

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT), GS-0101, in VA.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this handbook replace the existing MFT Qualification Standard in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix II-G44 in its entirety. The new standards are effective on the date of this publication, however no action may be taken to convert or promote employees until training and guidance is received. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the Office of Human Resources Management Web site. Significant changes include:
 - a. Allows regionally accredited programs as meeting basic qualifications for MFT positions legislative change section 239 of Public Law 114-223, enacted Sept 29, 2016.
 - b. Revises education requirements to clarify doctoral degrees in marriage and family therapy from accredited programs as meeting the basic qualifications for MFT positions.
 - c. Exception to licensure requirement pending completion of state prerequisites for licensure examinations has been extended from a period of not to exceed 2 years to 3 years.
 - d. Adds a new assignment for Advanced MFT. Advanced MFTs may serve as the sole licensed mental health provider in settings such as satellite outpatient clinics or having oversight of an MFT training program.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G44, Marriage and Family Therapist Qualification Standard," dated September 28, 2010.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Melissa S. Glynn, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary
for Enterprise Integration

/s/
Peter J. Shelby
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

NOTE: This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to the revisions made to this qualification standard.

FORMER VA HANDBOOK REFERENCE: PART II APPENDIX G44
EFFECTIVE DATE: April 18, 2018

**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0182
Veterans Health Administration**

1. COVERAGE. The following are requirements for appointment as a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA MFTs in the GS-0182 series including those assigned to VA Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS)/Vet Centers, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices, and VHA Central Office. Marriage and Family Therapist is one of the core mental health professions recognized by the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. MFTs work with couples, families, individuals and groups utilizing systemic theories, requiring expertise in interpersonal relationships, with conceptualizations that are distinct from individually oriented therapies. These professionals are licensed to diagnose and treat mental health disorders and are highly trained in psychotherapy and family systems. MFTs treat a wide range of serious mental health issues including relationship issues, child-parent challenges, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety and other mental health disorders.

2. AUTHORITIES.

- a. [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010;](#)
- b. [38 U.S.C. § 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration;](#)
- c. [38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees;](#)
- d. [38 U.S.C. § 7403, Period of appointments; promotions;](#)
- e. [38 U.S.C. § 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments;](#)
- f. [38 U.S.C. § 7407, Administrative provisions for section 7405 and 7406 appointments.](#)

3. DEFINITIONS.

- a. **Journey Level.** The full performance level (FPL) for this qualification standard is the GS-11 grade level.
- b. **Advanced Practice Level.** Advanced Practice Level is given to providers who possess the ability to provide expert clinical services from a systemic perspective in a specialized

area of practice to Veterans and their families. The MFT practicing at the advanced practice level has specialized knowledge and has mastered a range of specialized family systems theory/therapy modalities.

- c. **Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE).** The specialized accrediting body that accredits master's degree, doctoral degree and post-graduate degree clinical training programs in marriage and family therapy throughout the U.S. and Canada. Since 1978, COAMFTE has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as the national accrediting body for the field of marriage and family therapy. MFTs who have a COAMFTE accredited degree have undertaken a course of professional preparation that meets specific standards established by the discipline's accrediting body and individuals with COAMFTE degrees have been thoroughly trained in family systems theory/therapy.
- d. **Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Board Examination (AMFTRBE).** The AMFTRBE is the most widely used and accepted test for the MFT profession. The AMFTRBE is provided to assist State boards of examiners in evaluating the knowledge of applicants for licensure or certification. There is a wide diversity of educational backgrounds among the applicants who seek licensure or certification in marital and family therapy. The AMFTRB offers a standardized examination, to determine if applicants have attained the knowledge considered essential for professional practice, which includes family systems theory/therapy and models.
- e. **Regionally Accredited Institution.** The educational accreditation of schools, colleges, and universities in the United States by one of seven regional accrediting agencies. Each regional accreditor oversees the vast majority of public and private educational institutions, both not-for-profit and for-profit, in its region. The regional accrediting bodies recognized by the USDE are listed at Ed.gov.
- f. **Related Degrees/Field.** For the purposes of this standard, VHA defines related degrees as degrees in licensed professional mental health counseling, social work, psychiatric nursing, psychology, and psychiatry.
- g. **Clinical Supervision for Licensure.** Supervision between a licensed and unlicensed clinician or trainee in which the supervisee's clinical work is reviewed and reflected upon, with the aims of: improving the supervisee's work with clients; ensuring client welfare; supporting the supervisee in relation to their work, and supporting the supervisee's professional development. This includes co-signing clinical notes and supervising an individual as they are working towards licensure. Please refer to specific State licensing laws regarding the requirements for providing clinical supervision.
- h. **Systemic Clinical Supervision.** Supervision focusing on working with families and those in a close relationship to foster change. These changes are viewed in terms of systems of interactions between each person in the family or relationship.
- i. **Family Systems Theory/Therapy.** Theory or therapy that seeks to address Veterans

