



# ACE Handbook

The ASWB ACE program was created to help licensing boards evaluate a CE provider's ability to present social workers with effective, relevant continuing education. Today, the program also evaluates individual courses.

ACE approval demonstrates that a provider or course has been rigorously reviewed and found to offer quality continuing education according to best practices.

To be an ASWB Approved Continuing Education provider or to earn individual course approval, an applicant must demonstrate compliance with the ACE standards contained in the ACE Handbook and remain in compliance throughout the approval period.

[About ASWB ACE and program overview](#)

[Comparing approval types: Which is right for you?](#)

[ACE standards](#)

[About ASWB](#)

Look for these helpful icons throughout the ACE Handbook



Helpful tips



Distance learning



Appendix

The ACE Handbook uses color coding to call your attention to information that specifically applies to each type of approval.

Look for **ACE provider in red** and **ACE individual course approval in green**.

This revision, dated December 18, 2023, supersedes all previous versions.

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# 1. Meeting regulatory requirements

## Standard 1.1 – Regulations

The CE provider knows and adheres to social work regulations regarding CE requirements in the jurisdictions where it offers ACE credit.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 1.1

- For each jurisdiction where CE credit is offered, CE providers must stay current on
  - Course content requirements, categories, scope of practice, and professional skill levels within the jurisdiction
  - License renewal requirements (e.g., specific content requirements, ethics requirements, etc.)
  - CE requirements for license categories
- CE providers must
  - Plan and implement programs and learning activities in response to an identified need
  - Designate the category of CE offering (clinical, ethics, cultural competency, or general) needed for certificates of credit if required by the jurisdiction where CE credit is being offered or as required by ASWB ACE for all approved individual courses/conferences. Jurisdictional credit requirements may vary and, if the credit type is different than one of the types allowed for use in the ACE statement (as listed above), it should be clear on certificates, in a separate location than the ACE statement, that the CE provider is stating that the course meets a jurisdictional topic area requirement versus what is being offered as an ACE credit type (e.g., “This course meets Pennsylvania requirements for 3 suicide assessment credit hours.”).
  - Define potential learners and the target audience, identifying educational level and any prerequisites for each CE activity and including that information on promotional materials
- Where ACE requirements are more stringent than those of a specific jurisdiction, providers must follow ACE standards if offering ACE CE credit for a continuing education training.

### Providing CE credit to professions outside of social work

ASWB ACE standards are designed to align social work continuing education with most regulatory requirements and restrictions of social work licensing boards/colleges in the United States and Canada.

ACE does not track whether other professions’ licensing boards (such as marriage and family therapists, professional clinical counselors, and psychologists) accept CE credit for their licensees for individual courses approved by ACE or courses offered by an ACE provider.

CE providers must not state in advertising that ACE approval is granted for professions other than social work.

## 2. Applying social work values and ethics

### Standard 2.1 – Values and ethics

The CE provider's overall programs and individual courses and conferences adhere to the social work profession's values and codes of ethics.

#### Essential details for understanding Standard 2.1

- The mission of the social work profession is rooted in the following core values
  - Service
  - Social justice
  - Dignity and worth of the person
  - Importance of human relationships
  - Integrity
  - Competence
- Refer to the [NASW Code of Ethics \(2021\)](#) and the [CASW Code of Ethics \(2005\)](#).

### Standard 2.2 – Nondiscrimination

The CE provider does not discriminate against any individual or group based on gender, race, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, age, organizational membership, or any other basis prohibited by law or counter to the social work profession's codes of ethics.

#### Essential detail for understanding Standard 2.2

- Refer to the [NASW Code of Ethics \(2021\)](#) and the [CASW Code of Ethics \(2005\)](#).

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 2.2

- CE providers must use the social work profession's values and codes of ethics to define discrimination. In cases where an action is lawful but is counter to the social work codes of ethics, CE providers must follow the codes of ethics.
- CE providers must not require program participants to accept or adhere to any religion, religious principles, creed, or political principles.
- CE providers must not require membership in a particular organization as a prerequisite for participation.

### Standard 2.3 – Cultural awareness and diversity

The CE provider infuses cultural awareness and diversity into its courses and programs.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 2.3

- CE providers must ensure that their continuing education courses promote cultural awareness and understanding of diversity such as defined in the [NASW Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice, 2015](#).
- A CE provider's social work consultant must assess courses offered for ACE credit to ensure

they meet this standard. **Providers of approved individual courses/conferences** may use a social work planner or planners instead to review individual courses to ensure they meet this standard if they do not have a social work consultant. See Standard 3.2

## Standard 2.4 – Accessibility

The CE provider offers accommodations and accessibility as required by law.

### Essential detail for understanding Standard 2.4

- CE providers are responsible for meeting the legal requirements for accessibility in the jurisdiction(s) where they offer courses and for obtaining legal counsel to make sure they understand how accessibility laws apply to their organization when making accommodation decisions.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 2.4

- CE providers offering courses in the United States must make accommodations required by applicable laws related to individuals with disabilities.
- CE providers offering courses in Canada must follow all applicable laws related to human rights legislation in Canada.
- CE providers must include clear instructions for requesting accessibility accommodations in promotional and advertising materials.

### 3. Working with ACE

#### Standard 3.1 – Application eligibility

Prospective applicants must meet eligibility requirements prior to applying.

##### **Program requirements for meeting Standard 3.1**

- To be eligible to apply for ACE provider or course approval, a prospective applicant must
  - Have been operational for at least six months.
  - Have planned and presented at least three educational activities appropriate for social workers.
  - Designate an individual with appropriate experience to serve as continuing education director responsible for working with ACE.
  - Designate a licensed/registered social worker who will serve as social work consultant, involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of social work continuing education. (A social work planner or planners may serve this function **for approved individual courses/conferences**. See Standard 3.2)
  - Be able to supply evaluations and documentation of its program.

#### Standard 3.2 – Provider staff

The CE provider has assigned staff members to the roles of continuing education director, social work consultant, and primary contact to work with the ACE program during the application process and after approval to ensure continued compliance with ACE standards.

##### **Program requirements for meeting Standard 3.2**

- CE providers must assign a continuing education director who is a visible, identifiable authority within the organization and who remains in good standing with the appropriate regulatory body if the individual has a professional license in any field.
  - The CE director
    - Oversees the provider's application process with ACE, explaining the provider's mission and goals for the provision and evaluation of continuing education on the ACE application
    - Must be an employee (not contractor or volunteer) of the organization applying for ACE approval, unless an exception is requested and granted by ACE.
    - Ensures that the provider's programs and cosponsored programs meet ACE standards
    - Demonstrates administrative stability, oversees transitions and staffing changes within the provider organization, enacts procedures for the smooth and orderly transfer of administrative responsibilities in the event of an administrative change, and takes steps to ensure familiarity with ASWB standards

- Responds promptly to requests for information from ACE staff
- Informs ACE staff when changes occur in the provider organization
  - Updates information following changes to administrative staff responsibilities, contacts, company address, website address, and telephone number
  - Notifies ACE if the provider's company is sold and completes required documentation
  - Provides written notification to ACE within 10 days of changes to the individual serving as CE director or social work consultant, including updating resumes, license information (if applicable), and contact information
- CE providers must assign a social work consultant to participate in and monitor the planning and implementation of the provider's courses. When the same person serves as the CE director and social work consultant or planner, the CE provider is no longer required to name an auxiliary social work consultant or advisory committee members. Instead, the CE provider must attest that they have another licensed social worker or advisory committee/ CE committee of two or more behavioral health or healthcare professionals that will consult with the CE director, when needed, to mediate complaints that escalate to formal grievances.
  - The social work consultant
    - May not also serve as the CE director unless ACE grants an exception
    - Must be licensed as a social worker and have practiced or be currently practicing social work privately or within an institutional setting
    - Must remain in good standing with the appropriate regulatory body during the duration of ACE individual course or provider approval. If the social work consultant's license status ends for any reason, the provider must designate another qualified individual to serve as the SWC.
    - May be an employee, contractor, or volunteer
  - The social work consultant is involved in
    - Assessing the educational needs of social workers to inform course development
    - Reviewing or developing learning objectives
    - Planning the provider's continuing education courses
    - Administering and monitoring the provider's courses
    - Working with other staff to stay current on the CE requirements in all jurisdictions for which CE credit is offered (Standard 1.1)
    - Ensuring the provider infuses cultural awareness and diversity into courses and the overall program (Standard 2.3)
    - Resolving grievances (Standard 7.2)
    - Evaluating the provider's courses and program (Standard 7.4)
  - CE providers applying for **individual course or conference approval** may assign a licensed social worker as a social work planner for each course or conference session submitted instead of a social work consultant. The social work planner is responsible for the same functions as the social work consultant for each course to which they



are assigned. The social work planner may be an employee, contractor, or volunteer, and must be licensed as a social worker in good standing while serving in this role.

