Guide to Licensure Requirements

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

OUT-OF-STATE AND OUT-OF-COUNTRY APPLICANTS

Board of Behavioral Sciences

This guide provides a summary of requirements for Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) applicants with an out-of-state license, and/or an out-of-state or out-of-country degree.

"Out-of-State degree" means a degree from a school located outside of California, or from an online program that is not designed to meet California's requirements. "Out-of-Country degree" means a degree earned from a school located outside of the United States or its territories.

Note: All code sections listed in this document may be accessed by clicking on the link provided or by accessing the *Statutes and Regulations,* available at www.bbs.ca.gov (scroll to the blue bar at the bottom of the page).

1. What are the two paths to licensure for out-of-state applicants?

Path A is called "Licensure by Credential". It is for applicants who meet ALL FOUR of the qualifications listed in #2 below.

Path B is called "Licensure via Education and Experience". It is for applicants who do NOT meet all four of the requirements of Path A.

2. What are the qualifications I need to apply under Path A?

Path A "Licensure by Credential" is only available if you meet **ALL FOUR** of the following qualifications:

1. You have held an active license as a Clinical Social Worker in another United States jurisdiction for at least two years (time as an intern or associate does not count); and
2. The license you have held for the past two years as an LCSW is at the highest level for independent clinical practice in that jurisdiction; and
3. The license you hold as an LCSW is current, and has been active and unrestricted for at least two years immediately before the date the Board receives your application; and
4. The degree that qualified you for your LCSW license is a master's degree in social work obtained from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

If you do not meet all four of the above requirements, you must apply under Path B. You may also apply for registration as an Associate Clinical Social Worker (ASW), which allows you to work under supervision while you complete the requirements to become licensed under Path B.

3. I meet all of the qualifications to apply under Path A. What do I need to do to become licensed?

Applicants who qualify to apply under Path A must complete all of the requirements specified in Business and Professions Code (BPC) section 4996.17.1 (as summarized below) and submit the *Application for Licensure – Path A*.

1. **COURSEWORK**
   You must complete all of the coursework described below before your *Application for Licensure* can be approved. Courses must be taken at the graduate level from a school accredited by the CSWE, a school holding a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by U.S. Department of Education, a school approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, or an acceptable continuing education provider. Undergraduate coursework cannot be accepted.

2. **EXAMINATION**
   Once your *Application for Licensure* is approved, you will be eligible to take the LCSW California Law and Ethics Exam. Information about the exam is available under the Exams tab of the Board's website.

3. **SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR INITIAL LICENSE ISSUANCE AND FEE**
   Once you have passed the exam, you must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and pay the initial licensure fee. Allow up to 30 days for processing.

PATH A: REQUIRED COURSEWORK

1 semester unit = 15 hours; 1 quarter unit = 10 hours; 1 semester unit = 1.5 quarter units

COURSE	LENGTH	CONTENT REQUIRED
California Law and Ethics ***NOTE:*** *This is a SEPARATE requirement from the California Law and Ethics Exam*	12 hours	Must be California-specific and include instruction in advertising, scope of practice, scope of competence, treatment of minors, confidentiality, dangerous patients, psychotherapist-patient privilege, recordkeeping, patient access to records, state and federal laws relating to confidentiality of patient health information, dual relationships, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, online therapy, insurance reimbursement, civil liability, disciplinary actions and unprofessional conduct, ethics complaints and ethical standards, termination of therapy, standards of care, relevant family law, therapist disclosures to patients, the application of legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings, and licensing law and licensing process.

PATH A: REQUIRED COURSEWORK (continued)		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting in California	7 hours	Instruction must include detailed knowledge of the California Child Abuse Neglect and Reporting Act (CANRA). It must also include assessment and methods of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. The training shall also include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults.
California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must include an understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socioeconomic position.
Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention	6 hours of coursework or applied experience	Course must cover suicide risk assessment and intervention. See BPC section 4996.27.

4. What are the qualifications required to become licensed under Path B?

Below is a list of requirements for becoming licensed under Path B, as required by BPC section 4996.17.2:

1. Your degree must meet the **minimum degree requirements** described in questions 5 (and 6 if applicable); and

2. You must complete the **additional coursework** described in question 7; and

3. You must fulfill the **supervised experience** requirements described in question 9; and

4. You must pass the **California Law and Ethics Exam and the Association of Social Work Boards Clinical Exam** as described in question 10.

See the instructions in the *Application for Licensure* for full details. You can also apply for ASW registration, which would allow you to work under supervision while completing the Path B licensure requirements.

5. What are the minimum degree requirements for licensure under Path B?

California law requires a master's degree in social work from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Otherwise, it will NOT qualify for licensure in California.