on an individual level as well as in relationships. MFTs who are trained in Systemic therapy treat the entire system and evaluate the parts of a system in the relation to the whole.

- j. **Administrative Supervision.** Supervisory responsibilities includes, but is not limited to, assigning and evaluating the work of subordinate staff; resolving complex problems to ensure Veteran services are met; evaluating performance, and taking disciplinary action when necessary. The supervising employee has full administrative and professional responsibility for planning and directing the work of others.
- k. **American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).** The AAMFT is the professional association for the field of marriage and family therapy and represents the professional interests of MFTs.
- l. **AAMFT Approved Supervisor.** AAMFT issues a national credential to allow MFTs to provide clinical supervision. MFTs must take specific course work and meet specific standards to become an AAMFT approved supervisor. An AAMFT Approved Supervisor and AAMFT Supervisor candidates may clinically supervise trainees or unlicensed MFTs.
- m. **State Approved Supervisor.** Some States have State-specific standards to allow MFTs to provide supervision. The requirements to become a State approved supervisor vary from state to state. A State Approved Supervisor may clinically supervise trainees or unlicensed MFTS.

3. BASIC REQUIREMENTS. The basic requirements for employment as a VHA MFT are prescribed by statute in 38 U.S.C. § 7402(b)(10), as amended by section 239 of Public Law 114- 223, enacted Sept 29, 2016. To qualify for appointment as an MFT in VHA, all applicants must:

115- **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g, this part.)

116- **Education.** Candidates must meet one of the following:

- (1) Hold a master's degree or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy from a program approved by COAMFTE,
- (2) Hold a master's degree or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy from a MFT program from a regionally accredited institution, **OR**,
- (3) Hold a master's degree or doctoral degree in a comparable mental health degree (Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor, Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing, Psychology, and Psychiatry) that meets the current VA qualification standard of that profession.

117- **Licensure.** Persons hired or reassigned to MFT positions in the GS-0182 series in VHA must hold a full, current, and unrestricted MFT license to independently practice marriage and family therapy in a State. **Exception:** The Secretary, or his/her designee, may waive the licensure requirement for persons who are otherwise qualified, pending completion of State prerequisites for licensure examinations for a period not to exceed three years from the date of employment on the condition that MFTs appointed on this basis provide care only under the supervision of a fully licensed MFT with an AAMFT approved license. Non-licensed MFTs who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements may be given an appointment as an MFT under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3). This exception only applies at the entry grade level (GS-9). For grades at or above the full performance level, the candidate must be licensed.

(1) MFTs that are not licensed at the time of appointment must become licensed at the independent level (Journey level) within three years of their appointment as a MFT. Most States require two years of post-graduate MFT experience as a pre-requisite to taking the licensure examination; VHA allows MFTs one additional year to pass the licensure exam.

