutes of online or home study activity.

**Exclusions:** Time spent for breaks, socializing, registration and meals must be subtracted.

**Minimum number:** 1 hour of activity is the minimum for certification.

**Maximum number:** There is no maximum.

**Undergraduate courses:** Courses offered towards a Bachelor's degree do not fit the definition of "professional continuing education" and therefore ARE NOT eligible for MFT certification.

**Graduate courses:** courses attended toward a Masters or Doctorate or other post-Bachelor's degree ARE eligible for consideration for LMFT CE certification. Participants may either attend as auditors or degree candidates.

**Instructors' CE credit:** instructors of any LMFT certified activity may count their actual face-to-face contact teaching time toward their own CE requirements for the first time that they teach one particular course. Courses must be certified for CE credit. Non-certified activities, including academic courses that were not certified, may not be counted. Instructors should be given certificates of attendance. A maximum of 15 CE Instructor Hours will be granted during each renewal period.

## VI. GRANTING CE CREDIT TO PARTICIPANTS

**Attendance:** MFT licensees who participate in certified activities are expected to attend the entire program.

**Adjusted credit:** At the sponsor's discretion, licensees who do not attend the entire activity may be granted a proportional amount of CE credit, so long as they attended a minimum of 80% of the activities for which they were registered. The sponsor is responsible for documenting the participant's attendance schedule.

**Evaluations:** Licensees must provide an evaluation of each activity before CE credit is offered. Activity sponsors must prepare an evaluation form which participants complete at the end of the program. These

evaluations must be maintained for documentation of each licensee's completion of the program. As a condition of MFT certification for your activity, providers must maintain these records for a minimum of 5 years and agree to produce them for inspection by the Board as may be requested.

***Certificates of Attendance:*** Licensees who participate in certified activities should receive CE certificates of attendance showing the number of hours of certified activities they have completed. The recommended wording on the certificates is:

“This activity has been certified by FDA/CE Certifications and the Massachusetts (and/or Rhode Island) Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, Inc. for professional continuing education. Certification # \_\_\_\_\_.”

The certificate should show the name and license number of the registrant, the certification number provided by FDA/CE along with the number of contact hours granted, the title of the activity, instructor(s) name, date(s) of attendance and sponsoring organization. The certificate should be signed by an authorized representative of the sponsor.

MFT certifications may be listed on the same certificate given to participants for CE approval from other mental health professions. Check with the other professions to see if they will permit listing of multiple approvals on their licensee's certificates.

It is the sponsor's responsibility to provide certificates of attendance to participants in a timely manner.

## VII. MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES IN A SERIES

If your program design requires that participants register for all of the workshops or other activities in a series, and there is one overall title for the series, then only one application is needed for the entire series. An example would be a year-long course meeting once each month.

Total contact hours for the entire series should be indicated on the application. At least one qualified instructor present at each meeting must be identified. All activity meetings should be listed under “Activity Schedule” on the application. Attach additional pages as needed or include your brochure and reference it in the “Schedule” section of the application.

In some cases the program design permits participants to register for any number of activities in a series. An example would be monthly in-service trainings on a variety of topics. Participants must then be offered variable CE credit, depending on their choices. If your program design permits participants to register for less than the entire series, each meeting is then considered a separate CE activity and separate applications are required for each.

## VIII. CONFERENCES

Conferences may be either single day or multi-day meetings, which contain many choices of workshops in some or all time slots. One application may be submitted for the entire conference if:

1. Participants all receive the same number of CE credit regardless of which workshops they attend; and,

2. The title and printed description include prominent references to MFT or one of the approved content areas (see back of application form), or if it can be documented that more than 50% of the available meetings have MFT or related content areas in their title and/or descriptions. Documentation must be submitted along with the application.

Conferences that cannot meet these criteria can still submit individual applications for any workshop for which MFT CE certification is requested.

***Optional pre- and post- conference activities:*** These activities must be counted as separate activities and therefore require separate applications. You may choose to present your pre- or post- conference activities as a separate conference for CE certification purposes, therefore eliminating the need for additional applications for each element of the pre- or post- conference program.

