

**§ 90-345. Criminal history record checks of applicants for licensure as clinical mental health counselors.**

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions shall apply in this section:

- (1) Applicant. – A person applying for licensure as a licensed clinical mental health counselor associate pursuant to G.S. 90-336(b), 90-336(b1), or 90-336(b2) or licensed clinical mental health counselor pursuant to G.S. 90-336(c).
- (2) Criminal history. – A history of conviction of a State or federal crime, whether a misdemeanor or felony, that bears on an applicant's fitness for licensure to practice clinical mental health counseling. The crimes include the criminal offenses set forth in any of the following Articles of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes: Article 5, Counterfeiting and Issuing Monetary Substitutes; Article 5A, Endangering Executive and Legislative Officers; Article 6, Homicide; Article 7B, Rape and Other Sex Offenses; Article 8, Assaults; Article 10, Kidnapping and Abduction; Article 13, Malicious Injury or Damage by Use of Explosive or Incendiary Device or Material; Article 14, Burglary and Other Housebreakings; Article 15, Arson and Other Burnings; Article 16, Larceny; Article 17, Robbery; Article 18, Embezzlement; Article 19, False Pretenses and Cheats; Article 19A, Obtaining Property or Services by False or Fraudulent Use of Credit Device or Other Means; Article 19B, Financial Transaction Card Crime Act; Article 20, Frauds; Article 21, Forgery; Article 26, Offenses Against Public Morality and Decency; Article 26A, Adult Establishments; Article 27, Prostitution; Article 28, Perjury; Article 29, Bribery; Article 31, Misconduct in Public Office; Article 35, Offenses Against the Public Peace; Article 36A, Riots, Civil Disorders, and Emergencies; Article 39, Protection of Minors; Article 40, Protection of the Family; Article 59, Public Intoxication; and Article 60, Computer-Related Crime. The crimes also include possession or sale of drugs in violation of the North Carolina Controlled Substances Act in Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes and alcohol-related offenses including sale to underage persons in violation of G.S. 18B-302 or driving while impaired in violation of G.S. 20-138.1 through G.S. 20-138.5. In addition to the North Carolina crimes listed in this subdivision, such crimes also include similar crimes under federal law or under the laws of other states.

(b) The Board may request that an applicant for licensure, an applicant seeking reinstatement of a license, or a licensee under investigation by the Board for alleged criminal offenses in violation of this Article consent to a criminal history record check. Refusal to consent to a criminal history record check may constitute grounds for the Board to deny licensure to an applicant, deny reinstatement of a license to an applicant, or revoke the license of a licensee. The Board shall ensure that the State and national criminal history of an applicant is checked. The Board shall be responsible for providing to the North Carolina Department of Public Safety the fingerprints of the applicant or licensee to be checked, a form signed by the applicant or licensee consenting to the criminal record check and the use of fingerprints and other identifying information required by the State or National Repositories of Criminal Histories, and any additional information required by the Department of Public Safety in accordance with G.S. 143B-957. The Board shall keep all information obtained pursuant to this section confidential. The Board shall collect any fees required by the Department of Public Safety and shall remit the fees to the Department of Public Safety for expenses associated with conducting the criminal history record check.

(c) If an applicant or licensee's criminal history record check reveals one or more convictions listed under subdivision (a)(2) of this section, the conviction shall not automatically bar licensure. The Board shall consider all of the following factors regarding the conviction:

- (1) The level of seriousness of the crime.
- (2) The date of the crime.
- (3) The age of the person at the time of the conviction.
- (4) The circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, if known.
- (5) The nexus between the criminal conduct of the person and the job duties of the position to be filled.
- (6) The person's prison, jail, probation, parole, rehabilitation, and employment records since the date the crime was committed.
- (7) The subsequent commission by the person of a crime listed in subdivision (a)(2) of this section.

If, after reviewing these factors, the Board determines that the applicant or licensee's criminal history disqualifies the applicant or licensee for licensure, the Board may deny licensure or reinstatement of the license of the applicant or revoke the license of the licensee. The Board may disclose to the applicant or licensee information contained in the criminal history record check that is relevant to the denial. The Board shall not provide a copy of the criminal history record check to the applicant or licensee. The applicant or licensee shall have the right to appear before the Board to appeal the Board's decision. However, an appearance before the full Board shall constitute an exhaustion of administrative remedies in accordance with Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

(d) Limited Immunity. – The Board, its officers, and employees, acting in good faith and in compliance with this section, shall be immune from civil liability for denying licensure or reinstatement of a license to an applicant or revoking a licensee's license based on information provided in the applicant or licensee's criminal history record check. (2009-367, s. 9; 2012-12, s. 2(*ll*); 2014-100, s. 17.1(*ll*); 2015-279, s. 2; 2015-181, s. 47; 2019-240, s. 2(a).)