(2) It is VHA policy that a MFT who does not yet have a license that allows independent practice must be clinically supervised by an AAMFT approved licensed MFT at or above the journey level who is a VA staff member and who has access to the electronic health record.

d. **Failure to Obtain License.** In all cases, unlicensed MFTs must actively pursue meeting State prerequisites for licensure starting from the date of their appointment. At the time of appointment, the Human Resource Officer will provide the unlicensed MFT with the written requirements for licensure, the date by which the license must be obtained, and the consequences for not becoming licensed by the deadline. Failure to obtain a license by the prescribed date will result in removal from the GS-0182 MFT series and may result in termination of employment.

e. **Loss of Licensure.** Once licensed, MFTs must maintain a full, current and unrestricted license to remain qualified for employment. Loss of licensure will result in removal from the GS-0182 MFT series and may result in termination of employment.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** MFTs must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 3, Section A, paragraph 3j.

h. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in VHA as a MFT on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held, including positive education that is part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

- (1) Such employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, demoted, but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
- (2) MFTs who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.
- (3) Employees who are retained as a MFT under this provision and subsequently leave the occupation lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of reentry as a MFT.

4. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

a. Creditable Experience

- (1) Knowledge of current professional marriage and family therapy practices. To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with current professional marriage and family therapy practice. The experience must be post-master's degree or above. The experience should include working with couples, families, individuals and/or groups utilizing family systems theory/therapy. The experience also includes the ability to diagnose and treat mental health disorders. Experience satisfying this requirement must be active professional practice, which is paid/non-paid employment as a MFT, as defined by the appropriate State licensing board.
- (2) Quality of Experience. Experience is only creditable if it is obtained following graduation with a master's or higher degree in marriage and family therapy or comparable degree in mental health (Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing, Psychology, Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor and Psychiatry) and includes work as an MFT directly related to the position to be filled. Qualifying experience must also be at a level comparable to marriage and family therapy experience at the next lower grade level. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.
- (3) Part-Time Experience. Part-time experience as an MFT is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time workweek. For example, an MFT employed 20 hours a week, or on a 1/2-time basis, would receive one full-time workweek of credit for each two weeks of service.
- (4) Fellowships or Post-Graduate Training. Fellowship and post-graduate training programs are typically in a specialized area of clinical practice, e.g., group or family practice. Training as a fellow or post-graduate may be substituted for creditable experience on a year-for-year basis.

- (5) Practicum in a VA or other clinical setting. A practicum experience may not be substituted for experience, as the practicum (field placement) is completed prior to graduation with a master's degree in marriage and family therapy or comparable mental health degree.

b. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

(1) **Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-9 (Entry Level)**

- (a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** The entry level grade is used for non-licensed MFTs or for MFTs (master's or doctoral level) who are graduates not yet licensed at the independent practice (Journey) level. Unlicensed MFTs at the GS-9 grade level have completed the required education listed in paragraph 3b above, and are working toward completion of prerequisites for licensure. In addition, the candidates must demonstrate the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) in subparagraph (b) below.
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-9 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:
 1. Knowledge of human development throughout the lifespan, interventions based on research and family systems theory and therapy, formal diagnostic criteria, risk assessment, evidence-based practice and assessment tools.
 2. Ability to assess, with supervision, the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and their family members.
 3. Knowledge to formulate, implement, and re-evaluate a treatment plan through continuous assessment identifying the Veteran's challenges, strengths, readiness to change, external influences and current events surrounding the origins and maintenance of the presenting issue, and interactional patterns within the client system.
 4. Ability to provide counseling and/or psychotherapy services, under supervision, to individuals, groups, couples and families in a culturally competent manner that facilitates change through restructuring and reorganizing of the client system.
 5. Basic knowledge and understanding of existing relevant statutes, case law, ethical codes, and regulations affecting professional practice of marriage and family therapy.
 6. Ability to draft documents, manage data, maintain accurate, timely and thorough clinical documentation, and track quality improvements.

- (c) **Assignments.** Entry level MFTs provide mental health services under clinical supervision and within the ethics and guidelines of the professional standards. Individuals assigned at the entry level are clinically supervised since they are not yet functioning at the independent practice level conferred by independent licensure. Entry level MFTs are not practicing at an independent level, therefore should not be assigned to program areas where independent practice is required, such as in a CBOC, unless there is a licensed MFT in the program area who can provide supervision for practice.

