



Boundaries exist—you just have to find them

Attendees at ASWB's spring meeting watched videos, role-plays, panel discussions, individual presentations, and movie clips all devoted to an exploration of how regulators should approach boundary violations. The final verdict? This stuff ain't easy.

It's the Ophelia show, the "throne of American womanhood," featuring a girl with a brand new face and a social worker who is a celebrity because of her. Why is this probably not a good thing?

Boundaries. A lively ASWB Spring Education Meeting in Vancouver ranged from discussing just what a boundary violation looks like, even when it's on Ophelia, to helping regulators think through how such violations should be dealt with in disciplinary cases.

And why is that hard, on both sides?

In a panel discussion about how regulators keep emotional and mental order as they uphold the law, British Columbia Registrar (and social worker) Susan Irwin remarked that professional expertise is the reason for having social workers make judgments in disciplinary cases. "But there's a built-in tension because they are social workers," she said.

*from the 2011 ASWB
Spring Education Meeting*

And that was what the Spring Education Meeting was mostly about.

That tension was demonstrated in a briskly battling role-play among members of a fictitious board, and in a number of film clips and discussions, and demarcated with considerable clarity by Program and Education Committee Chair Dorinda Noble in the opening hour of the meeting. By the end of all this, participants could think to themselves, "Oh, right, that's why this is hard."

The role play featured Wade Tyler as a board chair who had just been through an overly long hearing in which members of his board acted like—well, members of social work regulatory boards. Tyler was moaning that he "didn't sign up for this," when several members of the board came back to the meeting room to rehash it all.

One man, played with noisy indignation by Michael Hickerson of Louisiana, drew on his own African American connections to be fiercely protective of the church family that he considered to have been duped; and a woman was admonished by the chair for saying to the erring licensee "There, there, it's going to be all right," and directing her energies to thinking about rehabilitation. And no one was happy with the public member, a woman with a strong religious background who always "wanted to hang 'em all."

How do you think your way around all these complications while trying to enforce a social work act? One approach, according to panelist Marcia Heitz of Illinois, is to think and talk about the conflict. "You

can't disengage from being a social worker," and board members shouldn't try. Professionals are there for the expertise, but also to "make decisions within the law." As chair, she frequently discusses the tug-of-war with her board, but she also welcomed the chance to spend several days talking and thinking about boundaries in British Columbia.

The third panelist, Joyce Westphal of Iowa, credited ASWB's New Board Member Training with helping her frame some of the conflicts between doing what comes naturally to a social worker and upholding the law, or doing what will help the profession versus protecting the public.

But perhaps the strongest impressions of what can go wrong, and why, came in a bit of film presented by Noble. The dramatization was based on a real case and a real hearing.

A social worker had become involved with a young mother and her children—with a husband in the background who was a "ticking time bomb." The social worker and the client felt comfortable from the first, and became more closely entangled as the young woman's problems became worse. When the ticking time bomb went off and the client was shot in the face and horribly disfigured, the social worker took one step and then another past helping and advocacy into directing the woman's life into fund-raising for her personal medical needs and then for combating domestic abuse.

The masked client not only went on the Ophelia show and late night with David "Mailman", but did a cover interview for Persons Magazine. It was the big time, the 15 minutes of fame. She became a cause célèbre, and one whose fame helped her get a new face. By her side every step of the way was the social worker, thrilled by the fact that her client was getting help, and encouraged by her agency because of the money coming in for a good cause. The client and social worker toured together, stayed in hotels together, and handled a trust fund set up by the social worker together.

Featured in the film was the testimony of the client, who could not understand why anyone would think her social worker had done anything wrong. The client declared that the woman was a savior. She was there for her when she had no one else, she said; she was caring and committed.

Indeed, no one criticized the caseworker until the furor died down, along with the flow of money. Then the agency noticed she had stopped doing any other work and others were having to handle it, and that perhaps there were questions of dignity—and boundaries.

At the hearing, the social worker explained that she had the encouragement of her agency, and that the young mother had had freedom of choice all the way. She said everything she had done had been agreed to in consent documents signed by the client, and that she was just trying to be the best possible advocate.

Even an investigator was impressed with the social worker's competence and abilities, and wondered how the woman would have managed without the help of the caseworker.

It didn't take the discussion among regulators long to find some flaws in what had been done. The client was disfigured, vulnerable,

and no doubt on major pain medications; she was in many ways very isolated, and was responsible for small children. Of course if someone advised her to tell her troubles to Ophelia to organize some help she was going to do it. Undue influence was one thing.

Lack of supervision was another. Good supervision could have helped the social worker know where to draw the line, to encourage another family member to step in, to have not gone outside her competency in setting up the trust fund, to have considered where guilt and embarrassment might have stopped the client from going further.

“You can look at your practice act,” said ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson. “Is this the practice of social work or exploitation?” If nothing else, the licensee was practicing law without a license, setting up a trust fund (that no one accused her of mishandling) and naming herself trustee. Richard Silver, legal counsel for the board in Québec, added that the woman had “used a previous relationship to further a cause.” He also wondered about abandonment of the children, who were not on the fund-raising tours, as an example of a social work ethical violation.

Good things did result, though, which is why the case clearly illustrated many of Noble’s opening session points. Boundary violations, she said, occur on a continuum, and within a context.

Placing a violation on a continuum can depend on whether no harm is done to a client, or catastrophic harm; whether societal expectations have been violated, and to what extent; and of course, whether ethics and the law have been violated.

What a boundary violation does is destroy a safe place in which a client can build a relationship with someone who can help, Noble explained. When boundaries are crossed, such a situation is no longer safe. Boundaries give predictability, and once they are crossed, with special attention, financial involvement, or sexual relationships, they aren’t predictable. “You no longer know how to act with each other,” the speaker said, and the therapeutic relationship is done for. Further, there is generally secrecy, and “the vulnerable becomes the protector.”

In the professional life of a social worker, she declared, “We’re in a swampland, surrounded by alligators and vegetation—if we step over a boundary, we go down a slippery slope.” And sometimes worst of all, the slippery slope exists in a context, a context that is not the client’s, and probably isn’t even clear to the client, but is the social worker’s.

The continuum comes into play not only when people are beginning on the slippery slope, but when social workers with their own contexts try to judge a violation. “A lot of boundary violations occur because of boredom, or lack of supervision, or substituting other values for social work values,” Noble said.

Continuums can be considered, motivations can be clear, and good and bad results factored in, but the laws and ethics governing professional behavior have to trump everything else.



Professionals Friending for themselves

Technology has changed the world, and has changed the ways professional boundaries can be violated. Now it's time for the regulators to catch up.

Technology's ability to erase boundaries can be a blessing: people separated by thousands of miles can re-connect, human rights movements can be fueled, pleas for help in a disaster can be responded to instantly.

But when the boundaries being erased are ones that help people understand roles and relationships, technology can also be a curse: private details can become public, rumors can turn into viral smear campaigns, personal interactions can be shared, sometimes unwittingly, with the entire world. And when it comes to the mental health professions, these kinds of boundary crossings can have disastrous effects, for both the provider and the client.

