National Association of Social Workers
California Chapter

Title: How do I obtain a LCSW License in California?

Author: Lora Pierce, BSW, MS

Course Description

This course is designed to assist social workers in understanding the overall licensing process, i.e. the basic requirements and timeframes for obtaining a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) license in California. California’s licensing process has been described at lengthy, complex and demanding. According to statistics, over 50% of applicants drop out before completing the process. Consequently, this course recommends strategies to help applicants (a) avoid the most common pitfalls, (b) decrease frustration and delays, and (c) increase the likelihood of being successful. The content also includes a section for licensed social workers from other states who want to become licensed in California.

There is no single course that can address all of the questions related to licensing, especially since readers will have questions specific to their experience and circumstances. Anyone who undertakes the journey towards licensure will need to utilize all available resources, the majority of which are listed in this course.

This is not a LCSW Exam Prep course. For additional information, please visit the California Board of Behavioral Sciences website at www.bbs.ca.gov under ”Exams.”

Target Audience

This course targets social workers who hold (or will hold) a MSW from an accredited school of social work and one of the following categories:

1. Are considering pursuing a license OR are ready to begin the process.
2. Have registered as an Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW) within the last twelve months.

3. Hold a valid social work license from another state and want to become licensed in California.

**Learning Objectives**

The content of this course was designed to give readers a better understanding of:

1. The role and functions of the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) and how it can support the applicant throughout the process.

2. The overall process, basic steps, and common timeframes for obtaining a California LCSW license.

3. The specific requirements as detailed in the California *BBS Statutes and Regulations* and the related forms, deadlines, and fees.

4. The most common mistakes made by applicants moving through the licensing process and recommendations for avoiding them.

5. The resources that can assist applicants throughout the process.

**Instructor Biography**

Lora Pierce, BSW, MS, served as the Director of Professional Development NASW-CA from 1998-2007 and then moved into the position of Director of Membership, Communications, and Online Professional Development. Over the years, she’s spoken to thousands of social workers from California and across the nation regarding the LCSW licensing process. Lora works closely with the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) and other organizations to develop strategies and resources to assist those in the licensing process.
Course Outline

Pre-Test Questions and Answers

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: The California Licensing Board

Section 3: Basic Steps to a California LCSW (for MSWs)

Step 1 Register as an ASW with the Board
Step 2 Find work setting and qualified supervisor
Step 3 Obtain required 3200 hours of work experience
Step 4 Obtain required pre-licensure coursework
Step 5 Create a six-month study plan for passing exams
Step 6 File the LCSW License Application Packet
Step 7 Sit for and pass Standard Written Exam
Step 8 Sit for and pass Written Clinical Vignette Exam
Step 9 Sit for an exam once a year until licensed
Step 10 Work under a qualified professional until obtaining LCSW

Section 4: Steps for Licensed Social Workers from Out-of-State

Step 1 Register as an ASW with the Board (See requirements)
Step 2 Obtain required pre-licensure coursework
Step 3 Create a six-month study plan for passing exams
Step 4 File the LCSW License Application Packet
Step 5 Sit for and pass Standard Written Exam
Step 6 Sit for and pass Written Clinical Vignette Exam
Step 7 Sit for an exam once a year until licensed
Step 8 Work under a qualified professional until obtaining LCSW

Section 5: The Most Common Mistakes

Section 6: A Summary of the Key Timeframes

Section 7: Important Resources

Post-Test Questions and Answers
Pre-Test Questions

This pre-test is composed of five (5) true or false questions. The purpose of this pre-test is to introduce the reader a few of the major themes.

1. The social work licensing requirements vary greatly from state to state.

   True or False

2. An applicant can begin obtaining the required clinical supervision hours prior to registering as an Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW) with California’s regulatory agency, the Board of Behavior Sciences (BBS).

   True or False

3. The *Supervisory Plan*, a form required by the BBS, must be submitted before the ASW can begin obtaining the required supervised hours.

   True or False

4. According to experts, the best way to prepare for the two LCSW examinations is to begin studying six to nine (6-9) weeks prior to the first exam.

   True or False

5. It is ultimately the responsibility of the supervisor, not the ASW, to know about the BBS statutes, regulations, and guidelines governing clinical supervision hours.

   True or False
Pre-Test Answers

1. **True.** The requirements for a social work licensure vary greatly from state to state.

2. **False.** Clinical supervision and work experience hours only count after the applicant registers with the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) and receives an Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW) registration number.

3. **False.** After associates have met all of the requirements (3200 hours, coursework, etc), they will submit the *Supervisory Plan* form with the LCSW License Application Packet.

4. **False.** The best way to prepare for the two licensing exams is to consider the entire process (work experience, clinical supervision, coursework, etc.) as important to passing the exams. Experts agree that implementing a study plan four to six (4-6) months prior to the first test date is the best strategy.

5. **False.** Ultimately, each ASW has the responsibility to understand and ensure that the supervision and work experience meet the BBS requirements. If there is a problem with the hours gained, the Board will not impose sanctions on the supervisor; however, the ASW could lose hours.
Section 1: Introduction

A. The Purpose of the Overview

As mentioned in the course description, the primary purpose of this course is to assist social workers in determining if they wish to become licensed and, once that decision is made, to give them sufficient information, strategies, and resources to be successful in obtaining a California license. By creating an online course, it is hoped that social worker students and professionals throughout California will make more informed decisions and create more viable plans for obtaining a LCSW.

Readers can also find helpful information and resources on the NASW-CA website at www.naswca.org where there is a whole sections dedicated to licensing, career, and professional development.

B. Employment as a Social Worker in California

In California, individuals with a BSW or MSW degree can be employed as social workers without holding a state license or certification. However, to perform psychotherapy in California, the social worker must have a MSW from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited school of social work and obtain a valid California Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) license. Although many other states have several levels of social work certification and licensure, there is only one social work license available in California and that is the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) license.

C. California’s LCSW Shortage

As many readers may know, there is a shortage of LCSWs in California. There are many opinions as to why this shortage exits; however, most will agree that the process to become a LCSW in California is demanding, complex, and lengthy. It is the goal of NASW-CA that more social workers become LCSWs (especially those who are bilingual or of color). For this reason, the Chapter has worked hard to assist members and non-members alike to better understand and meet the licensure requirements.
D. California’s LCSW Statistics

The following statistics were taken from the BBS website in 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Clinical Social Workers</td>
<td>17,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Clinical Social Workers</td>
<td>8,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Family Therapists</td>
<td>30,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Family Therapy Interns</td>
<td>12,502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is important to point out that it is estimated that only 50% of those who enter the LCSW licensing process actually go on to become licensed. Clearly, this means that approximately 50% of applicants are unsuccessful. The reasons for dropping out of the process vary greatly but may include illness, pregnancies, unemployment, moving to another state, exceeding time requirements, not meeting specific requirements, failing to sit for at least one exam every year, or being unable to pass the exams.

