



## One for the books

*ASWB Candidate Services Center handles record-breaking exam, call volume*

Pat Olinger, director of Examination Services, has spent 18 years leading the candidate registration process at ASWB. She's worked with two test vendors, dozens of call center representatives, multiple software and phone systems, and in offices in two different buildings. Her department has added more functions in the last few years, as product sales, fulfillment, and support were folded into their work.

Exam Services also went through a restructuring internally this year, with two experienced Candidate Services representatives promoted to mentor fellow representatives. The mentors have "helped alleviate some of the day-to-day duties of the supervisors," Olinger says. "They give the representatives someone readily available to answer their questions that they need a quick answer for." This frees up supervisors to manage the "back-end" functions of the Candidate Services Center, from processing online registrations to providing contact and support for member boards.

This fall, Olinger had a "first," for her and for every representative in the Candidate Services Center. Following the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in November, Candidate Services staff members were called into the

conference room at ASWB and presented with a formal commendation letter from the ASWB Board of Directors. The letter cited some remarkable statistics. During the first three quarters of 2015, the Candidate Services Center (CSC) processed 37,715 exam registrations and fielded 66,357 calls. Board of Directors President M. Jenise Comer praised the Candidate Services Center employees for their "exceptional work" during that period.

These numbers "look like a continuation of upward trends" ASWB has seen in the past, Olinger says. "But there are clear jumps, as well, with a 46 percent increase in registrations in May and June of this year compared to May and June of last year." That jump in particular, Olinger points out, is attributable to two July 1 deadlines this year: requirements for licensure for Massachusetts Department of Children and Families social workers who had been previously exempt, and the introduction of DSM-5 content onto the ASWB exams. Many social workers either needed or wanted to test before that date, which caused a bump in registrations and call volume.

Unlike a lot of call centers, ASWB does not have a lengthy automated menu for callers. When calling the CSC directly (888.579.3926),

customers hear a recorded message initially, but they are sent immediately to the call queue where representatives respond as soon as possible. Callers to the general number (800.225.6880) hear one phone menu to help them determine where they should be routed, then are put into the right queue for a response. Average hold time is less than 30 seconds.

With an average of 72 percent of exam registrations being processed online, it might seem logical that call volume would drop. That hasn't been the case, Olinger says. Candidate Services representatives field calls from exam candidates who have detailed questions about registration or licensing. "People call with questions about licensing," Olinger says, "more to get information than to register."

## Candidate Services, by the numbers

January-November 2015:

- 41,166 exams administered
- 43,554 exam registrations
- 78,866 phone calls answered
- Practice exam sales up by 13.6%
- Score transfers up by 16.2%