- CE providers must assign a primary contact to ensure effective communication between ACE and the provider's CE director and social work consultant.
  - The primary contact
    - May be the CE director, the social work consultant, or another individual assigned to this role.
    - Makes sure that the CE director and the social work consultant review all reports and requests for additional information from ACE and submits any revised material or additional information requested accurately and on time. Before the primary contact sends a response back to ACE for review, all areas in need of correction or revision must be addressed.
    - Notifies the CE director and the social work consultant of all information submitted to ACE.
  - If the primary contact is not the CE director and ACE determines that the primary contact is not meeting these responsibilities, ACE may require the CE director to assume this role or to assign a new individual.

### Standard 3.3 – Continued compliance

The CE provider ensures that its program and courses meet current ACE standards.

#### Essential details for understanding Standard 3.3

- **ACE providers** will receive an approval letter containing the ACE provider's official ACE approval statement (Standard 6.2) and other important and helpful information.
- After the approval letter is received, the **ACE provider** may begin offering continuing education events for ACE CE credit in the formats for which the ACE provider has been approved.
- **CE providers of approved individual courses or conferences** will receive an approval letter containing the course's official ACE individual course approval statement (Standard 6.2) and other important and helpful information. After the approval letter is received, the CE provider may begin offering ACE CE credit for the approved individual courses or conference sessions in the approved formats.
- **CE providers who are approved for individual courses or conference sessions** may not make changes to approved courses or conference sessions without submitting a change application to ACE and getting approval for the change(s).
- Failure to comply with ACE standards or respond to requests in a timely manner may subject the CE provider to adverse action by ACE including probation, suspension, or revocation of approval. ACE reserves the right to remove ACE approval at any time if ACE staff determine that a provider or course is not meeting ACE standards.
- ACE will notify CE providers as far in advance as possible of changes to standards or requirements via newsletters, emails, or the ACE page on the ASWB website.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 3.3

- Backdating of approval for courses or conferences offered before ACE approval was granted is prohibited.
- Every course offered for CE credit to social workers by CE providers using ACE provider or individual course approval must meet ACE standards.
- CE providers must update their courses and program to continue to comply with current ACE standards throughout the provider's or course's approval period. CE providers must update their materials to meet current standards whenever the ACE Handbook is revised. *Exception:* In some cases, CE providers may be required to make immediate changes to their courses to remain in good standing. This may occur when an ACE standard must be changed or created to remain in compliance with social work regulations.
- **Courses approved through individual course approval** may not be changed during the two-year approval period. The provider must request approval from ACE and pay a change fee for all changes, including content, instructors/speakers, title, etc. Only minor changes are permitted; if a provider wishes to significantly change a course, regardless of the number of changes, the provider must submit it as a new course. If ACE staff find that a requested change is significant enough to require a new course application, they will notify the provider that it must pay a new course application fee. The amount already paid may be applied to the new course application fee, but it will not be refunded.
- **CE providers who have received ACE approval for individual courses or conference sessions** may offer ASWB ACE credit ONLY for the courses/conference sessions that have been individually reviewed and approved by ASWB ACE.
- If audited, CE providers must provide ACE staff with requested documentation within 30 days. They must comply within 30 days to ACE requests for changes necessary to meet ACE standards.
- CE providers must make changes to materials within 24 to 48 hours of notification of a significant departure from ACE standards (e.g., removing a course on an unacceptable topic for social work CE).

## 4. Ensuring course quality and relevance

### Standard 4.1 – Acceptable topics

The CE provider offers courses on topics that are relevant to evidence-based social work practice and reflect current peer-reviewed research, best practices, and the needs of social workers.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.1

- Course topics must be pertinent to social work theory, methods, and practice and reflect current research and best practices.

### Is your continuing education content ready for ACE?

- ✓ Will it help social workers better serve the public and support ongoing professional competence?
- ✓ Can it be understood as building on a degree in social work for someone currently practicing as a licensed social worker?
- ✓ Is it credible (i.e., empirical, peer reviewed, follows established research procedures) OR does it address legal, ethical, or regulatory professional standards?

**ACE applicants answering YES to these questions are ready to review ACE standards for ensuring course quality and relevance.**

- Course topics must clearly fall within the scope of practice for social workers and be directly applicable to social work practice, relating to one or more of the following social work educational areas
  - Theories and concepts of human behavior in the social environment
  - Social work practice, knowledge, and skills
    - Social work research, programs, or practice evaluations
    - Social work agency management or administration
    - Development, evaluation, and implementation of social policy
    - Social work generalist practice
    - Social work clinical practice
  - Diversity and social justice
  - Social work ethics
- Course content should be based on peer-reviewed research, cover evidence-based practice, and apply specifically to the needs and the scope of practice of licensed social workers.

## ACCEPTABLE COURSE CONTENT AREAS

A course may focus on more than one topic within a category or from different categories.

### Individuals, couples, families, children

- Mandatory reporting
- Human development & behavior
- Gender/gender identity
- Sexuality
- Family systems
- Issues of poverty
- Diagnosis/assessment
- New approaches to treatment
- Social work research
- Social work clinical practice
- Social work nonclinical practice
- Social work with individuals
- Social work ethics

### Human development, diversity and behavior in the environment

- Cultural competency
- Diversity issues
- LGBTQI issues
- Multiculturalism
- Gender/gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disabilities
- Issues of poverty
- Domestic violence
- Psychotherapy
- Psychology
- Aging
- Gerontology
- Substance abuse & addiction
- Addiction theories & therapies
- Medical social work
- Psychopharmacology
- Diagnosis/assessment
- HIV-AIDS
- Trauma
- Sexual abuse/assault
- Death and dying
- Grief
- Spirituality
- New approaches to treatment
- Social work research
- Social work clinical practice
- Social work ethics
- Social work with individuals

### Communities and groups

- Social work with organizations
- Social justice
- Theories and methods of social change
- Social work with communities
- Social work system interface
- Social work communication

- International Issues
- Economic issues
- Issues of poverty
- Social work research
- Social work nonclinical practice
- Social work ethics

### Professional relationships, values, & ethics

- Professional impairment
- Mandatory reporting
- Professional competency
- Therapeutic relationships
- Psychotherapy
- Psychology
- Research/practice evaluation
- Boundary issues
- Confidentiality
- Client rights
- Dual or multiple relationships
- Mandatory reporting
- Billing practices
- Conflicts of interest
- Sexual misconduct
- Fraud
- Social work supervision
- Risk management
- Service delivery
- Spirituality
- Social work research
- Social work ethics
- Social work clinical supervision

### Public administration & policy

- Social policy
- Grants/funding
- Organizations
- Social work system interface
- International Issues
- Economic issues
- Issues of poverty
- Social work ethics

### Practice administration (specific to social work or general behavioral health fields)

- Record keeping
- Informed consent
- Law
- Service delivery
- Billing practices (ethical)
- Fraud
- Practice development (ethical)
- Social work ethics

