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FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

**PRIVATE PRACTICE TOOLKIT:
ASSOCIATE EDITION**

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TAMFT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: LAUNCHING ASSOCIATES INTO THE FREEDOM AND CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE PRACTICE

JASON MARTIN, PH.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S

One of the most exciting (and scariest) times in the life of a new therapist is when they finish their master's degree and move into the next phase of their career. Some grads choose to pursue a doctoral degree. A few may take a break or pursue a job that does not require a license. But the vast majority of MFT graduates upon graduation seek out an Associate license and a supervisor in order to work as therapists in their communities. Those new licensees may work for an agency, a group practice, or even open their own private practice.

The TSBEMFT stipulates that LMFT Associates (not LMFT-A; do not abbreviate "Associate") may own and work in their own private practice as long as they do so with a board-approved supervisor overseeing their work. In 2022, the LPC Board in Texas followed suit, allowing LPC Associates to own their own practice as well, so graduates who pursue both LMFT and LPC can do so within their own private practices.

The appeal of opening your own practice is obvious: You can make your own hours; you choose the structure within which you practice, set your own rates and develop your own specialties, thereby setting a higher ceiling of earning potential than you could have working for someone else. But this is not an easy road, however. Private practice owners have many more risks and struggles, especially in the early months: You will almost certainly lose money each month for a while, perhaps for a year or more. You have unavoidable expenses (rent, supervision fees, EHR subscription fees, etc.) without the certainty of regular, sufficient income; you may be starting from scratch to establish a reliable referral network; because insurance companies do not typically work with Associates, you do not have the benefit of building a caseload with insurance referrals. It can be a very stressful struggle in the beginning that may undermine the very reasons you opened your practice in the first place.

That is not to say that recent graduates should never pursue their own practice, but they need to educate themselves about the true risks and challenges of doing so. They need to prepare for at least a few months of very little income and negative profit. They need to be even more deliberate about establishing a supportive network of referrals and consultants. Most MFT and counseling training programs provide little to no preparation for the business and start-up aspects of establishing a private practice. (As a faculty member in a counseling training program, our concerns are more aligned towards developing engaging, ethical, and effective clinicians.) So the responsibility is on graduates to educate themselves about best business practices and prepare for the economic and practical realities of opening a private practice.

TAMFT can also play a role in helping members in private practice. We have held a number of monthly webinars to help private practice owners, including new Associates, grow and sustain their practices. The Annual Conference each spring includes sessions that help bridge the gap between graduation and private practice. While opening a private practice is not a good idea for everyone, we commit to supporting those who choose such a path. If you have ideas about how TAMFT can help private practice owners, particularly solo practitioners and Associates, we welcome your ideas and feedback. Thank you, as always, for the work and therapy you do.

Jason Martin (he/him), Ph.D., LMFT-S, LPC-S
President, TAMFT



LETTER FROM THE LMFT ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVE

REBEKAH TORRES, LMFT ASSOCIATE, TAMFT ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVE

As the theme indicates in this quarter's newsletter - the focus is all about our LMFT Associates! Who better to hear from than TAMFT's LMFT Associate Representative?



My name is Rebekah Torres. I've been an LMFT Associate since February 2022 and am under the supervision of Amy Birchill Lavergne, M.Ed., LMFT-S, LPC-S. Throughout my time as an LMFT Associate, I've worked in several group practices, opened my private practice, enrolled in a Ph.D. program, and maintained leadership positions within TAMFT and Delta Kappa International MFT Honors Society. I've also gone through my fair share of challenges both personally and professionally, so if you are going through something right now- I am here for you, and please don't give up on the development of your professional identity.

As the state opened an opportunity for LMFT Associates to open their own private practice, I must share a few words of advice and/or caution, as opening a private practice can be both challenging and rewarding.

