

LICENSING FACT SHEET

Massachusetts Social Work Licensing Information prepared as a service to NASW Members, authorized by:

The Massachusetts Board of Registration of Social Work
Division of Professional Licensure
1000 Washington Street, Suite 710
Boston, MA 02118-6100
T: 617-727-3064

Email: Erin.E.Murphy@state.ma.us
Web: www.mass.gov/dpl/boards/sw

WHAT IS THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK?

The practice of social work is the rendering or offering to render any clinical social work service, non-clinical social work service, or case management service, as defined in the **Rules and Regulations: 258 CMR 8.05**, to any individual, family, or group of individuals for any fee or other form of compensation, monetary or otherwise. For the specific definition of clinical social work service, non-clinical social work service, and case management go to www.mass.gov/dpl/boards/sw.

WHO MUST BE LICENSED?

All persons who practice social work, use the title “social worker” or any derivative thereof, or refer to themselves as practicing social work must be licensed in Massachusetts, unless they are a social worker for the county, state, or municipality, or a social work intern in a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Practicing social work without a license or performing functions reserved for a higher licensing level is cause for disciplinary action.

GENERAL LICENSING INFORMATION

The purpose of licensing in social work is to assist the public through identification of standards for the safe professional practice of social work. The Massachusetts Board of Registration of Social Work (The Licensing Board) protects the public by disseminating and enforcing regulations for which licensees are held accountable. It determines eligibility for admission to examinations for social work, conducts examinations and licenses qualified individuals at one of four levels of licensure (**Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, LICSW; Licensed Certified Social Worker, LCSW; Licensed Social Worker, LSW; Licensed Social Work Associate, LSWA**). The Board holds meetings, hears complaints, and takes action as required with the assistance of the Division's legal counsel and investigators.

The **Rules and Regulations 258 CMR 1.00 - 31.00** contain standards governing professional ethics and practice and explain the qualifications and functions for each license level. Every social worker should have a copy the Regulations. To obtain a copy, contact the State House Bookstore or download it from the Licensing Board's website: www.mass.gov/dpl/boards/sw.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A LICENSE & WHAT ARE THE FEES?

1. The **Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)** processes social work licensing applications on behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Board of Registration of Social Workers, as authorized by the Division of Professional Licensure. Call **866-527-2384** and request a social work license application or visit the ASWB website at www.aswb.org to download an application. **Initial New Applicant fee** for all licenses is **\$166.00**.
2. **Send the completed application, including fee, to ASWB for pre-screening.**
Those who meet licensing requirements will be sent written confirmation of your eligibility to test within two weeks. You will also receive scheduling instructions from ASWB as well as a copy of the ASWB Candidate Handbook.

All forms and fees should be submitted to:
ASWB, Attn: Massachusetts Application, P.O. Box 1508, Culpeper, VA 22701

**Do not send forms to the Licensing Board. Applicants for licensure in Massachusetts must follow the process of either the "New Applicant" section or the "Reciprocity Applicant" section as outlined in the instructions on the application materials.*

3. **In order to take the ASWB exam, you must first register with ASWB and pay the required exam fee of:** \$230 for the Associate, Bachelors, and Masters tests, and \$260 for the Advanced Generalist and Clinical examinations. To register for the exam call ASWB at 1-888-579-EXAM (3926) or go to www.aswb.org to register online after you have received written confirmation of your eligibility to test.

ASWB offers four different categories of licensing exams- Clinical, Advanced Generalist, Masters, and Bachelors. Massachusetts, however, does not use the ASWB Advanced Generalist exam. **If you are pursuing your LICSW, take the Clinical exam; LCSW, take the Masters exam; LSW or LSWA, take the Bachelors exam.**

4. **Information about the Licensing Exam:**

- ◆ There are 170 questions on the ASWB examination, but only 150 count toward your score. The remaining 20 are pre-test items, questions which are being evaluated for possible inclusion in the examination item pool.
- ◆ You will have four hours to complete the examination. If you feel you need accommodations for a disability, contact ASWB for ADA Accommodation information at 1-800-225-6880 x3003. If you feel you need ESL accommodations, contact the Licensing Board at 617-727-3064.
- ◆ Tests are administered by appointment at ACT testing centers throughout the country. Registered candidates schedule a time to take the test, rather than following a fixed examination schedule. Go to <http://www.act.org/actcenters/locate/index.html> to locate a testing center nearest you.
- ◆ **A passing exam score in Massachusetts is a scaled score of 75.** However, if you take the ASWB licensing exam and pass it in another state, your score will be valid in Massachusetts.
- ◆ After the exam, you will receive unofficial notice of your test result at the test site. ASWB will receive the official "pass" scores and will then notify you of your official score and indicate that you can now pay your initial licensure fee. Those who do not pass will also receive formal notification.

