

(approved November 8, 2001)

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
EXAMINATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 27, 2001

**EMBASSY SUITES
7762 BEACH BLVD
BUENA PARK, CA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Selma Fields, MFT Member, Committee Chair
Virginia Laurence, LCSW Member
Karen Pines, MFT Member
Roberto Quiroz, Public Member
Howard Stein, Public Member

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Burdick, LEP Member
Christina Chen, Public Member

STAFF PRESENT

Sherry Mehl, Executive Officer
Denise Johnson, Assistant Executive Officer
Julie McAuliffe, Administrative Analyst

GUEST LIST ON FILE

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m.

All Board members in attendance participated in the Committee meeting.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

SELMA FIELDS MOVED, ROBERTO QUIROZ SECONDED, AND THE COMMITTEE CONCURRED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 20, 2001 MINUTES.

2. 2001 STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE GOALS

Ms. Fields stated that the Board had anticipated the appointment of new Board members; therefore Committee Goals were included in the meeting materials for their benefit. Since no members were appointed, the Committee did not review their goals.

3. EXAMINATION STATISTICS

Ms. Fields stated Dr. Hertz from the Office of Examination Resources had provided a presentation on the oral examination to the Board on July 26, 2001. She stated that the new Board chair may wish to reconstruct the committees, but asked that the presentation information be brought back to this committee.

Jan Lee Wong, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), stated that the Association has concerns about the recent pass rates on the LCSW written examination since the implementation of the new state constructed written examination. He indicated that NASW representatives will be meeting with Ms. Mehl to discuss this further. The current pass rate is between 50% and 60% and he stated that the pass rate with the national examination was between 80% and 90%. He indicated that this is a serious problem especially with the current need for social workers in California and the difficulty in passing the written examination is creating a need for other professionals to fill the vacant social worker positions.

Ms. Mehl stated that the Board used to participate in the Association of Social Work Board clinical level national examination and the pass rate for first time participants was an average of 94%. There were problems with this examination because it was not based on the California occupational analysis and was not testing for the current clinical practice in California. Since the implementation of the state constructed examination, the average pass rate is 54%, which is in the statistical range for a written examination. Mehl stated that she is in the process of securing a Budget Change Proposal to perform an LCSW occupational analysis statewide. The results of this analysis may change some of the directions of the examinations but, at this time, the current examination has been validated by the Office of Examination Resources as valid and reliable.

Ms. Pines asked Mr. Wong what he thought the problem was and what should be done about it. He responded by stating that he did not believe that the preparation of social workers has drastically changed, and the oral statistics have improved over the past five years, so there may be something about the written examination that is not right. Ms. Pines questioned if it could be that people were just not prepared. Mr. Wong questioned if the examination was testing what someone learned in school, their supervised experiences, or what the current professionals know and have experience in because they have been performing these duties for years. He asked if it is the latter, how can people new to the profession pass the examination.

Ms. Fields asked if the examination change was conveyed to people entering the social work profession and beginning their graduate studies. Mr. Wong stated that schools are aware of the changes to the written examination. Schools see the postgraduate period as not their responsibility and they see the examinations linked to the postgraduate experience-gathering period. They do not make the connection that the two-year education period is directly linked to success in the examination. He indicated that it is different for the Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) schools because pre degree experience is credited toward total experience needed for licensure.

Ms. Mehl stated that there are two things that affect this issue. One is that when the examination was changed from a national examination to a state constructed examination, we knew that the examination would focus more on the clinical skills. The second were the skill sets needed in the profession and we have started to test those in the written format. When you are testing the needed skill sets in the written examination, you are weeding out those that do not have the clinical skills early in the licensure process. Ms. Mehl stated that she fully expected these examination results. She then stated that the supervision requirements for Associate Clinical Social Workers have changed and the experience required has become more clinical. There are three components to licensure; education, supervision, and examination and they should all be equal. The requirements became effective in 1999, so we have not seen the examination results yet for those people who were required to obtain more clinical experience.

Mr. Quiroz stated that the workforce issue is an issue that concerns the Board. Any process that impedes qualified, skilled people from entering that workforce is of concern to the Board. He then stated that the oral examination exit survey results clearly indicate that the majority of candidates felt that the examinations were fair and the questions were valid. He asked Ms. Wong if NASW received any comments to the contrary. Mr. Wong stated that they have not. The majority of the antidotal comments he receives are from out of state social workers who cannot transfer their examination results to California.

Ms. Mehl stated that these issues are constantly being discussed within this Committee and will continue to be. Ms. Fields stated that this is one of the ongoing goals of the Committee.

Ms. Pines asked if the website provides examination information that is adequate to guide the candidates to successfully pass the examinations without actually revealing the questions. Ms. Mehl indicated that our website provides all of the extensive information for both the written and oral examinations, including the clinic study guides, that are the most extensive of any profession. Ms. Mehl stated that the occupational analysis will tell us if people are performing the types of services that the license was originally intended for.

Mr. Quiroz asked if something could be done to reinforce the importance of supervisory experience. He asked Mr. Wong if the professional association, in a collaborative effort among the professional associations and the Examination Committee, would be willing to look into ways to further educate people on this important component needed for licensure.

Mr. Wong briefly explained the actual steps in the educational process in an MSW program and the supervisorial process in an exempt setting, such as an agency or licensed health facility.

Ms. Fields stated that Mr. Wong's description was explained very well and she thought his detailed account was something that the Committee could refer back to in the future if necessary. She thought that there were two issues. The major issue she identified was

that the association of social workers should take the responsibility of educating the people who do the hiring. Also, the students need to choose to educate themselves. If they do not obtain the necessary experience required from their regular job, they should volunteer in clinical settings to obtain this necessary experience. She stated that Mr. Wong clearly defined the differences between MSWs and LCSWs and the governments need to see that an MSW is adequate for some of the types of positions and settings and thought that it would be our responsibility to further define the LCSW and what different skills are needed.

Mr. Quiroz stated that he disagreed with an observation of Mr. Wong. He stated that to characterize social work intervention as only case management in the public sector is not an active representation. The reality is that there are a variety of services, including treatment intervention, that are offered by public agencies. There are national standards and managed care, which has not applied to California as yet, but may very well in the near future, that requires the credentialing of staff and that means they must have LCSWs supervising non licensed people who are providing treatment services in these settings. He suggested that within the supervision of students and registered ASWs, there has to be a responsibility by the particular agency to supervise well and to provide the skills that are needed. In that regard, he thought that there is a role for the associations to convey this information to their members and agencies as a way to increase the workforce.

Dr. Stein stated that other boards have close interplay between the board, the schools, and the professional associations. We have closeness with the associations but we need to become closer with the schools.

Ms. Mehl stated that the schools have made tremendous efforts to increase their interaction with the Board and inform their students about licensure.

Mr. Quiroz suggested that the Committee begin a collaborative effort with the directors of county mental health agencies and attend their meetings to begin discussions on this issue.

Dr. Laurence provided the committee with some background on the issue of private practice. She indicated that private practice began after the creation of the NASW in 1955. Private practice branched out after some practitioners decided they did not want to work in an agency setting. Social work began as a helping profession in 1898. The medical, psychiatric, school, and research social workers came together to formulate NASW and private practice was not a part of the formulation.

Ms. Fields thanked Dr. Laurence for the history and thought that younger social workers should know the history of the profession.

HOWARD STEIN MOVED, ROBERTO QUIROZ SECONDED, AND THE COMMITTEE CONCURRED TO CLOSE THE MEETING.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.