

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 723**

---

---

**Introduced by Assembly Member Low**

February 16, 2021

---

---

An act to amend Section 4980.02 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to healing arts.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 723, as introduced, Low. Marriage and family therapy: scope of practice.

Existing law, the Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Act, provides for the regulation of the practice of marriage and family therapy by the Board of Behavioral Sciences. A violation of the act is a crime.

Existing law defines the practice of marriage and family therapy as that service performed with individuals, couples, or groups wherein interpersonal relationships are examined for the purpose of achieving more adequate, satisfying, and productive marriage and family adjustments, including relationship and premarriage counseling. Existing law also specifies how marriage and family therapy principles may be applied, including, among others, psychotherapeutic techniques and the use, application, and integration of coursework and training required for licensed marriage and family therapists.

This bill would recast those provisions to include within this scope of practice the application of psychotherapeutic and family systems and theories, principles, and methods in the delivery of services to individuals, couples, or groups in order to assess evaluate, and treat relational issues, emotional disorders, behavioral problems, mental illness, alcohol and substance use, and to modify intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors. The bill would make conforming changes

relating to the various ways in which marriage and family therapy principles may be applied.

By expanding the scope of practice for marriage and family therapists and thus expanding the application and breadth of the related crimes, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would declare that these provisions are declaratory of existing law and would also declare the intent of the Legislature that this bill not be construed to expand or constrict the scope of practice of a licensed marriage and family therapist.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: yes.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 4980.02 of the Business and Professions  
2 Code is amended to read:

3 4980.02. (a) For the purposes of this chapter, the practice of  
4 marriage and family therapy shall mean ~~that service performed~~  
5 ~~with the application of psychotherapeutic and family systems~~  
6 ~~theories, principles, and methods in the delivery of services to~~  
7 individuals, couples, or groups ~~wherein interpersonal relationships~~  
8 ~~are examined for the purpose of achieving more adequate,~~  
9 ~~satisfying, and productive marriage and family adjustments. This~~  
10 ~~practice includes relationship and premarriage counseling: in order~~  
11 ~~to assess, evaluate, and treat relational issues, emotional disorders,~~  
12 ~~behavioral problems, mental illness, alcohol and substance use,~~  
13 ~~and to modify intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors.~~

14 ~~The~~  
15 (b) ~~The~~ application of marriage and family therapy principles  
16 and methods includes, but is not limited to, ~~the use of applied~~  
17 ~~psychotherapeutic techniques, to enable individuals to mature and~~  
18 ~~grow within marriage and the family, the provision of explanations~~  
19 ~~and interpretations of the psychosexual and psychosocial aspects~~  
20 ~~of relationships, and the use, application, and integration of the~~

1 ~~coursework and training required by Sections 4980.36, 4980.37,~~  
2 ~~and 4980.41, as applicable. all of the following:~~

- 3 (1) *Assessment, evaluation, and prognosis.*
- 4 (2) *Treatment, planning, and evaluation.*
- 5 (3) *Individual, relationship, family, or group therapeutic*  
6 *interventions.*
- 7 (4) *Relational therapy.*
- 8 (5) *Psychotherapy.*
- 9 (6) *Client education.*
- 10 (7) *Clinical case management.*
- 11 (8) *Consultation.*
- 12 (9) *Supervision.*
- 13 (10) *Use, application, and integration of the coursework and*  
14 *training required by Sections 4980.36, 4980.37, and 4980.41, as*  
15 *applicable.*

16 SEC. 2. The amendments to Section 4980.02 of the Business  
17 and Professions Code made by this act do not constitute a change  
18 in, but are declaratory of, existing law. It is the intent of the  
19 Legislature that this act shall not be construed to expand or  
20 constrict the existing scope of practice of a person licensed pursuant  
21 to Chapter 13 (commencing with Section 4980) of Division 2 of  
22 the Business and Professions Code.

23 SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to  
24 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because  
25 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school  
26 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or  
27 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty  
28 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of  
29 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within  
30 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California  
31 Constitution.