



Association of Social Work Boards
American Foundation for Research &
Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation

Request for proposals for primary research

OBJECTIVE

The American Foundation for Research and Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation (“Foundation”) is a 501(c)3 organization that supports efforts to explore the ways in which professional social work regulation impacts the profession and the public it serves. The Foundation has launched a grant program to sponsor research in one or more of five areas: Social Work Regulation and Consumer Protection; Efficacy of the Continuing Education Model; Knowledge and Understanding of Licensure among Social Workers, Social Work Students, Social Work Faculty, and Consumers; Best Practices/Case Studies for Effecting Regulatory Change; and Analysis of Complaints against Social Workers.

FUNDING AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Funding. The Foundation may award up to two \$10,000 grants and one \$25,000 grant to successful research proposals.

Timelines. The \$10,000 grants require an 18-month completion deadline; the \$25,000 project must be completed in 24 months.

Awards decisions. The Foundation will make grant decisions in July 2009. Research would begin immediately following announcement of grant decisions.

Eligibility. Social work faculty, students, members and staff of regulatory boards or provincial colleges in the United States and Canada may apply for grants.

Review criteria. In reviewing grant requests, the following issues will be considered: scope of proposed research (US, Canadian, international); quality of proposed research; likelihood that research can be completed within deadlines; publication potential for research; ability of research to be generalized to one or more facets of social work practice regulation.

How to apply. Contact the Association of Social Work Boards (info@aswb.org) for application materials.

Application deadline: May 31, 2009

RESEARCH AREAS

Area 1. Social Work Regulation and Consumer Protection

Despite the growth of social work regulation from the 1970s to the present, many consumers are still provided social work services from unregulated practitioners. Research in this area would focus on the relationship between unregulated practice and issues such as service delivery, consumer satisfaction, and public harm.

Area 2. Efficacy of Continuing Education Model

The continuing education model—systems whereby licensees must achieve a certain number of “hours” or “units” of learning for purposes of licensure renewal—is widely used among regulatory boards, but many still debate whether this system ensures the continuing competence of social workers. Research in this area would focus on the efficacy of the typical continuing education model, and would include an examination and evaluation of alternative means of ensuring continued competency among practitioners.

Area 3. Knowledge and Understanding of Licensure among Social Workers, Social Work Students, Social Work Faculty, and Consumers

Professional regulation is a reality of social work practice, yet confusion about social work licensure may exist for nearly every stakeholder group involved with or served by social workers. Research in this area would focus on the levels of awareness of licensure among elements of the profession (including the public) and include an examination of the barriers to greater understanding, as well as opportunities for increased knowledge of the role and function of social work regulation.

Area 4. Best Practices/Case Studies in Effecting Regulatory Change

Many factors can shape the ways in which legislation is introduced, amended, or repealed. Legislation that touches on who may or may not practice a profession or how that profession will be defined can be especially susceptible to the influence of interest groups, and spark debates that can reach far beyond the profession most directly affected. Research in this area would focus on various efforts to make changes in social work regulatory law, and would include an examination of the process and its results, as well as a discussion of whether there are identifiable “best practices” in effecting regulatory change.

Area 5. Analysis of Complaints against Social Workers

Final disciplinary actions taken against licensed social workers begin most often with a consumer complaint against the practitioner. Research in this area would focus on collecting more detailed information on the nature of complaints against sanctioned social workers, and include an examination of the relationship of these violations to various factors including practice setting, geography, licensure levels, education, years in practice, and other issues.