## QUESTIONABLE COURSE CONTENT AREAS

- Touch therapy (e.g. Reiki)
- Insurance billing (e.g. Medicare, Medicaid, etc.)
- Compassion fatigue
- Yoga
- Mindfulness

## UNACCEPTABLE COURSE CONTENT AREAS

- Exam prep
- Self help
- Personal growth/enrichment
- General leadership or management
- Marketing or growing a practice/business
- Generating income
- Billing/coding
- Office management
- Supervisory sessions
- Technology enhancement
- Staff orientation
- Company specific policies or procedures
- CPR
- Infection control
- Interpreter training
- Commercial content
- Topics outside of scope of practice for social workers (e.g. prescribing, nutrition, massage, etc.)
- Coaching (i.e., courses that discuss coaching, in general, and do not require the attendee be a licensed mental health or health care professional to register)
- Promotion of sexual orientation change efforts as a therapeutic method (sometimes called "conversion therapy")
- Political and religious content restriction: The program content cannot state or imply in any manner that individuals who act inconsistently with or who do not accept a particular political or religious belief or principle are dysfunctional or otherwise inappropriate or that the belief itself is unacceptable or incorrect.

\*The above list is not comprehensive. Additional course content areas may be determined to be unacceptable to offer for ACE credit if they do not meet ACE standards. Supervision towards licensure cannot be offered for CE credit to participants in such supervision.

- Courses related to other functions sometimes filled by social workers, such as leadership or business practices or processes, may not be acceptable for social work CE credit. Training that applies to leaders in any field, even when helpful to social workers in management roles, is not considered acceptable for social work CE credit unless the course includes learning objectives specific to social workers.
- Course topics that are primarily procedural or oriented toward business practices, self- help, or self-development are not acceptable for social work CE credit.



Determination of the appropriateness of a course must not be made based on topic alone. The provider must adequately establish the connection between course content and one or more of the social work educational areas. The more distant a topic appears from core disciplinary knowledge, the greater the responsibility of the CE provider to ensure that the CE is relevant to licensed social workers.

- CE providers must review and update course content and instructional materials for current content and update them regularly (at least every 5 years).
- When a CE provider determines that course content is no longer current or valid, the provider must either update the course or retire it.
- CE providers must regularly update the course bibliography with current references to demonstrate validity and currency even when course content and material do not require change. (Standard 4.2)
- Courses that include enduring materials, such as a recorded video or online reading-based material, must list in promotional materials the date the course was created, reviewed, or updated.
- Asynchronous distance learning (self-paced) courses based solely on enduring materials that cannot be updated, such as a book or article not created by the CE provider, must use course material published within the past five years. Providers must either retire courses with material published more than five years prior or add current written material.

### Multidisciplinary courses

CE providers may offer courses for social work CE that were originally developed for other professions if they include content appropriate for social workers and meet ACE standards. Such courses must be revised so the course materials, learning objectives, promotional materials, etc., are inclusive of social workers. CE providers must not offer a course for social work CE that was created for another profession and that includes learning objectives and content that are inappropriate for social workers or are geared specifically to another profession or professions.

For example, a course on end of life care developed for nurses may include content that would be valuable to a social worker who is part of a multidisciplinary team. If the course content, course materials, learning objectives, and promotional materials specifically address the nurse's role, the ethics of nursing professionals and end of life care, or a nurse's scope of practice, then it would be too focused on the nursing profession to be offered by a CE provider for social work CE credit.



### Developing ethics courses for social workers

#### Standard 4.2 – Bibliography

The CE provider creates a bibliography, also called a reference list, that includes all source material used, consulted, referenced, or quoted for each course or conference session.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.2

- The bibliography must include all sources used in the creation of the course, including information from websites, books, journals, articles, reports, charts, videos, etc. Most of the



references must come from peer-reviewed journals, unless no journal articles are available for the content area(s) being covered in the course. In that case, other references must prove the course relates to current evidence-based practice or best practice for the social work profession.

- Participants must have access to the bibliography to determine the credibility and source of information and to learn more from sources.
- At least 50 percent or five of the references cited, whichever is less, must reflect research published within the past five years. The bibliography must be updated regularly to ensure courses meet this requirement.
- If the bibliography includes writings the course instructor authored, it must also include relevant, current references from writings of other authors.
- The bibliography's entries must follow APA format. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) offers detailed instructions on formatting these entries.
- If a reference is from a website that lists no specific date of creation, then the date the CE provider last retrieved the information must be included in the bibliography.



Sources that may help participants but were not used in the creation of the course may be shared via a separate list called, for example, “Suggested readings” or “Additional resources.”

### Standard 4.3 – Learning objectives

The CE provider offers courses with measurable learning objectives—clear and concise written statements defining the knowledge, skills, and abilities a learner should be able to demonstrate following the learning experience—that the provider can evaluate and use to assess and improve future learning and course quality.

#### Essential detail for understanding Standard 4.3

- Learning objectives serve as the foundation for planning, instruction, and assessment of a learning experience and define the expected goal of the course.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.3

- Learning objectives must be written clearly to help participants understand how the course is related to their educational goals and focus their attention on specific aspects of the course content.
- The effectiveness of the course in helping participants meet the learning objectives must be assessed.
  - For distance learning courses, the learning objectives must be included and rated in the pilot test. (Standard 4.9)
  - A posttest requiring the participant to demonstrate knowledge is required for self-paced distance learning courses and live distance learning courses that are not interactive. Posttesting is encouraged for all other courses. (Standard 4.10)



- The required course evaluation must allow participants to rank learning objectives. (Standard 7.4)
- Learning objectives must use demonstrable verbs or action words that are measurable. They must state what the learner will demonstrate.



ACE does not accept verbs that cannot be demonstrated such as “appreciate,” “believe,” “understand,” “learn,” or “know.” Make sure learning objectives are measurable or observable. They should not describe how the learner will learn or what the instructor will teach.

- Learning objectives that were originally written for audiences from other professions must be revised to include social workers and the social work profession.



[Acceptable learning objectives list](#)

## Standard 4.4 – Content level

The CE provider accurately identifies content level as **beginner**, **intermediate**, or **advanced**.

### Essential details for understanding Standard 4.4

- **Beginning** level courses introduce learners to a content area; include information about a condition, treatment method, or issue; and involve learning and comprehending content.
- **Intermediate** level courses provide information that builds on knowledge practitioners with some experience already have. These courses focus on skill-building or adding knowledge, possibly following a brief overview of basic information, and involve using information in concrete situations and understanding the underlying structure of the material.
- **Advanced** level courses provide content for participants who have been working in the content area and have a clear understanding of the issues. These courses cover and address the complexities involved in the work and involve synthesizing material to create new patterns or structures or evaluating material for a specific purpose.



The identification of content level is related to the content of the course, not to the target audience. If an experienced social worker is learning new material, for example, it would be appropriate for that social worker to participate in a beginner level course.

### Program requirement for meeting Standard 4.4


- CE providers must review course content and accurately identify its level on promotional materials.



## Standard 4.5 – Instructor qualifications

The CE provider offers courses taught by instructors or presenters with appropriate professional qualifications.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.5

- Instructors or presenters of continuing education courses must have professional qualifications in good standing with their professional regulatory board, if applicable, and meet one or more of these criteria
  - Be a faculty member of an accredited undergraduate or graduate school of social work
  - Have specialized graduate or postgraduate training in the subject being taught
  - Have extensive experience including no less than five years of practical application or research in the subject taught
- Instructors or knowledgeable staff delivering distance learning courses must be available to communicate with participants and be proficient at using technology to communicate subject matter effectively. 
- Instructors must be assigned to teach topics specifically relevant to the social work scope of practice in which they have training and experience.
- With few exceptions, instructors must be members of a licensed profession such as social work, psychology, nursing, medicine, or law. Individuals who are not licensed professionals in any field are usually not considered acceptable instructors for social work CE courses unless the provider can provide justification, accepted by ACE, for the use of an unlicensed instructor.
- **Courses or conference sessions submitted for individual approval** are unlikely to be approved if the instructor is not a currently licensed member of a profession such as those listed above. Individual course or conference applicants should include additional details on the application explaining why they believe an instructor who does not meet these qualifications should be allowed to teach the course or conference session.
- To ensure compliance with ACE standards, **ACE providers** who wish to use an unlicensed instructor to present a course for social work CE credit using their ACE provider approval must contact ACE for a determination before the course is offered.

