

Coaching and the Colorado Mental Health Law

The situation

The 2004 Colorado Mental Law gave coaches an exemption from having to register with the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA). That law—and the coaches’ exemption—will expire at the end of next year. The State of Colorado is currently beginning a process called Sunset Review to rewrite the Mental Health Law. Part of the process will be to decide if the coaches’ exemption from regulation under the Mental Health Law will continue.

A little history

The Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) uses a very broad definition of psychotherapy. Under this definition, personal coaches or life coaches could be considered “unlicensed psychotherapists” and subject to registration and regulation under the requirements of the Colorado Mental Health Law. This would affect who could be a client, how you could market your business, and how you could work with clients.

What you can do

Follow the guidelines of the exemption: (1) Be clear in your marketing, your statements and your client agreements that you are a professional coach; (2) Complete coach-specific training.

A sample of a client agreement that spells out what coaching is—and how coaching is distinguished from psychotherapy—is attached.

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