6. What if my degree is from a school located outside of the United States or its territories?

If your degree was earned outside of the United States or its territories, you must obtain a comprehensive evaluation of your degree in order to determine equivalency to a master's degree in social work from a program accredited by the CSWE as specified in BPC section 4996.18(e). The evaluation must be performed by the CSWE or a CSWE-approved agency, and must include the following:

- A statement that the degree has been evaluated for equivalency with CSWE standards.

- If the evaluation is performed by a CSWE-approved agency, the evaluation must include a statement that the agency is approved by the CSWE.

You will also be required to submit an official transcript. The Board has the right to request additional information and to make the final determination of whether a degree meets all requirements including coursework, regardless of evaluation or accreditation.

7. What additional units and coursework must I complete prior to approval of my Application for LCSW Licensure under Path B?

CALIFORNIA LAW AND ETHICS COURSE

Note: This is a separate requirement from the California Law and Ethics Exam.

You must complete a 12-hour California Law and Ethics course that contains the content specified in BPC section 4996.17.2(d)(2)(F), taken from an acceptable continuing education (CE) provider.

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

You must also complete "Additional Coursework" at the graduate level from an acceptable CE provider as specified in BPC section 4996.17.2 prior to approval of your *Application for LCSW Licensure*. Certain courses must be California-specific. See the chart beginning on page 9 for a list of courses and required content.

8. Who is an acceptable course provider for the California Law and Ethics course and Additional Coursework?

Courses must be taken at the graduate level from an accepted continuing education provider.

9. What are the supervised experience requirements of Path B for applicants who hold a license in another United States jurisdiction?

➡ **If you are licensed as an LCSW in another U.S. state or territory at the highest level for independent clinical practice:**

- If you are **currently** licensed as an LCSW at the highest level for independent clinical practice in another United States jurisdiction that requires a **MINIMUM of 3,000 hours of supervised experience**:

  You do not need to submit verification of experience.

- If you are or were licensed as an LCSW at the highest level for independent clinical practice in another U.S. state or territory that requires **LESS than 3,000 hours of supervised experience** (New York or Florida for example) , you must make up the deficit using either or both of the following methods:

  - *Counting time actively licensed as an LCSW in good standing in another U.S. state or territory at the rate of 100 hours per month licensed at the highest level (up to a maximum of 1,200 hours, with no verification required for these hours).*

  - *Submitting additional hours of substantially equivalent* supervised experience (see next section for a definition of substantial equivalency).*

➡ **All other applicants:**

You must submit verification of substantially equivalent* supervised postdegree work experience totaling 3,000 hours and 104 weeks.

For your supervised experience to be accepted as "substantially equivalent" it must meet ALL of the following requirements:

- Experience must have been gained within the six (6) years prior to the Board's receipt of your California *Application for Licensure*.
- Experience must have been supervised by a licensed mental health professional who met all of the following qualifications:
  - Licensed in the state where the hours were earned at the highest level for independent practice as a LCSW, LMFT, LPCC, Licensed Psychologist or Board-Certified Psychiatrist; and
  - Licensed as one of the above for at least two years prior to the commencement of supervision; and
  - License was active and in good standing at the time your hours were earned.
- Experience must include a minimum of 1,700 hours under the supervision of an LCSW who met all of the above qualifications.
- If the state in which your hours were earned required a registration to gain experience, you must have been registered during the time you earned your hours.

If you need to gain additional hours

If additional hours are needed and will be gained in California, you must first register as an Associate and comply with all requirements for hours gained in California.

10. What are the supervised experience requirements of Path B for applicants who hold a license in another country?

Applicants licensed in another country must submit verification of 3,000 hours and 104 weeks of substantially equivalent work experience, gained within the six (6) years prior to the Board's receipt of your California *Application for Licensure*. This experience must include a minimum of 1,700 hours under the supervision of an LCSW.

The individual who provided your supervision must have held a license as a mental health professional that is equivalent to a California license for your hours to be considered.

For the supervisor's license to be considered equivalent, the applicant must submit documentation demonstrating that their supervisor meets ALL seven of the following requirements:

1. The supervisor must have held an active professional license in a mental health discipline in good standing during the time your hours were earned. Holding various specialist certifications is not enough.
2. The supervisor must have held their license for at least two years prior to the commencement of supervision.
3. The license the supervisor holds must come from the country where the hours will be earned.
4. The license must have been issued by a government regulatory body. Holding a membership in a professional association is not an acceptable alternative.
5. The supervisor must provide proof that they completed post-graduation supervised experience to obtain their license.
6. The supervisor must show proof that they took a licensing exam recognized by their country's regulatory body.
7. The supervisor must hold at least a master's degree in a mental health discipline recognized by the Board.

