

California Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Law & Ethics Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

- 1. What is the procedure for filing a complaint against an MFT in California?**
 - A. Contact the therapist directly**
 - B. File the complaint with the Board of Behavioral Sciences**
 - C. Make a public post on social media**
 - D. It cannot be done anonymously**
- 2. What information must MFT interns provide at their first session?**
 - A. The clients' personal details**
 - B. The name of their supervisor and type of license**
 - C. The details of previous employment**
 - D. The intern's credentials only**
- 3. Are MFTs allowed to provide therapy to minors without parental consent in California?**
 - A. Yes, for all issues**
 - B. No, always requires parental consent**
 - C. Only in specific circumstances**
 - D. Only if the minor is over 18**
- 4. What does "client autonomy" emphasize in therapy?**
 - A. Client compliance with therapist decisions**
 - B. Client rights to make informed choices about treatment**
 - C. Therapist control over the therapeutic process**
 - D. Encouragement of dependence on the therapist**
- 5. What ethical considerations are involved in working with a client's family members?**
 - A. Focus solely on the client's goals**
 - B. Issues of confidentiality and potential conflicts of interest**
 - C. Family member involvement is usually unnecessary**
 - D. Consent from family members is not required**

- 6. What is the required action for reporting child abuse that occurs out of state?**
- A. It depends on the location of the victim**
 - B. It must be reported in California, regardless of where it occurs**
 - C. Only the abuser must be reported, not the victim**
 - D. Reports are only needed if the victim is under 18**
- 7. In custody arrangements, which type of custody grants authority to make decisions about the minor?**
- A. Physical custody**
 - B. Joint custody**
 - C. Legal custody**
 - D. Visitation custody**
- 8. Who can initiate a 5150 hold?**
- A. Only a mental health professional**
 - B. Anyone, including family members**
 - C. Only police officers or designated professionals**
 - D. Parents of the client**
- 9. What are the repercussions for practicing without a valid MFT license in California?**
- A. Warning and mandatory training**
 - B. Legal penalties, including fines and potential jail time**
 - C. Ineligibility for future licensure**
 - D. Disqualification from professional organizations**
- 10. What constitutes dual relationships in therapy?**
- A. Therapeutic relationships with multiple clients**
 - B. A therapist having multiple roles with a single client**
 - C. Working with two different therapists simultaneously**
 - D. Combining therapy with socializing outside of sessions**

Answers

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1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. B
7. C
8. C
9. B
10. B

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Explanations

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1. What is the procedure for filing a complaint against an MFT in California?

- A. Contact the therapist directly**
- B. File the complaint with the Board of Behavioral Sciences**
- C. Make a public post on social media**
- D. It cannot be done anonymously**

Filing a complaint against a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) in California involves a formal process designed to ensure that concerns about professional conduct are addressed appropriately. The correct procedure is to file the complaint with the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS), which is the regulatory body responsible for overseeing MFTs and other mental health professionals in the state. The BBS provides specific guidelines for the types of complaints that can be made, as well as the process for submitting those complaints, including any necessary documentation. By submitting a complaint to the BBS, individuals ensure that their concerns are reviewed by the appropriate authorities who have the power to investigate allegations of unethical or illegal behavior. This formal mechanism is crucial for maintaining standards of practice within the profession and protects the rights of clients, as well as the integrity of the therapeutic process. In contrast, contacting the therapist directly might not lead to the resolution of serious concerns or ethical violations, as it may not involve any formal follow-up or accountability. Making a public post on social media can potentially damage reputations without offering a constructive way to address grievances, and it may not reach the regulatory body that can take action. Additionally, while it is possible to file a complaint anonymously under certain circumstances, this does not apply universally.

2. What information must MFT interns provide at their first session?

- A. The clients' personal details**
- B. The name of their supervisor and type of license**
- C. The details of previous employment**
- D. The intern's credentials only**

MFT interns are required to inform clients about their supervisor's name and the type of license they hold at the outset of their professional relationship. This is vital for transparency and ethical practice, allowing clients to understand the level of oversight and the qualifications of the intern they are working with. By disclosing the supervisor's information, interns help clients feel more secure regarding the quality of care they are receiving and reinforce a commitment to ethical standards in therapy. This aligns with the legal and ethical obligations for transparency in the therapeutic relationship, ensuring clients are adequately informed about who is overseeing their treatment. The other options, while they may seem relevant, do not fulfill this specific requirement under California law for MFT interns. Personal details of clients, the intern's previous employment, or the intern's credentials alone do not address the critical information necessary for client awareness regarding supervision and professional qualifications in the context of therapy. Providing this supervisory information is essential to maintaining ethical practices within therapeutic environments.