For psychologist Gary Schoener, who consults on professional boundary issues every day, the world of cell phones, texting, social media, and the internet compounds the already-complicated problem of maintaining appropriate professional relationships in mental health settings. And though he believes that navigating through the boundary complications brought on by technology requires professionals to “go back to some of the basic principles” of ethical behavior, Schoener is also convinced that technology “has really changed the equation.” The challenge for professions and the regulatory boards that oversee them will be to work together to understand that changed equation—and apply those basic ethical principles—as soon as possible.

*from the 2011 ASWB
Spring Education Meeting*

The former director (now Director of Consultation and Training) of the Walk-In Counseling Center in Minneapolis, MN was the featured speaker at the Association of Social Work Boards 2011 Spring Education Meeting in Vancouver, BC in early May. Schoener's message during the first part of his presentation was clear: the ways in which boundaries can be crossed are now myriad, and easy, and equally possible for both provider and client. “This is an area where boundaries are murky and getting worse,” he said.

Schoener began his presentation by reminding attendees of the sheer magnitude of use of Internet and social media: 500 million people use Facebook, with 250 million accessing the service on any given day; 50 million Twitter accounts send instant messages to millions of “followers;” videos can be recorded by phones and placed on YouTube for worldwide viewing; damaging gossip sites can emerge and vanish, and re-emerge; and the technological ease with which this can be accomplished is increasing by the minute. The implications for use

in healthcare are obvious, with some uses such as remote supervision and consultation already well established. But the truth, according to Schoener, is that “none of the [healthcare] fields are keeping up with these developments in terms of standards.”

The prevalence of technology changes a fundamental dynamic of the treatment relationship, Schoener said. In times past, patients and clients could only learn about their provider by way of information provided directly by the provider, or through a limited number of reference sources and biographical notes. Likewise, he said, providers could only learn about clients through what the client provided, or by way of collateral information obtained only after the client gave permission to do so.

Schoener pointed out that now, personal histories may be accessible by anyone, even if the subject does not post these histories him or herself. Family members may include information on a provider or client as part of a Facebook post on their own page; people at a party may record video of other partygoers and post the footage on YouTube without the consent of those recorded; participants in internet-based interest groups may share information that shouldn't be shared, and the possibilities go on. The bottom line, Schoener said, is that “it's fairly hard to be as anonymous as professionals have been all these years, and the same is of course true for our clients.”

This erosion of anonymity leads to a host of potential boundary issues that have yet to be adequately addressed by professionals, their professional associations, or the regulatory boards that oversee practice, Schoener asserted. The issues include more basic “hardware”-type concerns—for example, should professionals own multiple cell phones for personal and professional use? Should professionals block all text messages from clients?—but also beg questions that are not so easily answered, and that have to do with the fundamental relationship between client and provider.

For Schoener, one of those big questions centers on the nature of responsibility in the provider-client relationship, and how technology may be introducing a new dynamic that requires the client to adhere to some standards of confidentiality. “Are we not in an era where the client needs to take on some responsibilities?” Schoener asked. “We're really entering a time when the privacy of the professional is a relevant issue.”

“This is an ideal place for interdisciplinary collaboration,” Schoener said. He urged attendees to begin thinking about ways in which regulatory boards could work not only with professional associations and licensees within a profession, but also the ways in which entire professions could begin collaborating with each other to establish standards and expectations—some of which may have to be extended to clients and patients themselves. The truth of the matter, he added, is that such collaboration is slow in coming, and slow to produce results.

In the meantime, Schoener advised, be aware of the reach of technology, and understand how information you might think is confidential is not so confidential after all. Think about the boundary implications of a Facebook post or blog entry. And if nothing else, he said, “Google yourself.” You may be surprised at what comes up.



Pushing back at the boundaries

The first assumption to make when evaluating the professional who has committed a boundary violation is to assume assumptions won't work.

Think it's possible to follow a single roadmap for effectively evaluating the professional who has committed a boundary violation? Good luck.

Psychological tests? Easily faked. Physical "tells" that indicate lies? No proof that they exist. Honest practitioner disclosures of wrongdoing? Sometimes even the truly repentant can't see how other behaviors are related to the subject at hand. Complainant details? Maybe useful, unless they fill in what they don't really know with guesswork. Personnel records? An unblemished or even stellar personnel file does not necessarily mean that there isn't a pervasive problem beneath the seemingly "isolated" incident.

According to Gary Schoener, featured speaker at the Association of Social Work Boards 2011 Spring Education Meeting, the most effective evaluation of professionals who have crossed boundaries is the evaluation that takes nothing for granted. Instead, he suggested, the evaluator needs to assemble a kind of constellation of data, weighed against clinical judgment and an understanding that almost every assumption around the violation, the practitioner, and even the complainant, needs to be questioned.

Schoener has plenty of experience to back up his comments. As the former Executive Director of the Walk-In Counseling Center in Minneapolis, MN, Schoener has established himself as an internationally-recognized expert on professional boundary issues, as well as the assessment and treatment of violators. Much of his work has involved evaluating practitioners who have been found guilty of committing boundary violations and issuing opinions on what course rehabilitation should take – or whether it's possible at all.

Much of Schoener's presentation focused on dispelling what is erroneously believed to be "common knowledge" about practitioners who violate boundaries. Among these myths: that a boundary violation is a "slippery slope" that will always lead to further violations, or the alternative, that a relatively minor violation usually indicates that the practitioner is relatively problem-free. Particularly in the case of the minor violation, Schoener warned, make no assumptions. "Don't associate a minor offense with a minor problem," he said, adding that, for the evaluator, the verified violation has "opened the door [to] take a hard look at the entire practice."

*from the 2011 ASWB
Spring Education Meeting*

Evaluators need to take in nearly every detail available, while understanding the limits of each, he said. Obviously the reports from complainants are crucial, but the assessor needs to be sure that the complainant isn't leaving out details he or she feels are insignificant, or adding information based on guesswork. Likewise, personnel files, while a necessity in conducting a thorough evaluation, may not reflect serious problems that are just now surfacing in client relationships. The effort to make an accurate evaluation must involve these details, but must also include a thoughtful appraisal of the practitioner's strengths and weaknesses, personality characteristics, and entire range of behaviors—not just those related to client interactions.

And while it is often true that evaluations uncover deeper or more pervasive problems, Schoener said, the assessor also needs to be prepared for what he calls "perfect storm" cases, in which an otherwise stellar professional encounters a client or situation that creates a singular set of circumstances that lead to bad decisions. "These can be people with an unblemished career," Schoener said, "but on a given case, they just plain lose it." The key to making a "perfect storm" determination is to be as comprehensive as possible during the evaluation. And still, Schoener said, there are cases in which the root cause of the problem is simply unable to be found. "About five percent of the time I can't figure out why the offenses occurred," he said.

