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Application Process to Apply for Initial Licensure as a Clinical Social Worker

The Rules and Regulations can be located on the Board’s website at
www.dos.state.pa.us/social.

These FAQs are not intended to substitute for reading the Rules and Regulations.

Q: Are the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors (Board), Board Counsel and/or the Board Administrator and Board Staff permitted to provide legal advice?

A: No. Neither the Board’s Act nor regulations confer authority on the Board to issue advisory opinions, provide legal advice to outside persons or entities, pre-determine whether or what type of authorization to practice is required in order to be able to lawfully engage in an activity, or otherwise pre-approve/disapprove specific conduct. If you have a legal question, you should confer with a privately retained attorney.

Q: What is legal advice?

A: Legal advice is any written or oral counsel regarding a legal matter that impacts the responsibilities and rights of the person who receives it. Legal advice includes advisory opinions and interpretation of statutes or law.

Q: Can I provide teletherapy to clients in Pennsylvania or any other state?

A: The Board does not currently have regulations on teletherapy. However, the Board does require licensure when providing services in the State of Pennsylvania. If the person is physically located outside of the state at the time the services are being rendered, you would need to contact the state where the individual is located. You can also check with your national association (NASW) as the Board does expect licensees to act in accordance with ethics and practice standards of that organization.

Q: Does the Board issue a temporary license to practice in the state of Pennsylvania if I am licensed in another state?

A: No. Neither the Board’s Act nor regulations allow the Board to issue a temporary license to licensees from another state to practice in the State of Pennsylvania. However, if an applicant submits an application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41, they may be granted a provisional license at the discretion of the Board.

Q: What is Act 76 of 2018?

A: Act 76 of 2018 prohibits the independent practice of clinical social work, marriage and family therapy and professional counseling without a license as a clinical social worker (LCSW), marriage and family therapist (LMFT), or professional counselor (LPC). “Independent practice” means that the individual 1) styles themselves as a clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist or professional counselor; 2) regulates and is responsible for his or her own practice and treatment procedures; and 3) is not affiliated with any other practice, health care facility, government agency or government-regulated social service agency.

*As of October 27, 2018, an individual holding solely the MSW degree or LSW license may not enter independent **clinical** practice as defined in Act 76.*

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Social workers in independent clinical practice who, *prior to October 27, 2018*, began actively working towards licensure as a clinical social worker by accumulating the required 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” as set forth in the Board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code § 47.12c(b) are not considered to be engaging in “independent practice” and will be permitted to complete their experience requirements for licensure as a clinical social worker and to obtain the clinical social work license.

These licensed social workers must have been receiving the necessary supervision by a supervisor who meets the Board’s regulations in “Qualifications for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 47.1a and the “Standards for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 47.12d. These practitioners must continue to receive the required supervision until they are issued a license to practice clinical social work by the Board.

Q: Did Act 76 change the scope of practice for clinical social workers?

A: Yes. Please review Section 3 of the Board’s Act which defines Practice of Clinical Social Work to see the current scope of practice of clinical social workers.

Q: Can an individual holding solely the MSW degree or LSW license enter independent clinical practice as defined in Act 76?

A: Licensed social workers in independent clinical practice who, *prior to October 27, 2018*, began actively working towards licensure as a clinical social worker by accumulating the required 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” as set forth in the Board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code § 47.12c(b) are not considered to be engaging in “independent practice” and will be permitted to complete their experience requirements for licensure as a clinical social worker and to obtain the clinical social work license.

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Please also refer to Section 3 and Section 20(a) of the Act regarding definition of independent practice of clinical social work unlawful independent practice of clinical social work

Q: What degree is accepted for licensure as a clinical social worker?

A: Under Section 47.12c(2) of the regulations; an applicant must have received a master’s degree in social work or social welfare or a doctoral degree in social work from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

Q: How do I apply for a license?

A: You will need to apply for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license. When your application is complete you will receive official notification by e-mail that you are eligible to register for the appropriate examination (clinical) through ASWB.