## Standard 4.6 – Instructional materials

The CE provider uses appropriate, high-quality instructional materials.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.6

- Instructional materials (e.g., training manuals, handouts, outlines, background materials, audiovisual aids, bibliography, etc.) must enhance participants' understanding, be appropriate to their learning level, and be professional.

- Materials initially developed for audiences other than social workers must be carefully reviewed and modified as necessary in consultation with the CE provider's social work consultant or, if applicable, the social work planner.
- Course instructors and material must not promote commercial bias or interest.
- CE providers must ensure and attest that program materials do not infringe upon or otherwise violate intellectual property or privacy rights, including copyright, trademark, and license rights. Providers must either own the materials used or be permitted by law to use them, consulting with legal counsel if needed. ACE may require a provider to show proof of usage rights in the form of written permission. It is ultimately the responsibility of the CE provider, however, and not ASWB, to ensure compliance with all applicable laws for all continuing education courses offered for ACE credit.

### Standard 4.7 – Avoiding commercial bias

The CE provider does not show commercial bias or promote commercial interests during CE activities.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.7

- Course instructors must not promote, offer, or sell specific products or services in the context of a learning activity.
- Course materials must not promote a specific product or service.

### Standard 4.8 – Calculating CE credit

The CE provider follows ACE requirements for determining CE credit.




#### Essential detail for understanding Standard 4.8

- A CE credit is defined by ACE as 60 minutes of instruction.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.8

- Courses must be at least 60 minutes in length to offer ACE credit.
- The first 60 minutes of any course must be uninterrupted instruction.
- CE credit may be given in quarter-hour increments after the first required hour. Time may be rounded up to the quarter hour. For example, a two-hour and 20-minute course would provide 2.5 CE credits.
- Breaks and lunches must not be included in the CE credit determination.  
Example: A recorded webinar was 1 hour and 24 minutes in length (or 84 minutes total). The provider may round up to 1.5 credits for the amount of credit the course can offer.
- Breaks of any kind (coffee, lunch, dinner, etc.) and registration/check-in time must not be included in the CE credit determination. Breaks must, however, be included on the timed agenda on promotional material.
- When calculating CE credit, an introduction of the speaker(s) may be included as part of the course. Introductions lasting more than a few minutes—such as time for the entire group of

participants to introduce themselves to each other—may not be included in CE credit calculations.

- If CE credit is offered for time spent completing the posttest, the course must be pilot tested. (Standard 4.9)
- Courses, including distance learning courses, must provide a minimum of one hour of instruction in one block of time. If a recording of any kind is used as a self-paced, distance learning course, it must contain at least one hour of recorded material to be offered for CE credit. 
- The term “continuing education unit” (CEU), which is defined as 10 hours of participation in an education program, must not be used to measure continuing education credits for social workers unless it is used correctly. Many social work regulatory boards use the term CE. (1 CE = .1 CEU)
- Reading-based asynchronous distance learning (self-paced) courses or hybrid courses with reading-based content must be pilot tested to determine credit hours before being offered for CE credit. Course credit must not be offered for more hours than the average time it took the pilot testers to complete the course, after removing any outliers, regardless of the word count or other feedback. (Standard 4.9) 
- To estimate CE credit for reading-based asynchronous distance learning (self-paced) courses or hybrid courses with reading-based content before they are pilot tested, CE providers must consider 
  - Input from social workers involved in the development process
  - Volume and complexity of the subject matter
  - Course level
  - Difficulty of posttest questions
- To calculate CE credit for reading-based courses, word count must be based only on the reading portion of the course, not on the word count of the bibliography, resource lists, or any other course materials.
- Providers may use the ASWB ACE word count allowance in place of a pilot test when determining credit amount for a reading-based course or for the reading portion of a hybrid course that includes reading. (Note: words counted must not include reference list, author bios, posttests, or any other word count that is already being counted as part of time for another format, such as PowerPoints used during a recorded webinar, and can only be counted for required reading.)
  - Each 6,000 words = 1 credit
  - Each additional 1500 words = .25 credits
  - Rounding up is allowed to the next quarter hour for word counts that are between the word counts above.  
Example: The word count for a reading-based course is 9000 total words. The provider may offer 1.5 credits for this course.  
Example: The word count for a reading-based course is 7000 total words. The provider may offer 1.25 credits for this course.

## Standard 4.9 – Pilot testing

The CE provider uses pilot testing before delivering a course via distance learning to determine credit hours and ensure course quality and effectiveness.



### Essential details for understanding Standard 4.9

- Pilot testing is the process of presenting a course in its entirety, including posttesting, to a sample group of pilot testers under conditions similar to those under which it is offered to learners.
- CE providers use pilot testing to assess the suitability, utility, and clarity of course content and structure and to determine the length of time the average participant needs to complete a course so that an accurate amount of CE credit is assigned.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.9

- Pilot testing is required
  - For reading-based or hybrid asynchronous (self-paced) distance learning courses that include reading-based content
  - For all distance learning courses, synchronous or asynchronous, in which a CE provider offers CE credit for the time it takes to complete a course's posttest (Standard 4.10)
  - When the course content for a reading-based course or a hybrid course with reading-based content is updated or revised
- When a pilot test is required, CE providers must follow the ACE-approved pilot test procedure. *Exception:* If a new provider has offered a reading-based or hybrid asynchronous distance learning (self-paced) course for at least a year before applying for ACE approval, and evaluations completed by participants from previous offerings of the course contain certain required questions, including the exact amount of time it took the participants to complete the course, those results may be sufficient to substitute for a pilot test. ACE staff must approve this substitution of data for preexisting courses before providers may offer courses that were not pilot tested using the ACE-approved pilot test procedure for CE credit using ACE approval.
- All required pilot tests must ask for the exact amount of time, in minutes and hours, that it took to complete the education portion of the course and the posttest.
- Pilot testing is recommended as best practice when developing courses in any format to assess
  - Suitability, utility, and clarity of course content and structure
  - Overall course validity



To create a pilot test, CE providers may use the pilot test questions—or questions similar to them—found in the appendix. All pilot tests must also include instructions to the pilot testers. CE providers may wish to add additional questions.



[Pilot test instructions](#)

## Standard 4.10 – Posttesting

The CE provider uses posttesting as required to assess participant learning and course quality and effectiveness.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 4.10

- CE providers must develop and administer a standard posttest (or a posttest alternative as allowed) for all distance learning formats.
- The posttest must be assessed during the course’s pilot test and administered to each participant wishing to receive CE credit.
- The standard posttest must include 10 questions (multiple choice or true/false) for the first CE hour and five more for each additional CE hour.
- True/false questions may not comprise more than half the questions on a standard posttest.



#### Required number of posttest questions based on instruction time

Instruction time	Number of posttest questions
1 hour	10
2 hours	15
3 hours	20
Each additional hour	Add 5 additional questions

- An essay-question posttest, accompanied by a scoring rubric demonstrating objectivity and impartiality, may be used as an alternative to a standard posttest for asynchronous (self-

### Pilot test procedure

- Create a pilot test using the questions listed in the pilot test instructions (ACE Handbook appendix), or similar questions, allowing for yes/no responses, written comments, or Likert scale responses where necessary.
- Identify a group of at least five individuals from the social work and behavioral health professions to serve as pilot testers.
- Give the pilot test instructions and pilot test questionnaire to group members before they begin the course.
- Present the course in its entirety—including any pretest and posttest—to the pilot testers exactly as it will be presented to course participants.
- Summarize and analyze the results, adding comments and indicating areas of concern or areas needing change, etc. This process must be completed by the social work consultant, the social work planner (if applicable), or the CE director.
- Adjust the course content, course structure, materials, amount of CE credit offered, etc., as needed, based on the results.

paced) and noninteractive synchronous (live) distance learning courses.

