

Social Work Certification and Licensure in North Carolina

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Presentation Learning Outcomes

- Explain the value of becoming certified or licensed.
- Understand the difference between registration, certification and licensure.
- Know who regulates social work.
- Know the steps to apply for certification and/or licensure.
- Know what exam to take and when to sit for the exam.
- Understand your professional and ethical responsibilities.



Why get certified or licensed?

Social work practice is regulated at some level in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, several U.S. Territories, and all 10 Canadian provinces.

Certification and Licensure represent professional commitment to a standard of practice.

Promotes professional growth and development through ongoing continuing education.



Registration, Certification, Licensure: What's the difference?

- **Registration** – Requires individuals performing certain tasks to list their contact information with a designated government agency.
- **Certification** – Grants authority to use a protected title and mandates specific requirements related to education, training and experience, but does not protect practice.
- **Licensure** – Protects both title and practice, is required by legislation to engage in the activities covered by a defined scope of practice, and mandates specific (often more strict) requirements related to education, training, and experience.



Why Regulate?

- Public protection
- Standard of service
- Accountability

Who is the Board?



The Board is made up of 7 members. All 7 Board members are appointed by the Governor.

- 1 member shall be a Certified Social Worker or Certified Master Social Worker;
- 4 members shall be Licensed Clinical Social Workers; and
- 2 members shall be appointed from the public at large.



What are the functions and duties of the Board?



Mission & Purpose

Public Protection

Establishing and enforcing standards for qualifications, training, and experience for those who seek to represent themselves to the public as social workers, certified social workers, or licensed clinical social workers.

Board Authority

Established by Law

NC Gen. Stat. §90B

The NC Social Worker
Certification and
Licensure Act



- Establish standards through Rulemaking
- Title 21, Chapter 63 of the NC Administrative Code



Investigate complaints



Take Action

When and how to begin the application process?

1. Determine what level of Certification or Licensure to apply for.

LEVEL A - CERTIFIED SOCIAL WORKER (CSW)

<u>EDUCATION:</u>	BSW from CSWE accredited undergraduate school.
<u>EXAMINATION:</u>	ASWB Bachelor level examination.
<u>EXPERIENCE:</u>	No prior experience required.
<u>APPLICATION FEE:</u>	\$145
<u>BIENNIAL RENEWAL:</u>	\$70 and documentation of 40 clock hours of CE (4 in ethics) every 2 years.

LEVEL B - CERTIFIED MASTER SOCIAL WORKER (CMSW)

<u>EDUCATION:</u>	MSW, DSW, or PhD in social work from CSWE accredited school.
<u>EXAMINATION:</u>	ASWB Master level examination <u>or</u> ACSW examination.
<u>EXPERIENCE:</u>	No prior experience required.
<u>APPLICATION FEE:</u>	\$145
<u>BIENNIAL RENEWAL:</u>	\$90 and documentation of 40 clock hours of CE (4 in ethics) every 2 years.

Levels of Certification/Licensure Continued:

LEVEL C - LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER (LCSW) – [MANDATORY for clinical practice]

EDUCATION: MSW, DSW or PhD in social work from CSWE accredited school.

EXAMINATION: ASWB **Clinical level** exam.

EXPERIENCE: Minimum of 3,000 hours of post MSW paid clinical employment appropriately supervised clinical practice) **accumulated in no less than two (2) years, nor more than six (6) years.**

SUPERVISION: Minimum of 100 hours of supervision from a LCSW, MSW with an additional 2 years post LCSW clinical social work practice, on a regular basis: at least one (1) hour of supervision for every thirty (30) hours of clinical practice. A maximum of twenty-five (25) hours may be group supervision.

APPLICATION FEE: \$145

BIENNIAL RENEWAL: \$150 and documentation of 40 clock hours (4 in ethics) every 2 years.

Levels of Certification/Licensure Continued:

LEVEL C - LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER ASSOCIATE (LCSWA)

- For social workers who have not satisfied the experience requirements for LCSW licensure.

EDUCATION: MSW, DSW, or PhD in social work from a CSWE accredited school.

EXAMINATION: None required for initial licensure; however, in addition to satisfying the required 2 years/3000 hours of supervised clinical experience needed for LCSW licensure, LCSWA licensees must pass the ASWB Clinical level exam to be eligible for independent licensure as a LCSW.

EXPERIENCE: While no experience is required to receive this license, associate licensees must document their supervision and practice to the Board every 6 months as required by regulation. Acceptable experience must be post MSW paid clinical employment.

APPLICATION FEE: \$145

BIENNIAL RENEWAL: \$140 and documentation of 40 clock hours of CE (4 in ethics) every 2 years, but cannot exceed 6 years (2 renewal cycles).

