

REVISED 11/2019 (Continue to check these FAQs and the Board's website for updates).

Application Process to Apply for Initial Licensure as a Social Worker

The Rules and Regulations can be located on the Board's website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social.

These FAQs are not intended to substitute for reading the Rules and Regulations.

Q: Are the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors (Board), Board Counsel and/or the Board Administrator and Board Staff permitted to provide legal advice?

A: No. Neither the Board's Act nor regulations confer authority on the Board to issue advisory opinions, provide legal advice to outside persons or entities, pre-determine whether or what type of authorization to practice is required in order to be able to lawfully engage in an activity, or otherwise pre-approve/disapprove specific conduct. If you have a legal question, you should confer with a privately retained attorney.

Q: What is legal advice?

A: Legal advice is any written or oral counsel regarding a legal matter that impacts the responsibilities and rights of the person who receives it. Legal advice includes advisory opinions and interpretation of statutes or law.

Q: Can I provide teletherapy to clients in Pennsylvania or any other state?

A: The Board does not currently have regulations on teletherapy. However, the Board does require licensure when providing services in the State of Pennsylvania. If the person is physically located outside of the state at the time the services are being rendered, you would need to contact the state where the individual is located. You can also check with your national association (NASW) as the Board does expect licensees to act in accordance with the code of ethics and practice standards of that organization.

Q: Does the Board issue a temporary license to practice in the state of Pennsylvania if I am licensed in another state?

A: No. Neither the Board's Act nor regulations allow the Board to issue a temporary license to licensees from another state to practice in the State of Pennsylvania. However, if an applicant submits an application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41, they may be granted a provisional license at the discretion of the Board.

Q: What is Act 76 of 2018?

A: Act 76 of 2018 prohibits the independent practice of clinical social work, marriage and family therapy and professional counseling without a license as a clinical social worker (LCSW), marriage and family therapist (LMFT), or professional counselor (LPC). "Independent practice" means that the individual 1) styles themselves as a clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist or professional counselor; 2) regulates and is responsible for his or her own practice and treatment procedures; and 3) is not affiliated with any other practice, health care facility, government agency or government-regulated social service agency.

*As of October 27, 2018, an individual holding solely the MSW degree or LSW license may not enter independent **clinical** practice as defined in Act 76.*

Q: Did Act 76 change the scope of practice of a social worker?

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A: No. Act 76 of 2018 did not change the scope of practice for licensed social workers (LSWs). Therefore, the scope of practice for licensed social workers remains as defined in section (3) of the Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Act, as follows:

“Practice of Social Work.” Offering to render or rendering a service in which a special knowledge of social resources, human personality and capabilities and therapeutic techniques is directed at helping people to achieve adequate and productive personal, interpersonal and social adjustments in their individual lives, in their families and in their community or holding oneself out to the public by any title or description of services incorporating the term “social worker” or using any words or symbols indicating or tending to indicate that one is a social worker, except as otherwise provided by this act.

Q: Can an individual holding solely the M.S.W. degree or L.S.W. license enter independent clinical practice as defined in Act 76?

A: *As of October 27, 2018, an individual holding solely the MSW degree or LSW license may not enter independent clinical practice as defined in Act 76.*

Licensed social workers in independent clinical practice who, *prior to October 27, 2018*, began actively working towards licensure as a clinical social worker by accumulating the required 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” as set forth in the Board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code § 47.12c(b) are not considered to be engaging in “independent practice” and will be permitted to complete their experience requirements for licensure as a clinical social worker and to obtain the clinical social work license.

These licensed social workers must have been receiving the necessary supervision by a supervisor who meets the Board’s regulations in “Qualifications for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 47.1a and the “Standards for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 47.12d. These practitioners must continue to receive the required supervision until they are issued a license to practice clinical social work by the Board.

Please Refer to Section 20 of the Act regarding unlawful practice.

Q: What degree is accepted for licensure as a social worker?

A: Under Section 47.12a(2) of the regulations; an applicant must have received a master’s degree in social work or social welfare from a school which was an accredited school on the date the degree was awarded or a doctoral degree in social work.

Q: How do I apply for a license?

A: You will need to apply for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license. When your application is complete you will receive official notification by e-mail that you are eligible to register for the appropriate examination (master’s) through ASWB.

Q: If my school submits the Verification of Social Work Education form which makes me eligible to take the ASWB master’s examination while I am in my last semester, is an official transcript required?

A: No, an official transcript is not needed to take the examination. An official transcript conferring your MSW degree is required, however, in order for a license to be issued. You must follow through with your school to see that they submit an official transcript conferring the MSW degree as soon as the official transcript is available.

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Q: How do I get another 6-month extension to take the ASWB master's examination?

A: If your licensure application is on file for 6 months or longer, you will need to update any expired documentation in order to be granted the 6-month extension. An application fee is valid for 1 year. If your licensure application is on file for 1 year or longer, another current application fee will be required, as well as an updated application if required.

Q: If I failed the ASWB master's examination, what is the procedure?

A: ASWB requires a 90-day waiting period prior to retaking the ASWB master's examination again. If your licensure application is on file for 6 months or longer, you will be required to upload any expired documentation in order to be made eligible again for the exam. An application fee is valid for 1 year. If your licensure application has been on file for 1 year or longer another current application fee will be required, as well as a updated application if required.

Q: If I am licensed in another state how do I become licensed in Pennsylvania?

A: You will need to apply for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license. If you need to take the ASWB Master's examination, when your application is complete you will receive official notification by e-mail that you are eligible to register for the appropriate examination (master's) through ASWB.

Q: What is Act 41?

A: Act 41 is an alternative path to licensure by endorsement for people licensed in good standing in another state if they don't meet the Board's current endorsement requirements. It states that the Board SHALL issue a license if a licensee (1) holds a current licensed from another state whose licensure requirements are substantially equivalent to or exceed the requirements established in the Commonwealth (2) demonstrates competency in the profession through methods determined by the Board such as CE or been in practice for 2 of the last 5 years preceding the date of the application (3) has not committed any act that constitutes grounds for refusal, suspension or revocation of a license unless the board determines that the act should not be an impediment to licensure (4) is in good standing in the other jurisdiction and (5) pays fees established by the licensing board.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a social worker. What is the procedure for licensure under Act 41?

A: You will need to for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. Please note that you must hold a license in good standing as a social worker in another state and have been actively engaged in the practice of clinical social work for 2 of the last 5 years in any state or territory in the United States immediately preceding the filing of this application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41. All applicants from another country will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Are licensed social workers permitted to write Emotional Support Animal Requests?

A: A licensed social worker must work within their scope of practice as defined in Section 3 of the law and may only provide services that are within the competency areas for which an individual is qualified by education, training and experience. Please refer to the Code of Ethics in Section 47.72(a)(2)

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