- Discussion questions embedded within course content may be used as an alternative to a standard posttest for interactive, synchronous distance learning (live) courses. Discussion questions may be used only for courses in which distance learning technology is used to monitor participation and interaction is ensured through sound instructional design.



Interactive discussion, interactive polling, or a question-and-answer session may be used in place of discussion questions for interactive, synchronous distance learning (live) courses.

## 5. Delivering learning experiences

### Standard 5.1 – Course delivery

The CE provider delivers in-person or distance learning courses for CE credit to social workers only in the format(s) for which the course or provider have been approved.

#### Essential details for understanding Standard 5.1

- ACE recognizes the following delivery formats for approved providers or individual courses:
  - In-person
  - Synchronous distance
  - Recorded asynchronous distance
  - Reading-based asynchronous distance
- **ACE providers** are not required to have conference format approval and may offer conferences in any format for which the provider is approved provided all applicable ACE standards and requirements are met for each format.
- CE providers seeking approval for **individual courses or conferences** must still submit an application for approval of a conference and submit each individual conference session that they wish to offer for ACE credit.
- **Hybrid courses** integrate two or more formats. ACE providers approved for multiple formats may implement hybrid courses using any format for which they are approved. Pilot tests and posttests are required for any portion of the course that includes a format that requires them. Examples of hybrid courses:
  - The social worker watches a two-hour video (asynchronous recorded distance learning) before attending a live event (in-person).
  - Participants attend classroom sessions (in-person) and read chapters from a textbook (asynchronous distance learning).
  - Participants are required to attend a live webinar (synchronous distance learning) and read a book (reading-based distance learning).
- ACE defines an **in-service** as a course that is only being offered to employees of one specific organization. CE providers that provide in-services to the staff of either their own organization, or of an organization that has hired them to provide a training to their staff, must:
  - provide promotional material that meets ACE standards to all social work attendees prior to the in-service, regardless of whether attendance at the training is mandatory or not
  - not discuss company specific policies or procedures or resources during the training
  - be responsible for all aspects of the training, other than the location (if provided by the organization that has hired the CE provider to offer the training).

- meet all other ACE requirements and standards

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 5.1

- ACE approves in-person and distance learning delivery of courses only in recognized course formats. Providers may offer courses for ACE credit only in the formats for which they have been approved, as listed in their ACE approval letter.
- CE providers may apply to add a format at any time by completing an application and submitting required course materials and fees for review and approval. New formats may not be offered for CE credit before approval is received. An add-format application fee applies if the new format is requested outside of the renewal application.
- **ACE providers** wishing to offer a course in a format (including the conference format) for which they are not approved or wishing to cosponsor a course with another provider not approved by ACE for that format may choose to apply for **individual course or conference approval**.
- **Providers of approved individual courses or conferences** may only deliver the course in the format for which the course was approved.
- CE providers must determine whether the jurisdiction in which CE is being offered accepts CE credit earned through distance learning courses.
- In addition to meeting ACE standards for all courses, distance learning courses must meet additional standards.



Providers of reading-based courses should be prepared to list the word count and creation or publication date on the application. For reading material older than five years, providers may need to explain during application how and when the course was last reviewed for current content, how it was updated, and why the material is still considered current and useful for social work CE credit.

### Standard 5.2 – Distance learning communication

The CE provider ensures the availability of communication between participants and instructors when delivering courses via distance learning formats.



### Program requirements for meeting Standard 5.2

- CE providers must designate communication time and methods so that participants can communicate with an instructor or knowledgeable staff member regarding subject matter guidance, correction, grading, comments, or problem resolution. The method of communication must be included in promotional material.
- CE providers must have procedures and timetables for grading and returning assignments and posttests, reviewing evaluations, and issuing certificates of credit. Providers must return assignments to participants in a timely manner.

### Standard 5.3 – Cosponsorship

The CE provider may cosponsor courses and conferences under specified conditions. **Individual**



**course or conference approval** is required when any cosponsor is not an **ACE provider**.

### Essential details for understanding Standard 5.3

- ACE defines cosponsorship as more than one organization working together in the development, distribution, and presentation of a continuing education training (e.g., workshop, conference, distance learning, etc.) that will offer continuing education credit to social workers. Organizations serving only as financial sponsors of an event are not considered cosponsors under this definition.
- The requirements in this version of the ACE Handbook (revised April 1, 2019) reflect the new policy. Because of the 90-day period required for review of an application, a provider applying for cosponsorship approval beginning on April 1 must adhere to the new policy.
- Automatic cosponsorship approval is granted to all **ACE providers** in good standing that wish to cosponsor continuing education trainings with other **ACE providers** in good standing, regardless of whether any of the ACE providers had previous approval to cosponsor granted by ACE. This automatic approval is allowed only for formats that all ACE providers offering the training together are approved to offer.
- Individual course approval of a cosponsored course is required if
  - Any **ACE provider** is not in good standing
  - Any **ACE provider** is not approved for the format of the cosponsored training
  - Any of the cosponsoring organizations is not an **ACE provider**

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 5.3

- To work with cosponsoring organizations, the CE provider submitting the course
  - Must enter into a cosponsorship agreement that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each party. This document must be signed and dated by the responsible parties for both the CE provider submitting the course and the cosponsor.
  - Is responsible for ensuring that all cosponsored continuing education events meet ACE requirements.
    - If all organizations cosponsoring the course are **ACE providers**, they are all responsible for ensuring the course has proper oversight and adheres to ACE standards and requirements.
    - If only one of the organizations cosponsoring the course is an **ACE provider**, the **ACE provider** must oversee all administrative processes and procedures and ensure adherence to ACE standards and requirements.
    - If none of the organizations cosponsoring the course is an **ACE provider**, the CE provider that is submitting the individual course/conference application for approval must oversee all administrative processes and procedures and ensure adherence to ACE standards and requirements.

- Must ensure that cosponsor organizations promote, advertise, and present courses in compliance with ACE requirements.

## Licensure examination preparation and certification courses

■ ACE approval does not extend to licensure examination preparation courses. **ACE providers** who offer social work licensure examination preparation courses must use the following disclaimer language in all promotional brochures, web pages, and other materials used in the promotion, advertising, or delivery of these courses: "This licensure preparation program and materials associated with it were not included in the Association of Social Work Boards Approved Continuing Education review and are neither approved by ASWB for continuing education nor endorsed by ASWB in any manner."

Providers must not state or imply in any of their materials that a certificate program is approved or endorsed by ASWB ACE. ACE approval means that the provider's program meets ACE standards and allows it to offer CE credit to social workers as an ACE provider or through an approved individual course. Approval is not an endorsement of the quality or usefulness of certification programs a provider may offer to social workers.