Levels of Certification/Licensure Continued:

LEVEL H - CERTIFIED SOCIAL WORK MANAGER (CSWM)

EDUCATION: BSW, MSW, DSW, or PhD in Social Work from a CSWE accredited school.

EXAMINATION: ASWB **Advanced Generalist level** examination.

EXPERIENCE: Three thousand (3,000) hours of post degree paid employment accumulated in no less than two (2) years, no more than six (6) years.

SUPERVISION: Minimum of 100 hours of supervision on a regular basis, by a Social Work Administrator certified by the Board on at least one level and who has a minimum of five years administration experience in a Social Work or Mental Health setting. A maximum of fifty (50) hours may be through group supervision.

APPLICATION FEE: \$145

BIENNIAL RENEWAL: \$150 and documentation of 40 clock hours (4 in ethics) every 2 years.

NOTE: Educational requirements are based on a social work degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Applicants whose social work degree was obtained outside of the United States or its territories must contact CSWE at 1725 Duke Street | Suite 500 | Alexandria VA 22314-3457 to determine educational equivalency.



When and how to begin the application process? (con't...)

2. Complete the application and have your signature notarized.
3. Include 3 professional references (on Board forms) in sealed envelopes.
4. Obtain an official transcript from the Registrar. Transcript must sealed or sent electronically to ktabon@ncswboard.gov.
5. Include a certified bank check or money order for the appropriate application fee.
6. Submit a complete packet to the Board.
***If you would like confirmation of the Boards receipt of your packet, please include tracking at the post office.

Frequently Asked Questions



If I have a criminal background, can I still apply for licensure?

The NC General Statute 90B-11(a) provides that: "The Board may, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, refuse to grant or renew, may suspend or may revoke the certification/licensure of any person certified/licensed under this Chapter on the following grounds:

- 1) Conviction of a misdemeanor under this Chapter; or
- 2) Conviction of a felony under the laws of the United States or any state of the United States; or
- 3) Gross unprofessional conduct, dishonest practice, or incompetence in the practice of social work; or
- 4) Procuring or attempting to procure a certificate or license by fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation; or
- 5) Any fraudulent or dishonest conduct in social work; or
- 6) Inability of the person to perform the functions for which he or she is certified or licensed, or substantial impairments of abilities by reason of physical or mental disability; or
- 7) Violations of any of the provisions of this Chapter or Rules of the Board.

Applicants with prior criminal history should be prepared to submit with their application, a certified copy of court records related to any and all criminal history; **AND** a cover letter of explanation and impact of the/those events on the social worker both personally and professionally.

Is there a predetermination process if I am concerned my background will prevent me from obtaining licensure?

Pursuant to [G.S. 93B-8.1\(b\)](#), any person with a criminal history may petition the Board at any time for a predetermination of whether the individual's criminal history likely will disqualify the individual from obtaining a license, in accordance with this Rule. [Petition forms and instructions may be found on the Board's website.](#)



What about the Exam?

The North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board requires professional examination to evaluate the qualifications of each applicant, and utilizes the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) as their examining body.

Four (4) exam categories are used in North Carolina:

- Bachelor
- Master
- Clinical
- Advanced Generalist

Professional Examination

- To register for the exam or to purchase related materials (study guide or practice exam) the social worker MUST have approval from this Board first.
- Authorization to sit for the ASWB examination is good for ONE exam attempt.
- Exams are generally offered five days per week at several locations across the state. ASWB utilizes Pearson VUE Test Centers.



The Clinical Examination

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) has defined the intended purpose of the clinical examination as follows, and every candidate shall meet the following requirements prior to testing:

Clinical. This examination has been developed for use as a licensure requirement by Member Boards that issue to individuals who have an MSW and two years (or commensurate experience as defined by the jurisdiction) of experience in clinical settings, licenses for the practice of Clinical Social Work. The practice of Clinical Social Work requires the application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills.

-ASWB Policy Manual, Section 2, The Examinations

Clinical Examination cont.

- To register for the clinical exam, LCSWA's must document two years of clinical practice experience prior to being granted examination eligibility.
- Clinical practice experience can only be obtained after the issuance of the LCSWA license and under the ***appropriate supervision*** of a LCSW.
- Effective January 1, 2021, LCSWA's are no longer required to pass the clinical exam prior to renewing the license.

