



ASWB Regulatory Brief

Cultural competence requirements

ASWB conducted research to explore how cultural competence is addressed in social work regulations. ASWB reviewed information for 62 jurisdictions including the 10 Canadian provinces, 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Research was collected through a review of statutes, administrative rules, related documents, and by contacting regulatory staff directly. Applicable citations are provided where appropriate. An appendix with summary charts of the enclosed information is available at the end of the document. For more information about a specific jurisdiction’s regulatory requirements, ASWB maintains links to all of [the websites of U.S. and Canadian social work regulatory boards](#) and [applicable laws](#). Use the links provided or visit www.aswb.org.

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1. Overview

Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (National Association of Social Work (NASW) Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice). ASWB Research identified 30 jurisdictions which address cultural competence in one or more areas of their regulatory frameworks. Areas where the issue is addressed are identified in Table 1 and include: a required content area in continuing education; as referenced in social worker practice and professional conduct standards; as part of applicant education requirements; and as a requirement for social workers in the provision of services. Additionally 6 states were identified with cultural competence requirements in a related health field.

1. Cultural Competence Requirements	
AREA	# JURISDICTIONS
Continuing education	10
Alaska, Arizona, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island	
Practice standards	9
Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Nova Scotia, Oklahoma, West Virginia	
Professional conduct standards	13
Alabama, British Columbia, Kentucky, Newfoundland/Labrador, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Prince Edward Island, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming	
Applicant education	3
California, Minnesota, Virginia	
SW services definition	1
Nevada	

2. CE & Cultural Competence	
Licensee Requirement	
Alaska	6 hours
Arizona	3 hours
Mississippi	2 hours
New Mexico	6 hours
New Jersey	3 hours
Ohio	3 hours
Rhode Island	3 hours
New Applicant Requirement	
New Mexico	3 hours
Supervisor Requirement	
Louisiana	6.5 hours
	Board approved workshop
Content Area Requirement	
Massachusetts	Acceptable CE program content
Nevada	Required content area

2. Continuing education requirements

ASWB identified 10 jurisdictions which include cultural competence in continuing education (CE) requirements. Table 2 provides an overview. Seven jurisdictions require an average of 3.6 hours of CE in cultural competence per renewal period. New Mexico requires 3 hours only for new applicants. Louisiana supervisors are required to obtain 6.5 hours of CE and cultural competence is included as one of the required topics. The Louisiana board has also approved a supervision workshop on cultural competence. Massachusetts (258 CMR 31.04) and Nevada (NAC 641B.190) include cultural competence as a required CE program content area.

3. Requirements in practice standards

Cultural competence is addressed in some states defined scope of practice for social workers, and in several provinces, within the adopted standards of practice. In both instances social workers are expected to practice according to the parameters adopted by the jurisdiction in which they practice. As noted in Table 3 in the Appendix, a total of 9 states and provinces have expressly identified cultural competence as a practice standard; a summary of the included language and the applicable administrative code or standard of practice is provided in pages 3-5.

Alberta

Alberta College of Social Workers Standards of Practice *Draft language to be adopted November 2013*

- . E.2 Cultural Competence
 - (a) A social worker will acknowledge and respect the impact that their own heritage, values, beliefs and preferences can have on their practice and on clients whose background and values may be different from their own
 - (b) A social worker will be able to work with a wide range of people who are culturally different from the social worker or who may be considered to be members of vulnerable populations on the bases of attributes such as those listed in section F.1(a).
 - (c) A social worker will obtain a working knowledge and understanding of their clients' racial and cultural affiliations, identities, values, beliefs and customs and will be able to apply this knowledge in the provision of services.
 - (d) When possible, a social worker will provide or secure social work services in the language chosen by the client. If using an interpreter, the social worker will, when possible, engage an independent and qualified professional interpreter.
- . F. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS
 - Principle: Social workers will acknowledge the place of privilege they hold in all professional relationships, and the potential for harm to others should that privilege be misused. Social workers will consider the potential risk to others based on the nature of the professional relationship prior to entering any dual/multiple role relationship. Social workers recognize that they alone are responsible for managing the professional relationship in a manner that prevents harm to their client.
- . F.1 DIGNITY OF CLIENTS
 - (a) A social worker will not impose any stereotypes on a client based on behaviour, values or roles related to race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, income source or amount, political affiliation, disability or diagnosis, language, or national origin, that would interfere with the provision of professional services to the client.
 - (b) A social worker will use reasonable advocacy and other intervention activities to ensure that the dignity, individuality and rights of their clients are safeguarded.