The most common mistake applicants make is failing to fully understand the regulations, requirements, and timeframes prior to starting the process. This content is dedicated to helping social workers overcome this and other common pitfalls.

E. Benefits to Having a LCSW

While becoming a LCSW isn’t easy, those who have been successful, indicate that the hard work, time, and financial commitment are worth it. Given the shortage of LCSWs, having a license will create many more employment opportunities. Another clear advantage is a LCSW license generally earns more money than a Master’s degree.

F. The Decision to Become a LCSW

The decision to pursue a LCSW is a very personal choice and one that requires research and thought. NASW-CA encourages those who are in a MSW program, or who already have a MSW, to explore the licensing process and their career goals prior to making the decision to register with the Board as an Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW).
In deciding on career goals and/or pursuing a LCSW license, readers are encouraged to converse with licensed and non-licensed social workers and ask for recommendations. Also, to research jobs to gain a better sense of the employment opportunities for LCSWs as opposed to non-licensed social workers. For example, readers may wish to investigate private practice, since it is a popular reason for becoming licensed, or they may have an interest in the healthcare industry, which is always in need of licensed social workers.

It is important to note that the results of this type of research will vary from state to state. Consequently, it is best to research the state in which the reader wishes to practice. A few website that can help with research include:

NASW-California Career Center
http://www.naswca.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=3

NASW National Career Center
http://careers.socialworkers.org/

NASW Social Work Portal
http://www.socialworkportal.org

NASW Help Starts Here
http://www.helpstartshere.org

California Labor Market Information
http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/?pageid=3

www.monster.com
www.careerbuilder.com
www.indeed.com
http://www.friedsocialworker.com/CareerResources/socialworkjobs.htm
Section 2: The California Licensing Board

A. The Mission and Functions of the Licensing Board

The Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) is responsible for consumer protection through the regulation of Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT); Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW); Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEP); MFT Interns (IMF); and Associate Clinical Social Workers (ASW) in the State of California.

The function of the BBS is to protect the well-being of Californians by setting standards for mental health professionals through effective communication, education, examination, licensing, and enforcement. The Board adopted the following mission statement: “Protect Californians by promoting consumer awareness, advocating for improved mental health services, and setting, communicating, and enforcing standards.”

As the regulatory and licensing body, the Board issues the yearly document titled “Statutes and Regulations Relating to the Practice of: Marriage and Family Therapy, Educational Psychology, and Clinical Social Work.” On the Board’s website, this document is referred to as the BBS Statutes and Regulations. Chapter 14 is specific to clinical social work.

**Important Notation**
The BBS Statutes and Regulations are updated and revised once a year. It would be advisable to review Chapter 14 periodically at [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “Miscellaneous.”

B. The Board’s Contact Information

Physical Address: California State Board of Behavioral Sciences
1625 N. Market Blvd., Suite S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834
Phone Directory:       Main Phone Number: 916-574-7830
                     ASW/LCSW Evaluator  916-574-7851 or 7852
                     Testing Accommodations 916-574-7860
                     Outreach Coordinator 916-574-7863

Website:              www.bbs.ca.gov
E-mail:               BBSWebMaster@bbs.ca.gov

When e-mailing the Board, it is imperative that the message is addressed to a specific person or ASW/LCSW Evaluator in the “subject” line.

C. The Board’s Website Subscriber Tool

A feature that has been helpful to both ASWs and LCSWs is the “subscriber list.” The Board uses this subscriber service to notify those interested in receiving e-mail alerts about major updates and changes. This is a free service and is by far the easiest way to stay up-to-date and informed about licensing regulations and requirements. To register, simply sign up on the BBS website at www.bbs.ca.gov under “Subscriber List” in left-hand column.

D. The Board: Friend or Foe?

Some who enter the licensing process come to view the Board as less of a friend and more of a foe. However, this perspective doesn’t aid the applicant in her pursuit of a license. The better approach is to view the Board’s primary functions, which are enforcing statutes and regulations and protecting the public, as positive and necessary.

It is important that anyone pursuing a license realize that he must be pro-active in this process and take full responsibility for knowing, understanding, and meeting the requirements. The Board, as a state agency, is part of a larger system that is guided by California law and, as such, its actions are neutral and impersonal. For example, if an applicant neglects to meet a deadline, it doesn’t do any good to argue the issue. The deadline and timeframes are part of a legal statute and the Board’s staff members are unable to make exceptions regardless of the circumstances.

As is true of many lengthy processes, it is advisable for the applicant to keep a log of communication with the Board. For example, if the
reader calls the Board with a specific question, it is advisable to speak directly to an ASW/LCSW Analyst. At the end of each phone conversation, write a note detailing the date and name of the person who provided the answer. If using email, it is advisable to print and file responses.

**E. Important Licensing Acronyms**

California Board Designation: *Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW)*

The BBS uses the term “Associate Clinical Social Worker” to refer to those who are registered and working towards meeting the state’s LCSW license requirements. In reading information and documents, applicants will note that the Board uses the acronym “ASW” to refer to an Associate Clinical Social Worker; however, at times, it may also use the acronym “ACSW.” The regulations may also refer to the ASW as an “Associate.”

NASW Credential: Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW)

The Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW) was established in 1960 and remains the most widely recognized and respected social work credential. While NASW professional credentials and specialty certifications provide recognition to social workers having met national standards for higher levels of experience and knowledge, they are **NOT** a substitute for required state licenses. For information regarding this and other NASW credentials, please e-mail credentialing@naswdc.org.

**Designation Clarification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW or ACSW)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A designation specific to the California LCSW licensing process.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Academy of Certified Social Worker (ACSW)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A professional credential through the NASW national office.</td>
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</table>
Section 3: Basic Steps to a CA LCSW for MSWs

The information in the box below lists the ten basic steps for those with Master’s degrees from accredited schools of social work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ten Basic Steps to Becoming a LCSW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degrees from CSWE Accredited Schools of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1  Register as an ASW with the Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2  Find an appropriate work setting and qualified supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3  Obtain the required 3200 hours of work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4  Obtain all of the required pre-licensure coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5  Create a six (6) month study plan for passing exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6  File the LCSW License Application Packet</td>
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<td>Step 9  Sit for an exam at least once a year until licensed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 10 Work under a qualified professional until obtaining LCSW</td>
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</tbody>
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BBS Overview

The BBS also provides an overview of the licensing process titled “Navigating the LCSW License Process” on its website at [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/app-reg/lcs_presentation.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/app-reg/lcs_presentation.shtml).

