

PROVIDER NEWS

A Publication of the Approved Continuing Education (ACE) Program
of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)

DISTANCE LEARNING AND REGULATORY BOARDS

Issues in distance learning

Non-interactive home study pros and cons

- The learner initiates learning in traditional home study.
- Participant learning is in one direction only.
- Questions raised by the course content or presentation methods may go unanswered.
- The learner decides when class begins and ends.
- Learners who live great distances from workshop or seminar locations may find this method very satisfactory.
- Because fewer employers offer leave or reimbursement for continuing education participation, distance learning courses give many social workers an opportunity to catch up on articles and the latest research of favorite practitioners in an economical, flexible and timely manner.

Some public protection issues

- How does the provider verify the identity of participants?
- Do readings and post-test content adequately inform and challenge the participant?
- Is the course material valid and current? Does it reflect social work content? Is it relevant to jurisdictional requirements and restrictions?
- Can the participant easily contact the provider for learning and technical support?
- Does the provider incorporate program, technical and customer service evaluation questions into the course evaluation?
- Do the number of credits awarded accurately reflect the number of hours participants spend in course work?

Interactive home study variations

Web seminar: The learner reads an article or book received in hard copy, or downloaded from a website. After completing specific sections of the book or article, learners participate in online discussions by posting comments within a specified period of time. Learners read the comments of others, in their own time, and contribute to the discussion, which may be facilitated by the author, an instructor or moderator.

Videoconference: An expert lecture or panel discussion is broadcast live or by tape. Viewers watch at selected sites in groups, or individually on their computer. Questions can be sent to the panel (if the broadcast is live) through a moderator who interacts with the presenter or panel on behalf of the audience. A discussion period may follow the broadcast, conducted by a coordinator at the individual broadcast site or by the broadcast moderator at the origination site.

Interactive home study pros and cons

- The course attempts to mimic in-person workshops with a specialist presenting and an audience discussing a topic.
- While there is no “real time” interaction, and no facial expressions or body language to read, the participants find their written ideas challenged and questions answered in a manner similar to interactions in a classroom or workshop. Questions and problems can be addressed and resolved during the course session.
- At the end of the class, learning is assessed by class participation quality and quantity.
- Participants may find their skills challenged by the technology as well as by the course content. Providers use specific software or web sites that learners must be able to access and navigate in order to participate. In the videoconference format, the learner must be able to download and operate the software required for receiving and participating in the broadcast.
- Participants must have access to toll free phone numbers or web site and email address to ask questions.

Some public protection issues:

- Does guided interaction between learners provide the same educational quality as in-person interaction with an authority on the topic?
- How does the provider verify the identity of the participant?
- How is participant learning at remote locations evaluated?
- Do readings and discussion adequately inform and challenge the participant?
- How does the provider insure that participants complete the entire course?
- The ACE program requires providers to field test and establish credits before offering a course. How does a provider determine the number of course credits when some work is done individually and some as a group?
- Is the course material valid and current? Does it reflect social work content? Is it relevant to jurisdictional requirements and restrictions?
- Does the provider incorporate learning about the specific course technology and technical support into the course?
- Are questions about program format, technical issues and customer service incorporated into the course evaluation?

Continuing education approvers are still learning and asking questions about whether online learning is equal in quality to in-person educational experiences.

SUPERVISION TRAINING DO YOU OFFER IT?

Do you offer CE designed to train supervisors of recent social work graduates working to become licensed at the clinical level?

The South Carolina board (803-896-4665) requires 45 hours of CE education for supervision.

The New Jersey board (973-504-6495) recently began requiring 20 hours of training for supervision.

Representatives of these boards say there are few sources offering these courses!!

The Texas board (512-719-3521) requires supervisors to complete a training program acceptable to the board.

If you offer supervision CE, contact the boards, or let us know and we will pass course information on to boards requesting it.

VIRUS PROTECTION TIPS

1. Make regular back-ups of your data.
2. Never open attachments from someone you don't know.
3. Don't open an attachment from someone you know until you verify with them that they sent it.
4. If they did send the attachment, verify that they are the original source.
5. Run a well-known Anti-virus program and update your definitions weekly.
6. If you run Windows operating system, run regular updates.
7. If you get a suspicious email, go to your Antivirus website and search on words that made you suspicious.
8. If you use Outlook Express, turn off the Preview Pane.
9. If you receive suspicious email, delete it immediately without opening it (this only works with preview pane).
10. Exercise restraint in forwarding jokes, cartoons, petitions, and other cute or sexy messages.
11. If you email anything to a list of recipients, put their addresses in the BCC field instead of CC, because many viruses are sent not just to the addresses found in your address book, but also to email addresses in messages found on your system.

ACE-PROVIDERS@YAHOOGROUPS.COM RESPONSE

When you hit "reply" to an email message received from ace-providers@yahoogroups.com newsletter, your response will reach everyone on the mailing list. For a private reply to this email newsletter, send your comments directly to Jennifer at jward@aswb.org.