British Columbia

British Columbia Social Work Standards of Practice

- . Principal 2.14 "Social workers promote social justice and advocate for social change on behalf of their clients. Social workers are knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and to forms of social injustice such as poverty, discrimination and imbalances of power that exist in the culture and that affect clients. "

Colorado

Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 12 Professions and Occupations

- . 12-43-403. Social work practice defined. "(b) Practice within the values and ethics of the social work profession and with an understanding of, and respect for, the positive value of diversity

Idaho

Rules of the State Board of Social Work Examiners

- . 24.14.01 Section 201 Practice of Social Work includes "knowledge of...cultural diversity, with particular attention to person-in-environment"

Maine

State Board of Social Worker Licensure Rules, Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation

- . 02.416 Chapter 10. Clinical social work practice definition includes "knowledge of...cultural diversity, with particular attention to person-in-environment"

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Standards of Practice

- . 1.9.2 Recognizing the cultural diversity that exists in Nova Scotian communities, social workers shall consult with clients about how they wish confidentiality to apply within their community.
- . 1.10 Demonstrate Cultural Awareness and Knowledge 1.10.1 Understanding of client racial and cultural affiliations to apply this knowledge in the provision of services.
- . 1.10.2 Respect that client-social worker cultural differences can have an impact on practice.
- . 1.10.3 Provide services in the language chosen by the client, when possible.
- . 10.1.3 Advocate for equitable social, economic, political and cultural policy and legislation.
- . 7.1.3 Take into consideration the potential for exploitation and misuse of electronic methods by potentially vulnerable clients. Consider the strengths and limitations of current electronic modalities, process and practice models, in order to provide services that are applicable and relevant to the need of culturally and geographically diverse clients and members of vulnerable populations.

Oklahoma

Social Worker's Licensing Act

- . 59-1250.1. Definition of social work practice requires "knowledge of social economic and cultural institutions and forces"

Saskatchewan

Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers

- . E.2 (a) A social worker shall not impose any stereotypes on a client based on behavior, values or roles related to race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, income source or amount, political affiliation, disability or diagnosis, language or national origin, that would interfere with the provision of professional services to the client.

(b) A social worker shall be able to work with a wide range of people who are culturally different from the social worker or who may be considered to be members of vulnerable populations on the bases of attributes such as those listed previously in section E.2(a).

West Virginia

West Virginia Code

- 30-30-9. Scope of practice for an independent clinical social worker; "Clinical social work practice is based on knowledge of...cultural diversity with particular attention to the person existing as a combination of biological, psychological and social elements in his or her environment.

4. Professional conduct standard requirements

Cultural competence is addressed in the code of professional ethics adopted by 13 jurisdictions as described in Table 4 in the Appendix, in pages 5-7. In some jurisdictions a professional code of ethics is adopted within regulation, while others reference either the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) or the [Canadian Association of Social Workers \(CASW\) Code of Ethics and Ethical Guidelines](#), as described on pages 7-8.

Alabama

Alabama Social Work Examiners Administrative Code

- Chapter 850-X-9.01 Standards of Professional Conduct & Ethics; social worker must set "clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries"

British Columbia

British Columbia College of Social Workers Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2009) incorporates the 1983 and 1994 [CASW Code of Ethics](#).