In the end, Schoener said, the evaluator's primary duty is to be honest—not only about the person being evaluated, but about the limits of the evaluation itself. "Just be aware, all of these things are fallible," he reminded the audience. The evaluator needs to be sure, he said, "and sometimes, you just can't tell" if the practitioner is ready—or will one day be ready—to re-enter practice. Re-evaluation by another assessor should be done in all cases, he said, to guard against evaluations that let a practitioner who's "almost there" re-enter practice. "I can't tell you the number of [evaluators] who have expressed regrets" about approving a practitioner who had not in fact fully arrived at a rehabilitated state, he said.

Schoener also reminded attendees that the evaluations are only as good as the information discovered or disclosed. He said that when details arrive after the fact and he is asked how this changes his evaluation, he replies that as far as he's concerned, the evaluation is no longer valid. "You might as well file my evaluation away as a piece of ancient history," he said, because the additional details essentially rearrange the pattern that was the basis for the initial conclusions.

Finally, Schoener warned against something he called "the myth of the safe environment," in which a practitioner is identified as having a problem, but is allowed to continue to practice under certain restrictions. Schoener asserted that limits do not reduce risk if there is a fundamental lack of trust in the practitioner's ability to respect boundaries. "If you have a practitioner whose behavior you don't trust," he said, "there is no safe environment."



The more things change, the more they...change?

*2009
Foundation
research grant
award winner
Dawn Apgar
has completed
research
on faculty
knowledge
of licensure
and the
examinations.
The news is
mostly good—
and could be
getting even
better in the
future.*

It may not yet be as pervasive as some may prefer, but according to researcher Dawn Apgar, knowledge about social work licensure—and an appreciation of its value—is very much present among social work education program faculty. And opportunities for increasing this knowledge, as well as increasing support for licensure of faculty, may grow as students and recent graduates continue to expect their instructors to know more about licensure—and to be licensed themselves.

These observations were among many shared during Apgar's presentation at the Association of Social Work Boards 2011 Spring Education meeting, held in Vancouver, BC in May. The study she conducted, titled "Understanding the Knowledge and Attitudes of New Jersey Faculty about Social Work Licensure," was funded by the American Foundation for Research and Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation. The Foundation is the research arm of ASWB, and Apgar's research was among three grants awarded in 2009.

*from the 2011 ASWB
Spring Education Meeting*

Apgar explained that originally, her intent was to focus on social work faculty alone through a combination of surveys and focus groups. As she continued her work in 2010, she said, she began to realize that a survey of students and recent graduates could provide a perspective that examined "to what degree did faculty knowledge...translate into knowledge of the students?" In the end, Apgar's study included 41 faculty and 374 student surveys, and a focus group of faculty members—all but one of whom were licensed social workers.

The study was developed to look at faculty members' knowledge of licensure, views about the relationship between licensure and quality of actual practice, perceptions of the role of faculty as disseminators of information on licensure, and finally, beliefs around licensure for faculty members. Apgar acknowledged that any question about licensure of faculty is bound to spark conversation at schools of social work. "If you ever want to stir up anything, go to a faculty meeting and throw that out as a topic," she said. "You'll get quite a bit of feedback."

Apgar administered a true/false questionnaire to faculty, and a similar questionnaire to students and recent graduates attending various ASWB exam prep courses across New Jersey. The true-false quiz was designed to measure basic knowledge about licensure among the two groups. In addition, she asked both groups to fill out surveys stating level of agreement with various statements around licensure.

When it came to basic knowledge, the faculty group did slightly better than the nonfaculty group, with a correct response rate of about 73 percent compared to 65 percent for students/recent grads. Both groups tended to show more knowledge around issues including scope of practice, licensure fees, renewals, continuing education, and clinical supervision. The groups tended to have less consistent knowledge on custody issues and fee-setting.

As for the statements about licensing and the examinations, Apgar's study uncovered both similarities and gaps in how each group rated various statements. Some of the results she shared with attendees included the following:

- **Strong agreement on what it takes to pass the ASWB examinations.** The idea that a “basic knowledge about professional practice and the ability to think critically” are necessary in order to pass the ASWB licensure examination was a statement that generated an 88 percent agreement rate among faculty as well as new professionals.
- **A shared misperception about pass rates.** A majority of both groups (63 percent for faculty, 68 percent for new professionals) thought that most people fail the ASWB Clinical examination on the first attempt. Actually, the 2010 pass rate for the ASWB Clinical examination is 74.6% for first time takers.
- **Disagreement on the equity of licensure.** Just over half (54 percent) of faculty respondents felt that licensure can be obtained “equally by all social workers,” while a much larger majority (84 percent) of students felt this way. According to Apgar, much of the faculty's concerns about equity centered on perceived disparities for access to licensure by social workers whose first language is not English.

The study also asked respondents to evaluate various groups and estimate whether the group in question would have an easier time passing the ASWB examinations. Throughout these questions, responses were similar in both groups, with one exception: faculty seemed to feel that students who have participated in individual counseling would have an easier time with the exam (54 percent, to the new professionals' 35 percent).

The most notable part of this element of the study, according to Apgar, was the “overwhelming perception” that social workers whose first language is not English have a more difficult time becoming licensed than their primarily English-speaking counterparts. Discussions Apgar held in the faculty focus groups further supported this idea, but not for the reasons typically associated with ESL. “It had less to do about the reading level [of the examinations],” she said, “and a lot to do about cultural context.” Apgar said that there was a perception among faculty and new professionals that, among other things, the licensure examination questions did not adequately reflect the ways in which cultural factors could affect social work practice.

Finally, Apgar's study touched on perceptions about faculty as disseminators of information, as well as the overall value of licensure, and whether faculty should be licensed.

The results seemed to indicate that as disseminators of information, faculty have a bit higher opinion of their effectiveness than do the professionals who have completed (or nearly completed) their programs. The groups showed a 14 percent difference in agreement with a statement asserting that the institution adequately prepares students for passing the licensure examinations, with faculty agreeing at 74 percent rate, and new professionals registering 60 percent agreement. Similarly, 58 percent of faculty agreed with the statement "students at my institution learn everything that they need to know before graduating about how to become licensed," with only 35 percent of new professionals indicating that they felt the same.

More consistent—and stronger—agreement was found when it came to ideas about the value of licensure in general. Consistent and high agreement—ranging from the high 70s to high 80s—was demonstrated around statements about how licensure "legitimizes" the social work profession in the eyes of other professionals, how it does the same for consumers, and how it provides client protection. Agreement began to vary somewhat on whether licensure ensures that social workers stay current in the field (71 percent of faculty agreed; 81 percent of new professionals thought that was true). The groups went their separate ways, however, when it came to agreement with the idea that licensure "provides...specific guidelines" to help social workers "make appropriate practice decisions." That statement met with agreement by 81 percent of new professionals, while 68 percent of faculty felt the same.

Less strong—although relatively consistent—agreement was indicated with statements about licensure's ability to reduce unethical practice, its role in greater job opportunities, and its costs. However, faculty and new professionals did show a significant level of difference in perceptions about whether licensure "results in higher pay for social workers," with only 29 percent of faculty agreeing, and 61 percent of new professionals doing the same.

