

Important
Answers to

**Frequently
Asked
Questions**

***for Associate
Clinical Social
Workers (ASWs)***



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Associate Clinical Social Worker

Frequently Asked Questions



The information provided in this publication is supplemental and is intended to serve as a quick answer guide for common questions for those pursuing licensure as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The Board's *Statutes and Regulations* contain the official legal code sections and language. The BBS encourages you to thoroughly read the *Statutes and Regulations* pertaining to the clinical social work profession.

For information about the examination process and requirements for registered ASWs, see the Board's website.

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A. ASW REGISTRATION; LAW AND ETHICS EXAM

1. What coursework must be completed prior to applying for ASW registration?

All applicants must possess a master's degree in social work from an accredited school of social work. Applicants with out-of-state education, experience or licensure, who apply for registration as an ASW are required to complete 18-hour course in California Law and Professional Ethics.

All accredited social work schools in California have notified the Board that the California Law and Ethics requirement has been met by their graduates. No other coursework is required for ASW registration.

Statutes cited: Business and Professions Code (BPC) sections 4996.17 and 4996.18

2. When can my hours begin counting towards the LCSW licensing requirements?

Hours of work experience and supervision can only begin counting once your ASW registration number has been issued. The law does not allow the Board to grant exceptions.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4996.18 and 4996.23

3. When can I begin working in a private practice setting?

4. Are there any limitations on working in a private practice?

You may not work in a private practice until your ASW registration number has been issued by the Board. You may work in private practice for a maximum of six (6) years, until your first ASW registration has met its maximum length. There are no exceptions.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.45

5. Now that my ASW registration has been issued, can I start practicing independently/open my own office?

No. Independent practice cannot begin until you have completed all licensure requirements and the Board issues you a license as a LCSW. Independent practice by an ASW is considered unlicensed practice and is subject to disciplinary action by the Board. Additionally, ASWs cannot bill clients directly.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4991.1, 4992.3 and 4996; Regulation cited: Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1881

6. When am I required to renew my ASW registration?

Registrations expire annually and have a total six-year time limit. Your registration's expiration date will be printed on your registration certificate. You will be mailed a courtesy renewal application 100 days prior to your expiration date. You can also renew online.

Statute cited: BPC section 4992.09

7. Are ASWs required to take an exam to renew?

Yes. ASWs MUST take the LCSW California Law and Ethics examination in order to renew. There are no exceptions. To apply for the exam, download the exam application from the Board's website.

Statute cited: BPC section 4992.09

8. What happens if I don't pass the California Law and Ethics Exam?

You do not need to pass the exam in order to renew; you just need to have taken it. You may retake the exam after at least 90 days have passed from the date you last took the exam. The *Application for Re-Examination* is available on the Board's website.

If you don't pass the exam prior to your registration's expiration date, you must complete a 12-hour course in California Law and Ethics before you will be allowed to retake the exam during your NEXT renewal cycle. You will not be allowed to retake the exam after your registration expires until you submit proof of completion.

Statutes cited: BPC section 4992.09; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1805.05

9. Where can I take the 12-hour California Law and Ethics course?

The course must be taken through a continuing education (CE) provider, a county, state or other governmental entity, or a college or university.

Statute cited: BPC section 4992.09

10. What happens if I haven't passed the Law and Ethics Exam by my registration's 6-year time limit?

California law permits a registration to be renewed a maximum of five (5) times before being cancelled. ASWs may apply for a subsequent (second or third) registration number. You cannot be granted a subsequent number unless you have passed the Law and Ethics Exam. There are no exceptions.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.28

11. How do I obtain a second or third ASW registration number?

12. Can I work in a private practice under a subsequent ASW registration number?

Download the *ASW Subsequent Registration* application from the Board's website and submit it with the required fee. Be sure to submit it in advance of your registration's expiration date to allow time for processing.

Only those who have been issued a first ASW registration number may work in a private practice. An applicant issued a subsequent ASW number cannot work in a private practice setting. All other work settings are permissible.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.28

13. What happens once I pass the Law and Ethics Exam?

If you are still earning your hours of supervised experience, you will continue as a registrant until you have completed your hours. No further exams are required until you apply for licensure. You may apply for licensure once you have met all education and experience requirements. Upon approval of your *Application for Licensure and Examination*, you will be required to take and pass the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Clinical Level Exam.

Statute cited: BPC section 4992.05; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1877.1

B. EXPERIENCE HOURS, SUPERVISION & EMPLOYMENT

14. What is the breakdown for the experience required to become a LCSW?

California law requires 3,200 hours of supervised post-degree professional experience, including 104 supervised weeks, in order to qualify for LCSW licensure.