Kentucky

Kentucky Administrative Regulations

- 201 KAR 23:080. Code of ethical conduct. "A social worker shall provide a service to a client in a manner that is respectful and appreciative of the client's culture".

Newfoundland and Labrador

SNL2010 Chapter S-17.2 Social Workers Act

- All social workers adhere to the [CASW Code of Ethics and Ethical guidelines](#). This is the code of conduct adopted in legislation.

Nebraska

172 NAC 94, section 002

- Adopts the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
- Ethical Standards means the current Ethical Standards of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), the National Association of State Social Workers (NASW), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) as the Code of Professional Conduct for Mental Health Practice in Nebraska. A practitioner is required to comply with the ethical regulations of the National Association under which the practitioner holds an associated certificate. If the

practitioner holds only the license as a mental health practitioner, s/he is not required to comply with the AAMFT, NASW, or the NBCC ethical standards. Copies of the Ethical Standards are available from the appropriate Association.

North Carolina

21 NCAC 63 .0503 GENERAL PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- "Social workers shall not practice, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, or national origin."

21 NCAC 63 .0504 RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- "In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers shall set clear and culturally sensitive boundaries."

Ohio

4757-5-02 Standards of ethical practice and professional conduct: clients/consumers of services.

- (G) Responsibility to clients/consumers of services as to discrimination:
- (1) Counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists shall not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, veteran status, or mental or physical challenge.
- (2) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

Oregon

Division 30 Code of Ethics for Regulated Social workers

- 877-030-0070 Ethical Responsibility to Clients "Regulated social workers must provide services with professional skill, cultural awareness, and language competence with respect to each client's needs."

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island SW Registration Board Code of Ethics

- 1.2 Demonstrate Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity
- 1.2.1 Social workers shall obtain a working knowledge and understanding of their clients' racial and cultural affiliations...and be competent "in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups."
- 1.2.2 Social workers shall acknowledge the diversity within and among individuals, communities and cultures.
- 1.2.3 Social workers shall acknowledge and respect the impact that their own heritage, values, beliefs and preferences can have on their practice and on clients whose background and values may be different from their own.
- 1.2.4 Where possible, social workers shall provide or secure social work services in the language chosen by the client.

Tennessee

All licensees shall comply with the code of ethics adopted by the National Association of Social Workers, 750 First Street, NE, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002-4241, except to the extent it conflicts with the laws of the State of Tennessee or the rules of the Board. If the code of ethics conflicts with state law or rules, the state law or rules govern the matter. Violation of the code of ethics or state law or rules may subject a licensee to disciplinary action.

Vermont

Vermont Statutes, Title 26

- Chapter 61 § 3210. Unprofessional conduct "failing to take steps to protect a client and to set clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries, in instances where dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable;"

West Virginia

Legislatively adopted the NASW Code of Ethics social workers commit to.

Wyoming

The Mental Health Professions Practice Act administrative rules

- Chapter 15.1.a Ethical standards incorporate and are based on the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of the professional organizations representing each discipline. The published Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of the appropriate professional organizations are adopted by reference herein and shall be used by the licensee and certificate holder and the Board to provide additional guidelines to ethical standards
- Chapter 17 is a copy of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)

CASW Code of Ethics and Ethical Guidelines

[Code of Ethics](#)

Value 1 Respect for inherent Dignity and Worth of persons

- "Social workers recognize and respect the diversity of Canadian society, taking into account the breadth of differences that exist among individuals, families, groups and communities. Social workers uphold the human rights of individuals and groups..."

Principals

- "Social workers respect the diversity among individuals in Canadian society and the right of individuals to their unique beliefs consistent with the rights of others."

[Ethical Guidelines](#)

1.2 Demonstrate Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

- 1.2.1 Social workers strive to understand culture and its function in human behaviour and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- 1.2.2 Social workers acknowledge the diversity within and among individuals, communities and cultures.
- 1.2.3 Social workers acknowledge and respect the impact that their own heritage, values, beliefs and preferences can have on their practice and on clients whose background and values may be different from their own.