(2) **Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-11 (Full Performance Level)**

- (a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** In addition to the basic requirements, the GS-11 full performance level requires completion of a minimum of one year of post-master's degree experience in the field of marriage and family therapy work (VA or non-VA experience) and licensure in a State at the independent practice level. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the KSAs in subparagraph (b) below. **OR**, In addition to the basic requirements, a doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or comparable degree in mental health that meets the current VA qualification standard of that profession (Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor, Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing, Psychology, and Psychiatry) may be substituted for the required one year of marriage and family therapy experience in a clinical setting. **AND** the candidate must be licensed to practice at the independent practice level and they must demonstrate the following KSA.
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-11 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:
1. Skill to independently assess the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and their family members.
 2. Ability to provide counseling and/or psychotherapy services to individuals, groups, couples and families in a culturally competent manner that facilitates change through restructuring and reorganizing the client system.
 3. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with Veterans and their families, colleagues, and other professionals in collaboration throughout treatment regarding clinical, ethical and legal issues and concerns.
 4. Knowledge and understanding of existing relevant statutes, case law, ethical codes, regulations and VA policies affecting the practice of marriage and family therapy. This includes the ability to assist Veterans and their families in making informed decisions relevant to treatment to include limits of confidentiality.

5. Ability to provide orientation, training and consultation to new MFTs including clinical oversight of MFT graduate students, and/or provide clinical supervision to pre-licensure MFTs.
 6. Skill in the use of computer software applications for drafting documents, data management, maintaining accurate, timely and thorough clinical documentation, and tracking quality improvements.
- (c) **Assignments.** MFTs at the full performance level are licensed to independently practice marriage and family therapy. MFTs can provide general mental health services to Veterans within the ethics and guidelines of the professional standards. MFTs at this level formulate, implement, and re- evaluate treatment plans through continuous assessment identifying the Veteran's challenges, strengths, readiness to change, external influences and current events surrounding the origins and maintenance of the presenting issue, and interactional patterns within the client system. In the event that Advanced or Supervisory level assignments are not established/supportable, the incumbents at this level can be responsible for clinical supervision for licensing purposes only, provided they have an AAMFT approved supervisor credential.

(3) Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-12 (Advanced)

- (a) **Education, Experience and Licensure.** Candidate must have successfully completed evidence based training in family therapy and must have graduated from a COAMFTE accredited program OR have passed the AMFTRE. Candidate must have at least five years of post-licensed clinical experience in delivery of family systems therapy including one-year equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. This experience must demonstrate the use of an evidence based family therapy model while exhibiting progressive professional competency and expertise. Assignments requiring responsibility for providing clinical supervision must have an AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs listed below.
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs:**
1. Ability to provide specialized consultation for complex cases involving individuals, families and/or couples utilizing evidenced-based family systems theory/therapy.
 2. Ability to provide crisis intervention which includes assessment, safety planning and complex treatment planning using independent clinical judgment utilizing family systems theory/therapy.

3. Ability to provide family systems therapy, which seeks to address Veterans and their family members on an individual level and deals with interpersonal interactions.
4. Ability to provide unlicensed MFT staff/trainees with systemic clinical supervision towards licensure from a family systems theory/therapy perspective.

(c) **Assignments:** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Advanced MFTs can be assigned as the sole licensed mental health provider in settings such as CBOCs or satellite outpatient clinics or have responsibility and oversight for a MFT training program established under VA/VHA training policy as well as provide systemic clinical supervision to those MFT interns. The Advanced MFT who has responsibility for the training program provides family systemic clinical supervision to unlicensed MFTs and provides clinical consultation to less experienced staff. Advanced MFTs develop behavioral health related training curriculum and conduct trainings for clinical staff. Advanced MFTs meet routinely with inter-professional team members and leadership to communicate about program and veteran and family issues for in depth problem solving.