The decision for me to open my own private practice was made from a "need" rather than a "want." It seemed to have been an easy decision (and the only decision) with where I was in life: working a full-time job in the financial world while trying to obtain hours for licensure. If you are dabbling in opening your own practice, please ensure that it is a "want." You will need to dedicate a lot of time to learning the ins and outs of each process that comes with opening a practice. I used various resources and consulted with my supervisor during my process. Once my practice was opened, the challenge was marketing for myself since insurance does not allow LMFT Associates to panel.

My practice was open for about a year before I made the hard decision to close it and transfer my clients to the clinic where I currently work. It was a win-win since my clients could start using their insurance benefits and I could focus on developing a decent caseload for licensure purposes. (Again, with support and guidance from my supervisor).

All of that to say: when considering opening your own practice, take it one step at a time. Gather all the information you need, ask professionals in the field all the questions, gather resources (books, articles, handouts, CEUs and trainings geared towards private practice, courses to help with bookkeeping if you are unfamiliar with that, etc.) that you can turn to when you encounter specific situations. Additionally, networking is a great way to gather referrals for professionals like CPAs, business attorneys, realtors, etc. TAMFT offers great ways to network, including committee service, Board service, attending conferences, and more!

I hope this helps! Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

Cordially,

Rebekah Torres, LMFT Associate

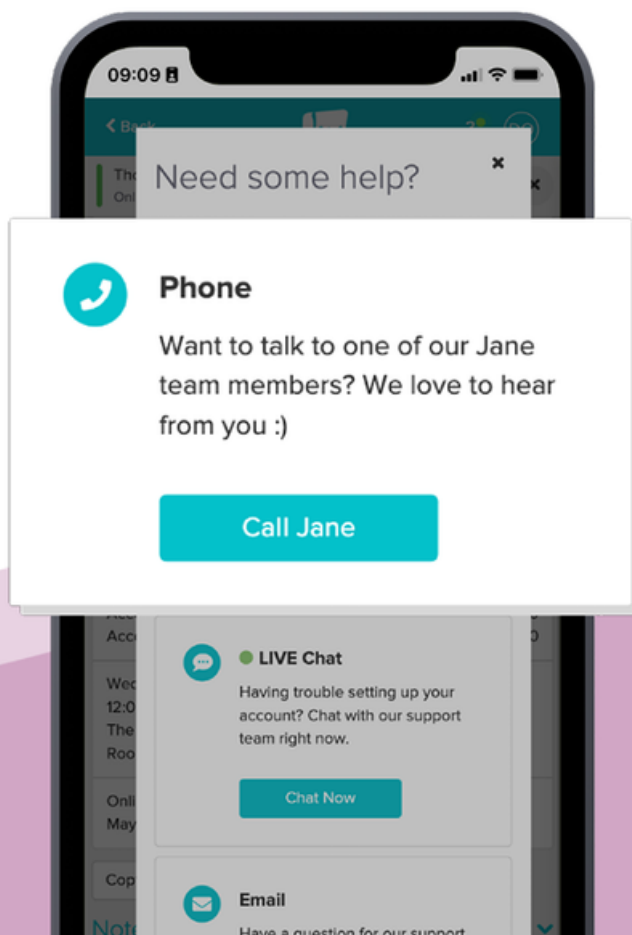
Supervised by Amy Birchill Lavergne, M.Ed., LMFT-S, LPC-S



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Branding: Your Private Practice's Gateway to Growth

BY: RIBA ARABGHANI, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER

When it comes to private practices in marriage and family therapy, therapists often overlook marketing themselves and their practice. They lean into their expertise, hoping their credentials and referrals will do the talking. While these elements play a vital role in your overall marketing strategy and success, where many businesses fall short (and MFTs are no exception) is a cohesive branding strategy. Branding is universally necessary - it's not just for tech companies and corporations. It's how a business is perceived and remembered by its clients. For mental health professionals, in particular, effective branding provides a sense of comfort, trust, and professionalism - crucial in a field where clients seek genuine connection and understanding.

Why is Branding Indispensable?

