

The Meaning of the Letters Behind Your Therapist's Name

While each therapist may appear to do the same work, the letters after our names actually point to specific training or knowledge bases that we have. None of this means that one group of letters is better than the other, each person is qualified no matter the letters.

- Intern: These therapists are nearly done with grad school where they are in the process of earning either a Master's degree or a Ph. D in a psychology related field. Their next step is a graduation ceremony, then the process of becoming licensed. Don't let the word intern fool you into thinking they don't know what they're doing, they do, they just don't get all the letters after their name just yet. At Parasol Wellness, our interns are involved in robust case consultation with a Board Approved Clinical Supervisor.
- MA or MS: This stands for Master's Degree (Master's of Arts or Masters of Science), and if you look at the diploma is usually followed with some counselling or psychology related topic, though isn't always specific. A person with an MA/MA at the end of their name has completed their degree but may or may not have a license from the state to practice therapy independently.
- MSW: A person with an MSW has their Master's degree in social work. A social worker is also able to be a therapist and typically works to support individuals in connecting with community resources to support their wellness.
- LSW: A Licensed Social Worker is a social worker that isn't able to do any clinical work - no diagnosing, assessing, or treatment of any mental, emotional, or behavioral issues. The social work that they do is under the supervision of another social worker.
- LGSW: This means Licensed Graduate Social Worker. They are able to do all forms of social work, however their clinical work must be done under supervision. Their next step would be to obtain the LISW or LICSW.
- LISW: This social worker is a Licensed Independent Social Worker. They are able to practice social work without being under supervision, but any clinical social work that they do will be supervised.
- LICSW: Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker is able to practice both social work and clinical social work independently (without supervision).
- LP: This is a Licensed Psychologist. This person has a Ph. D within the psychological or counseling field. They are often the ones that do the more intensive and in depth assessments, though there are some that also are therapists. This is the person that would officially be called a Psychologist.
- LPC: A Licensed Professional Counselor has earned their Master's degree. They are able to be involved in all aspects of therapy independently and don't need to be supervised. This person has gone through a school program that has been mostly focused on individual work, sometimes family work. Unless they have obtained additional training, an LPC does not typically work with couples. Some insurance companies will not cover services rendered by an LPC.
- LPCC: This person is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, basically the same as an LPC however there are a few more requirements that needed to be met before obtaining this license. As stated above, an LPCC also has had an

education that has mostly focused on individual therapy, sometimes family therapy. And again, unless the individual has sought out the specific trainings, they most likely won't work with couples.

- LAMFT: Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist, means that their license is recognized across the country but they have not obtained their individual state license yet. This person is in the process of completing all the paperwork and extra requirements needed to obtain their license from a particular state. Their work is supervised during this time and unfortunately not all insurance companies will work with this license. Much like the license suggests, they are trained specifically to work with families and couples. This doesn't mean that they don't also work with individuals because they do.
- LMFT: A Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist has both their national license and now their state license. This license also means that there has been specific training to work with couples, families, and individuals as well.
- ATR: This creative soul is a Registered Art Therapist. We know the letters are out of order, but that makes it all the more creative! While all therapists color, paint, or draw in session this doesn't mean that it is Art Therapy. An ATR has been specifically trained, starting in grad school, on how to use various art modalities in a specific therapeutic way. This isn't an art class, this is therapy and can be used with all ages and mental, emotional, and behavioral issues.
- SEP: Somatic Experiencing Professional, this person utilizes a form of therapy called Somatic Experiencing (SE) and has been trained and certified in it. This is a specific form of trauma therapy that focuses on the sensations within the body and healing.