



Through the Lens of Mobility



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I must admit that as I prepare to write this column, I am feeling simultaneously a bit nostalgic thinking about my past involvement with ASWB and at the same time completely blown away about the prospects of achieving Mobility in our Lifetime. In 1996–1997, twenty years ago, I was honored to serve as co-chair with Tom McSteen, Minnesota board administrator, of the eight-member ASWB Model Law Task Force. This was transformative work for ASWB as the task force crafted a fundamental document for our regulatory board members that “establishes standards for minimal social work competence, methods of fairly and objectively addressing consumer complaints, and means of removing incompetent and/or unethical practitioners from practice.” The Model Social Work Practice Act (model law) reflected current issues in professional regulation and served as an attempt to promote uniformity in regulation and terminology among jurisdictions.

Today, in 2016–2017, ASWB is engaged in similarly important and transformative work spearheaded by the 12-member Mobility Task Force, co-chaired by Dorinda Noble, ASWB past president, and Jenise Comer, ASWB current president. The present-day challenges of

a social work workforce that is on the move and the proliferation of practitioners who use various forms of technology in their practice make the critical case for the social work profession to collaboratively design a mobility model that fits the profession while it protects the public. As stated in the introduction to the model law, “The public protection mission of ASWB and its member boards provided the basis for all ultimate decisions.”

I believe and am proud that the Mobility Task Force is operating with similar guiding principles that the Model Law Task Force employed:

- ✓ Soliciting extensive input and cooperative connections from social work regulatory boards, professional organizations, credentialing groups, and accrediting bodies throughout North America
- ✓ Understanding that greater consistency in regulation across jurisdictions promotes increased mobility for social workers, greater access to vital mental health and social services for children, adults, and families, but also

increased public understanding of social work and public protection

- ✓ Understanding that greater consistency also promotes well-founded legal decisions related to licensure, renewal, discipline, and other board decisions
- ✓ Understanding that our jurisdictions have more consistency than differences in common and that we can get to areas of agreement on substantial equivalency
- ✓ Fostering a level of trust among licensing bodies to carry out their responsibilities in a thorough, mutually acceptable, and responsible manner to ensure the protection of their citizens

Some of the areas of agreement on the core functions of a mobility plan discussed by ASWB members and interested stakeholders at the 2016 Education Conference held in Jersey City include:

1. A fair and consistent process, without undue administrative and financial burdens on regulatory bodies and/or individual social workers
2. Substantial equivalency for social work education, examination, and experience in each category of licensure—Bachelor Social Work, Master Social Work (including Advanced Generalist), and Clinical Social Work as described in the model law

3. Responsibility for accountable discipline and enforcement shared across all jurisdictions
4. Focus on full and unrestricted license vs. temporary license
5. Minimal legislative change—retaining “home state” jurisdictional authority
6. Importance of using existing infrastructure within jurisdictions and ASWB

I feel confident that the social work profession will craft a “mobility plan that fits” because ASWB is incorporating invested stakeholders, listening to both practitioners and clients, collaborating for wisdom and success, learning from the efforts of our regulatory counterparts, and using good judgment in decision-making.

In closing, I would like to share some thoughts on “Flow,” which I recently encountered while taking an online continuing education course called Positive Psychology II for my license renewal. I was pleasantly surprised at how applicable the concept of Flow is to achieving Mobility in our Lifetime! The authors describe three concepts that struck a chord with me.

First, “The process of Flow is the experience of complete absorption in the present moment. One feels impassioned about the activity being engaged in and that talents and abilities are fully actualized.” At ASWB, we are processing our business plans and activities through the lens of mobility, in

order to keep a sharp focus on this goal.

Second, “The prerequisites for entering Flow include: a) perceived challenges or opportunities for action that expand but do not overbear existing skills, and b) clear, immediate goals with instant feedback on progress.” At ASWB, we have realigned our organizational and governance capacities to achieve our goals. (See [related story](#).)

And third, “The person must encounter progressively more complex challenges to maintain the state of Flow.” At ASWB, we forecast for the future in order to be prepared for and competent in the present.