3,200 Hours of Supervised Experience

Breakdown of Requirements

Category	Minimum/Maximum
Clinical psychosocial diagnosis, assessment, and treatment, including psychotherapy or counseling	Minimum 2,000 hours
Face-to-face individual or group psychotherapy	Minimum 750 hours <i>(of the above 2,000)</i>
Client-centered advocacy, consultation, evaluation, research, workshops, seminars, training sessions or conferences, and direct supervisor contact	Maximum 1,200 hours
Supervision by an LCSW	Minimum 1,700 hours
Supervision by another type of qualified licensed mental health professional	Maximum 1,500 hours

104 "Supervised Weeks"

Breakdown of Requirements

NOTE: A "supervised week" is a week in which an ASW meets with a supervisor for either one (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision

Supervision Amount & Type	Minimum
One (1) hour of Individual supervision per week	52 weeks
One (1) hour of Individual supervision by an LCSW per week	13 weeks <i>(of the above 52)</i>

Additionally, the following is required:

- A minimum of one (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision within the same week in which experience is claimed;
- A minimum of one (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision per week for each work setting;
- A maximum of 40 hours of experience earned in any week between all settings may be credited; and,
- A maximum of six (6) hours of individual or group supervision in any week may be credited.

An applicant for licensure cannot be approved to sit for the clinical exam without completing both the 3,200 hours of professional experience and the 104 required supervised weeks.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1874

15. What is the definition of “telehealth counseling”?

16. How many telehealth hours can I gain?

Telehealth refers to the mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient’s health care while the patient is at the originating site and the health care provider is at a distant site. ASWs are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the “Standards of Practice for Telehealth,” available in the Board’s Statutes and Regulations.

There is no limit on the number of telehealth hours that can be counted toward the supervised experience requirements.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 2290.5 and 4999.46; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815.5

17. How far back can hours of experience be counted? What is the six-year rule?

The Board cannot accept hours of experience older than six (6) years from the date the Board receives your *Application for Licensure and Examination*. The law does not allow the Board to grant exceptions.

For example, the Board receives an *Application for Licensure and Examination* on 4/27/2018. The Board can only accept hours earned by this applicant (under all ASW numbers) between 4/27/2012 and 4/27/2018 if all other requirements are met.

It is important to note that if your *Application for Licensure and Examination* is abandoned, you will be required to re-apply. Your six (6)-year period will be recalculated to six (6) years back from the date your new application is received. For more information on abandonment, see question 32.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

18. How do I determine the amount of supervision I need each week?

19. What is the required ratio of supervision to individual or group psychotherapy hours?

“One unit” of supervision = one (1) hour of individual OR two (2) hours of group.

ASWs are required to obtain one (1) unit of supervision, as defined above, during any week in which experience is gained in each setting.

If the ASW provides more than 10 hours of individual or group psychotherapy during a single week in a work setting, the ASW must receive a total of two (2) units of supervision in that same week in that setting.

EXAMPLE #1: An ASW works one job and provides 25 hours of direct psychotherapy in a single week. This applicant must receive two (2) units of supervision during this week.

EXAMPLE #2: An ASW works two jobs, and provides 12 hours of direct psychotherapy at Job A and nine (9) hours at Job B during the same week. This ASW must receive a total of three (3) units of supervision during that week - two (2) units at Job A and one (1) unit at Job B.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

20. Can I be paid as a 1099 / independent contractor?

21. Can I be employed as a volunteer?

You must be either a paid W-2 employee or a volunteer employee. You also may not bill clients directly.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

22. Who is eligible to supervise ASWs?

Only licensed mental health professionals may supervise ASWs, as follows:

- LCSWs
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs)
- Licensed Clinical Psychologists
- Licensed Physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Additionally, the supervisor must meet all of the following:

- Maintain a current valid California license
- Have been licensed in California or any other state for at least two (2) years prior to the commencement of supervision.
- Have practiced psychotherapy or provided direct supervision to ASWs or MFT Interns or Trainees who perform psychotherapy in two (2) of the last five (5) years.
- If the supervisor is an LCSW, LPCC or LMFT, the supervisor must have completed a one-time 15-hour course in supervision. Licensed Clinical Psychologists and Physicians certified in Psychiatry do not need to take the supervision course.

Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1870 and 1874

23. How many supervisees can participate in a session of group supervision?

Group supervision sessions shall include no more than eight (8) persons receiving supervision, even if there are two (2) or more supervisors present.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

24. Can group supervision be broken into one-hour increments?

Group supervision can be broken into one-hour sessions, as long as both increments (full two hours) are provided in the same week as the experience being claimed.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

25. Can I receive supervision via videoconferencing or over the telephone?

An ASW working for a governmental entity; school, college, or university; or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable may obtain supervision via live two-way videoconferencing. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the client confidentiality is preserved.