Q: How many hours of supervised clinical experience are required for licensure as a clinical social worker?

A: 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience are required. Under Section 47.12c(b)(9) of the regulations; the supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2

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years and no more than 6 years. (The Board has waived the requirement that no less than 500 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.) **OR** **If you hold current certification from the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW) issued prior to January 1, 2001, by the National Association of Social Workers, a letter will need to be submitted by the National Association of Social Workers (National Headquarters) verifying current ACSW certification. If the ACSW certification meets the requirements indicated above, the certification will be accepted in lieu of the 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience.**

Q: How many clinical hours per week must I work for the supervised clinical experience to be accepted?

A: Under Section 47.12c(b)(8) of the regulations; supervised clinical work activity will be counted toward satisfying the experience requirement only

- if it takes place in a single setting for at least 30 hours per week but no more than 50 hours per week during at least a 3-month period
- OR at least 15 hours per week for a period of at least 6 months.

Q: What is acceptable as supervised clinical experience?

A: Under Section 47.12c(b)(1) of the regulations: At least 1,500 hours (one-half of the 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience) shall consist of providing services in one or more of the following areas:

- (i) Assessment
- (ii) Psychotherapy
- (iii) Other psychosocial-therapeutic interventions (facilitation of client/peer, mediation, psycho education)
- (iv) Consultation
- (v) Family therapy
- (vi) Group therapy

Please note the above 6 experiences should involve direct client contact. The remainder of the clinical experience must be related to work with clients. **Example: case documentation and recordkeeping activities; court testimony related to work with client(s); advocacy on behalf of client(s); other activities that involve, support or enhance work with clients.**

Also, please be advised that administrative duties cannot be counted towards the 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience. Examples: administrative supervision of another individual, completing human resource and/or budget documentation, etc.

Please refer to Section 47.12c(b) of the regulations for the supervised clinical experience requirements.

Q: How long do I have to complete my 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience?

A: Under Section 47.12c(b)(9) of the regulations, the supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2 years and no more than 6 years. (The Board has waived the requirement that no less than 500 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.)

Q: How many hours per week must I meet with my supervisor?

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A: Under Section 47.12c(b)(5) of the regulations; the supervisor, or one to whom supervisory responsibilities have been delegated, shall meet with the supervisee for a minimum of 2 hours for every 40 hours of supervised clinical experience. At least 1 of the 2 hours shall be with the supervisee individually and in person, and 1 of the 2 hours may be with the supervisee in a group setting and in person. A total of 150 hours of supervision is required. At least 75 hours must be individual supervision and the other 75 hours may be group supervision.

Example: For every 40 hours of clinical experience you must have at least 1 hour of individual supervision and 1 hour may be group supervision or individual supervision. Example: If working 20 hours per week – 1 week you must have 1 hour of individual supervision and the next week you may have 1 hour of individual supervision or 1 hour of group supervision.

Q: What qualifications are required of my supervisor for my supervised clinical experience?

A: For the supervised clinical experience hours completed prior to January 1, 2006, 1500 hours must be completed either under an individual who holds a current license as a clinical social worker and has 5 years of clinical experience within the last 10 years as a clinical social worker (Section 47.1a(1)) OR under an individual who practiced as a clinical social worker, had 5 years clinical experience within the last 10 years as a clinical social worker and held a current license to practice as a social worker (47.1a(3)). The other 1500 hours may be completed under an individual who holds a current license and a master’s or doctoral degree in a related field and have 5 years’ experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 47.1a(2)), as per Section 47.12c(b)(2) of the regulations. A related field is defined in Section 47.1 of the regulations.

For the supervised clinical experience hours completed January 1, 2006 and after, 1,500 hours must be completed under an individual who holds a current license as a clinical social worker and has 5 years of clinical experience within the last 10 years as a clinical social worker (Section 47.1a(1)) and the other 1,500 hours may be completed under an individual who holds a current license and a master’s or doctoral degree in a related field and have 5 years’ experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 47.1a(2)), as per Section 47.12c(b)(2) of the regulations. A related field is defined in Section 47.1 of the regulations.

