



Content Outlines and KSAs

Social Work Licensing Examinations

What are KSAs?

A KSA is a “Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities” statement. These statements describe the discrete knowledge components that may be tested in each part of the examination, and are the basis for individual test questions.

ASWB Examination program

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

Bachelors Examination

I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY, AND BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT 27%

I.A. MODELS OF HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Typical and atypical physical growth and development
- Typical and atypical cognitive growth and development
- Typical and atypical social growth, development, and the socialization process
- Typical and atypical emotional growth and development
- Typical and atypical sexual growth and development
- Spiritual growth and development
- Child behavior and development
- Adolescent behavior and development
- Young adult behavior and development
- Middle adult behavior and development
- Older adult behavior and development
- The impact of physical, mental, and cognitive impairment on human development
- The interplay of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors
- Attachment and bonding
- Basic human needs

I.B. MODELS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Strengths-based and resilience theories
- Defense mechanisms and human behavior
- The psychosocial model
- Group theories
- Family theories and dynamics
- A. Systems and ecological perspectives
 - Social change and community development theories
 - The influence of social context on behavior
 - Role theories
 - Gender roles

I.C. DIVERSITY

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The interaction of culture, race, and/or ethnicity with behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The interaction of sexual orientation and/or gender with behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The interaction of age and/or disability with behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The interaction of spirituality and religion with behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The interaction of socio-economic status with behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The dynamics and effects of stereotypes and discrimination
- The relationship of diversity and communication styles

I.D. EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON CLIENT SYSTEM BEHAVIOR

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The impact of the physical environment on client systems
- The impact of the political environment on policy-making and client systems
- The impact of the social environment on client systems
- The impact of the cultural environment on client systems

II. ASSESSMENT

28%

II.A.SOCIAL HISTORY AND COLLATERAL DATA

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Obtaining a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual history
- Obtaining and evaluating collateral information
- Types of information available from employment, medical, psychological, psychiatric, and educational records
- The components of a sexual history
- The components of a family history

II.B.PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The process used in problem formulation
- The methods of involving the client system in identifying the problem
- The process of identifying the client system needs
- The process of referring the client for additional evaluations (e.g. medical, psychological, educational, etc.)

II.C.ASSESSMENT OF CLIENT SYSTEM'S STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Use of assessment instruments in practice
- Assessing the client system's communication skills
- Assessing the client system's strengths, resources, and challenges
- Assessing the client system's ability and motivation to engage in the intervention process
- Assessing the client system's coping abilities
- Assessing the client's needed level of care (e.g. supportive services, residential placement, continuum of care, etc.)
- Assessing group functioning
- Assessing community functioning
- Assessing functioning of organizations

II.D.ASSESSMENT OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Differentiating the use of, abuse of, and dependency on substances
- The effects of addiction on the client
- The effects of addiction on the family system and other relationships
- The indicators of addictions to gambling, sex, food, media, etc.
- The co-occurrence of addiction and other disorders

II.E.ASSESSMENT OF MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The symptoms of mental and emotional illness across the lifespan

- The symptoms of neurologic and organic conditions
- The indicators of behavioral dysfunction
- Prescription medications and other substances

II.F.DYNAMICS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of sexual abuse across the lifespan
- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of emotional abuse and neglect across the lifespan
- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of physical abuse and neglect across the lifespan
- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of intimate partner violence
- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of other forms of exploitation across the lifespan (e.g. financial, immigration status, sexual trafficking, etc.)

III. DIRECT AND INDIRECT PRACTICE

26%

III.A.INDICATORS AND EFFECTS OF CRISIS AND CHANGE

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The dynamics and effects of life stage and life-cycle crises
- The impact of physical and mental illness
- Dynamics and effects of trauma
- Dynamics and effects of loss, separation, and grief
- The impact of care giving on families
- Indicators of and response to client danger to self and others
- Stages of crises

III.B.INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Building and maintaining a helping relationship
- Developing, evaluating and establishing a measurable intervention plan
- The techniques used to engage and motivate client systems
- Working with involuntary client systems
- Contracting with client systems
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the client system
- Termination and follow-up in social work practice
- The effect of caseload management on client systems
- The crisis intervention approach
- Cognitive and/or behavioral interventions
- Strengths-based and empowerment practice
- Problem-solving approaches
- Techniques used to teach skills to client systems (e.g. role play, modeling, etc.)
- Providing education and information to client systems (e.g. parenting, psychosocial aspects of health and illness, etc.)
- Teaching coping strategies to client systems (e.g. assertiveness, conflict resolution, stress management, etc.)
- Group work approaches
- Family practice approaches
- Community practice approaches
- Social policy development and analysis
- Advocating for micro-, mezzo-, and macro-client systems

III.B.INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES (continued)

- Intervening with organizations (e.g. organizational policy development, hierarchy, formal and informal power structures, etc.)