**You are not considered licensed until you pay your initial licensure fee and are issued a license number.*

5. **Paying your initial Licensure Fee:**

Initial Licensure Fees to be paid once all requirements have been met:

LICSW- \$82.00 • LCSW- \$68.00 • LSW- \$54.00 • LSWA- \$42.00

Submit payment voucher and payment for your initial licensure fee to:
ASWB, P.O. Box 1508, Culpeper, VA 22701

CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE) REQUIREMENTS

All licenses expire on **October 1st of every even year**. Licensees must complete the required amount of continuing education hours *prior* to the renewal date of their license.

LICSW- 30 hours • LCSW- 20 hours • LSW- 15 hours • LSWA- 10 hours

See the Rules and Regulations 258 CMR 1.00 - 31.00 for additional information about Social Work CE Requirements. **NASW members may request a Continuing Education Fact Sheet from the NASW office.**

LICENSE RENEWAL

It is your responsibility to renew your license by October 1 of every even year. This is true even if you received your license just months before the renewal date. **Renewals are sent approximately 90 days prior to renewal date** and you should receive a computerized license renewal application (which includes CE information). Sign it and return it with

the renewal fee to the address indicated. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure that the address on file at the Licensing Board is up to date and current.

License Renewal Fees as of 07/01:

LICSW- \$82.00 • LCSW- \$68.00 • LSW- \$54.00 • LSWA- \$42.00

IF YOU DON'T RECEIVE A RENEWAL APPLICATION, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GET ONE FROM THE LICENSING BOARD. CALL 617-727-3064.

LAPSED LICENSES

Those who miss the October 1 deadline and have an expired license may not practice, regardless of the circumstances.

Lapsed Licenses:

- ◆ **Within one year after the expiration date**, can be renewed by submitting the renewal application along with the specified renewal fee, and late fee of \$57.00.
- ◆ **More than one year, but less than two years after the expiration date**, can be reinstated by submitting the re-licensure application along with documentation of continuing education to ASWB. If approved, a new license number will be issued.
- ◆ **More than two years after the expiration date**, can be reinstated by submitting the re-licensure application and taking the ASWB licensing exam. If approved, a new license number will be issued.

Licensees seeking re-licensure must meet the applicable requirements for initial licensure within the Licensing Board's Rules & Regulations. Applicants who were "grandfathered" in at the LCSW or LICSW levels must show evidence of an MSW degree from an accredited school of social work.

RECIPROCITY

Social workers licensed in other states must acquire a Massachusetts license in order to practice in this state. Social workers licensed in other states who met substantially equivalent requirements as Massachusetts', including the appropriate level ASWB examination, may be able to obtain a license without taking an examination. Call 866-527-2384 and request a social work license application or visit the ASWB website at www.aswb.org to download a Reciprocity application.

Requirements for Social Work Licensure in Massachusetts

This is a summary; applicants must review the Massachusetts regulations for detailed requirements.

Education	Examination	Professional References	Supervision	Documented Experience
LICSW				
MSW, DSW or PhD in Social Work from a CSWE accredited school of social work	Clinical	Two professional references from appropriately licensed individuals (see instructions p. 2)	One supervisory reference from LICSW	Two years (3,500 hours) post-MSW documented clinical experience with 50 face-to-face supervision hours per year (100 hours total) under a LICSW; hold current LCSW or equivalent
LCSW				
MSW, DSW or PhD in Social Work from a CSWE accredited school of social work	Masters	Two professional references *	One 2nd year field placement supervisory reference *	None Required
LSW				

Bachelors degree in Social Work from a CSWE accredited school of social work	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	None required
Bachelors degree in any field	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	Two years (3,500 hours) post degree supervised experience from a BSW or MSW
Two and a half years (75 sem/100 qtr hours) of college	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	Five years (8,750 hours) of supervised experience from a BSW or MSW
Two years (60 sem/80 qtr hours) of college	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	Six years (10,500 hours) of supervised experience from a BSW or MSW
One year (30 sem/40 qtr hours) of college	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	Eight years (14,000 hours) of supervised experience from a BSW or MSW
High school diploma or equivalent	Bachelors	Two professional references *	One supervisory reference *	Ten years (17,500 hours) of supervised experience from a BSW or MSW
LSWA				
Associate degree (or 60 sem/80 qtr hours) in human service field	Associate	Three references *	N/A	None required
Bachelor's degree (or 120 sem/160 qtr hours) in any field	Associate	Three references *	N/A	None required
High school diploma or equivalent	Associate	Three references *	N/A	Four years documented experience

*** At least one of the professional and/or supervisory references must be licensed as a LICSW or LCSW**