Clinical Examination Content Outline:

I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY AND BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT 24%

- HUMAN GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT
- HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
- DIVERSITY and DISCRIMINATION

II. ASSESSMENT, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PLANNING 30%

- BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL HISTORY and COLLATERAL DATA
- ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS
- TREATMENT PLANNING

III. PSYCHOTHERAPY, CLINICAL INTERVENTIONS AND CASE MANAGEMENT 27%

- THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP
- THE INTERVENTION PROCESS
- SERVICE DELIVERY and MANAGEMENT OF CASES
- CONSULTATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

IV. PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ETHICS 19%

- PROFESSIONAL VALUES and ETHICAL ISSUES
- CONFIDENTIALITY
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT and USE OF SELF

<https://www.aswb.org>

What is Clinical Social Work Practice?

Statute §90B-3. Definitions.

(6) Clinical Social Work Practice. – The professional application of social work theory and methods to the biopsychosocial diagnosis, treatment, or prevention, of emotional and mental disorders. Practice includes, by whatever means of communications, the treatment of individuals, couples, families, and groups, including the use of psychotherapy and referrals to and collaboration with other health professionals when appropriate. Clinical social work practice shall not include the provision of supportive daily living services to persons with severe and persistent mental illness as defined in G.S. 122C-3(33a).

What type of experience qualifies as clinical?

- (11) **Clinical Social Work Experience.** As it relates to the work experience required for LCSW licensure, two years of clinical social work experience in direct practice shall mean the professional application of master or doctoral social work theory, knowledge, methods, ethics, and the professional use of self to restore or enhance social, psychosocial, or biopsychosocial function. Clinical social work experience requires the application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills in the areas of assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of one or more of the following disorders or conditions: mental, emotional, addictive, behavioral, or developmental disorders and conditions. In addition, the clinical social work experience may also include clinical case management, information and referral, mediation, client education, clinical supervision and clinical consultation that is directly related to the treatment plan or personal care plan of a client/consumer.

What type of experience qualifies as clinical (con't)?

North Carolina Administrative Code .0102 DEFINITIONS

(12) **Diagnosis.** In the context of licensed clinical social work practice diagnosis is the process of distinguishing, beyond the general social work assessment, among one or more of the following: mental, emotional, addictive, behavioral, or developmental disorders and conditions; within a psychosocial framework on the basis of their similar and unique characteristics consistent with American Psychiatric Association or World Health Organization classification systems.

(18) **Treatment.** Clinical social work intervention, including individual, couples, family, or group psychotherapy, that is empirically grounded and used to help resolve symptoms of one or more of the following: mental, emotional, addictive, behavioral, or developmental disorders and conditions.
treatment plan or personal care plan of a client/consumer.

(10) **Clinical Case Management.** A comprehensive approach to care integrating an array of interventions; to include planning, implementation and management of care for clients with one or more of the following: mental, emotional, addictive, behavioral, or developmental disorders and conditions. Interventions by the clinical case manager shall involve face-to-face contact with the client on a regular basis, shall be grounded in clinical social work theory, and shall be guided by the client's treatment plan or personal care plan.

What is appropriate supervision?

See 21 NCAC 63 .0211

- Appropriate supervision shall mean supervision by a MSW who is also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and who is in good standing with the Board. The clinical social work supervisor shall have an additional two years of clinical social work experience post LCSW licensure.
- Appropriate supervision shall be that which is provided on a regular basis, conducted no less than once every two weeks, with at least one hour of supervision during every 30 hours of experience. A minimum of 100 hours of supervision is required.



If licensed by the Board, what would be my Professional & Ethical Responsibilities?

- Know the law.
- Know when your certification/license expires.
- Read material thoroughly.
- Update your contact information.
- Maintain professional competencies.
- Submit all materials to the Board on time and maintain a copy.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Protect client confidentiality.
- Know the law.



Apply

- Complete the application, include three professional references, official transcripts and the application fee.
- Once you have been issued an associate license, secure a clinical supervisor and submit the appropriate forms (employment verification, job description, emergency crisis plan and six month reviews).

Examine

- Upon completion and documentation of two years clinical practice, you may submit the examination request form and appropriate fee to receive exam eligibility.
- You must continue to practice under clinical supervision until you are issued the LCSW credential. The LCSW license will not be issued until you have met all the licensure requirements outlined in N.C.G.S. § 90B-7 and the Short Form Application has been submitted and approved by the Board.

Renew

- Biennial renewal is required prior to the expiration of the credential.
- Renewal requires a fee and documentation of continuing education.

Obtain and Maintain your Credential

References/Resources:

- Chapter 90B. Social Worker Certification and Licensure Act.
- North Carolina Administrative Code Title 21 Chapter 63.
- North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board Application.
- <https://www.aswb.org>
- <http://ncswboard.org>



Questions?