



Developing trust and finding commonalities to move Mobility forward



M. Jenise Comer, LCSW, MSW, ACSW
ASWB President

The largest group to ever attend an Education Meeting arrived in Jersey City, New Jersey, to prepare for our journey toward Mobility. The beautiful view of Manhattan with recognizable landmarks across the Hudson River both stimulated and energized us for the work ahead. The exact same view was even more breathtaking at night, reminding us to look at both sides of mobility, to arrive at a full and complete appreciation of the issues and potential solutions. The unseasonably cool and rainy weather did not dampen our spirits. It empowered us to continue the discussion with stamina and creativity.

Clearly there is a consensus that achieving mobility is the right thing to do. The cause is driven by technology, an increasingly mobile society, and the increased need for access to quality health and mental health care. The Mobility Task Force appointed in 2015 spent the past year studying the mobility question and doing research to shape a plan. By presenting their research and findings at the conference, task force members moved the development of a mobility plan further “down the road” to the next stage of construction: gathering ideas from attendees on six important areas where

additional research is needed. These ideas were captured in focus groups during a World Marketplace session.

In support of mobility, we already have agreement on common educational criteria and use of the ASWB exams. As the task force shared, however, jurisdictions still vary widely on the experience requirement for licensure. We also need to agree on the categories for licensure, as differences contribute to the current “alphabet soup” of titles different states use. Qualifications for licensure was one topic discussed during the focus group session. Input was also solicited on trust, disciplinary systems, technology driven change, stakeholder topic areas (such as finances, cooperation, and communication), and existing infrastructure. Staff will compile and categorize the data from the focus groups, and the task force will then analyze the data to continue shaping the mobility plan.

Two important themes emerged from the conference. First, there is a need to **trust** that every state and jurisdiction has the same goal of public protection and second, there is more to be gained in focusing on the **commonalities** that we share rather than getting distracted by the

exceptions. As we focus on identifying these commonalities, the task force reminded us that we have a number of ASWB-developed resources—including the Social Work Registry, the Model Social Work Practice Act, the Model Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice, and the Public Protection Database—that give us a foundation for establishing consistency in licensure, social work legislation, electronic social work service delivery, and discipline.

Adding to those resources, a new Mobility website will be launched this summer to provide more news about the work of the task force, give members and other stakeholders a voice into the process, and suggest ways to take action or provide input through surveys. We are excited to offer this avenue of two-way communication and outreach.

The input received during the World Marketplace and through the mobility website will guide the Task Force as members move forward to craft a plan. The task force will make a report to the 2016 Delegate Assembly in November on progress made. In 2017, the Delegate Assembly will be asked to vote on a final plan for implementation. As your Board president and as a co-chair of the Mobility Task Force, I thank you for helping to make this initiative a reality “in this lifetime.”