

**Pursuing MSW Licensure
in Maine?
Here's some of what you
should know....**

February 13, 2024

Presented by:

Jeanette Andonian, MSW, Ph.D., LCSW
Associate Dean, USM School of Social Work

Jeanette's Disclaimer:

I am not a board representative and I am not in the position to guarantee that your application will be approved by the licensing board. I offer information to you as a service, based on what I have learned over the years about licensure, but I do not claim expertise in this area. Ultimately, you are responsible to ensure you meet criteria for the license you want to pursue. This said, I will help you in any way I can if you accept my limitations!

This covers MAINE licensure

For information about obtaining licensure in other states, I urge you to contact the board in that state in advance. Most states have similar definitions, rules and laws but some differ!

Goals of Licensing Board

- Protect the public—Maine law
- Make sure that qualified social workers get licensed
- Make sure licensed social workers practice in accordance with laws and rules and respond and/or sanction when they don't

What are the different license types for MSWs?

- LMSW: A non-clinical license; can do **non-clinical** practice (e.g., policy, research, administration, etc.)
- LMSW-CC: The precursor to the LCSW; must do **clinical practice under supervision** of a person with a professional clinical license (*LCSW, LCPC, LMFT, licensed psychologist or licensed psychiatrist*) ; *cannot practice privately/independently.*
- LCSW: The clinical license that allows a person to engage in **clinical social work practice privately/independently** without supervision (though, best practice is for continued supervision throughout one's career, even if it is not required by law).

LMSW

LMSW: "Licensed Master Social Worker" is a person who has received a license as a Master Social Worker from the board and only performs non-clinical functions. A LMSW may perform all of the functions of the LSW License, engage in administration, research, consultation, social planning and teaching related to the functions of social work; engage in non-clinical private practice; and provide consultation required by the LSW and LSW Conditional Licenses.

From:

http://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/license_types.htm

LMSW-CC

- This license is for MSW's who are engaged in clinical practice who have not yet completed the consultation hours required for LCSW.
- "Licensed Master Social Worker, Conditional Clinical" means a person who has received a LMSW-CC license from the board. This licensee may perform all of the functions of the LMSW license; engage in psychosocial evaluation, including diagnosis and treatment of mental illness and emotional disorders, **with required consultation**; and provide clinical consultation to LSWs, Social Work students, other professionals practicing related professions and paraprofessionals engaging in related activities.
- A person with the LMSW-CC must receive **four (4) hours a month of consultation (no more than 25% in a group setting) by a licensed professional (LCSW, LMFT, LCPC, licensed psychologist or licensed psychiatrist)** while practicing social work in a clinical setting. The LMSW-CC does not qualify a person to engage in private clinical practice.

From: http://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/license_types.htm

LCSW

- The "Licensed Clinical Social Worker" (LCSW) is a person who has received a license as a Clinical Social Worker from the board and may engage in Clinical Social Work Practice.
- Clinical practice is professional application of social work theory and methods to the evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, disability or impairment, including emotional and mental disorders. It is based on knowledge and theory of psychosocial development, behavior, psychopathology, unconscious motivation, interpersonal relationships, environmental stress, social systems, and cultural diversity with particular attention to person-in-environment. It shares with all social work practice the goal of enhancement and maintenance of psychosocial functioning of individuals, families and small groups.

From:

http://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/license_types.htm

Which license do I choose?

- All MSW students first seek the LMSW
 - If you are *not* interested in clinical practice, the LMSW is all that is needed
- To pursue the LCSW, you must first have the LMSW-CC, be employed in a clinical setting as a W2 employee (not a 1099 contract employee) and be supervised for two years post-MSW

USM MSW Program: Preparation for Licensure

- USM SSW offers the MSW degree for “Advanced Social Work Practice” (ASWP). Don’t be confused that the term “clinical” isn’t used in this title!
- Contained in the ASWP curriculum is sufficient content to qualify graduates for licensure
- Advanced Standing students need to be slightly more mindful of elective choices, especially if you are doing a thesis (more on that to come...)
- Have not heard of any USM grad challenged by the Maine board about their qualifications for licensure

MSW Degree Requirements to qualify for the LMSW-CC (See Clinical Concentration Worksheet)

