

**RUECKERT-HARTMAN COLLEGE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS
DIVISION OF COUNSELING & FAMILY THERAPY**

Essay One: Autobiography and Current Interest (500-word max)

Please describe your personal, professional, and educational history and how that has led you to seek a career specifically in marriage and family therapy (MFT). What are you prepared to bring to our program and the field of MFT?

Essay Two: Commitment to Social Justice (500-word max)

Using the resources provided below that outline the field's perspective on issues of social justice, address the following questions:

- a. What social influences impact the health of relationships and access to resources?
- b. In your personal, familial, and/or professional roles, how do you currently (or in the future plan to) address racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, ableism, xenophobia, and/or other inequalities?

Essay Three: only required if undergraduate GPA is under 2.90 (500-word max)

What contributed to your low academic performance during your undergraduate coursework? What steps have you taken to rectify this? What can you do to be successful academically in graduate school?

**MFT Resources
STANDARD I**

RESPONSIBILITY TO CLIENTS

Marriage and family therapists advance the welfare of families and individuals and make reasonable efforts to find the appropriate balance between conflicting goals within the family system.

1.1 Non-Discrimination.

Marriage and family therapists provide professional assistance to persons without discrimination on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, health status, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or relationship status.

AMFT Statement on MFT Responsibility to Counter Racism

Recognizing that relationships are fundamental to the health and well-being of individuals, couples, families, and communities, AAMFT exists to advance the profession and the practice of marriage and family therapy. Because we value how systems impact families and communities, AAMFT is outraged by the continued racial trauma, violence, and loss that our communities of color are experiencing in this country.



Our members, our clients, and our society are hurting deeply, and we must stand together and in solidarity against injustice. There is no room in our society for inequality and it is vital that we use our platform, relationships, and training to enact change. It is a core value in AAMFT to support, promote, and protect diversity, to value all individuals and groups as free from prejudice and oppression as possible, and to foster a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic.

Marriage and family therapists have a direct responsibility to counter racism. We are uniquely positioned to understand and recognize the systemic effect that oppression, inequity, and overt and covert racism have on individuals in marginalized communities and have a role in fostering healing and growth. Therefore, AAMFT stands in support of our members dedicated to advancing the fundamental rights, health, safety, and well-being of all individuals, relationships, and communities. We encourage all members to have authentic dialogue to advance systemic change. As an organization, we will continue to advocate against societal inequalities and seek solutions in our clinical, research, community, and policy work to ensure that vital change is occurring.

Statement on Anti-Transgender Legislation

As an association, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's primary goal is to advocate for the profession of marriage and family therapy. We are also extremely sensitive to policies affecting individuals and families spanning a wide range of issues.

AAMFT is aware of recent passage of a bill in Arkansas related to banning access to gender-affirming care. On Tuesday, the Arkansas House overturned the governor's veto to pass the bill, restricting access to treatment for transgender young people.

AAMFT has been clear and vocal in its position that as an association, discrimination will not be tolerated on any basis. We reiterate our global commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and a fundamental belief in the power of relationships upon which our profession is built. We recognize the adverse effects of this legislation on the livelihood of the transgender and gender diverse community, including depression, increased suicide and attempted suicide, and fewer safe, inclusive spaces in which to thrive.

There is also a large number of anti-transgender bills before other state legislatures. In 2020, there were a record-setting 79 anti-transgender bills introduced in state legislatures. This year, that record has been beaten again, with over 83 anti-transgender bills introduced at the state level. While Arkansas House Bill 1570 does not explicitly prohibit mental health providers from providing gender affirmative care, it could likely cause an increase in mental and emotional distress as transgender individuals are denied medical care to assist with gender transitions. Legislative proposals like HB 1570 may also leave mental health providers overwhelmed with clients experiencing gender dysphoria, without any medical providers to refer clients to for further treatment. AAMFT opposes legislation that discriminates against the LGBTQ+ population, such as HB 1570 and legislation that seeks to limit MFTs' ability to provide gender affirmative care.



Many marriage and family therapists currently have an active and affirming role with transgender and gender diverse clients, supporting them throughout their journey of selfdiscovery, self-acceptance, and transition. Further, MFTs have occupied an integral role in supporting these individuals within their family systems, facilitating enriching, stable relationships that are fundamental to their well-being.

We also honor the contributions and influence on our field and within our own community by systemic therapists who identify as transgender or gender diverse. AAMFT is proud to support the Queer and Trans Advocacy Network (QTAN), a topical interest network that among its many goals is to increase professional competency to better serve all sexual and gender minority (SGM) clients and to advocate for SGM health and wellbeing. Alex Iantaffi, Chair of QTAN, urges family therapists to join community-based efforts to challenge discriminatory bills in their states to protect the emotional health of trans, nonbinary, and gender expansive youth beyond the therapy room. “We know, from the existing body of literature, that family support is a protective factor for trans, nonbinary and gender expansive youth. Family support leads to lower suicidality, and levels of depression and anxiety similar to the general youth population. As family therapists, our role in ensuring that families understand and support their children is essential.”