If your supervisor does not meet all seven of the above requirements, or if your out-of-country experience does not otherwise qualify, you will need to apply for an Associate registration and earn hours in California.

If you would like to apply for an Associate registration, please email the Board's registration unit at BBS.ASW@DCA.CA.GOV.

If you have LESS than 3,000 hours of experience AND held an LCSW license at the highest level for independent clinical practice in another country:

- You may be able to make up the deficit using time actively licensed in good standing. Credit will be applied at the rate of 100 hours for each month that you held this license (up to a maximum of 1,200 hours, with no additional verification required).

  This allowance only applies if the license you hold has been determined by the Board to be equivalent to a California LCSW license. Equivalency is determined after review of documentation provided by the applicant demonstrating that their license meets all of the following requirements:

  1. Your LCSW license must be at the highest level for independent clinical practice.
  2. Your license must have been issued by a government regulatory body. Holding a membership in a professional association is not an acceptable alternative.
  3. You must provide proof that you completed post-graduation supervised experience in order to obtain your license.

4. You must show proof that you took a licensing exam recognized by the country's regulatory body.
5. You must have obtained at least a master's degree to qualify for your license.

10. What are the examination requirements of Path B?

You must pass both of the following exams:

- California Law and Ethics Exam:

  You will be eligible to take this exam after issuance of your Associate number or upon approval of your *Application for Licensure*.

- Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Clinical Exam:

  You will be eligible to take this exam after approval of your *Application for Licensure* and after passing the Law and Ethics Exam.

  If you have already passed the ASWB Clinical exam, the Board may be able to accept your passing score, as described below:

  - **If you do NOT hold a current license or registration in another state or country:**

    Your passing score must be less than seven (7) years old as determined by the date of the Board's receipt of your California *Application for Licensure*.

  - **If you DO currently hold a license or registration in another state or country, AND your license or registration is active and in good standing at the time of application and is not revoked, suspended, surrendered, denied or otherwise restricted or encumbered:**

    A passing score of any age will be accepted.

The Board must receive official verification of your passing score from the Association of Social Work Boards. Be sure to follow the score verification requirements as described in the *Application for Licensure – Path B*.

Do You Have Additional Questions?

See Frequently Asked Questions for Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Applicants

PATH B: ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK LCSW OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS		
1 semester unit = 15 hours; 1 quarter unit = 10 hours; 1 semester unit = 1.5 quarter units		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
a) Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention	6 hours of coursework or applied experience	Course must cover suicide risk assessment and intervention. See BPC section 4996.27.
b) California Law and Ethics ***NOTE:*** *This is a separate requirement from the Law and Ethics Exam*	12 hours	Must be California-specific and include instruction in advertising, scope of practice, scope of competence, treatment of minors, confidentiality, dangerous patients, psychotherapist-patient privilege, recordkeeping, patient access to records, state and federal laws relating to confidentiality of patient health information, dual relationships, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, online therapy, insurance reimbursement, civil liability, disciplinary actions and unprofessional conduct, ethics complaints and ethical standards, termination of therapy, standards of care, relevant family law, therapist disclosures to patients, the application of legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings, and licensing law and licensing process.
c) Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting in California	7 hours	Instruction must include detailed knowledge of the California Child Abuse Neglect and Reporting Act (CANRA). It must also include assessment and methods of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. The training shall also include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults.

PATH B: ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK LCSW OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
d) Human Sexuality	10 hours	Instruction must include the study of physiological, psychological, and social-cultural variables associated with sexual behavior, sexual dysfunctions, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender dysphoria.
e) Alcoholism / Other Chemical Substance Dependency	15 hours	Instruction must include all of the following: • The definition of alcoholism, substance abuse, and other chemical dependency, and the evaluation of the client. • Medical aspects of alcoholism, substance abuse, and other chemical dependency. • Current theories of the etiology of substance abuse. • The role of persons and systems that support or compound the abuse. • Major treatment approaches to alcoholism, substance abuse, and chemical dependency. • Legal aspects of substance abuse. • Knowledge of certain populations at risk with regard to substance abuse. • Community resources offering assessment, treatment, and follow-up for the client and family. • The process of referring affected persons. • Prevention of substance abuse.
f) Spousal or Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention	15 hours	Instruction must cover spousal and partner abuse assessment, detection, intervention strategies, and same-gender abuse dynamics.
g) Aging, Long-Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse	10 hours	Instruction must cover aging and long-term care, including biological, social, cognitive and psychological aspects of aging, end-of-life, grief, and instruction on the assessment and reporting of, as well as treatment related to, elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect.
h) California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must include an understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socioeconomic position.