

Sunset In Texas: What you always wanted to know.

Is my government giving us our money's worth? This is basis for the Sunset process in Texas. Created in 1977, the Texas Legislature created the Sunset process to question the need for and success of agencies carrying out the responsibilities of State Government.

Sunset is the regular assessment of the continuing need for a state agency or program to exist. Each agency is given an automatic termination or Sunset date on which an agency will be abolished unless a bill is passed to continue it. This process allows an opportunity for the Legislature and stakeholders, the citizens of Texas, to look at and make key improvements to how state government works. Agencies typically undergo Sunset review every 12 years. Our License Board was last under Sunset Review in 2005.

Who Oversees Sunset?

The Sunset Commission is made up of 5 members of the Senate and one general public member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, and 5 members of the House and one general public member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. *

Among the 24 state agencies undergoing current Sunset Review are the boards governing; Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Psychologists.

What Can Happen Under Sunset?

The Sunset Commission's report on a typical agency must include a recommendation to abolish or continue the agency. Beyond continuation, Sunset reviews also focus on identifying areas of weakness in an agency's operations and recommendations for specific action for improvement through changes in law. The commission may also consider combining functions of two or more agencies to streamline state government.

Why is Sunset Important To Me?

If the recommendation of Sunset would be to abolish the board that regulates LMFT's, our license has the potential of being neutered in the state of Texas, or can be moved and combined with another mental health licensing agency, changing the unique status, independence and strength of our license.

Can The Sun Go Down For LMFT's?

Since 1977 -

- ▶ 37 agencies/programs abolished outright.
- ▶ 46 agencies/programs consolidated.
- ▶ Saving \$980 million in savings and increased revenues.
- ▶ Returned about \$23 for every \$1 spent on Sunset.
- ▶ Conducted nearly 500 reviews of state agencies/programs.
- ▶ About 80% of the Sunset Commission's recommendations typically become law.

So yes, it could happen to us. We *NEED* our Licensing Board to remain a separate, independent board and not get consolidated into another licensing board and diminishing the value of our license and family systems approach.

What?! How can I help?

You can provide valuable information to the Sunset Commission by calling the members of the Sunset Commission in your district and speaking with them, emailing or dropping off a Talking Points letter.

The Talking Points letter gives the Sunset Commission Members information about the uniqueness of our license within the mental health community and lets them know you want their support in maintaining our licensing board as a separate and independent board.

The Talking Points letter helps your Senator and Representative who are on the Sunset Commission understand the importance of the work LMFT's provide throughout Texas.

Setting a time to go by and see your Senator and Representative, making a call, emailing, or dropping off information shares how important you feel your license is and the mental health work you provide helps the citizens of Texas achieve greater access to mental health care.

The 2015-2017 Sunset Commission Members

Senate Members

Van Taylor	(R-Dist. 8)
Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa	(D-Dist. 20)
Robert Nichols	(R-Dist. 3)
Charles Schwertner	(R-Dist. 5)
Kirk Watson	(D-Dist. 14)
LTC (Ret) Allen B. West	

House Members

Larry Gonzales	(R-Dist. 52)
Cindy Burkett	(R-Dist. 113)
Dan Flynn	(R-Dist. 2)
Richard Pena Raymond	(D-Dist. 42)
Senfronia Thompson	(D-Dist. 141)
William Meadows	

If you do not know who your Senator or Representative is, go to the TAMFT home page with the tab FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR or you can go to www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx. Just by putting in your zip code you can easily find out if any of these members are in your area.

Don't Know What To Say?

- ▶ If you are not sure what to say in a letter, go to our website, www.tamt.org, and click:

SUNSET COMMISSION LETTER

There is a letter ready for you to download and email it on with your signature.

- ▶ If you are not sure how to set an appointment with a Sunset Commission member, click:

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT AND SEEING YOUR SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE in person.

- ▶ If you are not sure what to say in a call click:

SAMPLE CALL SCRIPT FOR SUNSET

This is a script that can be used to leave a message for a member of the Sunset Commission or their staff.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOT DEVIATE FROM THE SCRIPT OR LETTERS, AS THESE ARE THE ONLY WAY A UNITED MESSAGE CAN BE HEARD!

Thank you for all your help. Let Your Voice Be Heard!