

## **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.