Recommendation

Once the social worker has made the decision to begin the licensing process, it is recommended that they create and maintain a file for all related information, forms, resources, etc. Having one location where all of this information is kept and regularly updated will assist the applicant in avoiding some of the most common applicant pitfalls.
Step 1 - Register as an ASW with the Board

A. The Fundamental Requirements

To register with the BBS as an ASW, the applicant must meet two requirements:

1. Possess a Master’s degree from an CSWE accredited school or department of social work, and

2. Not have committed any crimes or acts constituting grounds for denial of licensure under Section 480.

B. International Degrees

Those with Master’s degrees in social work from outside of the United States may contact the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to determine if the degree meets California requirements. Visit the CSWE website and look for the International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service at www.cswe.org.

C. The ASW Registration Application Packet

Download the ASW Registration Application Packet

Because the Board regularly revises all of the applications and forms, it is important to download the form when ready to complete it. To download the application packet, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml under “Application Packages.”

Important Reminders

- To ensure that it will have the qualifying degree posted on it, check with the school prior to ordering the official transcript.

- Remember to answer the questions about criminal history and disciplinary action.

- Complete the fingerprinting process as close as possible to the day the application will be mailed to the Board.
Correcting Deficiencies

If the application is rejected because it is not complete, all deficiencies must be corrected within one year of notification; otherwise, the Board abandons the file.

ASW Registration

The complete ASW Application Package shall include the following:

- The one-page application
- The application fee
- A passport photo
- A copy of official transcripts in the school’s sealed envelope (make sure the school indicated the degree conferral date)
- A completed Live Scan (fingerprints) sheet (applicant retains one copy for personal records)

D. Registration Confirmation

Once the application is received, the Board has up to sixty-days to make a determination as to the applicant’s eligibility. However, the applicant generally receives a confirmation or rejection letter through the mail within thirty to forty-five (30-45) days. If eligible, the confirmation letter will provide an ASW registration number, which allows the applicant to begin obtaining work experience hours.

E. Renewal Information

The ASW registration must be renewed annually. The expiration date appears on the original registration document. Renewing on time is critical, so renew early. Approximately 120-days in advance of a registrant’s expiration date, the Board will mail a courtesy renewal reminder to the registrant’s address of record.
F. Notifying the Board of Name or Address Changes

Address changes must be reported to the Board, in writing, within thirty (30) days of the change. It is critical that the Board have a current address on record. For Change of Address or Name Forms, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml under “Renewal and Fee Documents.”

G. ASW Registration Six (6) Year Limitation

Associates may retain the ASW status for a total of six (6) years. For details, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/licensees/renewal_registrant.shtml.

H. Convictions and Registration

If an applicant wants to apply as an ASW but has been convicted of a misdemeanor or has questions regarding the criminal convictions regulation, e-mail naswca@naswca.org.
Step 2 - Find work setting and qualified clinical supervisor

A. Clinical Social Work and Psychotherapy Defined

“The practice of clinical social work is defined as a service in which a special knowledge of social resources, human capabilities, and the part of unconscious motivation plays in determining behavior, is directed at helping people to achieve more adequate, satisfying, and productive social adjustments. The application of social work principles and methods includes, but is not restricted to, counseling and using applied psychotherapy of a non-medical nature with individuals, families, or groups; providing information and referral services; providing or arranging for the provision of social services; explaining or interpreting the psychosocial aspects in the situation of individuals, families, or groups; helping communities to organize, to provide, or to improve social or health services; or doing research related to social work.

Psychotherapy, within the meaning of the this chapter (Chapter 14) is the use of psychosocial methods within a professional relationship, to assist the person or persons to achieve a better psychosocial adaptation, to acquire greater human realization of psychosocial potential and adaptation, to modify internal and external conditions which affect individuals, groups, or communities in respect to behavior, emotions, and thinking, in respect to their intrapersonal and interpersonal processes.”

To view the BBS Statutes and Regulations, Chapter 14, Section 4996.9, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml under “Miscellaneous.”

B. Work Setting Requirements

(f) (1) Experience shall only be gained in a setting that meets both of the following:

(A) Lawfully and regularly provides clinical social work, mental health counseling, or psychotherapy.

(B) Provides oversight to ensure the associates work, at the setting meets the experience and supervision requirements set for in this chapter and is within the scope of practice for the
professional as defined by Section 4996.9 (the paragraph above).

Copied from the BBS website.

C. Private Practice Setting

A private practice setting is a setting that is owned by a licensed clinical social worker, a licensed marriage family therapist, a licensed psychologist, a licensed physician or surgeon, or a professional corporation of any of those licensed professionals.

D. Volunteer Setting

If all other requirements are met, the Board does accept work settings where the registrant is a volunteer. In this case, the Board requires a letter from the associate’s employer verifying her voluntary status to be submitted with the LCSW License Application Packet.

E. Work Setting Restrictions

Associates shall not:

1. Receive any remuneration from patients or clients and shall only be paid by the employer.

2. Have any proprietary interest in the employer’s business.

3. Be paid as an independent contractor using a 1099 form.
   (Associates are to be paid as an employee (W-2 form) or be a volunteer.)

F. Evaluating Work Settings

All work settings are not created equal. Settings vary greatly in terms of providing sufficient clinical experience required to obtain the hours in a reasonable timeframe along with the expertise and confidence to pass the LCSW exams.

Therefore, it is very important that readers carefully evaluate potential work settings to ensure that they will be able to obtain a minimum of 2,000 hours in clinical psychosocial diagnosis, assessment, and
treatment, including psychotherapy or counseling and a maximum of 1,200 hours in client-centered advocacy, consultation, evaluation, and research within a two to three (2-3) year timeframe. For specific questions regarding potential work setting, e-mail naswca@naswca.org.

**G. Who Can Provide Supervision?**

“Only licensed mental health professionals may supervise associates, and this includes Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Licensed Family Marriage Therapists (MFTs), Licensed Clinical Psychologists, and licensed physicians certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Additionally, the supervisor must maintain a current valid California license. If the supervisor is a LCSW or MFT, the supervisor must complete a one-time fifteen (15) hour course in supervision. Licensed Clinical Psychologists and physicians certified in psychiatry do not need to take the supervision course. The supervisor also must have practiced psychotherapy at least two (2) of the last five (5) years.

*If the supervisor is a MFT, Clinical Psychologist, or licensed physician certified in psychiatry, he or she must wait two (2) years after receiving a license before supervising an ASW.*

Copied from the BBS website.