- **First Impressions Matter:** In the digital age, a prospective client's first interaction with your practice is likely virtual. Meaning, before they step into your office or make that first call, they've likely browsed your online presence. Your branding elements - from the logo and tagline to the content and visuals - serve as an introduction, setting the stage for their initial perceptions of you, your expertise, and your practice.
- **Trust Building:** Branding isn't just aesthetics; it's a promise. A cohesive and professional brand exudes a sense of reliability, assuring clients that they're entrusting their emotional journeys to capable, consistent hands.
- **Differentiation:** Branding illuminates what makes you and your practice distinct, attracting clients who resonate with your approach and specializations. This is especially important with Teletherapy expanding the availability of providers that clients can choose from.
- **Emotional Connection:** The journey of therapy is deeply personal. A well-thought-out brand communicates empathy, safety, and understanding even before a conversation begins.
- **Streamlined Marketing Processes:** A branding strategy offers a clear guide for marketing, ensuring consistency in messaging and design across all channels. This unified approach builds trust faster and makes marketing decisions more straightforward and efficient.

5 Essential Steps to Create or Enhance a Brand Identity for Your Private Practice

1. **Define Your Unique Proposition:** It starts with introspection. Identify what truly differentiates your practice. It might be a specialized therapy technique, your connection with a particular demographic, or a personal story that steers your therapeutic approach. Your branding should resonate with this uniqueness.
2. **Create Your Logo and Color Palette:**
 - a. Logo: Designing doesn't necessitate expertise. Platforms like Canva simplify the process, but hiring a freelance graphic designer is also an option. Your logo should be an embodiment of your practice's core values, kept minimalistic yet memorable.
 - b. Colors: Your chosen colors should align with the emotions you aim to invoke. Soft blues or greens, for instance, communicate tranquility and trust.
3. **Craft a Memorable Tagline:** Think of this as the essence of your practice condensed into a few words. It should be both evocative and reflective of your therapeutic ethos.

4. **Use Consistent Imagery:** Consistency is more than just repetitiveness; it's about creating a unified narrative. Whether on brochures or digital platforms, consistent imagery solidifies brand recall. When someone sees a familiar motif or color associated with your brand, it should evoke feelings of trust and comfort.
5. **Establish Your Digital Presence:** Having a web presence is essential, as most potential clients begin their search for services online. Without a web presence, even the most talented therapists risk being overlooked. A diverse online footprint—be it through a website, social media, or local directories—ensures you're discoverable and accessible to those in need, directly influencing your practice's growth and success.

While branding might initially seem daunting, especially for therapists just stepping into their private practice or starting to market themselves, it's essentially about storytelling. It's the story of who you are, what you offer, and why someone should choose your practice. For therapists with limited resources and tech experience, it's comforting to note that branding isn't about grand gestures or massive campaigns. It's about authenticity. It's about consistently communicating the heart of your practice, ensuring that those seeking help find their way to your door, and more importantly, feel welcomed even before they knock.



JOIN TAMFT TODAY!

By joining TAMFT, you show your commitment to advancing marriage and family therapy in Texas

Other member benefits include:

- Involvement in legislation that directly impacts your career
- Access to Texas-based attorney with free consultations
- 12 free CEUs each year, plus bonus webinars (\$360 VALUE)
- Discounts on conferences, online courses, tuition/services and more
- Networking with like-minded individuals



TAMFT.org/Join-TAMFT

COMMITTEE UPDATES

LEGISLATIVE & PAC UPDATE

Members: Dr. Carlos Perez, Board Liaison; Marion Vickerman, Board Liaison; Tim White, PAC Chairman; Jaida Pryor, Student Association Liaison; Hannah McKinnies; Tara Roper; Sommer Greer; Gabrielle Dean; Kristin Ross; Mercedes Burk; Andrea Beth Jackson (Rep for BHEC standardization only)

With the close of the Legislative session earlier this Spring and the board's ability to consolidate the lessons learned, the legislative committee has some updates for our membership.