To use ACE approval information for cosponsored courses or conferences, **ACE providers** must

- Display information, recognition numbers, and indicators of ACE status on promotional material, including websites and printed materials offered to the public, and must adhere to ACE language requirements
- Use ACE identifying information and recognition numbers only for courses for which a written cosponsor agreement and appropriate oversight by the **ACE provider** are in place
- Ensure that cosponsor organizations in partnership with an **ACE provider** indicate that the course is cosponsored with the **ACE provider** and include the approval information on promotional materials and certificates of credit
- Provide appropriate information and oversight regarding use of ACE approval information and jurisdictional acceptance of ACE approval to cosponsor organizations
- To use ACE approval information for **approved individual cosponsored courses** or conferences, CE providers must
  - Display information, recognition numbers, and indicators of ACE status on promotional material, including websites and printed materials offered to the public, and must adhere to ACE language requirements
  - Use ACE identifying information and recognition numbers only for approved courses for which a written cosponsor agreement and appropriate oversight by the CE provider who submitted the application to ACE are in place

- Ensure that cosponsor organizations in partnership with the CE provider that submitted the application and was granted course approval indicate that the course is cosponsored with that CE provider and include the submitting CE provider's ACE approval information on promotional materials and certificates of credit
- Provide appropriate information and oversight regarding use of ACE approval information and jurisdictional acceptance of ACE approval to cosponsor organizations



#### [Cosponsor agreement](#)

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### Standard 5.4 – Conferences

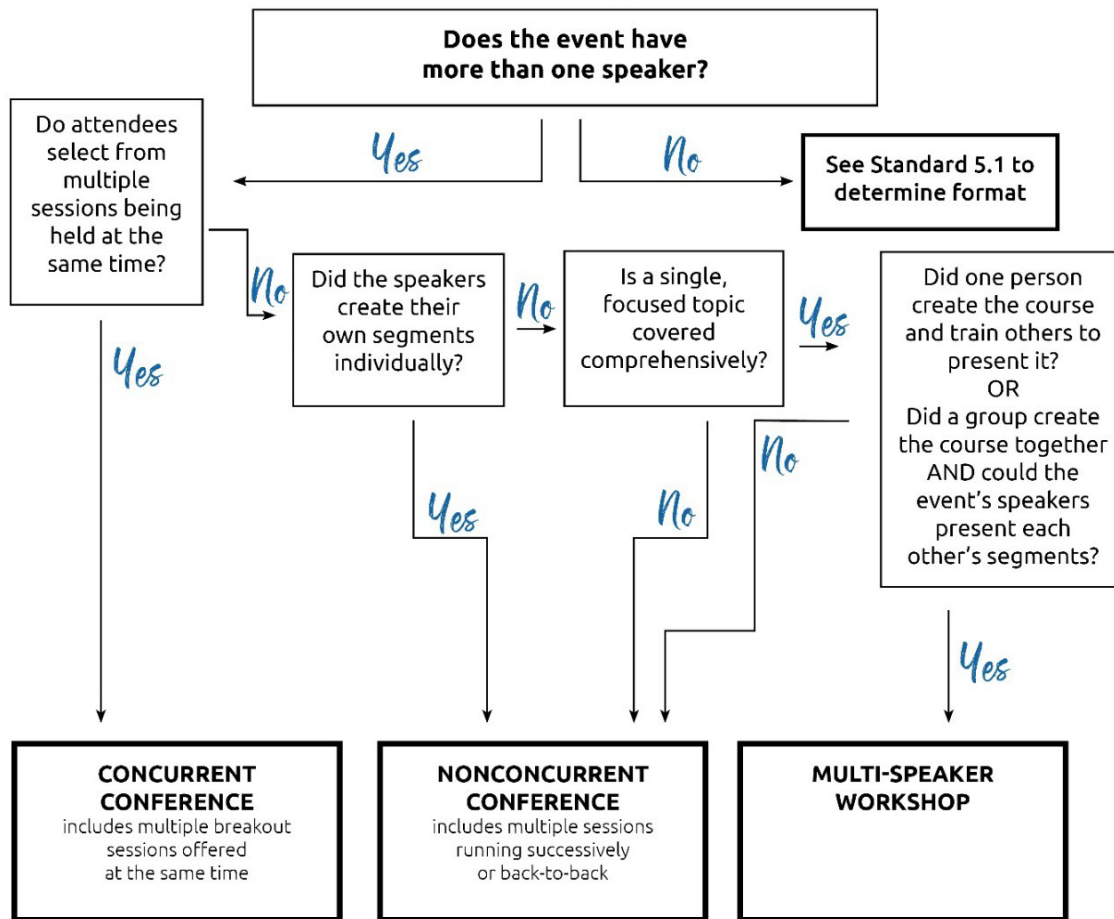
The CE provider has specific conference approval for events defined as conferences by ACE.

#### Essential details for understanding Standard 5.4

- CE providers must determine whether an event is a conference or a multi-speaker workshop, according to the chart on the next page, so that they apply for the correct ACE approval and follow the correct ACE requirements.
- **ACE providers** may offer ACE credit for conference sessions in any format for which the provider has been approved to offer courses. Conference sessions must meet all standards and requirements for the format of that session.
- **Providers of approved individual courses/conferences** may offer ACE credit for conferences only when the conference itself has been approved and only for the individual conference sessions that have been submitted and approved to offer ACE credit.

## Conference or workshop?

*What is the difference?*



### Program requirements for meeting Standard 5.4

- No matter what the provider calls an event, if it meets the ACE definition of a conference, it must adhere to ACE standards and requirements for all courses as well as additional requirements for conferences.
- Each conference session must
  - Adhere to all ACE standards
  - Have at least 60 minutes of uninterrupted instruction time
  - Have learning objectives (overall conference objectives are recommended but optional)
  - List the following in the conference brochure and on promotional material: description, learning objectives, instructor bio(s), number of CE credits offered, target audience, practice/content level, and agenda for each session longer than two hours
  - Include its own individual bibliography that is available to attendees by request
- Promotional materials must

- List which sessions are offered for ACE credit. (This is especially important when some sessions are not relevant to social workers or are not being offered for ACE credit.)
- List course completion requirements for receiving CE credit, including signing in and out of each session (or the entire conference where full attendance is required) and completing evaluations for each session and the overall conference.
- Include the ACE provider or course approval statement(s) with the last sentence adjusted for conference use. (Standard 6.2)
- Certificates of credit must
  - Include the name of the conference
  - Consist of either a separate certificate for each session or a single certificate for the whole conference. Whole conference certificates must include a list of sessions the social worker fully attended and indicate the following for each: session title, number of credits, type of credits (if required by jurisdiction), date, and ACE provider or course approval statement with the last sentence adjusted for conference use. (Standard 6.2)
- CE providers must require attendees to complete evaluations of each session they attended and of the overall conference.
- Providers offering nonconcurrent conferences must decide whether they will require full or partial attendance.
  - When a provider requires full attendance
    - Attendees must attend the entire conference from beginning to end and may earn only the full amount of CE credit offered.
    - Providers must document attendance for the whole conference.
    - The last sentence of the ACE provider or course approval statement on promotional materials must be adjusted for conference use. (Standard 6.2)
  - When a provider allows partial attendance
    - Attendees may choose which sessions to attend and earn CE credit only for those sessions they attended in full.
    - Providers must document attendance for each session.
    - The last sentence of the ACE provider or course approval statement on promotional materials must be adjusted for conference use. (Standard 6.2)
- CE providers approved to offer either workshops or conferences may not offer individual sessions for ACE credit using their own ACE approval at conferences or events offered by other providers of continuing education, regardless of whether the other providers are offering credit for the conference as a whole.
- CE providers may not provide credit for poster sessions. Poster sessions are not eligible for **individual course approval**.



■ **ACE providers** may find sample conference materials in the [ACE provider appendix](#)

■ **Providers of approved individual courses** may find sample conference materials in the [ACE individual course approval appendix](#)

## 6. Promoting and advertising

### Standard 6.1 – Promotional materials

The CE provider uses promotional materials that provide adequate information and follow social work ethical conduct and core values.

Course completion requirements to get a certificate are still required to be included in the promo, including when the attendee will receive the certificate, but providers do not need to describe in promotional materials exactly how the evaluation and certificate are made available to the course attendee upon conclusion of the course.