(4) **Supervisory Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-12**

- (a) **Experience, Education, and Licensure.** Candidates must have successfully completed evidence based training in marriage and family therapy and must have graduated from a COAMFTE accredited program OR have passed the AMFTRBE. Candidates must have at least five years of post-licensed clinical experience in delivery of family systems therapy including one-year equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. This experience must demonstrate possession of using evidence based family therapy model while demonstrating progressive professional competency and expertise. Assignments responsible for providing clinical supervision must have an AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-12 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:
 1. Ability to identify professional development needs of other MFTs and guide them in current family systems theory/therapy practice guidelines.
 2. Ability to collaborate with members of other disciplines and supervisors and to represent the family systems theory/therapy profession both in and outside of VHA. This includes knowledge of the roles, contributions, and interrelationships with other disciplines.

3. Ability to perform the full range of administrative and clinical supervisory duties including responsibility for work assignments, competency assessments, performance evaluations, selection of staff, and recommendation of awards, advancements, and when appropriate, disciplinary actions.
 4. Ability to analyze clinical data and make recommendations for corrective actions to optimize quality, efficiency, performance, and productivity within service keeping in line with accrediting bodies and policy.
- (c) **Assignment.** At this level, MFTs administratively supervise professional staff which may include experienced MFTs, Advanced MFTs, MFT Program Coordinators, other Mental Health occupations and administrative staff. Duties include preparing work assignments, monitoring clinical performance, conducting performance appraisals, developing performance standards, as well as other clinical and administrative responsibilities. Interviews/recommends individuals for hire, trains, evaluates, disciplines and recommends for termination. Duties may include tracking of data to ensure that trends are analyzed and monitored, preparing appropriate administrative reports and quality assurance reviews. The supervisor at this level may be assigned to any program area. Supervisors may include coordinator responsibilities and may supervise other MFTs for licensure.

(5) Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-12 (Program Coordinator)

- (a) **Experience, Education, and Licensure.** In addition to the basic requirements, completion of one year of progressively responsible assignments and experience equivalent to the GS-11 grade level which demonstrates knowledge, skills, and abilities that are directly related to the specific assignment. MFT program coordinators of family programs must be trained in family systems therapy/theory. If the assignment is responsible for providing systemic clinical supervision for licensure the individual must have an AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (b) below:
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-12 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:
1. Ability to organize work, set priorities, meet multiple deadlines, delegate tasks and facilitate team building.
 2. Ability to manage and direct the work of others to accomplish program goals and objectives.
 3. Ability to devise innovative ways to adapt work operations to new and changing programs, to develop staffing and budget requirements, and to translate management goals and objectives into well- coordinated and

controlled work operations and ensure compliance with pertinent VHA policies.

4. Ability to establish and monitor performance priorities according to standards and program evaluation criteria.
5. Knowledge of family systems theory/therapy in coordination of family programs.

(c) **Assignments.** MFT Program Coordinators are administratively responsible for a clinical program providing treatment to Veterans in a specialty area as defined by the National Mental Health Office. Examples include RCS/Vet Centers, Homeless Veterans program and Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM). They coordinate the daily operations of the program, develop policies and procedures for program operation and prepare reports and statistics for facility, VISN and national use. At this level, MFTs are licensed to independently provide mental health services and may supervise for licensure other MFTs.

(6) **Marriage and Family Therapist (Program Manager), GS-13**

- (a) **Experience, Education, and Licensure.** In addition to the basic requirements, completion of one year of progressively responsible assignments and experience equivalent to that equivalent to the GS-12 grade level which demonstrates knowledge, skills, and abilities that are directly related to the specific assignment. MFT Program Manager must have graduated from a COAMFTE approved program OR have passed the AMFTRB examination. MFT Program Manager must have five years of post- licensed clinical experience in family systems theory/therapy and must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressive professional competency and expertise. MFT Program Manager must have an AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential.
- (b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-13 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:
 1. Skill in assessing qualifications and abilities of current and prospective employees to include staff performance evaluation and may include evaluations of lower level assignments and support staff.
 2. Ability to facilitate professional development of other MFTs across programs/or locations (i.e. CBOC, outpatient clinics, etc.) and guide them in current practice guidelines.
 3. Ability to collaborate with leaders of other disciplines within facilities, the community, VISN, and VACO.

