



## What's in a blueprint?

*Volunteers, staff,  
and consultants take first  
steps toward revised  
exam content*

In many ways, the ASWB licensing exams are updated continually—new questions are written and put into the pretest pool, their stats are collected and reviewed, and those with good enough numbers make the cut into the bank of scored questions. In July, the exams were updated to reflect the changes in the DSM-5. But in order to make sure that the entire exam program reflects current social work practice, ASWB has a much longer, more complex process: the practice analysis.

Since ASWB's founding in the late 1970s, there have been five practice analyses, with the last one completed in 2010. That [practice analysis](#) began in 2008 and resulted in new blueprints that were launched in 2011.

This year, ASWB is starting its sixth practice analysis, and took the first steps at a meeting of the Practice Analysis Task Force in late November. Late this summer, the Board of Directors appointed the task force, comprising 20 licensed



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Standing from left to right: Jeffrey Trant (MA), Pamela Huggins (MO), Efia Miles (GA), Alejandro Zamora (ID), Tiffany Welch (PA), Jennifer Winship (CA), Mark Gagnon (VT), Sharon Zimmerman Wilson (OH), Velia Villegas-Aguillon (TX), Jenna Wilke (WI), Dianna Cooper-Bolinsky (IN), Jean Leong (AB), Steven Ramos (AK), Nelly Chow (AB).*

social workers from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Members of the task force were selected to represent diversity in racial, ethnic, and practice demographics. The meeting was held at the offices of Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), ASWB's psychometric contractor. At that meeting, ASWB staff and consultants from HumRRO provided task force members with an overview of the process and asked the SMEs to review the task list to be included in the pilot survey.

SMEs? Task list? Pilot survey?

The practice analysis starts with a list of social work tasks. Subject matter experts (SMEs) review these tasks to ensure that the tasks are appropriate for entry-level social workers. The pilot survey gives the task force a chance to test out the task list in surveys with licensed social workers. Once the survey is developed (in both English and French, to include a representative sample in the U.S. and Canada), it will be sent to a representative sample of social workers who have become licensed in the last three to five years.

Once the pilot survey is complete, HumRRO and ASWB will make any necessary adjustments to the survey instrument and send it to at least 16,000 social workers in all ASWB member jurisdictions. Once the survey results are in, task force members will dig into the data to link each task to KSAs (knowledge, skill and ability statements) that form the building blocks of the exams. Connection between survey responses and KSAs will help develop the test content outlines late in 2016.

At that point, there is a great deal of work to be done before the content outlines become an exam. The next steps will include reclassifying existing test questions, developing a benchmark exam form, and conducting a passing score study that sets the pass point on the exams under the new content outlines. All this work will continue until the end of 2017. ASWB anticipates the new test content outlines to appear on live exams in January 2018.