Some of the strongest differences in perception occurred on issues of faculty licensure, Apgar noted. Her study revealed some wide gaps in whether MSW and BSW level faculty should be licensed, with 86 percent of new professionals believing licensure should be required of instructors teaching at the MSW level, and 73 percent supporting the same idea at the BSW level. Among faculty, support for licensure was considerably lower, with only 49 percent of respondents supporting this requirement for MSW instructors, and 39 percent feeling the same way about BSW instructors.

Apgar suggested that creating more support for licensure among faculty may require a different tack than the typical approach used—particularly in those jurisdictions in which faculty are not required to be licensed. Apgar said that her work indicated "strong support among licensees and students [for licensure as] public protection, but

that doesn't resonate with faculty.” Instead, she asserted, licensing boards, ASWB, and other groups should promote licensing as the “gold star” in the profession—an indication that the licensee is committed to competent, ethical service, and understands the importance of professional accountability in all areas of practice, including the social work classroom. Apgar’s presentation slides can be downloaded from the ASWB website at www.aswb.org.



More to be done?

The most recent spring meeting was a success—if for no other reason than the way it showed how much more there is to learn.

Evaluations of the Spring Education Meeting, “Furry Vengeance: How Regulators Deal with Fuzzy Boundary Issues,” indicated that participants left the meeting knowing quite a bit more about both regulation and boundaries. But audience members also indicated that they would like to know even more, asking for more in-depth sessions on topics, more discussion, and further exploration.

The session of the movie-themed meeting that drew the most, and strongest, responses was “Eat, Pray, Regulate.” Some evaluators felt it was one of the best such presentations they had seen, while others felt a stronger link to regulation was needed. There were comments that the panel presentations were uneven and some were unfocused. One speaker who stood out was Delmar Stone, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Executive Director in both Oregon and Idaho, who talked about conscience clauses and the need to guard against laws that violate social work ethics. *from the 2011 ASWB Spring Education Meeting*

Comments also praised the use of two attorneys with expertise in regulation, ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson and Richard Silver, legal counsel for the Québec board, to make follow-up comments on many of the sessions.

The highest number of the “4” rating for aspects of each session (ratings were 1 – 4, with 4 the highest) was tallied by the “CSI Vancouver” session on investigating and assessing boundary issues. Gary R. Schoener, Director of Consultation and Training for the Walk-In Counseling Center in Minneapolis, was the main speaker, followed by the two attorneys, and then a question session for all of them. A total of 75 participants felt it was worthy of the “4” mark in one category, “Speakers were well-prepared,” and the only fairly low marks came for “information was new to me.”

The main reservation that the audience seemed to have toward this segment was in the final learning objective. It was not a great deal lower than the others, but comments backed up the opinions that the objective to “Understand the steps to take in investigating boundary violations of various descriptions” was not quite reached. One person remarked that it was “good, but not the topic advertised; more about evaluation and rehab of the professional.”

Schoener was praised as an engaging and well-versed speaker, and the video clips he used “truly illustrated boundary violators,” one

evaluator said. Another person noted “I’d like a full day, and some solutions.”

The evaluations summed up the introductory session, “Going Rogue: When Professionals Cross Boundaries,” as “a great introduction to the topic—engaging, informative, professional,” with an outstanding job and preparation by Program and Education Committee Chair Dorinda Noble. Some commentors would have liked it to be longer than the one-hour format. A video that was used to frame the presentation was found by one Canadian attendee to be a bad fit, because “we have universal health care so no fund-raising is needed.”

“The Social (Work) Network: Boundary Issues with Relationships and Technology” may have been the most daunting foray into the development of regulatory issues. Schoener, and later Noble, Atkinson and Silver talked about the growing incursion of social media into both personal and professional relationships, pointing out horrifying numbers of possible pitfalls. People again asked for solutions, and one comment noted that “This is a critical and overwhelming issue. I’m not any less scared after this presentation but have even more information to justify my anxiety.” There were several calls for ASWB to provide more information as well as leadership in setting standards.

Representatives of ASWB collaborated with those from NASW to produce a small booklet, *Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice*, in 2005, but that preceded most of the social media development.

Conference-goers also appreciated “Law and Order: Strategies to Help Regulators Keep Emotional and Mental Order as They Uphold the Law.” A skit that introduced it was called “a lot of fun and a nice way to illustrate the point of how different views and biases affect people.” Although the “information new to me” category indicated that this wasn’t breaking new ground, one evaluator felt “it is a good thing to review it, reengage in discussion to remind us of challenges and continue reflection to improve the work of our board.”

The issue of regulatory bodies versus professional associations came up, and met with the usual controversy. Again, participants found “Lots of depth still to be explored here” and suggested “next spring meeting?”

The final presentation, “The Secret Life of the Licensee—Testing and Licensure” was a summary of the last ASWB practice analysis, as well as a report of research done under a grant from the association’s foundation. Some found the information on the exam too detailed, but most appreciated it. The research, by Dawn Hall Apgar, was on social work faculty attitudes toward licensure. It interested the audience, many of whom would like to see it expanded.



Closing the window on free exams

The success of ASWB's free exam program means a new AG test can be launched next year. Now it's up to boards to use the exam appropriately.

The window that provided free Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Advanced Generalist examinations is now ready to close, marking the next phase of the process that will result in new tests in 2012. The new tests, more focused on advanced non-clinical practice, will be supported by a newly-adopted ASWB policy stating that the association will stand behind the legal defensibility of its examinations only when they are used appropriately.

The change will have implications for some social work regulatory boards. Although numbers have been decreasing, several states still allow candidates to choose either the Advanced Generalist or Clinical exam for licensing direct-practice clinical social workers—an area of practice knowledge the new Advanced Generalist examination is not designed to measure. At its meeting in May, the ASWB Board of Directors voted to reinforce this difference by being more explicit about the defensibility of ASWB tests when not used for their intended populations.

For many years, ASWB has offered two kinds of examinations for social workers with an MSW and at least two years of post-degree supervised experience: the Clinical examination, targeted at social workers with direct-practice clinical experience, and the Advanced Generalist, targeted at social workers with experience in non-direct, administrative or macro settings. The most recent practice analysis results supported the development of more distinct content for the Advanced Generalist and Clinical examinations—so distinct, in fact, that ASWB decided to delay implementation of the new Advanced Generalist examination for a year, in order to gather test data to accommodate the changes. All other ASWB examinations debuted new content outlines beginning January of 2011.

To ensure that enough data would be collected to launch the new Advanced Generalist examinations in 2012, ASWB offered free Advanced Generalist examinations to any candidate testing between January and June 30 of this year. In exchange for the free test, candidates were required to answer 260 questions, rather than the standard 170—and were allowed an additional two hours to do it. The additional questions were nonscored “pretest” questions that are being evaluated for future use on the 2012 tests.

Now nearing the end of the six month window, ASWB has collected sufficient data to move ahead. For the rest of 2011, candidates taking the Advanced Generalist examination will be required to pay the standard \$260 fee and take a four-hour, 170-question test. These tests, like those administered prior to July 1 of this year, will follow the same blueprint

in place since 2004. Content changes will not go into effect until 2012, and will not affect the length of the exam, or time allowed to take it.