**H. Requirements for ASW Supervisors**

The reader is encouraged to read Article 6, Section 1870 of the *BBS Statutes and Regulations* for a detailed list of requirements for ASW supervisors. It is important that the selected supervisor be familiar with these guidelines. To view the *BBS Statutes and Regulations*, Article 6, Section 1870, visit [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “Miscellaneous.”

**I. The Fifteen Hour Clinical Supervision Class**

All supervisors of ASWs must complete a 15-hour clinical supervision class prior to providing supervision. The Board has listed specific requirements for this clinical supervision course, and it must be taken through a BBS-approved continuing education provider.
The NASW-CA Chapter is a BBS-approved provider and offers this required clinical supervision course through several of its educational programs including online classes and monthly CE Fairs. For details, visit www.naswca.org under “Professional Development.”

J. Obtaining Supervision

There is no single agency or organization in California that provides a list of potential supervisors. It is the responsibility of each ASW to find an appropriate and capable supervisor. Most often, it is to the advantage of the ASW to look for a work setting where the employer provides supervision.

However, if the work setting doesn’t provide a supervisor who meets the BBS requirements, it is the responsibility of the ASW to find and contract with a supervisor. This can mean paying for supervision. The fee paid is often the same fee that clients are charged, which can vary widely depending on the geographic location and the supervisor’s expertise and years of experience.

Contracting an Outside Supervisor

If the ASW obtains supervision from someone not employed in the same agency, the Board requires that the contracted supervisor sign a written agreement assuming legal responsibility for the associate’s work. The Board has sample templates of this written agreement available upon request. The licensed professional contracted to provide supervision cannot serve in the role as a consultant to the agency.

K. Suggestions for Finding a Supervisor

NASW-CA offers the following suggestions for finding a supervisor if one isn’t provided through employment or volunteer work setting.

1. Network through NASW-CA Chapter events. Because California is so large, it is divided into nine (9) geographic regions and each region is divided into smaller units so that social workers can participate in local events. Please visit the chapter’s website for information regarding upcoming events at www.naswca.org under “Networking.”
2. Read the NASW-CA News, which features networking events, licensure classes, and classified ads for those who provide clinical supervision and/or exam preparation. Visit www.naswca.org under “Newsletter.”

3. Contact local social work staffing agencies to inquire about supervision.

L. A Guide to Supervision for ASWs

Step 3 - Obtain required 3200 hours of work experience

The licensing regulations are specific to when the individual registers as an ASW with the BBS. For those who registered after January 1, 2002, the following section details the specific requirements related to the 3200 hours of work experience and clinical supervision. This information was copied directly from the *BBS Statutes and Regulations*.

**Registration On or After January 1, 2002**

**Section 4996.23 Supervised Post-Master’s Experience Criteria**

Effective January 1, 2002.

The experience required by subdivision (c) of Section 4996.2 shall meet the following criteria:

(a) All persons registered with the Board on and after January 1, 2002, shall have at least 3,200 hours of post-master's degree supervised experience providing clinical social work services as permitted by Section 4996.9. At least 1,700 hours shall be gained under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker. The remaining required supervised experience may be gained under the supervision of a licensed mental health professional acceptable to the Board as defined by a regulation adopted by the Board. This experience shall consist of the following:

1. A minimum of 2,000 hours in clinical psychosocial diagnosis, assessment, and treatment, including psychotherapy or counseling.

2. A maximum of 1,200 hours in client-centered advocacy, consultation, evaluation, and research.

3. Of the 2,000 clinical hours required in paragraph (1), no less than 750 hours shall be face-to-face individual or group psychotherapy provided to clients in the context of clinical social work services.

4. A minimum of two years of supervised experience is required to be obtained over a period of not less than 104 weeks and shall have been gained within the six years immediately preceding the date on which the application for licensure was filed.
(5) Experience shall not be credited for more than 40 hours in any week.

(b) "Supervision" means responsibility for, and control of, the quality of clinical social work services being provided. Consultation or peer discussion shall not be considered to be supervision.

(c) (1) Prior to the commencement of supervision, a supervisor shall comply with all requirements enumerated in Section 1870 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations and shall sign under penalty of perjury the "Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of an Associate Clinical Social Worker" form.

(2) Supervised experience shall include at least one hour of direct supervisor contact for a minimum of 104 weeks. In addition, an associate shall receive an average of at least one hour of direct supervisor contact for every week in which more than 10 hours of face-to-face psychotherapy is performed in each setting experience is gained. No more than five hours of supervision, whether individual or group, shall be credited during any single week.

Of the 104 weeks of required supervision, 52 weeks shall be individual supervision, and of the 52 weeks of required individual supervision, not less than 13 weeks shall be supervised by a licensed clinical social worker. For purposes of this section, "one hour of direct supervisor contact," means one hour of face-to-face contact on an individual basis or two hours of face-to-face contact in a group of not more than eight persons receiving supervision.

(d) The supervisor and the associate shall develop a supervisory plan that describes the goals and objectives of supervision. These goals shall include the ongoing assessment of strengths and limitations and the assurance of practice in accordance with the laws and regulations. The associate shall submit to the Board the initial original supervisory plan upon application for licensure.

A. Frequently Asked Questions

Readers are encouraged to read the brochure titled “Answers to Most Frequently Asked Questions Relating to Associate Clinical Social Workers” at http://www.bbs.ca.gov/quick_links/faq.shtml.
B. ASW Supervision Forms

These forms should be downloaded from the Board’s website just prior to use at [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “Application Packages.” The first three forms must be submitted to the Board with the LCSW application. The fourth document is used to assist the ASW in tracking their work experience and is not submitted to the Board.

1. Supervisory Plan
2. LCSW Supervisor Responsibility Statement
3. Clinical Social Worker Experience Verification
4. ASW Weekly Tracking Log (Do not submit weekly logs to the Board)

About Signatures

The Board requires original signatures on all of the required supervision forms (the first listed above) on the original forms. The Board will not accept photocopies of these forms.

C. Vignettes about Supervision

# 1 - More Than One Supervisor

Initially, Sally found a MFT to provide supervision hours and, under this MFT, she has gained over 1500 hours. Based on the requirement that all Associates obtain a minimum of 1700 from a LCSW, Sally must now find a LCSW to supervise her.

Q. Do Sally and her new LCSW supervisor have to fill out a new Supervisory Plan form?

A. Yes. With each supervisor, the Associate and the supervisor must complete the Supervisory Plan. The original Supervisory Plan form (or forms if more than one supervisor) and original signatures must be submitted to the Board with the LCSW License Application Packet. Photocopies are not accepted.

Q. Does the new supervisor have to complete any other forms?
A. Yes. Each supervisor who will be verifying hours or supervised experience must complete the three supervisory forms, i.e., *Supervisory Plan, Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of an ASW*, and *Clinical Social Work Experience Verification*.

