



Recruits share curiosity and a willingness to serve their profession

New committee members dive in, eager to learn and work

Five social workers recently met the challenge of moving from the item writing program to serving on the Examination Committee. The five newcomers, along with two emeritus committee members who rejoined the committee for 2018, participated in the year's first committee meeting in Reston, Virginia, March 23–25, 2018. The Bachelors exam committee welcomed Jessica Davis of Illinois and welcomed back Shannon Bender-Bell of British Columbia, who previously served on the committee between 2007 and 2010. Jil Meadows of North Carolina joined the Masters exam committee, and Leana Torres of Arizona returned; Torres previously served on the committee from 2010 until 2012. The Clinical exam committee added three new members: Amanda Eagle of Florida, Joseph Harper of Illinois, and Lauren Henriquez-Bentiné of New York.

“We really appreciate your jumping into the exam committee,” Dwight Hymans, ASWB chief operating officer, told the new committee members. “This is a very different side of the exam development program.” He added, “If you listen to some of the long-timers who’ve been on the exam committee..., I think what

you’ll find is that they have really appreciated getting to know a lot of professionals from all over. I hope you’ll find this to be a beneficial experience, and not just a hard-working experience.”

“The exam committee process is critical,” said Lavina Harless, ASWB director of examination development, welcoming the new volunteers. “It’s the part where we have social workers from diverse backgrounds sitting together in a room and making decisions about test questions. There’s no other piece of exam development that’s quite as robust in terms of having that subject matter expertise.” Before the returning committee members arrived in Reston, Harless led the new members in an orientation program to give them a broad overview of the exam program along with the details they needed to get started in their new role reviewing items.

The Exam Committee spent two-and-a-half days working in pairs and groups, using a consensus model to revise when necessary and then approve items for pretest. Pretest items are included as unscored exam items embedded in the examinations where they will collect psychometric data before going live as scored items. At this

meeting, the committee, which generally meets four times per year, sent 251 individual items to pretest. During the same meeting, form reviewers met to complete a review of exams to be released in July.

“This year’s class of new committee members got off to a great start,” said Harless. “They made excellent contributions to their committee subgroups, doing the important work of approving test items for use. We’re confident that this diverse group of talented, committed social workers will continue to keep the ASWB examination program strong.”

Meet the new committee members

Jessica Davis lives in Chicago and works as the clinical coordinator of a nonprofit substance use disorder treatment provider. She has a background in community mental health, substance use disorder treatment, management, and administration. She holds an MSW and a BSW from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Davis became an item writer in 2016, submitting her application because she was curious about how exam items are created. Now that she has joined the Examination Committee, Davis says, “I’m looking forward to learning and contributing. I’m excited to be able to see the bigger picture and be a part of the process.”

Amanda Eagle lives in Land O’ Lakes, Florida, where she provides education and substance abuse assessments in a traffic safety school. She also maintains a small private practice working with at-risk youth. She has worked with children and families in crisis, quality assurance and improvement, psychoeducation,



New and returning Exam Committee members gathered for an orientation before the Reston meeting (front row from left): Jessica Davis (IL), Leana Torres (AZ), Shannon Bender-Bell (BC), Jil Meadows (NC), and Lauren Henriquez-Bentiné (NY); (back row from left): Joe Harper (IL) and Amanda Eagle (FL).

and child welfare. Eagle holds a BSW from Florida A & M University, an MSW from University of South Florida, and a doctorate of education from Nova Southeastern University.

Eagle appreciates the importance of the ASWB exam and wants to be a part of its creation. “When I learned I could be a part of the process, I was immediately drawn to it,” she said.

Joe Harper lives in New Athens, Illinois, and serves as the hospital administrator of Chester Mental Health Center, a maximum-security forensic psychiatric hospital in Chester, Illinois. He also serves as an adjunct faculty member of the graduate social work program at the University of Southern California. He has presented on the topic of services to offenders and co-authored publications in the field of forensic social work practice. Harper graduated with an MSW from the George Warren

Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis.

Harper became an item writer in 2015 because he found the exam intriguing. “How does this exam get developed?” he wondered. “How many versions are there?” Now that he is serving as part of the Exam Committee, he enjoys the opportunity to engage in tasks different from his day-to-day work.

Lauren Henriquez-Bentiné lives in New York City and works in two school-based health clinics in the Bronx, serving a population made up of mostly immigrants in middle and high school. Her previous experience includes working as a case manager in an HIV program and in two outpatient health clinics. Henriquez-Bentiné holds a BASW from Lehman College and an MSW from Fordham University.

As a resident of a community made up largely of people of color,

Henriquez-Bentiné aspires to bring an urban perspective to the work of the Exam Committee. “This is a different hat: I’m using social work skills while thinking in a different way,” she said. In reflecting on her first meeting, Henriquez-Bentiné said she was happy to be a part of the item development process. “There are so many checks and balances in place,” she said, “and the team has such a wide breadth of experience in the field, both of which are crucial to having culturally competent exams.”

Jil Meadows lives in Asheville, North Carolina, and works as a counselor at her alma mater, Warren Wilson College. She holds a BA in English from that school and an MSW from Smith College School for Social Work. She began her career more than 30 years ago in medical settings and then moved

into the area of therapeutic foster care. In her current clinical work, she incorporates neuroscience, positive psychology, and a sense of humor.

Meadows saw becoming an item writer in 2009 as a natural fit because writing was a strong point. “It’s exciting to use that strength and also contribute to the field of social work.” Now that she’s part of the Exam Committee, Meadows says she finds the intricacies of the process challenging. “It is like putting a puzzle together.” She’s impressed by how much work goes into each item as it progresses through each step of the process. And she is exhilarated by working among a group with a very broad knowledge base. “I felt as if I were in a room full of experts—oh, right, I was!”