SOCIAL WORK LICENSING

WHY IT MATTERS

Association of Social Work Boards
Social work is regulated across the United States and Canada. For aspiring and practicing social workers, this means one thing: either licensure with your U.S. jurisdiction or registration in Canada.

**Licensing protects the people you help every day**

Licensed or registered social workers provide a practice backed by a legal guarantee—that service will be safe, competent, ethical, and responsible. That’s key because the most vulnerable clients are the least able to choose who will provide them with social work services. Regulation protects the public by giving clients a way to hold professionals accountable.

**Licensing helps YOU, the social worker**

Social work licensing is a fact of professional life. And what more and more social workers are finding is that licensing is simply a good idea. Most jurisdictions have title protection—you need a license to call yourself a social worker. That group of letters behind your name is a powerful signal to employers and potential clients that you possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, education, and experience needed to practice. And in many cases, only licensed practitioners are permitted to bill insurance.
Q & A

Who should be licensed?
Licensing is for all social workers, not just clinical social workers. Most U.S. jurisdictions offer multiple categories of licensure recognizing different scopes of practice. And most U.S. jurisdictions require licensure for practice as a bachelor’s, master’s, and clinical social worker.

Who is in charge of licensing?
Your jurisdictional regulatory body issues licenses. Regulatory boards/colleges operate through state/provincial legislation and administer laws and regulations.

When should I get a license?
When you have the education and in some cases the supervised experience necessary to practice, you’re ready to get a license. Remember, licensing represents a minimum level of competency for social work practice—in other words, what you should be able to do on your first day on the job, not the highly developed skills you may refine later in your career.

What do I do to get licensed?
Visit the website of your jurisdiction’s social work regulatory body for information about applying for your license. Links to jurisdictional websites can be found at aswb.org.

How do I maintain my license?
Licensure is about more than getting licensed at the start of your career.
It’s also important to commit to living licensed. Licensure renewal procedures typically require updating your personal information and showing that you have completed your jurisdiction’s continuing education requirements. Staying current in your profession means taking courses accepted by your regulatory body on topics—including ethics—that are relevant to evidence-based social work practice and reflect current peer-reviewed research and best practices.

**What if I want to practice in a different state or province?**

Mobility varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Contact the regulatory body in each jurisdiction in which you wish to practice for licensure requirements. ASWB shares expert information about adding licenses at MovingSocialWork.org.

---

**Do you have the three E’s?**

**EDUCATION**

**EXAMINATION**

**EXPERIENCE**

Your social work regulatory board will make its licensure decision after reviewing your degree from an accredited school of social work, your passing score on the ASWB examination for your license category, and when needed, your hours of supervised experience.
Focus on social work practice mobility

Social workers don’t know where they might work—down the street, across town, on the other side of a state or provincial border, or at a distant disaster. Each jurisdiction has its own laws and regulations to protect the public. If you practice electronically, you will likely need to be licensed where you are and where your clients are located.

ASWB is leading the way in promoting mobility solutions that work for regulators, social workers, and the public. Learn more at MovingSocialWork.org.

Feel confident in your career moves

Applying for a license? Moving to a new jurisdiction? The ASWB Social Work Registry (now called PROfile) can help you gather and keep your important documents in one place.

The Registry is a go-to ASWB practice mobility service that will request, verify, submit, and safely store your critical documents—from academic transcripts and social work exam results to licensing history and supervisory records.

You can also store other records, such as CE courses completed, employment history, and professional credentials.

Visit aswb.org to start a Social Work Registry file now!
About ASWB
As the nonprofit association of social work regulatory bodies in the United States and Canada, the Association of Social Work Boards is the recognized expert in the licensing and regulation of the social work profession.

ASWB develops and maintains the social work examinations and provides support and services to the social work regulatory community. That community includes not only regulators, but also social workers, social work students and educators, and other social work organizations.

Mission
Provide support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection.

Vision
All social workers are licensed in order to protect clients and client systems.