The related policy changes reflect an ongoing effort by ASWB to more strongly encourage careful use of each of its examinations. This effort has been more actively pursued since 2008 when the ASWB Delegate Assembly approved a resolution empowering the ASWB Board of Directors to take whatever steps necessary to ensure the ongoing validity of the examinations through appropriate administration. Earlier work was focused on the elimination of state provisions that allowed examinations to be taken without candidate pre-approval by a regulatory board. The association was successful in getting member boards to adopt these changes, and will now be working to help regulators understand the importance of matching the correct examination to each level of licensure offered.



A rare opportunity

Nomination deadlines for ASWB board member and staff award are fast approaching. Help the association recognize a fellow regulator.

Since 2002, the Association of Social Work Boards has given two annual awards to honor people who are too rarely thanked, much less given awards. The Sunny Andrews Award and the Administrators Award winners are chosen by the Board of Directors from nominations sent in by board members, staff and others.

Deadline for nominating forms is July 31 every year, since decisions are made during the August board meeting.

Board volunteers nominated for the Sunny Andrews Award, named for a former president, should have shown great commitment to board service to their individual boards, not to ASWB. The same standards apply to the Administrators Award.

The form that is filled out for a nominee asks for a description of service in one or more of the following areas: Promoting the ethical, responsible, and effective functioning of a member board; facilitating a fair, efficient and responsible process for legal regulation in a member jurisdiction; or educating the public and profession on legal regulation. There can be up to two winners each year in each category.

In 2010, winners of the Sunny Andrews Award were Marcia Heitz of Illinois and Claude Leblond of Québec. Other past winners are:

2002: Evelyn Seaton of Oklahoma and Jane Anker of South Carolina

2003: Mary Burke of Maryland and Doug Knight of Wisconsin

2004: Dan Wheelan of Rhode Island

2005: Taylor Aultman of Louisiana and Patrick Wolberd of Montana

2006: David Neal of Michigan

2007: Jonathan Ball of New York

2008: Jeannie McGuire of Texas and Jacqueline Shellington of Louisiana

2009: Sheila Renaud-Finnegan of New Hampshire and Jerry Satterwhite of Alabama

There was only one winner chosen last year for the Administrators Award—Susan Foster of Florida. Other past winners are:

2002: Elizabeth Buys of Oregon

2003: Alison MacDonald of Alberta and Suzanne Pevey of Louisiana

2004: Suzanne McKenna of New Brunswick

2005: Emily Efferson of Louisiana and Vanessa Beauchamp of Missouri

2006: Ben Foster of Virginia

2007: Troylene Jones of Arkansas and Debra Rinaudo of Arizona

2008: Carol Tellinghuisen of South Dakota and Rose Tuana of Nevada

2009: Micki Lilly of North Carolina and Kate Zacher-Pate of Minnesota



A summary of the work of the ASWB Board of Directors at its May 14, 2011 meeting

*From the
ASWB Board of
Directors*

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Board of Directors met in-person on Thursday, May 14 at the Westin Bayshore hotel in Vancouver, BC. Following is a recap of the activities of the board at the meeting.

Financial report: Board members reviewed 2010 year-end financial statements, as well as financial statements for the first quarter of 2011.

Check signing authority: As proposed by the ASWB Finance Committee, the Board of Directors voted to designate the ASWB Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director with check-signing authority, and remove the ASWB Treasurer from this list. This change was made because of more restrictive bank policies on check-signing authority identification, as well as to reflect current practice.

Exam/legal defense reserve fund goal: As proposed by the ASWB Finance Committee, the Board of Directors voted to increase the goal for ASWB's Exam/Legal Defense reserve fund from \$2 million to \$5 million.

Draft audit report: The Board of Directors reviewed the draft audit report for ASWB.

Strategic planning update: Board received report on progress of various strategic planning initiatives at the Association office level.

New Board Member Training evaluations: Board members reviewed attendee evaluations from the ASWB New Board Member Training session held in March.

Support of legal defensibility of examinations: Board members approved a change to ASWB policy that clarifies the association's position that it will support the legal defensibility of the ASWB examinations only when use is consistent with policy and the current practice analysis.

ESL arrangements policy: Board members approved changes to the ASWB policy on arrangements for candidates whose first language is not English (ESL) that reflect current practices around shipping dictionaries, as well as the kinds of dictionaries permitted.

Examination program reports: Board members received reports on test administration, testing program transition to Pearson VUE, score reporting, study guides/practice examinations, item writing program, and activities related to individual jurisdictions.

Executive session: Board members met with a representative from Pearson VUE in closed session.

Association office report: Board members received reports on personnel, equipment, ACE, the Social Work Registry, Massachusetts applications, CE audits, the Public Protection Database, and other products, as well as reports on visits to individual jurisdictions and involvement with and activities of other groups.

Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) conference: Board members received a report on the most recent social work Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) conference. ASWB sponsored a break at the conference, and gave a presentation on the social work examinations.

National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW): Board members received a report on the most recent conference of NABSW. ASWB volunteers led a presentation on licensure and the social work examinations.

NASW joint workgroup: ASWB will be participating with NASW in a joint workgroup to develop supervision guidelines.

NASW chapter exhibits: ASWB had exhibit booths at the NASW DC metro chapter conference as well as the New Jersey chapter conference. In the fall, ASWB will have booths at the Illinois and Pennsylvania NASW chapter conferences.

CASW update: Board members discussed the current status of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW).



Prepare to Dual

**By Dale Atkinson,
Partner, Atkinson
& Atkinson**

The compassion with which most practitioners approach their professions and the desire to provide effective services are underlying principles of practicing licensees. Indeed, this enthusiasm and emotion may in fact dictate the choice of a particular career. But the desire to help must be pursued within the context of the professional relationship, where progress of treatment is paramount.

As readers know, licensees are governed by ethics and boundaries when providing professional services. Licensees must be aware of the demarcation between professional services and behavior that compromises the relationship, behavior often driven by a desire to assist in ways that extend above and beyond recognized boundaries. Consider the following:

A Master's degreed social worker (licensee) was licensed by the Arizona State Board of Behavioral Health Examiners (Board). Soon after the issuance of her license, the licensee began working for a company that provided behavioral health and related services. In particular, the licensee acted as a clinical liaison with clinical oversight of her clients' behavioral health needs. In June 2005, the licensee reported herself to the Board for engaging in a dual relationship with a 19 year old male client. Due to numerous conflicts with his mother, the client moved out of the home and was sleeping in a park. According to the licensee, the client refused to stay in a shelter.

Based on the potential risks associated with living in the park, the licensee allowed the client to stay at her home for four days. This accommodation of her client caused the licensee to self report her actions to the Board. The licensee also resigned from her job shortly before making the report to the Board.

Several months later, in March 2006, the client contacted the licensee and informed her he had violated his court ordered probation. The licensee alerted law enforcement, and police apprehended the client. The client was placed in intensive probation, with one condition of the probation being that he receive mental health services.

Without performing a new assessment, the licensee created a "treatment plan" for the client. This plan included having the client



reside with the licensee's family, enroll in a community college, receive therapy, undergo random urinalyses, and quit smoking.