# 2 - The Breakdown of the 3200 Hours

While Jim has over 2,600 hours of clinical psychosocial, diagnosis, assessment, and treatment and over 750 hours of face-to-face psychotherapy or counseling, he has only gained 400 hours related to client-centered advocacy, consultation, evaluation, and research.

Q. Does Jim have to have 1,200 hours in client-centered advocacy, consultation evaluation, and research to meet the 3200-hour requirement?

A. No. The requirement is a minimum of 2,000 hours in clinical psychosocial, diagnosis, assessment, and treatment and a maximum of 1,200 hours client-centered advocacy, consultation evaluation, and research.

# 3 – The Two (2) Years or 104-Week Requirement

Kelly wants to obtain his license as quickly as possible because his employer is changing its policy and will require all employees to have a LCSW license within the next three years.

Q. Can Kelly gain the required supervised experience in less than two calendar years?

A. No. All applicants must have a minimum of two years or 104 weeks of supervised experience. If an applicant claims 104 supervised weeks on the Clinical Social Work Experience Verification form, he or she must claim sufficient supervision to cover all 104 weeks.

# 4 – Meeting the Regulations

Janis registered with the Board as an ASW on January 3, 2003. She has a colleague that registered with the Board as an ASW on July 29, 2001. Janis’s supervisor insists that the requirements for clinical hours are the same for both Janis and her colleague.

Q. Are the requirements the same for both of these ASWs?
A. No. As indicated in the first paragraph of Section 5 of this content, the regulations and requirements depend on when the applicant registers as an ASW with the Board. It is quite feasible that a supervisor may provide supervision to several Associates at one time and, thus, may have to work with different requirements, depending on when these individuals registered with the Board.

D. BBS Breakdown of Required Experience

For a chart that breaks down the Required Experience, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/forms/lcs/lcs_exp_chart.pdf.
Step 4 - Obtain the required pre-licensure coursework

A. Required Pre-license Coursework

All applicants are required to obtain the specific coursework and to submit the original copy of the certificate of completion (or graduate transcript) with the LCSW application. Please note that all of the coursework must meet the Board’s specific requirements and stipulations, all of which are listed below and vary depending on several factors.

1. Alcoholism and Other Chemical Substance Dependency
   15 Hours
   Obtained from an educational institution or extension course offered by an institution that is accredited or approved.

2. Human Sexuality
   10 Hours
   Obtained from an accredited or approved educational institution or an extension course, from an approved continuing education provider, a professional association, or from a state, county, or local department of health services or department of mental health.

3. Child Abuse
   7 Hours - Class must be specific to California Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting laws, regulations, and procedures. Obtained from a WASC accredited or approved educational institution or an extension course, from a professional association, or from a local, county, state, or federal governmental entity, or licensed health facility. Those working for County Child Welfare agencies do not have to take a course outside of the extensive training provided by the county.

4. Aging and Long-Term Care
   10 Hours
   Obtained from an education institution as part of the degree program or in a separate course. The BBS will accept a certificate from the chief academic officer of the educational institution indicating that this coursework was part of the Master’s program curriculum.
5. Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection, and Intervention

Hours: 15 Hours
Associates who began their MSW program on or after January 1, 2004, must complete a minimum of fifteen (15) hours. The BBS will accept a certificate from the chief academic officer of the educational institution indicating this coursework was part of the Master’s program curriculum.

B. The Timing of Coursework

As indicated previously, all coursework, along with the 3200 hours of work experience and clinical supervision, must be completed prior to filing a LCSW application. While the BBS Statutes and Regulations only allow applicants to accumulate hours towards licensing once they are formally registered an ASW, the coursework can be completed at any time prior to submitting the LCSW application.

For example, courses can be taken during a Master program or after graduating. The applicant can take courses prior to registering as an ASW or while they are accumulating the 3200 hours. The six-year rule doesn't apply to the coursework. Specific recommendations are given below:

MSW Students

If a student has any interest in becoming licensed, the best approach is to take as much coursework as possible while in a Master’s program. For example, NASW-CA offers volunteer options at its annual conference where students are able to attend the required pre-license courses. For more information, e-mail tbruyeva@naswca.org.

Associates

While the coursework can be done at any time once the person has begun a MSW program, many applicants wait until they have registered with the Board as an associate before obtaining the coursework.
C. Online Classes

The Board allows applicants to obtain all of the required coursework through online courses as long as the training (a) meets the specific requirements outlined in the statutes and regulations, (b) is offered through an approved provider, and (c) the participant receives a certificate of completion.

D. Finding Approved Providers

Entities that are approved by the Board must include a BBS Approved Provider Number in their marketing information. If there is any question regarding whether the class meets the BBS requirements, call the organization offering the class prior to attending. Unfortunately, associates have wasted both time and money by attending classes that weren’t BBS approved.

E. Creating a Flexible Plan

Once the applicant has an ASW registration number, it is advisable to create a plan for completing all of the coursework. Depending on the type of course (online or in-person), geographic location, registration fees, etc., the coursework can take from four to twelve (3-12) months to complete.

It is advisable to obtain the necessary coursework prior to completing the 3200 hours. Many ASWs have completed everything but their coursework and had to wait an additional 3-6 months before submitting the LCSW License Application Packet.

F. Keep Original Certificates

When filing the LCSW Application Packet, the BBS requires applicants to submit the original copies of the certificates of completion for all coursework. This is true unless proof of the requirement is met with a graduate-level transcript. It is important that applicants keep certificates in a safe place, as it can be difficult (sometimes impossible) and expensive to replace original copies.
Step 5 - Create a 6-month study plan for passing exams

A. Creating a Study Plan

It is strongly suggested by experts that applicants begin preparing for the LCSW exams six-months in advance. This means creating a plan and studying for the first exam prior to completing the work experience and submitting the LCSW License Application Packet.

It is important to keep in mind that once the LCSW License Application Packet is received, the Board has (60-120 days to determine eligibility. Once the associate is deemed eligible, she must make a reservation to sit for the Standard Written Exam a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the preferred testing date. If the Board takes 90-days to deem the applicant eligible and the associate makes the reservations with the testing site 30- days in advance of the testing date, the time period -- from filing the LCSW license application to sitting for the exam -- could be 4-months or more.

Experts suggest that associates start with an objective assessment of their clinical strengths and weaknesses. The goal of this process is to better understand where applicants should focus their efforts and time. There are many strategies for studying for these examinations and, determining which of these strategies to utilize, will require the ASW know his preferred learning style.