3. Are MFTs allowed to provide therapy to minors without parental consent in California?

- A. Yes, for all issues**
- B. No, always requires parental consent**
- C. Only in specific circumstances**
- D. Only if the minor is over 18**

In California, Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) can provide therapy to minors without parental consent in specific circumstances defined by law. One significant aspect of this provision is related to the treatment of certain issues that may warrant confidentiality and autonomy for minors. For instance, California Family Code allows minors aged 12 and older to consent to mental health treatment if they are considered mature enough to participate in therapy. This means that if a minor is experiencing issues such as emotional distress, substance abuse, or certain behavioral problems, they may seek therapy without requiring parental consent, reflecting an understanding of their right to privacy and the necessity for a safe space to explore their feelings and issues. This nuanced provision helps protect the minor's interests, especially in sensitive situations where involving a parent might deter the child from seeking help. However, these specific circumstances do not extend to all issues or situations, thus making the answer "C" the most accurate choice. MFTs must navigate these complex laws to provide ethically sound and legally compliant services based on the individual circumstances of the minor.

4. What does "client autonomy" emphasize in therapy?

- A. Client compliance with therapist decisions**
- B. Client rights to make informed choices about treatment**
- C. Therapist control over the therapeutic process**
- D. Encouragement of dependence on the therapist**

"Client autonomy" in therapy emphasizes the importance of the client's rights to make informed choices about their own treatment. This concept is fundamental in therapeutic practice, as it recognizes that clients have the ability and the right to direct their own personal growth and healing. When clients feel empowered to make their own decisions regarding their therapy, they are more likely to engage actively in the process, which can lead to more effective outcomes. In promoting client autonomy, therapists provide information and support to help clients understand their options but do not dictate the choices the client can make. This respect for a client's independence is vital for establishing an ethical therapeutic relationship where clients feel valued and heard. Therefore, the focus is on fostering an environment where clients can express their preferences and collaborate in their treatment planning. Understanding this principle also highlights why the other options are less aligned with the concept of client autonomy. Compliance with therapist decisions or encouraging dependence on the therapist undermines the client's ability to make their own choices, while therapist control over the therapeutic process limits the client's agency.

5. What ethical considerations are involved in working with a client's family members?

- A. Focus solely on the client's goals**
- B. Issues of confidentiality and potential conflicts of interest**
- C. Family member involvement is usually unnecessary**
- D. Consent from family members is not required**

When working with a client's family members, the ethical consideration that stands out is the issues of confidentiality and potential conflicts of interest. In therapy, confidentiality is a fundamental principle that protects the privacy of the client's information. When family members are involved, therapists must navigate how much information can be shared and what boundaries need to be respected, ensuring that the client's confidentiality is upheld. Additionally, involving family members in therapy can lead to conflicts of interest, especially if family dynamics and disagreements are present. For instance, what may be beneficial for one family member might not align with the best interests of another, creating ethical dilemmas for the therapist. Addressing these conflicts requires careful consideration and often necessitates discussions around consent and shared goals, ensuring that all parties are informed and consenting to the therapeutic process. These ethical considerations are essential for maintaining professional integrity and protecting the welfare of all individuals involved in therapy. By understanding and addressing these complexities, therapists can create a therapeutic environment that honors the needs of the client while respecting the dynamics of the family unit.

6. What is the required action for reporting child abuse that occurs out of state?

- A. It depends on the location of the victim**
- B. It must be reported in California, regardless of where it occurs**
- C. Only the abuser must be reported, not the victim**
- D. Reports are only needed if the victim is under 18**

The required action for reporting child abuse that occurs out of state is correctly identified as that it must be reported in California, regardless of where it occurs. California law mandates that if a licensed therapist, such as a Marriage and Family Therapist, becomes aware of suspected child abuse, they are obligated to report it to the appropriate authorities. This obligation applies irrespective of the location where the abuse took place. This legal requirement is grounded in the principle that the safety and well-being of the child is paramount. The idea is that child abuse should be reported to ensure that necessary actions can be taken to protect the child, no matter the geographical context. This ensures a uniform standard of care and protection for children throughout the state, as therapists are expected to act in the best interests of their clients. The other choices reflect misunderstandings about the reporting obligations. For instance, the location of the victim does not influence the duty to report when the person is a mandated reporter. Additionally, reporting is focused on suspected abuse, not merely the identity of the abuser, and is required for all minors, not just those under 18 years old. Thus, the correct understanding emphasizes the need for action to be taken regardless of where the abuse occurred, upholding the commitment to