In August 2006, the licensee made an unscheduled visit to the probation officer to discuss the client's treatment plan and his release. Upset that the probation officer had not yet acted on the treatment plan, the licensee said "I'm so angry I want to take you down." This incident was reported to the Board by the probation officer and supervisor.

The Board issued a Notice of Hearing regarding both the self reported incident and the probation officer incident, alleging unprofessional conduct as defined under three sections of the Arizona statutes, including:

1. Engaging in a dual relationship with a client that could impair the licensee's objectivity or professional judgment or create a risk of harm to the client. A.R.S. section 32-3251(12)(y);

2. engaging in conduct that impairs the ability of the licensee to safely and competently practice under A.R.S. section 32-3251(12)(l); and

3. engaging in conduct that is contrary to recognized standards of ethics, or that constitutes a danger to the health, welfare, or safety of a client under A.R.S. section 32-3251(12)(k).

The matter proceeded to a hearing after which the administrative law judge (ALJ) determined that the licensee violated sections (12)(y) and (12)(l), but not section (12)(k). The Board adopted the findings of the ALJ and suspended her license for six months, imposed a 24 month probation period, along with a psychological evaluation, successful completion of an ethics course and payment of investigative costs. The licensee appealed the matter to the Superior Court which affirmed the decision of the Board. An appeal to the Court of Appeals followed.

On appeal, the licensee argued, among additional procedural defenses, that the statute defining unprofessional conduct under section (12)(y) was unconstitutionally vague. The licensee also argued that section (12)(l) was unconstitutional in that it allows for the imposition of sanctions for conduct that lacks a "nexus" to client care. Further, the licensee argued that the evidence did not support the findings of the Board and that the disciplinary sanctions were disproportionate to her conduct.

Regarding the allegations that section (12)(y) was unconstitutionally vague, the court first noted the presumption of validity of a statute and that a challenging party must establish invalidity "beyond a reasonable doubt." In order for a statute to be invalidated for vagueness, it must be shown to be "so vague and standardless that it leaves the public uncertain as to the conduct it prohibits." More specifically, a statute may be deemed unconstitutional under the due process clause if it "fails to give a person of ordinary intelligence a reasonable opportunity to know what is prohibited, or if it allows for arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement by failing to supply objective standards to those charged with enforcing or applying it."

Noting that due process does not require "perfect notice, absolute precision, or impossible standards", the court stated that as long as the statute gives fair notice it is not void for vagueness "simply because it is

difficult to determine how far one can go before violating it.” Under this section (12)(y), the licensee argued that the statute was unconstitutional because it authorized administrative sanctions for conduct that “could” impair the licensee’s objectivity or professional judgment. Rejecting this claim, the court held that the licensee was disciplined not because her conduct might impair her professional judgment or objectivity, but because her conduct did, in fact, seriously impair her judgment. It further held that unprofessional conduct using language such as “could impair” or “is or might be harmful or dangerous” to a client can withstand constitutional scrutiny under the due process clause.

The court also addressed the licensee’s argument that a nexus must exist between the conduct and the clients served. The court held that in this case, the youth served was a client of the licensee in both cases of the dual relationship. The necessary nexus existed and justified the findings of the Board.

The court also found that substantial evidence supported the findings of the Board and that there were no procedural infirmities which merited a reversal of the administrative rulings. Finally, the court held that the sanctions imposed were not disproportionate to the conduct, but were well within the range of penalties specified for the offense. Accordingly, the appellate court affirmed the lower court and upheld the findings and sanctions imposed on the licensee.

Ambiguities within statutes can be drafted to ensure that boards of social work maintain flexibility to administratively prosecute licensees for wrongdoings that fall under the general phrase of unprofessional conduct. While practitioners may have the added enthusiasm of helping their clients, boundary violations remain and must be enforced to protect the integrity of the professional relationship.

Norton v. Arizona State Board of Behavioral Health Examiners,
2011 WL 704891 (App. Ct. AZ 2011)

Dale Atkinson is a partner with the Illinois law firm that is counsel to ASWB. He is also executive director of the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB).



Licensure on the home front

Several state legislatures are requiring licensure by endorsement for spouses of military personnel. It could make life easier for some, but what about public protection?

**By Bobbie Hartman
ASWB Publications
and Web Applications
Coordinator**

For any licensed professional, moving from state to state in the US can be a headache. With very few exceptions, most professions require the licensee to apply for a license in their new state. The applicant submits documentation, transcripts, and exam scores to the new regulatory board and waits for the wheels of regulation to crank out a new license. It's a hassle for professionals who relocate voluntarily, but it can be career-ending for spouses of military personnel, who may be expected to complete the same process every two or three years. Often, less than a year after the process is completed, new orders come down and the licensee has to start over again in a new state.

As active duty personnel are transferred from one military installation to another, the "trailing spouse" who is in a licensed profession is required to meet requirements in the new jurisdiction. Often, the trailing spouse is unable to find professional employment for weeks or months as the paperwork is processed.

With 33 percent of military spouses holding some sort of professional licensure, there has been growing support for laws and policies to ease those transitions. This spring, 15 state legislatures passed laws aimed specifically at making professional licensure easier for military spouses.

Seven states—Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Carolina, New York, and Texas—have passed laws that require boards to give military spouses licensure by endorsement (some of these are still awaiting governors' signatures), barring some compelling reason against it. Eight others have created special temporary licenses that will allow spouses of active duty military personnel to continue their careers while they complete the licensing application process. These laws were passed in Alaska, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee. Utah allows military spouses to use out-of-state licenses, and Virginia will reinstate licenses for military spouses who return to the state after moving elsewhere.

From the perspective of US military personnel and their families, these efforts seem like a no-brainer. After all, most states waive in-state licensure for federal employees, in and out of uniform. And support for such measures is coming straight from the top: President Obama released a directive earlier this year to make a government-wide effort to support military families, and First Lady Michelle Obama is mounting a parallel public awareness campaign.

*from the
staff*

Social work regulatory boards, however, have another constituency to be concerned about: the public. The board's primary responsibility, as always, is to ensure that licenses are issued only to social workers who can practice competently and safely. That responsibility does not disappear when the applicant is married to a member of the military.

While social work licensure by endorsement—or some substantially similar variation—does take place under certain circumstances, it can become difficult when boards have different standards. A licensed clinical social worker in Mississippi, for example, is required to have 1,000 hours of supervised practice. If that same social worker is relocated to Maryland, the comparable license requires 3,000 hours of supervised practice. In this situation, the easiest path might be for the MS social worker to apply for MD licensure as a Licensed Graduate Social Worker (a masters-level license) instead—provided the social worker has passed the required examination. The additional supervision requirements would not be an issue, but the social worker would be required to practice under a different, less clinical scope, potentially missing out on professional advancement and increased income that often comes with the clinical license. At best, this kind of choice can cause a social worker's career to stall; at worst, it can derail the career long-term.

The State Liaison and Educational Opportunity Office is an arm of the Department of Defense that focuses on military community and family policy. In a statement this spring about the new legislation, the State Liaison Office expressed a clear preference for the endorsement option, and it's easy to see why licensed professionals would agree.