***Certificate of Attendance:*** Licensees who participate in conferences should receive CE certificates of attendance showing the number of hours of certified activities they have attended. In some cases, this number will not be the same as the total number of contact hours available at the conference. Most conferences will provide an opportunity within the registration process to identify the correct number of MFT CE credits to be received by each licensee.

## IX. ENCLOSURES

To ensure rapid and accurate consideration is given to your application, please be sure to enclose all of the following:

- Cover Page(s) listing each activity, start date, and fee.
- Application, completed, signed and dated (**one copy only**).
- Bibliography or reading list relevant to each activity
- Sample evaluation form(s) to be completed by participants
- Catalog or brochure (if available)
- Other: any other descriptive information which may help us evaluate the appropriateness of your program for MFT's.
- Optional: you may include either vita's or biographical information about your instructors(s) if their qualification for teaching CE activities is not immediate apparent.
- Fee: enclose check, institutional check request, or make payment online at: [www.mftce.com](http://www.mftce.com)

## X. INCOMPLETE OR ILLEGIBLE APPLICATIONS

We reserve the right to either return or request revisions of any application that is either incomplete or too difficult to read. A fee of \$50 maximum per returned application may be charged.

## XI. FEES

If you intend to submit applications for more than one activity, we encourage you to prepare and submit them all in the same package.

Determine your fee as follows, if you are submitting:

**1. One application only (for one activity only):** The fee is based on the number of contact hours you are proposing. In the chart below, go to the first column labeled “Applications Submitted”. The next 3 rows are for “1 only, or highest contact hours”. Select your contact hours requested in column 2 and then the corresponding fee in column 3. If you are certifying for two states, add the fee indicated in column 4.

**2. More than one application (multiple activities) submitted in the same package:** The fee for the activity with the highest number of contact hours is based on the amount of those contact hours you are proposing. If you are adding a second state that fee will be double. Fees for all subsequent activities are a flat rate of \$15.00 for each state requested.

The following chart summarizes the fee structure.

**Application Fees**

<b><u>Applications Submitted</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Hours</u></b>	<b><u>1 State</u></b>	<b><u>2 States</u></b>
1 application only, <i>or</i> highest contact hours if submitting multiple applications	1.0 - 4.0	\$ 15.00	<i>add</i> \$15.00
"	4.5 - 14.0	\$ 25.00	<i>add</i> \$25.00
"	14.5 +	\$ 35.00	<i>add</i> \$35.00
Each subsequent application, when 2 or more applications are in the same package	<i>any</i>	<i>add</i> \$ 15.00 per application	<i>add</i> \$15.00 per application

**Example #1:** a single activity for 14.0 contact hours certified in one state only (either Massachusetts or Rhode Island), would have a fee of \$25.00 (row 3, column 3). If Rhode Island certification were added, the fee would be \$25.00 + \$25.00 (row 3 columns 3 + 4) = \$50.00.

**Example #2:** a package of applications containing 3 separate activities offering 6 contact hours each, plus one activity with 24 contact hours, for one state would have a fee calculated as follows:

Since there are multiple applications, we start with the activity with the highest proposed contact hours (24 hours), which has a fee of \$35.00 (row 4, column 3).

The next 3 activities would be flat rate of \$15.00 each (from row 5, column 3).

The total fee would be: 1@\$35.00 + 3@\$15.00 = \$80.00.

**Example #3:** Same as Example 2, but 2 states were certified for all 4 submitted activities, the fee would be \$80.00 (for the first state as in Example 2 above) + 1@ \$35.00 + 3 x \$15.00 (from column 4) or \$80 also for the second state = \$160.00 total.

You may find it helpful to list your activities on the Cover Page first, to determine your fee.

Applications are considered incomplete without the fee enclosed. If your institution provides vouchers for scheduled payments, they may be substituted for a check, so long as payment is received within 30 days. Late payment or returned checks may result in the invalidation of any certification previously granted. Finance fee of 1.5% per month, or invoicing fees of \$25.00 per invoice may be charged. Credit card charges may be made through PayPal on our web site.

