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

March 2016

Presented by:

Jeanette Andonian, MSW, Ph.D., LCSW
USM School of Social Work
MSW Program Coordinator
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!
What are the different license types for MSWs?

- **LMSW**: A non-clinical license; can do independent non-clinical practice (e.g., policy, research, administrative, etc.)
- **LMSW-CC**: The precursor to the LCSW; must be doing clinical practice under supervision of a person with an LCSW; cannot practice privately/independently.
- **LCSW**: The clinical license that allows a person to engage in clinical social work practice privately/independently.
Which license do I choose?

If you wish to do clinical social work practice and work toward obtaining the LCSW, you must first have the LMSW-CC; If you are not interested in clinical practice, the LMSW is all that is needed.
USM MSW Program: Preparation for Licensure

- USM SSW offers MSW degree for “Advanced Social Work Practice” (ASWP)
  Don’t be confused that the term “clinical” isn’t used in the concentration 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 (more on that to come…)
- Have not heard of anyone in recent years challenged by the board about their qualifications for licensure
Requirements for your MSW Degree and the LMSW-CC (Later, the LCSW):

- A “Clinical” Concentration 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, POSSIBLY concentration year field seminar; Several practice electives offered 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 foundation year, therefore, no Practice I—Need to take an additional clinical methods course to fulfill the requirement for four methods courses. You have Practice III & IV, maybe field, so one more—two to be safe—carefully selected course is needed in addition to SWO 660.
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”: HBSE
- “Abnormal personality”: Advanced Biopsychosocial Assessment, SWO 660
- Clinical methods: Practice I, III, & IV; sometimes field; Electives that are commonly taken to fulfill the clinical concentration requirement: couples & families, mental health practice with children and families, trauma, substance abuse, immigrants & refugees, gender & aging.
What about non-SWO courses?

For example, counseling courses? These are acceptable from our program standpoint. BUT, the licensing board is 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 decisions about course approvals in the context of application and it is up to board members to make this determination. It is somewhat risky—BUT at the same time, many students have been licensed using these courses to meet clinical methods requirements.
Important Advice:

Save your syllabi, course descriptions, or other course documentation!!!! You may very well be asked to provide these documents when you apply for licensure!!!!
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 Master Social Workers who are engaged in clinical practice who have not yet completed the consultation hours required for LCSW (independent licensure). "Licensed Master Social Worker, Conditional (Clinical)" means a person who has received a MSW Conditional (Clinical) 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 LMSW, Conditional (Clinical) must receive four (4) hours a month of consultation (no more than 25% in a group setting) by a LCSW while practicing social work in a clinical setting. A LMSW Conditional (Clinical) may not engage in private clinical practice.

From: http://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/social_workers/license_types.htm
MSW Licensure Types (Con’t):

**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: 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. 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
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 LCSW level of licensure and establish a contract that is then 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.
Licensure process:

- **When can I take the Master’s exam (for the LMSW)?**
  - ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) administers all social work exams across the country: [https://www.aswb.org/](https://www.aswb.org/)
  - ASWB requires all states to approve candidates prior to allowing them to take exam.
  - **This means you must first submit your licensure application to the Board and secure approval.**
  - Licensure application is not complete until MSW degree is officially granted and transcript is submitted to the Board.
Therefore...

You cannot take the exam before you have your MSW degree/transcript in hand, BUT you can begin the licensure application process and submit your official transcript once received from USM. Once transcript has been received by the Board, you can then be pre-approved for the LMSW pending the passage of the Master’s exam.
Conditional Clinical:

Once you get the LMSW, to qualify for the “CC”, your employment and supervision must be secured and approved by the Board.
Cost of 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, host a bake sale 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 to keep on file.
Helpful Web Links

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, call ASWB to arrange for the test (800-225-6880).
- 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)
- DSM 5 material reflected in exam as of July 2015
Prepping for Exam

Study guide at USM Library: FREE!
(Available for Reference Only)

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!
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!!!