4. Skill in managing and directing the work of others to accomplish program goals and objectives, reporting requirements and the ability to devise ways to adapt work operations to new and changing programs, staffing and budget requirements. This includes knowledge of VA policy and procedures as well as fair, principled and decisive leadership practices.
5. Ability to analyze organizational and operational problems and to develop and implement solutions that result in sound operation of the program.
6. Ability to clinically supervise in areas related to the provision of marital and family therapy services to accomplish organizational goals and objectives.

(c) **Assignments.**

1. MFT Program Managers have broad program management responsibilities which include the operation and management of key clinical, training, or administrative programs. Responsibilities include development and implementation of programs, policies and procedures; oversight of administrative and programmatic resources; and monitoring of outcomes using a data driven quality assurance process. Decisions made affect staff and other resources associated with the programs managed and are made while exercising wide latitude and independent judgment. Such programs deliver specialized, complex, highly professional services that are important program components and significantly impact the health care provided to Veterans and their families. They have responsibility for staffing, work assignments, budget, clinical services provided and admission criteria for the program, day-to-day program operations and all reporting requirements. Additionally, program managers at this grade generally have collateral assignments determined by the needs of the local facility, RCS/Vet Center, the VISN, and or VACO.
2. MFT Program Managers may also have full responsibility for oversight of the professional practice of MFTs to assure the highest quality of mental health care provided to Veterans and their families throughout the facility and affiliated clinics. This responsibility also includes insuring that all MFTs in the facility and its affiliated clinics meet the requirements of this qualification standard. At this advanced performance level, GS-13 MFTs are licensed to independently provide marital and family therapy services with program management responsibilities.

(7) **Marriage and Family Therapist Program Manager Leader, GS-14 (Care Line Manager/VISN/National)**

- (a) **Experience, Education, and Licensure.** In addition to the basic requirements, completion of one year of progressively responsible assignments and experience at the GS-13 grade level which demonstrates knowledge, skills, and abilities that are directly related to the specific assignment. The MFT Program

Manager must have graduated from a COAMFTE approved program OR have passed the AMFTRB examination. The MFT Program Manager must have at least five years of post-licensed clinical experience in family systems theory/therapy and must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressive professional competency and expertise. The MFT Program Manager must have an AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential.

(b) **Demonstrated KSAs.** In addition to meeting the KSAs for GS-14 grade level, the candidate must demonstrate all of the KSAs below:

1. Advanced knowledge and skill in management/administration of multidisciplinary mental health programs at complex facilities and/or across multiple sites which includes supervision, consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
2. Demonstrated global knowledge of the practice of marriage and family therapy to develop, maintain, and oversee programs in all settings.
3. Ability to provide consultation on policy implementation, qualification standards, counseling practice, and competency with medical center director, VISN, or national program managers that are consistent with organizational goals and objectives.
4. Advanced knowledge of evidence-based practices and mental health practice guidelines in multiple professional areas, and the ability to use these resources to guide the program staff in providing appropriate treatment interventions.
5. Ability to influence high level officials in adoption of, and conformance to, performance measures, monitors, and other policy guidelines.

(c) **Assignments.** Typical assignments include serving at a facility as a care line manager or at the VISN/VACO level. A care line manager is assigned to manage, direct, and oversee complex treatment programs within the medical center. Supervisory responsibilities cover multiple disciplines that may be separated geographically or in multi-division facilities. They have responsibility for staffing, work assignments, budget, clinical services provided and admission criteria for the program, day-to-day program operation, and all reporting requirements. Leadership positions at the VISN or national level are characterized by their scope, level of complexity, significant impact on VHA mission, significant importance to the VISN, etc. They direct a mental health, behavioral science, other patient care program component at the VISN or national level or direct organizational development at the national level. Duties are exercised with wide latitude, autonomy, and independence. They have delegated authority to determine long range work plans and assure that implementation of the goals and objectives are carried out. They may serve as

consultants to other management officials in the field, VISN, or national level.

5. DEVIATIONS.

- a. The appointing official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for MFTs in VHA whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.
- b. Under no circumstances will the educational or licensure requirements be waived for the GS-11 grade level or above.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)