From a regulatory perspective, though, there is a stronger case to be made for the temporary or provisional license, which allows a licensed professional from another state to find employment and practice professionally for a period of six months or a year, while completing the application process and meeting any additional requirements for in-state licensure. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Model Act contains temporary practice language that allows for a 30-day practice period, provided the social worker's "home" license has requirements that are "substantially similar" to those in the state allowing the temporary practice. The provision was designed primarily as model language to address internet-based practice or practice in response to a disaster or other emergency.

With three ongoing military conflicts on top of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, U.S. service members and their families have a lot to worry about. Efforts to make professional licenses easier to transfer would mean one less thing to focus on when faced with a new assignment. For regulators, the issue is a more complicated. Add this to an already-lengthy list of balancing acts faced by social work boards—supporting military families when they need it most while simultaneously ensuring that those receiving social work services are getting competent, safe care.



Learning how to write right

*The newest
ASWB test item
writers are
trained and
ready to roll.*

The newest class of social workers who will be writing items for the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) licensing examination reflects the association's focus on diversity, and its tradition of recruiting people who are committed to social work and public protection.

In all, 21 social workers, selected from a large pool of applicants from the United States and Canada, participated in the two and a half day training, held June 24-26 in Crystal City, VA. The training sessions help to orient the new writers not only to finer points of writing test questions, but to the entire examination program, and ASWB itself. The writers were selected based on performance on a screening document as well as areas of expertise and potential to provide a diverse perspective in the item development program.

Trainees for this year were: Heather Brame (CA), Ken Campbell (BC), Terry Cluse-Tolar (OH), Cynthia Costello (MA), Amy Faben-Wade (NY), Theodore Fletcher (CA), Amelia Franck-Meyer (MN), Fran Franklin (DE), Nancy Grobarek (IL), Sharon Issurdat (MD), Steven Johnson (KY), Linda Lipscomb (CA), Tracy Mims (MS), Christine Neighbors (CA), Roxroy Reid (NM), Sheila Rinaud-Finnegan (NH), Haidy Shenouda (AB), Greta Slater (IN), Bora Sunseri (LA), Chris Walker (AL), and Kimberly White (WV).

Each year, ASWB trains a class of 20-25 subject matter experts to join its network of writers across Canada and the United States. The recruiting process for 2012 is set to begin in fall of this year, with final selections made in spring of 2012. Application information will be available on the ASWB website.



The 2011 ASWB Item Writer Training class. Seated, from left: Cynthia Costello (MA), Linda Lipscomb (CA), Chris Walker (AL), Haidy Shenouda (AB), Bora Sunseri (LA). Middle row, from left: Terry Cluse-Tolar (OH), Amy Faben-Wade (NY), Sharon Issurdat (MD), Heather Brame (CA), Christine Neighbors (CA), Amelia Franck-Meyers (MN), Fran Franklin (DE), Greta Slater (IN), Sheila Rinaud-Finnegan (NH), Tracy Mims (MS). Back row, from left: Theodore Fletcher (CA), Ken Campbell (BC), Roxroy Reid (NM), Kim White (WV), and Steven Johnson (KY).



Minnesota board may be shut down

A far-reaching government shutdown may bring the board's work to a halt

With a government shutdown looming as of this writing, the Minnesota Board of Social Work is not only preparing for a halt to its activities, but is also attempting to handle a rush of work coming from applicants and others who are trying to get things taken care of before the July 1 doomsday.

The shutdown—which seemed imminent during the last week of June—is anticipated to be far-reaching, and could affect operations and services ranging from state parks to various judicial and law enforcement services. Although the shutdown would not affect services “that affect life, health, and personal safety,” the actual determination of what would be covered under those descriptions is left to the courts. Fights over these potential court decisions are already taking place.

In a June 13 memo to the public, applicants, and licensees, Minnesota board administrator Kate Zacher Pate warned that “most or all of our operations may be suspended” on July 1, and that the board may not be able to grant new licenses to any new applicants or renew any licenses. “No Board staff will be available for communication with applicants, licensees, or the public,” she wrote.

Like most state government agencies in the state, the social work board has experienced a significant increase in calls, emails, and other activities in the weeks leading up to the shutdown. Communications from the board staff now includes a warning that the board is experiencing a high volume of inquiries, and will attempt to respond as soon as possible.

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) will continue to register all applicants who have been approved to test by the Minnesota Board, and is prepared to assist the board with any administrative tasks that may be necessary in the wake of the shutdown.



The time is now for research

ASWB's research foundation has put out a call for a new round of proposals. This time, up to \$50k may be awarded.

With its first round of grant projects in various stages of completion, the Association of Social Work Board's (ASWB) research arm is preparing to fund another series. This time around, the American Foundation for Research and Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation has expanded both the range of research topics it will consider as well as the amount of funding available.

For the 2011 round, \$50,000 in funding will be made available, including a \$5,000 award reserved for currently enrolled MSW or doctoral social work students. Funding opportunities were announced in early May, with an official call for proposals issued later that month. Applicants have until July 31 to submit proposals.

During its last funding cycle, the Foundation identified five research topic areas for potential funding, areas that included social work supervision, complaints against social workers, continuing education models, and knowledge and understanding of licensure. This time around, the Foundation board, through its advisory committee, elected to leave potential subject areas open-ended to encourage a wide range of proposals.

The \$50,000 in funding will be divided into four awards: one \$10,000 grant for research to be completed in 12 months; one \$10,000 grant for research to be completed in 18 months; one \$25,000 grant for research to be completed in 24 months; and one \$5,000 grant for a nine-month research project by a student currently enrolled in doctoral social work or MSW program. Social work faculty, students, and members or staff of regulatory boards are eligible to apply.

Like its 2009 predecessor, the 2011 program is intended to help establish a body of research on issues central to social work professional regulation. Grants in 2009 were awarded for research on access to social work supervision in rural areas of Minnesota, knowledge of licensure and the social work examinations among social work program students and faculty in New Jersey, and a study of patterns of complaints and discipline among social workers across the United States. The first grant project completed—Dr. Dawn Hall Apgar's study of licensure knowledge—was presented to ASWB members at the 2011 ASWB Spring Education Meeting, May 12-14 in Vancouver (see related story in this issue of association news).

Detailed information on the program, as well as applications and other information, are available for download at www.aswb.org.



An innovative leader steps down

*CSWE's
Julia Watkins
has announced
her coming
retirement in
2012.*

After eight years as executive director of the Council on Social Work Education, Julia Watkins has announced her retirement from the position, effective June 30, 2012. During her tenure with CSWE, Watkins helped to create strong working relationships between her organization, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), and many other organizations in the social work community.

The official announcement of Watkins' retirement was made by CSWE President Mit Joyner, who called the departure of Watkins "an incredible loss" for the council. Joyner described Watkins as a "dynamic, charismatic, innovative leader" and "a friend to all of us in social work education and the profession."

"Julia Watkins helped to set a tone of open communication and cooperation both inside CSWE and with other organizations," said ASWB Executive Director Donna DeAngelis. "Through calm persistence, she was able to achieve many changes that have benefitted CSWE and social work education in general, and she has been instrumental in the very productive relationship that has developed between CSWE and ASWB."