7. In custody arrangements, which type of custody grants authority to make decisions about the minor?

- A. Physical custody**
- B. Joint custody**
- C. Legal custody**
- D. Visitation custody**

The correct choice is legal custody, which is the type of custody that grants one or both parents the authority to make significant decisions regarding the child's upbringing. This encompasses decisions about education, healthcare, religious training, and general welfare. Having legal custody means that the parent has the right and responsibility to be involved in these critical aspects of the child's life. Physical custody, in contrast, pertains specifically to where the child lives and who has day-to-day responsibility for the child. Joint custody refers to a situation where both parents share legal and/or physical custody, which means that both parents have a say in significant decisions if they have joint legal custody. Visitation custody typically refers to the time-sharing arrangement that is set for a non-custodial parent, allowing them to spend time with the child but does not grant them the legal rights to make decisions regarding the child's upbringing. Thus, legal custody is the correct concept concerning decision-making authority about a minor's welfare.

8. Who can initiate a 5150 hold?

- A. Only a mental health professional**
- B. Anyone, including family members**
- C. Only police officers or designated professionals**
- D. Parents of the client**

A 5150 hold, which allows for the involuntary detention of an individual for psychiatric evaluation, can be initiated by police officers or designated professionals. This procedure is rooted in California's Welfare and Institutions Code, which outlines who has the authority to initiate a hold based on specific criteria related to the individual's mental health status. Police officers are specifically empowered to do this because they can assess the situation quickly and determine if the individual poses a danger to themselves or others. Designated professionals, such as mental health workers who are authorized under the law, also have the ability to initiate a hold when they determine that an individual meets the necessary criteria for evaluation and treatment. While family members or other individuals may express concern about someone's mental health, they do not have the legal authority to initiate a 5150 hold. This focuses the responsibility on trained personnel who can objectively assess the situation and ensure that the rights and safety of all parties are considered during the intervention. Parents, while they may have legal rights in other contexts, do not have the specific legal standing to initiate involuntary holds without the involvement of the police or designated professionals.

9. What are the repercussions for practicing without a valid MFT license in California?

A. Warning and mandatory training

B. Legal penalties, including fines and potential jail time

C. Ineligibility for future licensure

D. Disqualification from professional organizations

Practicing without a valid Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) license in California carries serious legal repercussions, making the consequences significant and far-reaching. Engaging in therapy without the required licensure is considered a violation of California law, and the penalties for doing so can include legal consequences such as substantial fines and the possibility of jail time. This strict enforcement serves to protect the public from unqualified individuals providing potentially harmful or incompetent therapeutic services. The law aims to ensure that all practitioners meet specific professional standards and qualifications, underscoring the importance of licensure in maintaining the integrity and safety of mental health care services in the state. On the other hand, while options like ineligibility for future licensure or disqualification from professional organizations may reflect consequences of practicing unethically or without proper credentials, the most immediate and severe repercussions are always legal penalties. Thus, it is crucial for anyone in the field of marriage and family therapy to maintain valid licensure to avoid these serious implications.

10. What constitutes dual relationships in therapy?

A. Therapeutic relationships with multiple clients

B. A therapist having multiple roles with a single client

C. Working with two different therapists simultaneously

D. Combining therapy with socializing outside of sessions

Dual relationships in therapy specifically refer to situations where a therapist has more than one role with a single client. This can create potential conflicts of interest and may impair the therapist's objectivity, effectiveness, and professionalism. In the context of therapy, having multiple roles can encompass various scenarios, such as being both a therapist and a friend, business associate, or family member to the client. Each of these additional roles can complicate the therapeutic relationship and put the therapist at risk of violating ethical guidelines. The other choices do not accurately depict dual relationships within the therapy context. Therapeutic relationships with multiple clients are standard practice in therapy and do not inherently lead to ethical dilemmas. Working with two different therapists simultaneously is also a common situation that does not create a dual relationship for any one therapist with a client. Meanwhile, combining therapy with socializing outside of sessions can lead to boundary issues, but it is merely one aspect of a larger concern regarding dual relationships. However, it is the multiplicity of roles with a single client that directly constitutes a dual relationship, making the identification of choice B as the correct response accurate.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://camftlawethics.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!