B. Selecting Study Materials

“Let the Buyer Beware” applies to those looking to purchase exam prep materials or classes. It is advisable to shop carefully while keeping several specific goals in mind. A few recommendations include: doing research; preparing specific questions to ask potential providers; and listing the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Keep in mind that while some applicants have found courses, materials, and tutoring helpful, there is no exam prep strategy that will compensate for insufficient clinical experience or expertise.
Step 6 - File the LCSW License Application Packet

A. LCSW License Application Packet

At this point, the associate has completed all of the required work experience and clinical supervision hours, the required coursework, and has begun to implement a study plan. He is ready to file the LCSW License Application Packet and, if approved, will become eligible to take the first of the two timed, computerized examinations. The BBS has 60-120 days to process this application. To download the LCSW Application Packet, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml (under “Application Packages”).

B. Avoid the Most Common Error

The Board reports that the most common error made in completing the LCSW application is failing to follow the instructions, i.e., not filling in all required information or providing the necessary documentation, etc. If the application is incomplete, the application will be returned and must be re-submitted, which delays sitting for the first exam.

C. Suggestions

When the associate is assured that the application is complete, it is wise to: (1) Make a copy of the entire application packet and store it in a safe place; AND (2) Place the application, fee, and original supervision forms, other required documents, and certificates of completion in one envelope and mail it using “Certified Mail.” By doing this, the applicant will have a receipt with the date the BBS received the packet.

D. Eligibility Confirmation

The Board has 60-120 days to review the application. The average length of time it takes to process the application is 60-90 days. The Board will mail a letter to applicants confirming their eligibility to sit for the first examination or indicating the applicant isn’t eligible. If the applicant is deemed ineligible, the letter delineates the specific requirements that must be met before the person can reapply.
Step 7 - Sit for and pass for the Standard Written Exam

A. The LCSW Standard Written Exam Application

Once deemed eligible by the Board, the applicants receive a letter confirming their eligibility and providing instructions for making a reservation to sit for the first examination. As mentioned previously, both exams are timed and computerized.

A fee must be paid each time applicants apply to take an exam whether it is their first or fourth time taking the exam. To download the LCSW Request for Examination/Re-Exam Application, visit [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “Registrant and Exam Materials.”

Psychological Services (PSI) administers the Board's licensure examinations and has testing centers located throughout the state offering testing 5-6 days a week. Applicants must refer to the candidate handbook (website listed below) for the exact locations of testing centers and other information.

The Board states that candidates should not attempt to schedule a reservation to sit for either exam until receiving eligibility confirmation. The Board suggests making a reservation either by calling PSI or submitting an online form at least thirty (30) days prior to the preferred testing dates. Read the Standard Written Examination Candidate Handbook for complete details and instructions.

B. BBS Exam Information and Handbook

The BBS provides a specific exam handbook that candidates should read prior to creating a study plan or submitting the LCSW License Application. For the Standard Written Examination Candidate Handbook, visit [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “LCSW / ASW.”

C. Testing Accommodations

The Board and PSI will provide fair and reasonable test accommodations to applicants who substantiate a need due to physical or mental disability or qualified medical condition. Those whose primary language is not English may also request special
accommodation. However, applicants who are seeking special accommodations must apply early and allow the Board at least 60-days to process the request.

For forms, visit [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) under “Examination Information.”

**D. Critical Exam Stipulations**

1. Once candidates have been deemed eligible, they must take the test within one year of the stated eligibility date.

2. If candidates takes and fails the exam, they must retake it no later than one year from the date of failure.

3. After failing the exam, the candidates must wait a minimum of 160-days (from the date of failure) before they can be approved to retake it.

4. Each time the exam is retaken, candidates must submit an application and fee, which can take up to 60-days to process.

**E. Notification of Exam Results**

Once the exam is completed, candidates will receive their results at the test site. If the candidate fails the exam, she will receive a re-examination application the same day.

**F. Standard Exam Pass Rates (Statistics)**

To better understand the challenge the examinations present, it is important to view the current exam pass rates at [www.bbs.ca.gov/exams/exam_stats.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/exams/exam_stats.shtml).

**G. California Exams are State Specific**

What many social workers do not understand is that each state varies greatly in their social work licensing requirements. Some states offer social work certificates and several levels of licenses. It can be difficult to understand just how different each state’s licensing is until having to move to another state. One commonality among all other 49 states is that they accept results from the clinical level Association of Social
Work Boards (ASWB) Exam. However, the two LCSW examinations utilized in California are specific to this state and no other exam is accepted, including results from the clinical level ASWB exam.

H. Considerations in Moving to Another State

If the reader is considering moving to another state, it is important to research that state’s requirements as early as possible and prior to moving. This can be done by visiting the American Social Work Board’s (ASWB) website and viewing the “Social Work Laws & Regulations Online Comparison Guide” at http://www.aswb.org/ under SW Licensing – Laws and Regulations.

This guide is a database that “contains the basic elements of social work regulation in the 50 U.S. states, 10 Canadian provinces, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Tables available include information on board structure, levels of practice, minimum requirements for licensure, exemptions, supervisory qualifications, reciprocity and endorsement, continuing education, privileged communication, practice definitions and other elements.”
Step 8 - Sit for and pass Written Clinical Vignette Exam

A. The LCSW Written Clinical Vignette Exam Application

Once applicants have successfully passed the Standard Written Exam, they will need to submit an application to apply for the Written Clinical Vignette Exam. This application can be obtained at the test site center (only after passing the Standard Written Exam) or by visiting the PSI website (this address is listed in both exam handbooks).

To download the LCSW Request for Examination/Re-Exam Application, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml.

To download the Written Clinical Vignette Examination Candidate Handbook, visit http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml.

B. Notification of Exam Results

Once the exam is completed, candidates receive their results at the test site. If the candidate fails the exam, he will receive a re-examination application the same day.

C. Clinical Vignette Exam Pass Rates (Statistics)

To better understand the challenge the examinations present, it is important to view the current exam pass rates (statistics) for the past several years at www.bbs.ca.gov/exams/exam_stats.shtml.
Step 9 - Sit for an exam once a year until licensed

From the point in which an applicant is approved to sit for the first exam, he must sit for an exam at least once a year until both exams are passed. If the applicant does not sit for an exam at least once a year, the Board will abandon her application for licensure.

Example

Jane is an ASW who filed her LCSW License Application Packet three (3) months ago. On July 17, 2009 she received a letter from the Board stating she was eligible to sit for the Standard Written Exam. In September 15, 2009 Jane sat for this exam but did not pass it. Jane waited the required 160-days and reapplied to take the exam a second time. In May 2010, Jane sat for and passed the Standard exam.