Supervised clinical experience completed in another state may be counted towards meeting the Pennsylvania supervised clinical experience requirements as long as the experience meets Pennsylvania requirements.

Please also refer to Section 47.12d of the regulations for the Standards for Supervisors.

Q: What documentation am I required to maintain while I am completing my supervised clinical experience?

A: You and your supervisor must maintain records as defined in Section 47.12d (Standards for supervisors). You and your supervisor would devise a form to use to maintain your records. The Board may request these records if it becomes necessary.

Q: What documentation must I submit to verify my supervised clinical experience?

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A: There are forms in the licensure application to be completed by the supervisor. You will be able to download the supervised clinical experience forms when you submit your licensure application on-line at www.pals.pa.gov.

Q: Is there a limit on the number of individuals a supervisor can concurrently supervise toward licensure?

A: Under Section 47.12c(b)(6) of the regulations, a supervisor shall supervise no more than 6 supervisees at the same time. If this provision creates an undue hardship on a supervisee, the supervisor and supervisee may request an exception to this provision. The request shall state, in writing, the reasons why this provision creates a hardship on the supervisee and why the supervisee is not able to obtain a supervisor who meets the requirements of this provision. **Please be advised that the Board may require a personal appearance by the supervisee and supervisor in certain circumstances.**

Q: If I am unable to locate my supervisor or my supervisor is deceased, how do I have my supervised clinical experience verified?

A: If you do not hold a clinical social work license in another state, you can have another individual who can attest to the fact that the supervised clinical experience has occurred, submit the following documentation:

- (1) A notarized statement by the applicant indicating why the supervisor cannot complete the supervised clinical experience forms.
- (2) A notarized statement, by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating how that individual can verify that the supervised clinical experience occurred and indicating why that individual is completing the supervised clinical experience forms instead of your supervisor.
- (3) The supervised clinical experience forms, completed by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating your supervisor’s name and qualifications and all other documentation.

If you hold a clinical social work license in another state, you may request that copies of the supervised clinical experience on file with the other State Board be forwarded to the PA State Board for review.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a clinical social worker, however, I have not taken the ASWB clinical examination. What is the procedure for licensure?

A: You would first need to apply for the social work license (LSW). Upon receiving the LSW you may then apply for the clinical social work license (LCSW). You will need to for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license. When your application is complete you will receive official notification by e-mail that you are eligible to register for the appropriate examination (clinical) through ASWB.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a clinical social worker and have taken and passed the ASWB clinical examination. What is the procedure for licensure?

A: You will need to apply for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license.

Q: What is Act 41?

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A: Act 41 is an alternative path to licensure by endorsement for people licensed in good standing in another state if they don’t meet the Board’s current endorsement requirements. It states that the Board SHALL issue a license if a licensee (1) holds a current license from another state whose licensure requirements are substantially equivalent to or exceed the requirements established in the Commonwealth (2) demonstrates competency in the profession through methods determined by the Board such as CE or been in practice for 2 of the last 5 years preceding the date of the application (3) has not committed any act that constitutes grounds for refusal, suspension or revocation of a license unless the board determines that the act should not be an impediment to licensure (4) is in good standing in the other jurisdiction and (5) pays fees established by the licensing board.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a clinical social worker. What is the procedure for licensure under Act 41?

A: You will need to for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. Please note that you must hold a license in good standing as a clinical social worker in another state and have been actively engaged in the practice of clinical social work for 2 of the last 5 years in any state or territory in the United States immediately preceding the filing of this application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41. All applicants from another country will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Are licensed clinical social workers permitted to write Emotional Support Animal Requests?

A: A licensed clinical social worker must work within their scope of practice as defined in Section 3 of the law and may only provide services that are within the competency areas for which an individual is qualified by education, training and experience. Please refer to the Code of Ethics in Section 47.72(a)(2)