



Be READY to go Beyond CE



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I am most pleased to share a preview of “**BEYOND CE: Regulating Competency in a Dynamic Profession**,” April 27-29, 2017, in Henderson, Nevada. The ASWB Board of Directors chose this theme so that together with our members, volunteers, approved CE providers, and other collaborators, we can grapple with the emerging awareness that as regulators, we may need to go *Beyond CE* in order to fulfill our mission to truly protect the public.

To put this in context, I offer the following story:

Years ago, I was conducting a session for MSW students on legal regulation and ethical practice. I focused on the profound influence that they, even as beginning students, have on their clients. I spoke of their ability to harm clients if they did not become aware of—and learn to understand, embrace, and manage—their power in the professional relationship. One student expressed her horror at this power concept and worried that she might harm a client.

I then spoke of the influence, authority, and responsibility that regulatory licensure boards would have when they became licensed. At this point, most of the students expressed their

horror at this realization and one nervously asked in a startled voice, “Professor Monahan, how do I protect myself?”

And that day I gave some pretty good advice. I said, “Every day when you wake up and look at yourself in the mirror, proclaim out loud and with strong conviction: “Today, I will be a safe, competent, and ethical social work professional.”

The awareness I instilled in this class of students was a starting point—for them and for any discussion of what continuing competence means and how it is measured.

Continuing competence can be defined as maintaining and enhancing competence throughout one’s career, fueled by a dedication to lifelong learning. Experts regard it as a process of thoughtful self-reflection on practice that requires regular self-assessment. Continuing competence is holding oneself accountable to acceptable practice standards; becoming more adept at applying ethical judgment; and “going beyond” by engaging in continuous professional development activities, such as supervision, making professional presentations, being published, and committing to independent learning.

As regulators, we hope that licensed social workers are enhancing their skills and knowledge; but how do we really know that licensees are engaging in continuous competency post-licensure? What is the regulator's obligation to the public to oversee, monitor, or measure the continuous competence of licensed social workers? Moreover, what is the obligation of licensed social workers, employers, professional associations, and educators to ensure the continuing competency of the profession as a whole?

The REAL (Regulatory Education and Leadership) Committee members planning this education conference have prepared a multi-dimensional learning experience for attendees to explore these critical questions and develop thoughtful, strategic responses. Participants will engage in:

- information sharing with continuing education and continuing competency experts
- interactive panel discussions with social work education, practice, and regulatory leaders
- demonstrations of innovative professional learning assessment models
- analysis of current data on the state of CE/CC across jurisdictions

The panels and sessions over the two days will move from current state to emerging trends, to the regulatory role and response.

As social workers, we live by a code of ethics that establishes competence as both a core value and an ethical principle. In our personal and professional lives, we can and should remind ourselves daily of our commitment to these values and take the steps necessary to advance our skills and knowledge. Self-assessment and self-awareness, however, cannot be the final arbiters of competency; it must be measured externally—which is where regulation, education, and practice intersect.

This conference will engage all three (the “pillars of the profession”) and provide the unique perspectives of each to help in defining through a collaborative process what continuing competency means for the social work profession. We have devoted the last session to a strategic and generative Think Tank, where we invite discussion to integrate our learning.

In the Think Tank we will brainstorm ideas for how ASWB membership moves forward regulating competency, decide what research is still needed, and determine how ASWB staff can support members in this dynamic new territory. As one of our presenters, Dr. Gary R. Schoener, has said: “Boards pick up the pieces from failed training, preparation, supervision, and agency management. Whether through empirical research or ‘think pieces,’ it would be very helpful to look for keys to improving the field and share them with relevant parties.”

I look forward to finding out what emerges “Beyond CE” from our collective work together.