



Mobility is a moving target

Factoring in feedback from membership, a resolution for Delegate Assembly

After three plus years and two education conferences focusing on mobility in social work licensing, ASWB is ready to take the next step. At the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee will present a resolution asking members to support the key concepts behind practice mobility for social workers in the United States. This resolution comes from the Mobility Task Force and is endorsed by the Board of Directors. The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee is recommending that members vote to pass the resolution.

The Mobility Strategy that is part of the resolution reflects the work of the Mobility Task Force and member boards through a collaborative process. At last year's Annual Meeting, task force co-chairs M. Jenise Comer and Dorinda Noble presented the task force's research in an interactive session that surveyed members for additional feedback. That feedback informed detailed presentations made to the Board Member Exchange and Administrators Forum at the 2017 Education Conference in Henderson, Nevada. ASWB staff and task force members again asked for input from member boards and adjusted their proposal. In May, a revised draft plan was forwarded to members for a formal review period.

Throughout the summer, that draft plan was refined even further. It now is more appropriately named a Mobility Strategy. Three categories of licensure and four criteria remain at the core of the strategy. Tools for mobility include a secure centralized databank where social workers will store their professional documentation, including verified primary source records such as transcripts, exam scores, and supervision hours; continuing education documentation; and state-issued licenses. This databank will be available for member board use as boards are able. The databank is designed to facilitate a social worker's ability to gather all application materials in one place for easier transmittal of required documentation as part of a licensing application. "We are very excited for the next step," says Member Services Director Jennifer Henkel. "It is time to put the Mobility initiative in front of our membership formally, at the Delegate Assembly." With this resolution, says Henkel, "we're hoping to show by delegate vote that all ASWB members have a clear understanding and intention regarding social work practice mobility."

The research conducted by the Mobility Task Force has highlighted that social workers are moving more

frequently and practicing electronically at a greater rate. Because of these realities, social workers are seeking licensure in multiple states. “Research has also highlighted that the physical and technological mobility phenomena transcend professions,” said Dale Atkinson, ASWB legal counsel, who has been integral to the deliberations of the Mobility Task Force and the Board of Directors concerning the Mobility initiative. Mobility demands have created increased political and legal scrutiny on state-based licensure systems. There are currently at least two U.S. federal initiatives focusing on occupational and professional licensing.

The U.S. Department of Labor began work on a three-year Occupational Licensing project in May 2017 in collaboration with the National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governor’s Association Center of Best Practices, and the Council of State Governments. In February, the chair of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) appointed an Economic Liberty Task Force, which is advocating for reform of occupational and professional licensing (see related story). The FTC’s efforts are part of increased focus on occupational and professional regulation throughout the United States.

Meanwhile, practicing social workers are eager to serve clients who need them. Through online forms at www.moving-socialwork.org, ASWB has collected more than 250 endorsements and mobility stories from social workers throughout the country. Concerns range from providing continuity of services for clients who move across state lines to tracking down long-ago supervisors to document supervision hours for a licensing application.

Resolution 2017-1

Title: ASWB Member Board Contributions to Mobility Strategy

Submitted by: ASWB 2017 Bylaws and Resolutions Committee/
ASWB Board of Directors

Bylaws and Resolutions Committee Recommendation:
___ DO PASS _____

WHEREAS, increased physical movement of licensed social workers to other jurisdictions has led to the need for them to obtain licenses in addition to or in place of the jurisdiction of original licensure; and

WHEREAS, technological advancements have provided social workers with a means to practice social work electronically across state and international lines and without physical presence in the jurisdiction where the client is located; and

WHEREAS, electronic practice has increased the need for a determination of and focus on where practice occurs; and

WHEREAS, the ASWB Model Social Work Practice Act adopted and amended by the ASWB member boards identifies that electronic social work practice constitutes the practice of social work in the jurisdiction where the social worker is located and the jurisdiction where the client is located; and

WHEREAS, the ASWB Model Social Practice Act requires social workers to be licensed in all jurisdictions where they practice; and

WHEREAS, electronic practice and technological advancements have increased the need for social workers seeking licensure in multiple jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, these physical and technological mobility phenomena transcend professions and have created increased political and legal scrutiny on state-based licensure systems; and

WHEREAS, in response to the current regulatory climate and in response to the needs of the ASWB membership, ASWB convened a Mobility Task Force to address these issues; and

WHEREAS, the Mobility Task Force has recommended and the ASWB Board of Directors endorses a Mobility Strategy that is attached to and is a part of this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, the ASWB Mobility Strategy is premised on a concerted effort by member boards to harmonize licensure eligibility criteria across all ASWB member boards, and

WHEREAS, the ASWB Mobility Strategy includes, among other things, a centralized, secure databank that can provide member boards with access to verified primary source documentation for social workers seeking equivalent licensure in additional jurisdictions, and that such strategy is based on the following principles:

1. Member board recognition that currently licensed applicants have been vetted and duly licensed by another board of social work, and
2. Member board recognition of the information in the databank as primary source and verified; and

WHEREAS, the success of the ASWB Mobility Strategy is dependent upon the acceptance and participation of ASWB member boards; and

WHEREAS, ASWB staff is prepared to serve and support ASWB member boards to conduct the research listed below.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT through the adoption of this resolution, each ASWB member board agrees to review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the Standards outlined in the attached Mobility Strategy; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each ASWB member board agrees to review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the primary source data verified by ASWB staff and maintained in the secure centralized databank; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each ASWB member board agrees to identify any barriers or restrictions in the jurisdiction's statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility Strategy; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT each ASWB member board agrees to identify the benefits to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility Strategy.

Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Strategy to Address Social Work Practice Mobility

Please note: The use of the terms "state" and "board" are intended to be inclusive of all ASWB membership regulatory organizations, including states, commonwealths, districts, territories, and provinces. Similarly, the use of the term "license" is intended to refer to the state-issued credential authorizing the applicant to practice the profession and is meant to be inclusive of licensure, certification, registration, and other similar terms. States will continue to use their own terminology when describing the practitioners, the various credentials, nomenclature, and acronyms.

OVERVIEW

The qualifications for and application and receipt of state-issued licenses is under heightened scrutiny. Differing qualifications for licensure, differing categories of licensure, and differing scopes of practice fuel these debates. This additional scrutiny is largely premised upon increased interstate physical movement of practitioners and technological advancements that facilitate virtual practice of social work without physical presence.

Social work practice mobility refers to the physical and virtual mobility of social workers who elect to practice in multiple jurisdictions. The Mobility Strategy aspires to depoliticize the process, maintain regulatory expertise, and implement a commonsense approach to addressing social work practice mobility.

PURPOSE

Efficient licensure eligibility decisions increase state board effectiveness and benefit the member boards, licensees, and the consuming public. To lawfully practice, social workers must be authorized to practice by obtaining a license issued by each state where they practice. ASWB's Mobility Strategy recognizes states' rights and honors member boards' overarching public protection mission.

The ASWB Mobility Strategy is premised on a concerted effort by member boards to harmonize licensure eligibility criteria across all ASWB member boards so that equivalently licensed social workers can obtain licenses necessary to lawfully practice in other jurisdictions. The Mobility Strategy provides a process and resources through which member boards can quickly evaluate and determine eligibility when a licensed social worker seeks equivalent licensure in an additional jurisdiction.

Standards, as agreed upon by ASWB members and defined below, clarify social work licensure categories and criteria across jurisdictions. Further, a centralized databank will provide member boards with verified primary source information to make decisions about equivalency, including supervision.

PROCESS

License equivalency will be determined by applying the Standards for the mobility licensing process. The Standards increase consistency across jurisdictions and are outlined in the ASWB Model Social Work Practice Act (model act). The jurisdictional board retains the statutory authority and responsibility to grant the initial license. When a licensed social worker seeks additional licenses, each board determines eligibility.

Member boards are not expected to change current license titles and acronyms. A crossmap of license titles and categories has been developed and will be maintained to reflect members' current licensing structure. In addition, member jurisdictions may require additional criteria for licensure such as background checks, jurisprudence exams, or additional supervision. An index highlighting these jurisdiction-specific requirements (JSRs) will be developed based on input from member boards.

STANDARDS

The following Standards represent the core of the Mobility Strategy. It is anticipated that these Standards can be implemented administratively without the need for legislative, regulatory, and/or rule changes. However, members will be asked via resolution to provide jurisdiction-specific feedback.

Three categories of license (from the ASWB Model Social Work Practice Act)

- Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW)
- Licensed Master's Social Worker (LMSW)
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Four minimum essential criteria

- Graduation from an accredited social work program
- A passing score on the appropriate ASWB exam

- Completion of supervised experience (as required by license)
- No disciplinary action

RESOURCES

Consistent with the mission to lessen burdens of member boards, ASWB provides resources that support member boards' Mobility efforts, including legally defensible, reliable, and valid exams, the model law, the Public Protection Database (PPD), application processing services, the Social Work Registry, the Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program, and continuing education audit services. In addition, the Model Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice publication is available to support the regulation of electronic practice.

ASWB is developing and populating a centralized, secure databank that can provide member boards with access to verified primary source documentation for social workers seeking equivalent licensure in additional jurisdictions. Current candidate and licensee data contained in the ASWB Social Work Registry will be integrated into the databank.

Optimal use of the databank is based on the following principles and the market research currently being conducted (i.e., fee structure, usage, branding, etc.):

1. Member board recognition that currently licensed applicants have been vetted and duly licensed by another board of social work.
2. Member board recognition of the information in the databank as primary source and verified.

The databank will serve as a permanent and secure repository of primary source records, including:

- Educational transcript(s)
- Exam scores
- Verified supervision hours
- Continuing education documentation
- Licensure applications
- State-issued license(s)

Upon the social worker's request, ASWB will share databank materials with identified member board(s). ASWB staff will also verify the status of all social work licenses held, query the ASWB Public Protection Database (PPD), and perform other checks as required.

Social workers will have multiple opportunities to enroll in the databank:

- as a social work student
- when registering with ASWB to take the licensing exam
- when applying for licensure or renewing with the member board(s)
- at any time as a social work professional

The ASWB Board of Directors endorses the ASWB Strategy to Address Social Work Practice Mobility developed by the Mobility Task Force.