

California Law & Ethics Updates (2025–2026)

Applicable to: LMFT, LPCC, LCSW licensees and associates (California)

This course update summarizes the most **substantive and enforceable** ethics and law changes from **CAMFT** and the **California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS)** that impact clinical practice, telehealth, advertising, and professional accountability.

A. CAMFT Code of Ethics Updates

Revised CAMFT Code of Ethics

Effective Date: December 6, 2025

CAMFT adopted a revised Code of Ethics with several expanded and newly clarified areas.

1. New Section 6: Telehealth, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence

The revised Code consolidates all technology-related ethics into a single section.

Key requirements include:

- **Competence and technical proficiency** when using telehealth platforms and AI-supported tools (6.1).
- **Assessment of telehealth suitability**, including client factors and clinical appropriateness (6.2).
- **Ethical use of technology and AI** in documentation, treatment planning, and clinical decision-making (6.3).
- **Compliance with all applicable laws and regulations** governing telehealth and technology use (6.4).
- **Enhanced informed consent and disclosure** regarding purpose, risks, benefits, limits, confidentiality, and technical failures related to telehealth and AI tools (6.5).

2. Advertising and Testimonials (Section 13)

- Therapists **may not solicit testimonials** from current or former clients who may be vulnerable to undue influence (13.6).

3. Public Statements and Social Media (Section 5)

- Ethical standards governing public professional statements now explicitly include **social media and internet-based content**, including online opinions and recommendations (5.13).

4. Expanded DEI and Anti-Discrimination Framing

- **Broad non-discrimination mandate** across all aspects of professional practice (1.1).
- **Explicit prohibition against perpetuating historical or social prejudice** in diagnosis, assessment, or treatment (1.2).

Ongoing (2026): CAMFT AI Ethics Development

CAMFT has indicated that **additional ethics guidance related to AI is under development**, including draft proposals and member feedback processes. No additional effective date has been finalized as of this update.

B. California Law & Regulation Updates (BBS)

1. Unprofessional Conduct Regulations

Effective Date: January 1, 2025

What Changed:

- BBS revised unprofessional conduct regulations across LMFT, LPCC, and LCSW statutes.
- Changes removed duplicative regulatory language now covered by statute.
- Updates incorporated **CMIA confidentiality requirements** and gender-neutral language.

Why It Matters:

- These regulations define the standards used in complaint investigations and disciplinary actions.
- Clarified language increases enforcement consistency and compliance clarity.

2. Client Notice Requirement (SB 1024)

Effective Date: July 1, 2025

Requirement: All new clients must receive a written notice including:

- Clinician's **full legal name** as filed with the Board
- **License or registration type and number**
- **License or registration expiration date**

Why It Matters:

- This is a **statutory consumer-protection requirement**, separate from advertising rules.

3. Telehealth Standards of Practice (16 CCR §1815.5)

Effective Date: January 1, 2026

Key Requirements:

- Clinicians must hold an **active California license or registration** when providing telehealth services to clients physically located in California.
- At initiation of telehealth services, clinicians must:
- Obtain informed consent consistent with Business & Professions Code §2290.5
- Disclose risks and limitations of telehealth
- Provide license or registration type and number
- Document reasonable efforts to identify appropriate local emergency resources
- **Each telehealth session must include:**
- Verbal confirmation and documentation of the client's **full name and physical location**
- Ongoing assessment of telehealth appropriateness
- Technology used must comply with **HIPAA and CMIA privacy and security standards**.
- **Noncompliance constitutes unprofessional conduct.**

4. Advertising Regulations (16 CCR §1811)

Effective Date: April 1, 2026

Advertising Must Include:

- Therapist's **full board-filed legal name**
- **License or registration type** (LMFT, LPCC, LCSW, etc.)
- **License or registration number**

Additional Requirements for Associates/Registrants:

- Name of employer or volunteer entity
- Clear statement that services are provided **under supervision by a licensed clinician**

Additional Clarifications:

- Use of the terms *psychotherapy* or *psychotherapist* is permitted when required identifiers are present.
- Nicknames or former legal names may be used **only in addition to** the required legal name and may not be misleading.

5. Disciplinary Guidelines and Uniform Standards (16 CCR §1888)

Effective Date: July 1, 2026

What Changed:

- BBS revised the Uniform Standards Related to Substance Abuse and Disciplinary Guidelines.
- Updates include clarified penalty frameworks, probation conditions, and drug-testing protocols.

Why It Matters:

- These guidelines are used to determine discipline severity, probation terms, and remedial requirements.
- Violations related to telehealth, confidentiality, and record-keeping are more explicitly addressed.

6. Proposed BBS Fee Reductions (Pending)

Proposed Effective Period: July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2030

Summary:

- BBS has proposed reducing multiple licensing, registration, renewal, and examination fees by approximately **50%**.
- Rulemaking and public comment have concluded; final adoption is pending.

7. Law & Ethics Examination (No Substantive Change)

- Associates must take the **California Law & Ethics Exam annually** until passed to maintain registration.
- The exam must be passed prior to subsequent registration or licensure issuance.
- Name on file with the Board must exactly match government-issued ID.
- No structural or content changes have been adopted as of this update.

Practice-Ready Compliance Checklist

- Document telehealth informed consent, client location, and emergency resources.
- Confirm license or registration is active for all California-based telehealth services.
- Update all advertising (websites, directories, social media) to include required identifiers.
- Ensure associates clearly disclose supervision in all public materials.
- Update new-client notice forms to comply with SB 1024.
- Track Law & Ethics exam timelines until passed.
- Understand that telehealth, confidentiality, and documentation violations are explicitly enforceable as unprofessional conduct.