The departure will also mark a change in the position's title, according to Joyner. Bylaws changes adopted by the group in 2010 will alter the name of the position, from Executive Director to President of the organization. Joyner stated that Dr. Alberto Godenzi, dean of the Graduate School of Social Work at Boston College, will be chairing the search committee for Watkins' replacement.



Association Asides

JERRY SATTERWHITE of Alabama was a volunteer working for the relief effort following the terrible spring tornado onslaught in his state. The former VA chief and Alabama board chair found himself in “bulk distribution”—dispatching trailer trucks of supplies wherever they were needed. He said the tornadoes went ten miles north and south of where he lives; the one that went through Tuscaloosa, about 50 miles from him, was a mile wide and stayed on the ground for more than 80 miles.

Another Alabama resident in the heart of the storm’s swath was **TERESA YOUNG** of the Nominating Committee and the Approved Continuing Education Committee (ACE). She emailed quite a while after the events that she and her son were at home in Hartselle, and “This is the first access I’ve had to the Internet since the tornado. “There was still no electricity at her house, so she had gone to a friend’s to charge her phone and laptop. Her apartment in Tuscaloosa, where she is working toward her doctorate, lost part of its roof, and there were broken windows in the building. She said she lives next to “the area that you are seeing on CNN.” A BSW student at the University of Alabama was killed, and “all of the trees and most of the houses and businesses between my apartment complex and the campus are just gone! It looks like a war zone.”

MARIA CARROLL of Delaware stopped by the ASWB office on her way home from a conference in Atlanta. The former ACE chair stayed for dinner in Culpeper with **JENNIFER WARD**, the association’s ACE coordinator.

DARRELL ALLMAN, an Alaska board member for the past seven years, has accepted a new position within the Department of Veterans Affairs that will take him from the cold north back to his childhood home of West Virginia. In leaving the board and ASWB, he sent a thank you and best wishes to the association. “I wish continued development and growth of the Association as it supports the boards in their service of the public and social work profession.” He did note that spring had been less than totally welcoming where he is now located, Weston, WV. It had rained a lot, he said—but “you don’t have to shovel it.”

It’s not something everyone can do—preside as president over a board meeting while one’s first grandbaby is being born. But **AMANDA DUFFY RANDALL** did it in Vancouver, fairly calmly, and then looked at her cellphone and announced that **WILLIAM** had arrived in Omaha at 11 a.m. She did fly home early, and sent back a photo of the happy grandmother with the infant.

The Vancouver meeting took place on traditional First Nations Squamish land, and in fact there was a village not far away. **IAN CAMPBELL**, chief of the Squamish Nation, gave a very warm welcome to the association there. He

also proved that while he has a sense of humor, although it can be a bit, well, a lot, politically incorrect. His brief but effective remarks about the past history of the First Nations people and their struggle to retain their identity and culture were followed by this awful pun: “Our word for adaptation is injun-nuity.”



The reception in Vancouver hosted by the British Columbia College of Social Workers was a great treat for spring meeting participants; the food was so exceptional that it turned out to be an entire dinner for many attendees. BC folks there included former board member **DEBBY JONES**, now on the ASWB Examination Committee, and her family. For purposes of a photo op, she expanded the family to include ASWB IT Manager **DAN SHEEHAN**. **DEBBY** and **DAN** are sure there’s a family connection—**DEBBY** was a **SHEEHAN** before she was married, and **DAN**’s family migrated through Canada at some point.

British Columbia’s Stanley Park is as wonderful as its advance description. The old trees, the abundant flowers, the harbor—and one of the best parts is a statue of the man it was named for. **LORD STANLEY** was governor general of Canada in the late 1880s AND was the originator of hockey’s Stanley Cup. The park was dedicated in 1888, and the inscribed dedication reads “To the use of people of all creeds, colours and customs, for all time.” Except maybe after the Vancouver Canucks lose the Stanley Cup to the Boston Bruins.

JOYCE WESTPHAL of Iowa spent her birthday with ASWB on the Saturday of the spring meeting.

Great role-play during the session on “Law and order: Strategies to help regulators keep emotional and mental order as they uphold the law.” It featured **DORINDA NOBLE**, **WADE TYLER** and **MICHAEL HICKERSON**. As they agitated over doing their duty, **WADE**, who is from Louisiana, remarked that he was “gonna talk to that Richard guy”—**RICHARD SILVER**, the social worker/lawyer from Québec—“but he talks funny, and I don’t think it’s Cajun, either.”

SUSAN IRWIN stayed a bit extra in her job as registrar with the BC board just so she could help host ASWB. **LIZ JONES** capped off the meeting by presenting her with thanks from the college and with flowers. **SUSAN**, who has held her position for 11 years, said it had been her privilege to work with “wonderful colleagues” over the years. She’s been very involved with the association, and will be missed well beyond BC.

DICK HEITZ, the congenial husband of **MARCIA** from Illinois, was assigned to lead the way to the boat tour landing spot from the hotel for the Saturday outing in Vancouver, since he had already scoped it out. But he was disappointed when the group refused to obey “Simon says”-type commands to jump on one foot and the like.

MARCIA wrote that they made good use of the trip to Vancouver. Stayed over, went to Vancouver Island, took the train to Whistler and then a float plane ride over the glaciers. They had a wonderful time, she said, then went home and took in a Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top concert. They had sixth row seats; the ear doctor says the steroids should take care of the hearing loss soon—really!

Because the boat tour was three hours, of course there had to be singing about “A three-hour tour; a three-hour tour.” There were the very young who don’t watch reruns of *Gilligan’s Island* and didn’t get it, but **RONNIE SAUNDERS** of Indiana, certainly one of the youth corps, knew the words and helped **MICHAEL HICKERSON** and **TERESA YOUNG** get them right.

The hotel in Vancouver was hosting graduation festivities constantly during the spring meeting. One particular school apparently had a high roller or two attending—there was a Bentley parked out front. Apparently no one felt up to telling the owner that it should be moved. Those who couldn’t resist posing with it included the various bellmen, and Saskatchewan administrator **RICHARD HAZEL**—who looked pretty natural.



Director at Large **MARY MACOMBER** had to miss the spring meeting because of severe eye problems her husband **DON** was experiencing. She reported back at the end of the month that things were better, but visits to the eye doc were continuing and it was still an ongoing battle.

Another board administrator is moving on—**VALERIE JONES** of Indiana has decided to be a stay-at-home mom for a while, while she decides where to go next with her career. **VALERIE**, an attorney, served a term on the ASWB Board of Directors in the seat designated for board staff, and was a valued member.

The new president of the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers is **BARB WHITENECT**, taking over from **KARINE LEVESQUE**. **BARB** is beginning a two-year term as president, after serving two terms as vice-president.

And, saving the worst for last—**ROD ADACHI**, the Alberta registrar, is resigning effective Oct. 31. In announcing this, he pointed out that it’s been 16 years, “so I made the decision to move on before I go beyond my ‘best before’ date.” **ROD** is pretty much always best.