#### **Program requirements for meeting Standard 6.1**

- CE providers must promote and advertise courses in keeping with social work ethical conduct and core values, as defined by the profession's codes of ethics and as defined under applicable state, provincial, and federal laws. Refer to the [NASW Code of Ethics \(2021\)](#) and the [CASW Code of Ethics \(2005\)](#).
- CE providers must include adequate and accurate information on promotional material shared with prospective participants before registration.
- CE providers must share required course details that meet ACE standards even when attendance is required and the course is not open to the public (e.g., an in-service training).
- CE providers must use promotional and advertising materials that appear professional.
- CE providers must include required information on all promotional material. This information, or a web page link to it, must be included in printed and electronic promotional materials.
  - All promotional materials for courses and individual conference sessions must include
    1. Title
    2. Date
    3. Location or distance learning delivery method description
    4. Description
    5. Learning objectives
    6. Target audience
    7. Instructor bio(s)
    8. Outline or agenda with specific times and breaks
    9. Amount of CE credit offered
    10. CE credit type (if required by jurisdiction)
  - In addition to the above, promotional materials for all courses, including overall conference promotional materials, must include
    11. Fees
    12. Registration deadline
    13. Refund policy

14. Cancellation policy
15. Instructions for requesting accessibility accommodations
16. Complete ACE approval statement (Standard 6.2)
17. Other jurisdictional approvals, if any
18. Course completion requirements
19. Assignments, if any
20. When/how certificate is issued
21. Where and how to register
22. Contact information for questions, concerns, etc.

- In addition to the above, all distance learning courses must include
  23. Detailed description of specific delivery method. Simply stating “online” is insufficient. Potential participants should know from reading the promo if they are reading course material, watching a recorded video, attending a live webinar, etc.
  24. Course interactivity (interactive or noninteractive)
  25. Date recorded or created, if asynchronous (self-paced)
  26. System requirements
  27. Posttest requirements (passing score and retest policy)



- Conference sessions offering ACE credit must be clearly identified, especially when some sessions are not relevant to social workers OR are not being offered for ACE CE credit.
- If an ACE provider or a provider of approved individual courses offers courses to social workers outside of the providers ACE approval, advertising materials must clearly state what organization the credit is being offered through so that social workers do not think those courses are being offered for ACE credit.
- CE providers offering live trainings in a jurisdiction that does not accept ACE credit at all or does not accept **ACE provider** courses for credit (i.e., the jurisdiction requires **individual course approval**) must clearly state in promotional material that CE credit is not provided for social workers in that jurisdiction.
- **ACE providers** must ensure that both sample promotional material submitted with the application and all promotional material for all courses they are offering for CE credit under their ACE approval meet ACE requirements.
- **A provider of approved individual courses/conferences** may not call itself an “**ACE provider**” unless it has also completed the ACE provider application process and is currently an ACE provider.
- **ACE providers** must not state or imply that an individual course is “approved by ASWB ACE” unless that specific course has been reviewed and approved through the ASWB **ACE individual course/conference approval** process.



ACE uses the terms “CE,” “CE credits,” or “continuing education clock hours” rather than “CEU.” More information about the term “CEU” is available in Standard 4.8.



■ **ACE providers** may find sample promotional materials in the [ACE provider appendix](#)

■ **Providers of approved individual courses** may find sample promotional materials in the [ACE individual course approval appendix](#)

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## Standard 6.2 – ACE approval statement

The CE provider displays the correct ACE approval statement and, when needed, the provider number on promotional materials and certificates of credit.

### Essential details for understanding Standard 6.2

- When approval is granted, the provider will be issued an ACE provider or individual course approval statement with approval dates and several other important details. The statement provided to **ACE providers** will include the ACE provider number, and the statement provided for **approved individual courses** will include the ACE course number.
- The ACE logo is available from ACE staff.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 6.2

- The correct ACE approval statement, including the provider number (for **ACE providers** only) or the ACE course number (for **approved individual courses**) must
  - Be displayed in its entirety on all print and online promotional material and on certificates of credit for each course offered for ACE credit.
  - Be used in its entirety, except for the last sentence, on any page of the organization's website that lists all the organization's accreditations. (The last sentence need not be used in this case because it is course specific.)
  - Not be altered in any way other than adding making adjustments for conferences as shown in the chart below.
  - Be used only for courses directly related and applicable to social work continuing education that are being offered for ACE credit.
  - Not be used or displayed on promotional material or websites or used in any manner that may be misleading to the public, such as on courses that are not appropriate for CE credit (e.g., exam prep courses or self-help courses).
  - Not be transferred to any other entity.



## ACE provider statements

**ACE provider** approval statement for courses with a **single credit type or no credit type** in the ACE statement:

[Provider name], [provider number], is approved as an ACE provider to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE provider approval period: [dates]. Social workers completing this course receive [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

**ACE provider** approval statement for courses with **more than one credit type** in the ACE statement:

[Provider name], [provider number], is approved as an ACE provider to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE provider approval period: [dates]. Social workers completing this course receive [number] total credits including [number] [type\*] and [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

Conference approval statement adjustments		
Conference type	Change the last sentence to...	
	Promotional materials	Certificate of credit
Concurrent conference and nonconcurrent conference where full attendance is not required	Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to [number of credits available for all sessions] continuing education credits.	The social worker participating in this conference received [number] continuing education credits.
Nonconcurrent conference where full attendance is required	Social workers participating in this conference receive [number] continuing education credits.	

## ACE individual course approval statements

**ACE individual course** approval statement for **courses** with a single credit type in the ACE statement:

[Course name], [course number], is approved by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program to be offered by [provider name] as an individual course. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE course approval period: [dates]. Social workers completing this course receive [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual course** approval statement for **courses** with more than one credit type in the ACE statement:

[Course name], [course number], is approved by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program to be offered by [provider name] as an individual course. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE course approval period: [dates]. Social workers completing this course receive [number] total credits including [number] [type\*] and [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

#### **ACE individually approved conference approval statements Promotional materials**

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a concurrent conference where all sessions offer ACE credit

All sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates]. Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a concurrent conference where all sessions do not offer ACE credit

Where identified, sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates]. Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a nonconcurrent conference where full attendance is required and all sessions offer ACE credit

All sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates]. Social workers participating in this conference will receive [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a nonconcurrent conference when full conference attendance is required but NOT all sessions offer ACE credit

Where identified, sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually

approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates].  
Social workers participating in this conference will receive [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a nonconcurrent conference when partial conference attendance is allowed by provider and all sessions attended offer ACE credit.

All sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates]. Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for a nonconcurrent conference when partial conference attendance is allowed by provider and NOT all sessions offer ACE credit.

Where identified, sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, [conference title], approval # [conference ID], offered by [provider name]. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: [dates].  
Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to [total number] continuing education credits.

## Certificates

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for conferences **with all sessions** on one certificate, change the last sentence to:

The social worker participating in this conference received [total number] continuing education credits.

**ACE individual conference** approval statement for conferences with only one session on the certificate

Where only one credit type was offered for the session, change the last sentence to: The social worker participating in this conference session received [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

Where more than one credit type was offered for the session, change the last sentence to:

The social worker participating in this conference session received [number] [type\*] and [number] [type\*] continuing education credits.

\* Types of credit that may be listed in the ACE statement include ethics, clinical, cultural competence, or general

### The ACE logo

- May be used only by providers who have successfully completed the ACE approval process and have received an ACE approval letter.
- May be used on promotional material and certificates of credit.
- May be used only on materials for courses directly related and applicable to social work continuing education that meet ACE standards and requirements (**ACE providers**).
- Must not be confused with the ASWB logo, which may not be used. ACE is the program that approves providers and courses; ASWB is the organization that administers the ACE program.



## 7. Administering the CE program and courses

### Standard 7.1 – Online security

The CE provider ensures the online security of participant information.

#### **Program requirements for meeting Standard 7.1**

- CE providers must restrict access to a participant's account and related information and grant access only to authorized individuals.
- CE providers must maintain participant course and performance information securely and confidentially.
- CE providers must restrict access to online courses, webinars, and related materials for which certificates of credit are provided and grant access only to authenticated and authorized users.
- CE providers must handle credit card information securely in a manner consistent with the most current defined PCI security standards.
- CE providers who share data with third parties must inform participants and allow them to opt out.
- CE providers must maintain a written data breach monitoring and response plan and make it available to participants.