- Internally we think Day at the Dome went great and we appreciate those who participated.
- We will continue to do a better job of following up with congressional representatives after meeting with them. Please see the [link](#) to the guide to writing congresspersons.
- It seems that due to the acrimony in the last session, bills that were and are important to TAMFT didn't get much traction. While this is aggravating, it highlights just how important the Family PAC is. Part of Family PAC's mission is to financially contribute to those congressional representatives who support LMFTs. Please see the link to donate today and keep PAC in mind on Giving Tuesday!



**Help show your support for
Family PAC by purchasing
TAMFT Merch!**

[VISIT THE TAMFT MERCH SHOP!](#)

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: Rebekah Torres, Chair & Board Liaison; Misty Schmidt; Kim Khuyen Nguyen; Fariba Arabghani; Crystal Lina Lopez

With the end-of-year initiatives like the Student Membership Drive and the 2024 conference gearing up, the Communications Committee has been busy, supporting each committee with its communication efforts. We're also working on our social media efforts to develop a social media strategy to ensure our audience is known and our voice is consistent.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: *Joann Travis-Evans, co-Chair; Anna Thomison, co-Chair; Layla Scott, Board Liaison; Mi'cah Ducros; Hannah McKinnies; Heather Austin-Robillard; Heather Lucero*

The Membership Committee has been hard at work on strategizing the best way to maximize TAMFT's reach to the newest members of the field: students and associates! We kicked off the annual student membership drive which is a friendly competition among universities to recruit the highest number of new student members between the dates of September 25 and November 13. The committee is utilizing social media platforms to engage with students with fun ideas such as "Do your impression of your future therapist self!" We hope to generate enthusiasm and galvanize the curiosity of their learning minds with prizes such as DSM-5s for winners that will be selected on a weekly basis throughout the membership drive.



Finally, we are aiming to focus on recruiting LMFT-Supervisors and all associates as we create a more formal structure to the Mentorship Program that was created at the 2023 Annual Conference. More information will be forthcoming!

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: *Kelsey Austin, co-Chair & Board Liaison; Emily Esail, co-Chair, Melinda Barsales; Brandon Gardenhire; Taylor Conable; Lisl Stadler*

The Conference Committee has put our heads together (and scoured through member feedback) to come up with a theme for the 2024 conference. We think we've got the perfect one! We're also working on contacting potential keynote speakers for the conference that will not only embody our theme but also provide value and inspiration to our attendees. Providing value has been at the top of our agenda as a committee! We've opened the call for proposals that will attract quality presenters who are passionate about the research and professional acumen they have to offer. We are also scouting sponsors and exhibitors that will interest our attendees so they can feel that even their time spent sipping coffee in the exhibitor hall was beneficial during their conference experience. Do you have thoughts or suggestions for the Conference Committee? Don't hesitate to reach out to TAMFT -- we love creating conferences that meet our members' needs and cultivate authentic connections!

ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Members: *Ty Leonard, Chair; Layla Scott, Board Liaison; Michael (Charles) Flynn; Lisa Salazar; Paula Boros; Brianna Tran*

The Ethics and Social Justice Committee is a revisioned committee combining the principles of ethical clinical practice with the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This committee will be working collaboratively within the organization to model and demonstrate TAMFT's commitment to the highest standards of care in the field of mental health. This committee will partner with the Education and Conference committees to prioritize webinars and in-person workshops that fulfill CEU requirements for renewal, particularly mandated topics such as human trafficking, cultural humility, technology-based services, and supervisory trainings. Committee tasks and initiatives that center support and community for special interest groups and those of minority status will be developed.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members: *Nelliana Acuna, co-Chair; Leila Anderson, co-Chair; Robyn Flores, Secretary; Dr. Wen-Mei Chou, Board Liaison; Benita Madison; Hannah McKinnies; Baldemar Menchaca; Jose Mata; Christina Watts-Figueroa*

The Education Committee is committed to delivering valuable monthly education to our members for a total of 26 CEUs every two years. Regardless of your need for hours, attending training is a great way to continue your education, learn from colleagues, and feel connected to the field.

