

**Board of Psychology**

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**Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists**

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To: The Legislative Assembly

From: Charles Hill, Executive Director  
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RE: Senate Bill 855 (2019)

**Introduction**

Senate Bill 855, which became effective June 20, 2019, directs professional licensing boards to study the manner in which persons who are immigrants or refugees become authorized to practice regulated occupations or professions, and to develop and implement methods to reduce barriers to licensure for these persons. The purpose of this memo is to report on progress of the Mental Health Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in meeting the requirements of the Bill.

**License Types and Requirements**

This report covers two professional licensing boards that are administered by MHRA: the Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists (BLPCT) and the Board of Psychology (BOP). The types of regulated services include the professional practice of psychology, professional counseling, and marriage and family therapy. The licensure requirements and procedures can be found in law under ORS 675.030 to 675.090 (BOP) and ORS 675.715 to 675.745 (BLPCT), and in administrative rule under OAR Ch.858 (BOP) and OAR Ch. 833 (BLPCT).

To summarize, each profession has defined education, examination, and training standards that formulate prerequisites to licensure. Licensure applicants study the various academic domains and laws, rules, and ethical standards that apply to their field of practice, and are expected to demonstrate both knowledge and competence. The Boards apply thorough and consistent standards in order to protect consumers of mental health services, which includes some of the most vulnerable Oregonians. The licensure application process includes the submission of an application and fee, nationwide criminal records check, and submission of various documents to verify education, training history, licensure in other jurisdictions, and character and fitness to practice the profession.

**Agency Progress**

The Agency has initiated work to comply with the requirements of Senate Bill 855 by the operative date of July 1, 2020. The first step is for the Agency to study the manner in which persons who are immigrants or refugees become licensed as psychologists, psychologist

associates, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists. Individuals who apply for and become licensed by the boards are not identified in the Agency's records as immigrants or refugees; therefore, it is not feasible to study the manner in which they become authorized to practice by reviewing historical records. In order to obtain this perspective, the Agency has determined to survey its entire applicant and licensee base to obtain data on the volume of immigrants and refugees who are in the process or have become licensed, and gather information regarding these individuals' perceived barriers to licensure that they either experienced themselves or perhaps witnessed. This will enable the Agency to benefit from first-hand perspectives that may not be immediately apparent, and to gather unique and personalized suggestions from stakeholders on methods to reduce barriers. Development is currently underway, and the survey is planned to launch in December 2019.

Additionally, the Agency has initiated work to review laws, rules, procedures, and web materials as they relate to immigrants and refugees versus other applicants. The Agency is currently in the process of developing and implementing a new integrated online licensing system, which creates a timely opportunity for staff to review board process and collaborate with the contracted vendor to identify processes which may create barriers to licensure- for example, language. Last year, the boards transitioned to new websites that include the option to translate webpages to a variety of different languages to help deter this type of potential barrier for individuals trying to understand the requirements and procedures for licensure. Agency staff has, and will continue to, work with social service personnel who are providing assistance to individuals that wish to become licensed. With these efforts, the Agency expects to gain a comprehensive understanding and strategy to address the barriers faced by immigrants and refugees who are qualified to engage in the professional practice of psychology, professional counseling, and marriage and family therapy in Oregon.

A copy of this report may be obtained by contacting me at [charles.j.hill@oregon.gov](mailto:charles.j.hill@oregon.gov) or 503-373-1155.