

Navigating the Colorado Psychotherapy Law

Colorado's psychotherapy statute is unusual. Most, though not all, states do not allow anyone to practice psychotherapy without a license. In those states you must be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, Psychologist, etc. to practice psychotherapy. In Colorado a person can practice psychotherapy as defined if he or she is either licensed *or* listed in the state's Data Base of non licensed psychotherapists.

The state law defines psychotherapy as:

the treatment, diagnosis, testing, assessment, or counseling in a professional relationship to assist individuals or groups to alleviate mental disorders, understand unconscious or conscious motivation, resolve emotional, relationship, or attitudinal conflicts, or modify behaviors which interfere with effective emotional, social, or intellectual functioning. Psychotherapy follows a planned procedure of intervention which takes place on a regular basis, over a period of time, or in the cases of testing, assessment, and brief psychotherapy, it can be a single intervention. Colo Revised Statutes Title 12, Article 43, Section 201 (9)

If one decides not to pursue licensure but wants to practice psychotherapy as above defined then:

1) They can contact the State Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)
<http://www.dora.state.co.us/mental-health/nlcboard.htm>

where they will find the following detail about requirements

Requirements

By law, anyone who is not licensed or certified, practicing psychotherapy in the State of Colorado, must be listed in the Grievance Board database directory. Requirements for listing are as follows:

- * Complete and submit the application.
- * Pay the application fee.
- * Document types of therapy used.
- * Submit copy of disclosure statement.
- * Submit copy of diploma or transcript if applicable.
- * Complete a Board-developed jurisprudence examination. *(Note: There are several resources for training preparation for the exam. It's main function is to help the psychotherapist applicant gain a basic understanding of the statute and regulations for their own liability protection and that of their clients. For trainings on this exam contact CAP)*

Applications

Applications to be listed in the database of non licensed psychotherapists, as well as all required forms, rules, and statutes, are available on the DORA Application Forms page.

Generally, if a person meets all these requirements, then they can practice psychotherapy, but, as with any licensed therapist, they are allowed to practice only within the scope of their training, education, or experience. Also they are generally held to the same standards which are also outlined in the law under Colo Revised Statute 12-43-222.

The state legislature sees this statute as a function for both consumer choice and protection. Clients who have complaints against non licensed therapists have recourse to file grievances through the Mental

Health Grievance Board.

CAP has supported this statute for a long time and sees it as a two way street. The therapist can choose to practice without a license, but be accountable to a peer reviewed system in the case of complaints AND the consumer can choose among all of the various types of practitioners, licensed or non licensed. This statute has been in place since the 1980's and has a proven track record of promoting choice and consumer protection.