

Talking the Talk: Contacting a State Licensing Agency

Each state vests licensing authority in a specific group or agency such as a “Board” or in the case of education related licenses, the “Department of Education” (DOE). The “Board” or “DOE” then creates rules or regulations that provide the specific details governing the profession, including licensing requirements.

Members of boards are generally politically-appointed professionals in the field. However, some boards have designated spots for “consumers” or others not associated with the field. Department of Education licensing divisions are generally government employees. Remember that although the board or DOE holds the power to license, they are all just people interested in maintaining the quality of the professions.

No Such Thing as a Stupid Question

After you have completed the [Professional Licensure Research Worksheet](#), you may have questions. You should contact your state licensing agency and ask them. Even if you have a solid understanding of your state’s requirements, it is wise to confirm your understanding with the board or DOE. Remember that they are the gatekeepers and are the only group that has the power to issue licenses. The questions that arise from research will vary greatly from state to state. Here are a few examples of questions:

- Can required coursework be completed outside of a degree?
- Is online coursework acceptable?
- Does a CACREP accredited program fulfill all specific content area requirements?
- What is your semester to quarter hour conversion ratio?

One question not to ask; “Is Capella’s program approved?” Most state licensing boards do not approve specific programs for licensure. Education related programs are typically approved by the state Department of Education, but usually only where the university is physically located. Capella’s School Counseling and School Psychology programs are approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching and the Arizona Department of Education, respectfully. The key questions to ask your state will be apparent after you complete the research worksheet.

Best Practice Tip: Take detailed notes and request that the licensure representative send you an email, if possible, with a link or cite to the rules upon which they are basing their opinion.

Great Expectations

Licensure agencies rarely, if ever, will offer you their opinion on whether you will become licensed with a particular degree because licensure laws and rules are regularly changed, universities can change their programs, and there are many other factors besides your education that will be evaluated before a license will be issued. These other factors include, among other things; actual degree earned, testing results, amount, nature and type of field experience, background checks, and fitness to practice. In short, there are no guarantees when it comes to licensure. Because of the ever-changing nature of licensure requirements and the varied factors, there is always some risk that professional licensure will not be possible.