Due to a serious illness, Jane did not sit for the Written Clinical Vignette Exam until December 3, 2010. Unfortunately, she failed this second exam on her first attempt so she must sit for this exam again no later than December 3, 2011. If Jane isn’t successful in her second attempt, she must continue to reapply and sit for this second exam at least once a year until she passes. Each time Jane must wait 160-days before reapplying and it takes 60-days to process the application.

Jane does not have to keep her ASW registration current while she is in the process of sitting for exams. Her hours of experience gained as an ASW will be “locked in” as long as she continues to sit for an exam at least once a year. If for any reason, Jane neglects to sit for an exam at least once a year, the Board will abandon her application and Jane’s hours of experience will no longer be valid. At that point, Jane would have to face the daunting task of regaining experience to qualify to take the exams again.

More Examples

Elliot received his notice of eligibility to sit for the LCSW Standard Written Exam on March 3, 2009. He must take this exam no later than March 3, 2010.

Pamela failed the LCSW Written Clinical Vignette Exam on June 11, 2009. She must retake this exam no later than June 11, 2010.
Step 10 - Work under qualified professional until obtaining LCSW

Once applicants submit the LCSW License Application Packet, they may continue to provide psychotherapy until they receive their LCSW **IF** they are supervised by a licensed mental health professional (LCSW, MFT, or licensed psychologist) who assumes legal responsibility their work.

Once the applicant is deemed eligible to sit for the exams, it is no longer a requirement that associates meet with a supervisor for a specific number of hours per week or file supervisory forms with the Board. However, it is important that they continue to meet with their supervisor regarding clients.

The associate and supervisor must keep in mind that courts expect that both parties will be able to (a) demonstrate sufficient and appropriate supervision activity, (b) meet all legal and professional standards, and (c) provide services that meet the California Standard of Care. If there should be a lawsuit, both the associate and the supervisor will be called into court and held accountable.
Section 4: Licensed Social Workers from Out-of State

A. California LCSW Licensure

As the reader may be aware, the licensing requirements vary greatly from state to state. California does not have a reciprocity agreement with any other state; consequently, any licensed social worker from another state wishing to become a California Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) must meet all of the California’s requirements.

B. Employment as a Social Worker in California

As mentioned previously, in California, those with a BSW or MSW degree can be employed as social workers without holding a state license or certification. However, to perform independent and unsupervised psychotherapy, the social worker must have a MSW from an accredited school of social work and hold a valid California Licensed Clinical Social Work (LCSW) license.

C. CA Clinical Social Work and Psychotherapy Defined

“The practice of clinical social work is defined as a service in which a special knowledge of social resources, human capabilities, and the part that unconscious motivation plays in determining behavior, is directed at helping people to achieve more adequate, satisfying, and productive social adjustments. The application of social work principles and methods includes, but is not restricted to, counseling and using applied psychotherapy of a non-medical nature with individuals, families, or groups; providing information and referral services; providing or arranging for the provision of social services; explaining or interpreting the psychosocial aspects in the situation of individuals, families, or groups; helping communities to organize, to provide, or to improve social or health services; or doing research related to social work.

Psychotherapy, within the meaning of the this chapter (Chapter 14) is the use of psychosocial methods within a professional relationship, to assist the person or persons to achieve a better psychosocial adaptation, to acquire greater human realization of psychosocial potential and adaptation, to modify internal and external conditions
which affect individuals, groups, or communities in respect to
behavior, emotions, and thinking, in respect to their intrapersonal and
interpersonal processes.”

D. Basic Steps for Licensed Applicants from Out-of-State

The Basic Steps to a California LCSW
For Licensed Social Workers from Out-of-State

Step 1 Register as an ASW with the Board (see specifics)
Step 2 Obtain the required pre-licensure coursework
Step 3 Create a six-month study plan for passing exams
Step 4 File the LCSW License Application Packet
Step 5 Sit for and pass Standard Written Exam
Step 6 Sit for and pass Written Clinical Vignette Exam
Step 7 Sit for an exam once a year until licensed
Step 8 Work under a qualified professional until obtaining LCSW

The reader will note that the basic steps for out-of-state applicants
listed above are nearly identical to the ten basic steps for other
applicants. The only major difference is that the licensed out-of-state
applicant can use prior supervised experience to meet the California
requirement.

E. Specific Requirements for Out-of-State Applicants

1. Whether to register as an Associate Social Worker (ASW)

The answer to this question is determined by whether the licensed
applicant will be performing psychotherapy while working toward
licensure. The following paragraphs clarify when it is necessary to
register as an ASW with the Board.

   a) To perform psychotherapy in California, social workers must hold
      a valid LCSW license OR be registered with the Board as an
      Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW).
b) Licensed social workers from another state may find a job where they perform psychotherapy when supervised by a California licensed mental health professional. This includes a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Marriage Family Therapist (MFT), Licensed Psychologist, or Psychiatrist. In this scenario, the California licensed professional assumes legal responsibility for the services provided by the social worker from out-of-state. Consequently, the out-of-state candidate will have to register with the Board as an ASW prior to providing psychotherapy.

c) Those holding a valid social work license from another state may choose to work in a setting where they do not perform psychotherapy. In this circumstance, the out-of-state candidate does not have to register with the Board as an ASW.

For further information regarding these requirements and information regarding exempt settings, the reader should refer to the *BBS Statutes and Regulations*, Chapter 14, Sections 4996.14 – 4996.17.

**F. The Required Course Work**

Out-of-state applicants must complete the required coursework through a BBS Approved Provider prior to completing the LCSW License Application Packet.

1. Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting (7 hours and must be taken in California)
2. Human Sexuality (10 hours)
3. Chemical Substance Abuse Dependency (15 hours)
4. Spousal or Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention (15 hours)

NASW-CA is a BBS approved provider offers all of the required pre-licensure courses through online courses and in-person classes. To view the online course library, visit [www.socialworkweb.com/nasw](http://www.socialworkweb.com/nasw). To view the classes offered through the CE Fairs or Annual Conference, visit [www.naswca.org](http://www.naswca.org) under “Professional Development.”
G. Documenting Out-of-State Experience

The California State Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) accepts prior experience and supervision from those holding a valid out-of-state license. The following information was copied from the BBS website, and readers are encouraged to visit the website for more details.

*The Board’s statutes (Business and Professions Code Section 4996.17) set forth different requirements depending on how long the applicant held a clinical social worker license in another state.*

*If you have been licensed as a clinical social worker in another state for at least four years, you have met the Board’s experience requirements for licensure. You will document this with the Clinical Social Worker Verification of Licensure/Registration/Certification in another state form, which is found in the LCSW Application.*

*If you have been licensed as a clinical social worker in another state for less than four years, you must provide verification of completion that you completed 3,200 hours of supervised work experience and 104 weeks of supervision.*

*If the licensing body in your state does not have equivalent requirements, time actively licensed as a clinical social worker in your state shall be accepted at a rate of 100 hours per month up to a maximum of 1,200 hours. You will document this with the Clinical Social Worker Verification of Licensure/Registration and Certification in Another State form, which is available in the LCSW Application.*


H. Vignette for Out-of-State Applicant

Jennifer has a MSW and PhD and is licensed in Texas and Arizona. She has practiced as a psychotherapist for 27 years and is a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor in Texas. She is moving to California to be near her grandchildren. She is planning on retiring in the next ten years but wishes to continue her private practice until that time.