Our upcoming webinar on Friday, October 13th, is “Affirming Discussions About Sex in Therapy,” presented by Robyn Flores and Caroline Lee. Worth 1 Ethics CEU, this presentation will cover how to support erotically marginalized clients and how to broach the topic of erotic countertransference in supervision to mitigate risks of harm. Robyn Flores, LMFT, LPC, NCC, ACS (she/her) is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Texas, Colorado, Utah, and Missouri and a Licensed Professional Counselor in Colorado. She is an Approved Clinical Supervisor and AAMFT Supervisor Candidate. She is also a Sex Therapist, Sexuality Educator, professor on the topic of Human Sexuality at the master’s level, and teaching assistant for doctoral-level Ethics and Neuroanatomy. Caroline is a Colorado therapist, specializing in trauma therapy and sex therapy. She holds candidacy for both the Licensed Professional Counselor and Marriage and Family Therapist licensures. Caroline is passionate about helping clients in their journey of life, as well as many other side projects related to mental health. Her current research topics include erotic countertransference, the experience of the cuckquean within kink, and the experience of grieving the life you're living.

Upcoming topics include “The Silent Wounds of Disenfranchised Grief: A Relational Perspective” (November), and an informative discussion on sleep in December, so be on the lookout for those notifications!



2024 TAMFT Conference

We are excited to announce the 2023 TAMFT Annual Conference, taking place April 11-13, 2024 in San Antonio! This year's theme, "Celebrating 50 Years of TAMFT: Embracing the Past, Enriching the Present, Empowering the Future" is dedicated to the reflection of how far our profession has come and the continued evolution of our innovative field. Keynotes and workshops will honor the foundations of our field, showcase emerging treatments and theories, and inspire critical conversations about the co-creation of the future of marriage and family therapy. Systemic thinkers from Texas and beyond will have the opportunity to gain new skills, share their own research, as well as forge new connections and rekindle professional flames.

Registration will open at the first of the year, but we are currently accepting applications for conference proposals abstracts, and poster presentations, **now through December 29, 2023!**

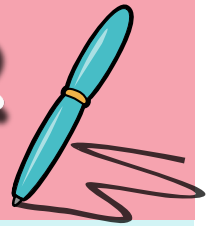
[SUBMIT WORKSHOP
PROPOSAL](#)

[SUBMIT POSTER
ABSTRACT](#)

[BOOK
HOTEL](#)



STUDENT CORNER



TSAMFT BOARD UPDATE

Members: Jaida Pryor, President; Emily Esail, Secretary; Melinda Barsales, Treasurer; Crystal Lina Lopez, Social Media Manager; Sydney Jeffrey, Outreach Manager

The student board is gearing up for another great school year, and we are excited to engage our student membership in the process! Join us to connect with TAMFT, grow as a clinician, and expand your network in the process!

The Peer-to-Peer Support Program is launching in October and will run throughout the year! It'll be on the 1st Saturday of each month at 10am on 10/7, 11/4, 12/2, 1/6, 2/3, 3/2, 4/6, 5/4, and 6/1. Follow us on Instagram (@TSAMFT) to learn more. We can't wait to see you there!

Follow us on Instagram (@TSAMFT) to stay up to date on how the nomination process for the student spotlight works and to stay up to date on each month's winner!

Join a meeting and learn more about what the students and associates are up to this year.

Meeting Calendar:

November 18th, 9am, [click here to join](#).

Meeting ID: 864 8210 6608

Passcode: 303481

January 20th, 9am, [click here to join](#).

Meeting ID: 889 9679 1956

Passcode: 389248

TAMFT 2024 Annual Conference Student Meeting
(in-person)

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP DRIVE!