- 1.2.4 Social workers seek a working knowledge and understanding of clients' racial and cultural affiliations, identities, values, beliefs and customs.
 - 1.2.5 Where possible, social workers provide or secure social work services in the language chosen by the client. If using an interpreter, when possible, social workers preferentially secure an independent and qualified professional interpreter.
- 8.0 Ethical Responsibilities to Society
- 8.2.5 Social workers strive to promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within Canada and globally. Social workers promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

NASW Code of Ethics

1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

5. License education requirements

Three states include cultural competence as part of education requirements for licensure.

California

Requirements for qualifying degree programs; Recommendation for inclusion in social work practicum development

California approves social work degree programs and cultural competence is included as a content requirement. California Business and Professions Code Section 4980.36 Qualifying Degree Program for Licensure or Registration: Instruction on "Cultural competence and sensitivity, including a familiarity with the racial, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds of persons living in California." is required. Educational institutions are encouraged to design practicum required by this section.

Minnesota

Clinical education content requirement

Minnesota specifies clinical knowledge areas and corresponding clock hour requirements. Minnesota Statute 148E.055 LICENSE REQUIREMENTS.Subd.5.2.(v): "72 clock hours (20 percent) in social work values and ethics, including cultural context, diversity, and social policy".

Virginia

Clinical education content requirement

Virginia requires clinical course content to include issues surrounding diversity. Virginia Code Section 54.1-3707.1. Educational requirements: "Clinical course of study means specialized advanced courses in human behavior and the social environment, social justice and policy, psychopathology, and diversity issues..."

6. Defines/requires culturally competent services

Nevada

In the Nevada social workers must ensure services are provided in a culturally competent manner. Administrative Code NAC 641B.160 and NAC 641B.062: Requires that services are "culturally and linguistically appropriate" and compatible with the client's "Cultural beliefs and practices" and "preferred language of communication."

7. Cultural competence requirements in related fields

Several states have cultural competence requirements for fields related to social work.

Colorado - Addiction Counselors

Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 12 Professions and Occupations

- . 12-43-803. Practice of addiction counseling defined-scope of practice, includes "...recognition of social, political, economic, and cultural contexts within which addiction exists; Application to practice "Includes the ability to properly diagnose behavioral health disorders using appropriate assessment and testing instruments and placement criteria" including cultural competence.

District of Columbia - Marriage and Family Therapists

The District of Columbia Code

- . 3-1208.31. Qualifications for licensure; Included within a required education content area.

Florida - Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors

- . MFT and MHC licensees are required to complete a graduate level course in social cultural foundations (called psychosocial in the MFT requirement) as part of their master's programs.

Indiana - Addiction Counselors

Indiana Code

- . 25-23.6-10.5-5 Addiction counselor educational requirements; cultural competence is required content area

Pennsylvania - Professional Counselors

State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors - Licensure of Professional Counselors

- . 49.2. Educational requirements; Social and cultural foundations, studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society.

Utah - Addiction Counselors

Part 5 Substance Use Disorder Counselor Act

- . 58-60-502. Definitions; counseling includes "methods that are sensitive to an individual client's characteristics, to the influence of significant others, and to the client's cultural and social context".



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Cultural Competence - Appendix A Summary Charts

1. Overview Cultural Competence Requirements	
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Continuing education	10
Alaska, Arizona, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island	
Practice standards	9
Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Nova Scotia, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, West Virginia	
Professional conduct standards	13
Alabama, British Columbia, Kentucky, Newfoundland/Labrador, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Prince Edward Island, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming	
Applicant education	3
California, Minnesota, Virginia	
SW services definition	1
Nevada	

2. Cultural Competence and Continuing Education Requirements	
Licensee Requirement	
Alaska	6 hours
Arizona	3 hours
Mississippi	2 hours
New Jersey	3 hours
New Mexico	6 hours
Ohio	3 hours
Rhode Island	3 hours
New Applicant Requirement	
New Mexico	3 hours
Supervisor Requirement	
Louisiana	6.5 hours
	Board approved workshop
Content Area Requirement	
Massachusetts	Acceptable CE program content
Nevada	Required content area