**Q.** To become licensed in California, does Jennifer have to meet all of the LCSW licensing requirements?
A. Yes, Jennifer must meet the coursework requirements, submit the LCSW License Application with documentation of her supervised experience, and pass both of the California licensing exams.

Q. Can Jennifer work in a private practice setting while working toward a license?

A. Yes, **IF** she is employed by a California licensed mental health professional (LCSW, MFT, or Licensed Psychologist) in a private practice setting and the licensed professional provides supervision and assumes legal responsibility. In this case, Jennifer would have to register with the Board as an ASW and receive her ASW registration number **prior** to performing psychotherapy.

Q. Can Jennifer collect fees from clients?

A. No. The law does not allow an ASW to bill a fee, monetary or otherwise. Unless volunteering, all associates must be paid as an employee utilizing W-2 forms.

Q. If she registers as an ASW, does Jennifer have to place this information on her business card?

A. Yes. According to regulations, all associates must inform clients that they are unlicensed in California and under the supervision of a licensed supervisor prior to performing professional services.

Q. Jennifer took several Child Abuse courses pertaining to Texas and Arizona laws and regulations. Does she have to take another Child Abuse course to meet California’s requirement?

A. Yes. The requirement stipulates that the Child Abuse course must be taken in California so that the social worker learns the laws, regulations, and procedures appropriate for this state.
Section 5: The Most Common Mistakes

1. Failing to research and understand California’s licensing process and requirements prior to beginning the process.

2. Failing to utilize appropriate resources to answer questions pertaining to licensing requirements prior to deadlines.

3. Failing to be proactive and taking full responsibility for the process and requirements and instead relying on colleagues for guidance.

4. Failing to download applications and forms from the Board’s website just prior to completing them; consequently, submitting out-of-date applications and forms.

5. Failing to accurately complete the application packets and forms or not submitting originals when required; therefore, causing potentially lengthy delays.

6. Failing to find appropriate work settings or receiving adequate supervision; therefore, not gaining sufficient clinical expertise and experience to pass both of the exams.

7. Failing to consistently document the hours of work experience and clinical supervision utilizing the log provided by the Board.

8. Failing to complete the required 3200 hours of experience within the six-year time frame.

9. Failing to create and implement a study plan with specific strategies 4-6 months prior to sitting for the exams.

10. Failing to renew their ASW registration annually until deemed eligible to sit for the exams and not filing a change of address or name form within 30- days of the change.

11. Failing to complete all of the pre-license coursework prior to obtaining the 3200 hours, thus delaying the date they can submit the LCSW License Application Packet.

12. Once deemed eligible to sit for exams, failing to sit for an exam at least once a year until both exams are passed, which will cause the Board to abandon the application.
Section 6: A Summary of Key Timeframes

1. ASW Application Packet
   Processing Time: 30-60 days

2. 3200 Hours of Supervised Experience
   Time Limit: 6 Years
   Minimum Timeframe: 2 Calendar Years

3. Required Coursework
   Time Limit: Anytime during/after a MSW program
   Deadline: Prior to filing the LCSW App

4. LCSW License Application Packet
   Processing Time: 60-120 days

5. Standard Written Exam Reservation
   Submit Form to PSI: 30 days in advance of test date

6. Written Clinical Vignette Exam Application
   Processing Time: 60 days

7. Written Clinical Vignette Exam Reservation
   Submit Form to PSI: 30 days in advance of test date

8. Applying to Retake Either of the Exams
   Waiting Period: 160 days
   Processing Time: 60 days
Section 7: Important Resources

A. Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS)

Website: [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)
Telephone for ASW/LCSW Analyst: 916-574-7851 & 916-574-7852

The Board’s website is the most important resource any applicant can use. Each applicant is strongly encouraged to become very familiar with the website and all that it offers. The following items were covered in the content and can be found at [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov).

- The Automated Email Subscriber List
- The *BBS Statutes and Regulations*
- The Applicant/Registration Information and Packages
- The Examination Application and Information

An additional resource is the *BBS News*, a newsletter that is mailed twice a year to everyone registered with the Board. To read the latest issue, visit [http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml](http://www.bbs.ca.gov/forms.shtml) and scroll to the bottom of the page.

B. NASW-California Chapter (NASW-CA)

Website: [www.naswca.org](http://www.naswca.org)
Email: craynak@naswca.org

The California Chapter’s website is also an important resource for any applicant. As mentioned in the content, applicants can find pre-licensure courses through online and in-person classes, information about licensing and important resources at [www.naswca.org](http://www.naswca.org) under the professional development, career center, and licensing tabs.

C. National NASW

Website: [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)

With 150,000 members, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and
maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

D. California Society for Clinical Social Work

Website: www.clinicalsocialwork society.org
Email: info@clinicalsocialwork society.org

The California Society for Clinical Social Work was founded in 1969 to ensure the continued existence and quality of clinical social work as a mental health discipline. The mission of the Society continues to emphasize the highest level of clinical training and education, adherence to standards of ethical practice, and a strong presence in the legislature to advance and protect the integrity of the profession.

Over the years, the Society has been a proponent for clinical social work licensure, parity with other professions, confidentiality of client records and therapists' treatment notes, and informed consent for consumers of mental health services.

E. Related Resources

*The Association of Social Work Boards* (ASWB)
Website: www.aswb.org. This website provides information regarding licensing requirements in each state.

*The Council on Social Work Education* (CSWE)
Website: www.cswe.org. This website provides information on the evaluation of international degrees.

*Social Work Access Network* (SWAN)
Website: http://cosw.sc.edu/swan/organizations.html. This website offers a list of National Social Work organizations and their websites.

*The Social Work Portal*
Website: www.socialworkportal.com. This website offers links to social work programs, organizations, and more.
**Help Starts Here**  
Website: [www.helpstartshere.org](http://www.helpstartshere.org). This website provides information and educates the public about social work.

**Post-Test**

To complete the online post-test, return to [www.socialworkweb.com/nasw/](http://www.socialworkweb.com/nasw/) and login with your username and password as a “Return User.”

For assistance, e-mail [louis@naswca.org](mailto:louis@naswca.org).