- A “Clinical” Concentration is needed
 - Defined by six courses total in the following categories:
 - Minimum of two courses in “personality theory”
 - One on the “abnormal” personality or “psychopathology” (SWO 660)
 - One on “Normal growth & development” (HBSE)
 - Four graduate “clinical methods” courses on individuals, families, and groups:
 - Practice I, III, and IV, Specialized year field seminar; Several practice electives offered also typically fulfill this
- OR--
- Three clinical methods and one additional personality theory course

Special Issues for Advanced Standing Students

- HBSE is credited from your BSW degree
- No MSW generalist year, therefore, Practice I (SWO 503) is not taken
- Need to take an additional clinical methods course to fulfill the requirement for four methods courses.
- You take Practice III (Groups) & IV (Individuals & Families), field seminar (SWO 654/655) so need to take one more clinically-focused course (in addition to SWO 660)
- If you do the 6-credit thesis, the one elective course you take must be clinically focused to meet licensure qualifications (consult with your advisors on course selection).

How does the board define “clinical social work practice”?

“ ‘Clinical social work practice’ is the practice of social work in a clinical setting. ‘Clinical social work practice’ is the professional application of social work theory and methods to the evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, disability or impairment, including emotional and mental disorders. ‘Clinical social work practice’ is based on knowledge and theory of psychosocial development, behavior, psychopathology, unconscious motivation, interpersonal relationships, environmental stress, social systems, and cultural diversity with particular attention to person-in-environment. Clinical social work practice shares with all social work practice the goal of enhancement and maintenance of psychosocial functioning of individuals, families and small groups.”

(Chapter 10 of the board rules, *Definitions*,
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/02/chaps02.htm#416>)

Important:

Your four clinical methods courses must align with the licensing board's definition of clinical social work practice in order for you to qualify for clinical licensure (LMSW-CC and later the LCSW).

USM SSW Courses Historically Approved for Licensure by the Board

- **“Normal growth and development”**: SWO 502/552 HBSE
- **“Abnormal personality”**: SWO 660, Advanced Biopsychosocial Assessment
- **Clinical methods**: Practice I (SWO 503), III (SWO 603), & IV (SWO 651); field (SWO 654/655);
 - Here are some electives in our curriculum (not comprehensive list) that can fulfill the clinical concentration requirement: **couples & families, mental health practice with children and families, trauma & sw practice, empowerment practice, addiction/substance use, immigrants & refugees, DBT, sw practice in healthcare, grief & loss**
- New requirement effective January 1, 2020: 12 Interpersonal Violence (IPV) education contact hours—this content is embedded in the curriculum in SWO 651, 603 & 604 so you automatically meet this requirement.

What about non-SWO courses (e.g., counseling courses?)

- These are acceptable from our program standpoint and you can take *up to 6 credits* outside of SWO
- The licensing board has been non-committal about stating these will always be approved for licensure, even if they meet criteria for the definition of clinical practice
- The board makes course approval decisions in the context of the license application
- I have never heard that counseling courses have been denied by the board to fulfill clinical methods requirements

Important Advice:

Save your syllabi, course descriptions, or other course documentation!

You may be asked to provide these documents when you apply for licensure.

To pursue the LMSW-CC:

- Must secure post MSW employment in a clinical setting (*a non-independent practice setting*)
- Must secure supervision with a person holding the professional clinical license (*LCSW, LCPC, LMFT, licensed psychologist or licensed psychiatrist*) and establish a contract that is approved by the board
- An on-site supervisor who works closely with the candidate is preferred by the board
- May hire outside supervisor if on-site is not available, but a clear contractual agreement is needed and the relationship must be formal

LMSW-CC Scope of Practice & Supervision Requirements

- Evidence of engagement in *clinical SW practice*
- Evidence of practicing in a *clinical setting* with concurrent approved supervision
- Cannot work as a contract employee or in an independent practice with the LMSW-CC—against the law
 - E.g., cannot be a self-employed as a 1099 employee—must be a regular employee receiving a W2
- Private practice defined as “practicing SW on a self-employed basis”. This is prohibited until obtaining the LCSW

Licensure Application Process

The Master's exam for the LMSW:

- ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) administers all social work exams: <https://www.aswb.org/>
- ASWB requires all states to approve candidates prior to allowing them to take exam.
- Apply to take the exam
 - You can take the exam with proof of degree (official transcript), or a letter from USM indicating your expected date of graduation and that you are in good standing. You would then submit the official transcript after passing the exam when you apply for licensure.
 - Your licensure application is not complete until MSW degree is conferred and the official transcript from a CSWE accredited institution is submitted as proof

The “CC”: Conditional Clinical

- Pass the Master’s exam and apply for licensure for the LMSW
- Submit your licensure application
- Secure appropriate employment and supervision in a clinical setting and seek board approval for this
- You will then have your LMSW-CC and can begin clocking your hours

Completing the application

See State Board of Social Worker
Licensure [Applications & Forms](#)

Continuing Education Requirements

- Continuing education is *required for renewal of all licenses* (LMSW & LCSW)
- License renewal is every 2 years
- All licensees are required to obtain twenty-five (25) contact hours of continuing education directly related to social work practice, including four (4) hours specifically on ethics within each two-year period
- Requirement **effective January 1, 2020**: 12 Domestic Violence contact hours for all new licensees and renewal licensees—can be acquired through academic courses (we got you covered here!) or online or face-to-face CE courses
- Refer to the SW licensing board website for more detailed information to ensure you are current on CE requirements as these can change over time

Renewing a License

- At the time of license renewal, licensees pay the \$70 fee online and verify that they have completed the requisite continuing education requirements.
- Keep all documentation of your CE contact hours as you may be required to submit proof in an audit.

Cost of Initial Licensure Application

- \$116 Total Cost for Maine License Application
 - \$25 application fee
 - \$70 License Fee
 - \$21 Criminal background check (be honest about criminal background, no matter how long ago an incident may have occurred)

Cost of ASWB Exams

- \$230 for Bachelor's or Master's exam (you take the Master's exam post MSW)
- \$260 for Advanced generalist or clinical exams (two years post MSW, for LCSW eligibility)

So...Total Cost for License Application & Exam?

A whopping

\$346

(Start saving your pennies! Set up a “go fund me” site or something!)

Supervision/Consultation

- A consultation form must be completed by a supervisor who agrees to provide 4 hours of consultation per month for 2 years of full-time work (or 96 hours of supervision total for 3200 hours of employment).
- If you leave the agency for any reason, or your supervisor leaves, make sure to provide documentation of your accrued hours to the board and keep this on file for your own records.

The Master's Level Exam

- Two ASWB test sites in Maine: Bangor and Westbrook (Pearson Professional Centers)
- Once you are pre-approved for licensure by the Board, contact ASWB to arrange for test.
- ASWB will send e-mail to you to schedule the test.

The Test

- 170 Multiple choice questions
- 150 questions are graded
- 20 questions are included as pre-test items and not graded but these questions will not be identified to you
- Use practice materials available on the ASWB website to prepare
- Same test taken for LMSW or LMSW-CC (Intermediate/Masters)

Prepping for Exam

Study guide at USM Library: FREE!

(Available for Reference Only)

Apgar, D. (2017). *Social Work ASWB Masters Practice Test: 170 Questions to Identify Knowledge Gaps*. New York: Springer Publishing. This is a comprehensive study guide with full-length practice exams for the social work licensing exam: masters & clinical level.

ASWB Online Practice Exam: \$85

Available to registered exam candidates—full length 170 question practice test.

Jeanette's Unsolicited Advice? Don't go too overboard with studying—just get acquainted with the exam contents and take some practice tests. Get into the “mindset” of the test. Study with friends!

Helpful Web Links

- Maine State Board of Social Work Licensure: http://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/index.html
- Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB): <https://www.aswb.org/>
- Exam Outline (ASWB PDF): <https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/MastersKSAs.pdf>
- ASWB Candidate Handbook: <https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Candidate-Handbook.pdf>
- ASWB Exam Registration Form: <https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RegistrationForm.pdf>
- ASWB Exam Guide Order Form: <https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ExamGuideOrderForm.pdf>

Remember...

- USM SSW students have passed the licensing exam at a rate higher than the national average.
- All you need is 70% to pass.
- You can always take the exam again if you fail (and pay more \$\$, of course).
- Life is too short to fret too much about this!!!