### Standard 7.2 – Addressing grievances

The CE provider has a written grievance policy that guides its response in a timely and ethical manner to complaints received by the provider, a regulatory board, or ASWB.

#### **Essential detail for understanding Standard 7.2**

- Transparency of grievance processes helps to ensure openness and fairness to all parties.

#### **Program requirements for meeting Standard 7.2**

- The grievance policy must include how the CE provider will handle refund requests, complaints about course content, speakers, facilities, nonreceipt of certificates, and other miscellaneous occurrences.
- The social work consultant, auxiliary social work consultant, social work planner (when applicable), or advisory committee must be involved in all grievance resolutions for social workers to remove the possible perception of bias, lessen risk for the person serving in multiple roles, provide additional perspective to problem resolution, strengthen decisions regarding complaints or disputes, and maximize objectivity. The individuals involved in the process must be identified in the written policy.
- CE providers must make the written grievance policy available when applying to the ACE program and upon request by participants. Transparency of grievance processes helps to ensure openness and fairness to all parties.

- CE providers must document all grievance reports and keep a record of all actions taken to address the grievance, whether the complaint was made to the provider, ASWB, or another entity.
- CE providers must keep a record of each complaint and its resolution and provide it to the ASWB ACE program when requested.
- CE providers must include contact information on promotional material so that individuals can submit a grievance.
- Grievance information and resolutions must be shared with and used by members of the provider organization to improve future courses.

### Standard 7.3 – Record keeping

The CE provider collects and maintains important records.

#### Essential detail for understanding Standard 7.3

- ACE retains the right and authority to audit and monitor programs and to review provider records and course materials at any time.

#### Program requirements for meeting Standard 7.3

- CE providers must collect and maintain these records for at least seven years
  - Organization changes, including changes to organizational structure and mailing and physical addresses
  - Personnel records for CE directors and social work consultants, whether paid or volunteer
  - CE director and social work consultant/planner contact information, resume, and licensure information
  - Course, cosponsorship, personnel, instructor, and participant information
  - A cosponsor agreement for each cosponsored event
  - Instructor information for each course offered, including instructor's resume, qualifications, licensure information, and professional affiliations
  - Participant attendance, including name and profession
  - Social worker attendance numbers
  - Verification of attendance documents such as sign in/out logs
  - Participant evaluations and evaluation summaries
  - Certificates of credit, or the ability to generate them, for participants in each course/conference
  - Course title, date, location, and credits awarded for each course or conference session offered
  - Course outline/syllabus, learning objectives, and course materials (including PowerPoints and handouts)
  - Grievances and resolutions

- Requests for and documentation of accessibility accommodations
- Pilot tests
- Posttests
- CE providers must provide upon request by ACE a summary report or full access to these records, as allowed under applicable state, provincial, and federal laws.
- CE providers must meet all audit requests within 30 days of receipt unless ACE determines that the request is urgent. In this case, records may be required within 24 to 48 hours of the request.
- CE providers must allow participants access to information about their course participation upon request.
- Applicants and CE providers must, when requested, describe and explain the following during application, renewal, or audit
  - Details about storage, maintenance, access, and destruction of personnel records for CE directors, social work consultants/planners, and instructors
  - Details about the collection, storage, use, and availability of participant data

## Standard 7.4 – Course evaluation

The CE provider requires participants to evaluate courses.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 7.4

- CE providers must develop and implement course evaluations for every course being offered for CE credit and distribute and collect the evaluations from each participant before awarding CE credit.
- **ACE providers** must analyze, summarize, and interpret evaluations to improve CE offerings. ACE providers must make modifications based on course evaluation information. **Note:** Courses approved through **individual course approval** must have permission from ACE before modifications to courses are made.
- Because completing an evaluation is a required for participants to earn CE credit, CE providers must use a collection method that ensures that each participant who wants CE credit completes an evaluation. If the evaluation form does not require the participant's name, providers must use another method to verify that participants requesting CE credit have completed an evaluation.
- Evaluations must include
  - Course title
  - Course date
  - Participant name (or other verification of identity)
  - Learning objectives, worded exactly as they appear in the promotional material
  - Questions that allow participants to assess
    - Whether the course met their expectations as outlined in the promotional material
    - Usefulness of the course content to their needs or interests
    - Currency of the content

- Effectiveness of the course’s supporting materials (e.g., handouts, teaching aids, visual aids, etc.)
  - Clarity and effectiveness of the instructor’s/author’s delivery
  - Responsiveness of the instructor (all in-person and synchronous distance learning [live] courses with interactivity)
  - Course registration process
  - Responsiveness of the administrative staff to questions or concerns
  - Adequacy of accessibility accommodations
  - Adequacy of the location/meeting space (in-person courses only)
  - Exact length of time, in writing, that it took the social worker to complete the course (all distance learning courses)
  - Course technology (all distance learning courses)
- Comment box for participants to include additional feedback or suggestions



[Sample course evaluation – in person and distance](#) [Sample conference session evaluation](#)  
[Sample overall conference evaluation](#)

## Standard 7.5 – Attendance documentation

The CE provider accurately documents attendance at in-person and synchronous distance learning (live) events and participation in asynchronous distance learning (self-paced) educational activities and issues certificates of credit to participants who complete courses.

### Program requirements for meeting Standard 7.5

- To document attendance, CE providers
  - Must have procedures to document and verify attendance of any individual who receives a certificate.
  - Must use a method that documents each participant’s first and last name and exact times of arrival and departure for live events.
  - Must do one of the following to document attendance at in-person events.
    - Use a sign in/out log that includes attendees’ first and last names, time in with signature, and time out with signature or initials
    - Scan attendees’ badges
    - Have a room monitor who checks attendees in and out
    - Require a signed self-attestation
- The CE provider must abide by the following requirements if they wish to use an attestation instead of a sign-in/sign-out log or other acceptable documentation:
  - Require a signed self-attestation of full attendance from attendees of live in-person events.



- Attestations must include the attendee's full name and course (or conference session) title and date of course or conference session.
- Attendees must turn in their attestations for courses and conference sessions no later than the end of the day that the course or conference session was offered.
- For a multi-day course, attestations must be turned in each day.
- To issue certificates of credit, CE providers
  - Must indicate attendance and credit awarded to each participant who completes a course. The certificate must be signed by a recognized authority such as the CE director or another person designated by the organization.
  - Must issue certificates within 30 days of course completion.
  - Must issue certificates of credit only after the participant has met course completion requirements.
    - For an in-person event, the attendee must be present for the entire course or conference session and complete an evaluation. Partial credit is not allowed.
    - For a distance learning course, the participant must complete the entire course (watch the entire DVD, read all material, etc.), complete a posttest, and complete a course evaluation.
    - For a conference or conference session, the attendee must be present at each chosen session in its entirety and complete an evaluation for each session and for the overall conference. Partial credit for attendance at only a portion of a session is not allowed.
  - Must include all required items on each certificate. Requirements vary depending on course delivery method and format.
  - Must include the ACE approval statement issued at approval, modified only as allowed for conferences (listing the exact amount of credit each participant received) on every certificate issued to social workers. (Standard 6.2)
- Certificates of course completion with ACE credit cannot be issued to course instructors. If an instructor requests verification of their role in a course, the CE provider may provide a letter or other proof that the instructor taught a specific course or courses for the provider.



■ **ACE providers** may find sample materials in the [ACE provider appendix](#)

■ **Providers of approved individual courses** may find sample materials in the [ACE individual course approval appendix](#)

## Appendix

These appendices offer applications; checklists; samples of forms, certificates, and promotional material; and other informational documents. Choose the appendix for the type of approval you are seeking or have.



 [ACE provider appendix](#)

 [ACE individual course approval appendix](#)