## XII. REPEAT ACTIVITIES

You may easily certify a repeat of a previously certified activity by sending a copy of your previous certification and a fixed fee of \$15.00 per activity, for each state requested (2 states = \$30.00). To qualify as a repeat, the activity must begin within one year of the completion of the previously certified activity and must have the identical title, content and instructors. The location need not be the same.

## XIII. PAPERWORK REDUCTION

**Alternative applications:** If you have already completed the Massachusetts or Rhode Island Social Work or Licensed Mental Health Counselor CE applications, you may substitute a copy of either of these for the completed MFT application. *Send only one copy, please.*

However, we will still need our Cover Page completed and your signature and date on at least one of the MFT application forms. You may use one MFT application and write across the top “see attached Social Work (or LMHC) application”, then sign and date where indicated.

## XIV. ADDITIONAL MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

**Instructor information:** Only one qualified instructor is required for each activity. There is no need to provide information about all instructors. If your activity is certified as a conference or a series, information about *only one* qualified instructor is needed, so long as this person can accept responsibility for the appropriateness of the entire program for MFT’s.

**Transmission of applications:** You may fax or email applications. Applications can be emailed to the address below. You may use Microsoft Word format, Adobe Acrobat format or HTML documents. Please note that certification is not valid unless all fees are received.

**Prepayment of fees:** Please send a cover letter clarifying the intended purpose of payment, if you wish to prepay fees to enable quick transmission of applications when you are close to your printing deadline.

**Invoicing of fees:** FDA/CE may process applications that have been transmitted via fax or email, or where an error has been made in the calculation of the fees, before the correct fee is received. In this case an invoice for fees due will be included with your certification. If repeated invoicing is required, an invoicing fee may be added to the balance due.

## XV. CE REQUIREMENTS & LICENSURE REGULATIONS

**Massachusetts:** the following is a summary of current CE requirements for MFT's in Massachusetts. For updates and complete regulations, please see the legislation cited above.

MFT licenses in Massachusetts are valid for a two-year period, and are renewed January 1 of every even year. Thus renewal years are:

January, 2000  
January, 2002  
January, 2004, etc.

Within each renewal cycle, MFT's must attend a total of 30 approved CE hours. Every hour must be in certified CE programs. Licensees can not earn more than 50% of their required credit thru distance learning or home study. There are currently no requirements for specific CE topics for license renewal (such as ethics or abuse).

For further details of CE and licensure regulations, check the Massachusetts Board of Allied Mental Health Professions. The Board's web page is:

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ocasubtopic&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Licensee&L2=Division+of+Professional+Licensure+Boards&L3=Board+of+Registration+of+Allied+Mental+Health+and+Human+Services+Professionals&sid=Eoca>

An easier link to the Board's web site and additional CE regulation information is at: FDA/CE's web site at: <http://www.mfice.com>. MAMFT's web site is: [www.mamft.org](http://www.mamft.org).

**Rhode Island:** the following is a summary of the CE requirements for Rhode Island MFT's. RI MFT licenses are renewed every two years on July 1. License renewal requires 40 hours of approved continuing education. Of the 40 hours, 20 must be in "formal activities" which generally included face-to-face training programs. The other 20 can be alternative activities including online and home study courses, teaching and creative educational work. For details see the RI Rules and Regulations available on the FDA/CE web site: [www.mfice.com](http://www.mfice.com). The Rhode Island Board's web site is:

[http://www.health.ri.gov/hsr/professions/mf\\_counsel\\_app.php](http://www.health.ri.gov/hsr/professions/mf_counsel_app.php)

## XVI. RETROACTIVE APPROVAL FOR INDIVIDUAL LICENSEES

Massachusetts MFT's may apply for CE credit individually for professional mental health training they attended, if that program was not pre-certified. They may not apply prior to attendance, and if approved, credit is offered only to the individual licensee submitting the application. Application by the program sponsor covers all attendees and eliminates any uncertainty about whether credit will be granted. See the FDA/CE web site or "Application for Retroactive Credit" for details.

Rhode Island does not allow for individual licensees to retroactively receive approval for attending non-certified CE activities.



XVII. CONTACT INFORMATION

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