3. Cultural Competence in Practice Standards	
Alberta	ACSW adopted 2013 E.2, F, F.1
British Columbia	Social Work Standards of Practice Principal 2.14
Colorado	Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 12 Professions and Occupations
Idaho	Rules of the State Board of Social Work Examiners 24.14.01 Section 201
Maine	State Board of Social Worker Licensure Rules, Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation 02.416 Chapter 10
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Standards of Practice 1.9.2, 1.10, 1.140.2, 1.10.3, 10.1.3, 7.1.3
Oklahoma	Social Worker's Licensing Act 59-1250.1
Saskatchewan	Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers E.2 (a) (b)
West Virginia	West Virginia Code 30-30-9

4. Cultural Competence in Professional Conduct Standards	
Alabama	Administrative Code Chapter 850-X-9.01 Standards of Professional Conduct & Ethics; Social Workers must set "clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries"
British Columbia	Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2009) incorporates the 1983 and 1994 CASW Code of Ethics
Kentucky	Administrative Regulations 201 KAR 23:080 Code of Ethical Conduct
Newfoundland /Labrador	SNL2010 Chapter S-17.2 Social Workers Act; All social workers adhere to the CASW Code of Ethics and Ethical guidelines
Nebraska	172 NAC 94, section 002; Adopts the NASW Code of Ethics
North Carolina	21 NCAC 63 .0503 General Professional Responsibilities; 21 NCAC 63 .0504 Responsibilities in Professional Relationships
Ohio	4757-5-02 Standards of ethical practice and professional conduct
Oregon	Division 30 Code of Ethics for Regulated Social workers 877-030-0070 Ethical Responsibility to Clients "Regulated social workers must provide services with professional skill, cultural awareness, and language competency with respect to each client's needs."
Prince Edward Island	Social Worker Registration Board Code of Ethics 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4
Tennessee	All licensees shall comply with the code of ethics adopted by the NASW
Vermont	Statutes, Title 26 Chapter 61 § 3210 Unprofessional conduct "failing to take steps to protect a client and to set clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries, in instances where dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable"
West Virginia	Legislatively adopted the NASW Code of Ethics social workers are to commit to

Wyoming	The Mental Health Professions Practice Act administrative rules: Chapter 15.1.a Ethical Standards incorporate and are based on the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of the professional organizations representing each discipline. Chapter 17 is a copy of the NASW Code of Ethics.
5. Cultural Competence in License Education Requirements	
California	California Business and Professions Code Section 4980.36. Quality Degree Program for Licensure or Registration: Instruction on "Cultural competence and sensitivity, including a familiarity with the racial, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds of persons living in California." is required. Educational institutions are encouraged to design practicum required by this section.
Minnesota	Minnesota Statute 148E.055 LICENSE REQUIREMENTS.Subd.5.2.(v): "72 clock hours (20 percent) in social work values and ethics, including cultural context, diversity, and social policy".
Virginia	Virginia Code Section 54.1-3707.1. Educational requirements: "Clinical course of study means specialized advanced courses in human behavior and the social environment, social justice and policy, psychopathology, and diversity issues..."

6. Defines/requires culturally competent services	
Nevada	In the Nevada social workers must ensure services are provided in a culturally competent manner. Administrative Code NAC 641B.160 and NAC 641B.062: Requires that services are "culturally and linguistically appropriate" and compatible with the client's "Cultural beliefs and practices" and "preferred language of communication."

7. Cultural Competence Requirements in Allied Health Fields	
Colorado	Addiction Counselors
District of Columbia	Marriage and Family Therapists
Florida	Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors
Indiana	Addiction Counselors
Pennsylvania	Professional Counselors
Utah	Addiction Counselors