September 25th - November 13th, 2023

TAMFT Student Membership: \$50

20% off with code FALLISFUN23



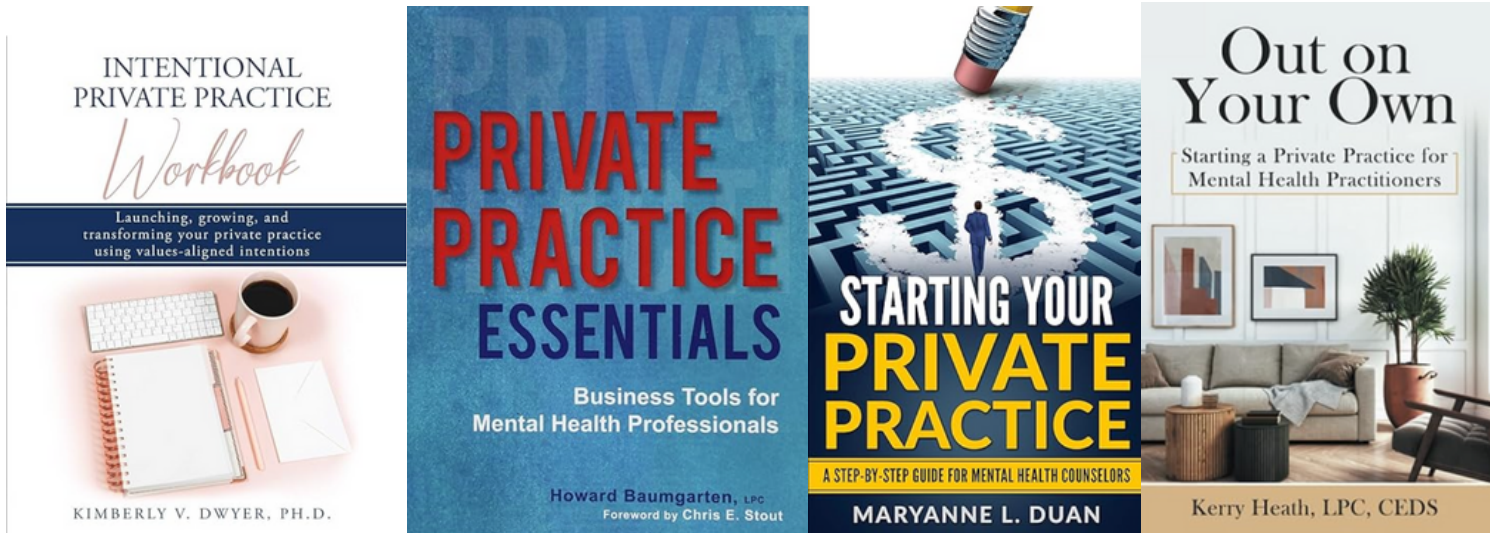
Join Today!

Weekly
Raffle Prizes!
Including: DSM-5s,
gift cards, and more!

ASSOCIATE RESOURCES

Deciding to open a private practice as an LMFT-Associate is not always an easy or straightforward process. Below are a few resources to help you along the way when starting your own practice.

BOOKS



PODCASTS



MISC. RESOURCES

- CPA/Bookkeeper
- Business Consultant
- Business Attorney for LLC assistance
- EHR Platform
- Course Courses for Bookkeeping (If deciding to do your own)
- Bookkeeping/Payroll Software
- Marketing Platform
- Website Platform
- Branding Assistance
- Bank for Business Account

ONLINE COURSES

CONTINUING
EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES

TAMFT OFFERS A
WIDE VARIETY OF
ONLINE
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CEUs.

CHECK THEM OUT
HERE.



UPCOMING LIVE WEBINAR:

Affirming Discussions About Sex in Therapy



Robyn Flores



Caroline Lee

October 13, 2023 |
12:00-1:00pm CT
1 Ethics CEU