III.C.MATCHING INTERVENTION WITH CLIENT SYSTEM NEEDS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Determining which individual, family, group, or combined modality meets the needs of client systems
- Determining which community or organizational approach meets the needs of client systems
- The effect of the client system's abilities on the selection of an intervention (e.g. literacy, employability, developmental level, cognitive ability, physical ability, etc.)
- The effect of the client system's culture on the selection of an intervention
- The effect of the client system's life stage on the selection of an intervention
- Providing case management services
- Referring client systems for services
- Determining the client's eligibility for services

III.D.USE OF COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Scope of practice and basic terminology of professions other than social work
- The use of consultation and case conferences
- Interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary team approaches
- Establishing, maintaining, and utilizing formal and informal service networks or community resources and supports

III.E.DOCUMENTATION

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The use of objective and subjective data in written assessments and case notes
- Writing and maintaining client records (e.g. client progress notes, etc.)
- Developing reports for external organizations (e.g. the courts, etc.)
- Developing administrative reports (e.g. grant reports, outcomes and evaluations, program proposals, accreditation reports, etc.)
- Recording and monitoring assessments and service plans
- Obtaining and recording service-related forms (e.g. informed consent for services, consent for release of information, advanced directives, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) etc.)
- Legal and ethical issues regarding documentation

III.F.INTERVIEWING

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Obtaining information relevant to a given situation
- The use of verbal and nonverbal communication techniques
- Identifying the underlying meaning of communication
- The use of active listening and observation
- Interviewing techniques (e.g. supporting, clarifying, confronting, validating, feedback, reflecting, etc.)

III.F.INTERVIEWING (continued)

- Eliciting sensitive information (e.g. substance abuse, sexual abuse, etc.)
- Interviewing clients with communication barriers (e.g. language differences, use of interpreters, etc.)

- Using bias-free language in interviewing
- Responding to clients' resistant behaviors

III.G.EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Evaluation of one's own practice (e.g. single-subject designs, goal-attainment scaling, task-achievement scaling, use of scales and instruments, etc.)
- Critiquing relevant research and statistical data (i.e. understanding basic research design and methods)
- Selecting interventions based on research
- Using data to inform and influence organizational and social policy
- The use of program evaluation (e.g. needs assessment, formative and summative, cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit analysis, outcomes assessment, etc.)

IV. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, VALUES, AND ETHICS

19%

IV.A.ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CLIENT SYSTEM AND PROFESSION

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Ethical issues and boundaries in the social worker - client relationship (e.g. dual relationships, power differences, conflicts of interest, etc.)
- The influence of the social worker's own values on the social worker-client system relationship
- Ethical and legal issues regarding termination
- Identification and resolution of ethical dilemmas
- Ethical and legal issues regarding mandatory reporting (e.g. abuse, threat of harm, impaired professionals, etc.)
- Professional values and ethics (e.g. competence, social justice, integrity, worth of the individual, etc.)

IV.B.CONFIDENTIALITY

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Legal and ethical issues regarding confidentiality
- The secure use of client records, including electronic information
- Legal and ethical issues regarding confidentiality and the competency of the client
- Legal and ethical issues regarding confidentiality and minors

IV.C.CLIENT'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Protecting and enhancing client system self-determination
- The client's right to refuse services (e.g. medication, medical treatment, counseling, placement, etc.)
- Minors and self-determination (e.g. emancipation, age of consent, permanency planning etc.)
- Competence and self-determination (e.g. financial decisions, treatment decisions, etc.)
- Balancing self-determination and client risk (e.g. suicidal, homicidal, grave danger, etc.)

IV.D.PROFESSIONAL USE OF SELF

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The use of empathy in the social worker – client relationship
- The concepts of transference and countertransference

- The use of acceptance in the social worker – client relationship
- The appropriate use of self-disclosure
- Understanding and managing burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue

IV.E.METHODS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Transference and countertransference within supervisory relationships
- Supervisee's role in supervision (e.g. identifying learning needs, self-assessment, prioritizing, etc.)
- The use of ongoing professional development to improve practice and stay current (e.g. in-service training, licensing requirements, reviews of literature, workshops, etc.)
- Differential use of consultation, peer support, and supervision