Individual and group supervision may not be provided over the telephone, as supervision must consist of face-to-face contact.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

26. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer?

27. Does my supervisor have to be on site?

You may obtain supervision from a person not employed by your employer if the supervisor has signed a written agreement with the employer to take supervisory responsibility for the ASW's social work services. A sample written agreement is available on the Board's website.

Whether a supervisor is required to be on site depends on the situation. Supervisors must consider their responsibilities as defined in LCSW statutes and regulations, which includes taking responsibility for, and control of, the quality of clinical social work services being provided. Among other responsibilities, supervisors are required to do all of the following, whether they are on site or off site:

- Ensure that the extent, kind and quality of clinical social work performed by the ASW is consistent with the training and experience of the person being supervised.
- Review client/patient records and monitor and evaluate assessment and treatment decisions of the ASW.

- Monitor and evaluate the ability of the ASW to provide services at the site(s) where he or she will be practicing and to the particular clientele being served.
- Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations governing the practice of clinical social work.

Upon request by the Board, a supervisor is required to provide the Board with documentation that verifies the supervisor's compliance with all requirements.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4996.18 and 4996.23; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1870

28. Where can I find more information about supervision?

Please see the *Guide to Supervision*, available on the Board's website.

29. What forms must I use to record my experience hours and supervision?

While gaining your hours of experience you must use the following forms, available on the Board's website:

Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of an ASW: Your supervisor must sign this form prior to commencing supervision and provide you with the original. Retain for later submission with your *Application for Licensure and Examination*.

Supervisory Plan: Your supervisor must sign this form prior to commencing supervision and provide you with the original. Retain for later submission with your *Application for Licensure and Examination*.

Experience Verification: This form is completed upon the termination of your supervised experience with your supervisor, and must indicate the total hours completed in each category under your supervisor, your supervisor's license information and certain information about your employer. Your supervisor will sign the form and provide you with the original for submission with your *Application for Licensure and Examination*.

Optional Form - Weekly Tracking Log: Log your hours on this form on a weekly basis and have your supervisor sign weekly. You will retain the original logs.

30. How do I fill out Experience Verification forms or Weekly Tracking Logs if I have more than one supervisor in the same work setting?

If you are receiving supervision from two individuals in one employment setting, document the hours from each supervisor on separate forms. As long as the time periods on the two forms overlap and the employment setting is the same, the BBS will combine the experience and supervision together when evaluating your experience.

31. When do I need to send in supervision-related forms?

All supervision-related forms (*Supervisor Responsibility Statement*, *Supervisory Plan*, and *Experience Verification* forms) must be submitted with the *Application for Licensure and Examination*.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.2; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1870

C. APPLYING FOR LICENSURE

32. Should I be concerned about abandonment of my *Application for Licensure and Examination*?

Yes – and abandonment could have major consequences. Once an application is abandoned, an applicant may reapply, but must pay a new application fee and meet all current requirements. One of those requirements is that your hours are less than six (6) years old.

If your *Application for Licensure and Examination* is abandoned, you would lose any hours of experience that are more than six (6) years old, based on the date the Board receives the new *Application for Licensure and Examination*. See question 17 for more information about the six (6)-year rule.

In accordance with Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1806, an application shall be deemed abandoned in any of the following circumstances:

- Applicant does not submit the remaining documents or information requested in the application deficiency letter within one (1) year from the date of the deficiency letter;
- Applicant does not complete the application within one (1) year after it has been filed;
- Applicant who has submitted experience hours does not sit for an examination within one (1) year after being notified of initial eligibility to take the examination;
- Applicant who has submitted experience hours does not take an examination within one (1) year from the date the applicant was notified of failing an examination; or,
- The applicant fails to pay the initial license fee within one (1) year after notification by the Board of successful completion of LCSW requirements.

Regulation cited: Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1806

33. What type of employment documentation does the Board require with my *Application for Licensure and Examination*?

If a Paid Employee: You must provide a W-2 for each year of paid employment with your *Application for Licensure and Examination*. W-2s are required for all tax years during which you gained experience. For the current tax year, include a photocopy of your most recent pay stub. A copy of your 1040 or other tax filing form is not acceptable.

If a Volunteer Employee: You must provide a letter from your employer verifying your status as a volunteer with your *Application for Licensure and Examination*. A sample letter verifying volunteer status is available on the Board’s website.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

34. Do I need to send in originals of my W-2s or most recent pay stub?

Originals are not required - photocopies are acceptable.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

35. What additional coursework do I need to take prior to submitting an *Application for Licensure and Examination*?

In addition to possessing a master’s degree in social work from an accredited school of social work, an applicant must complete specific courses prior to submitting an *Application for Licensure and Examination*, as follows:

Course	Required of:	Length	Content Required
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting	All applicants	7 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Title 16, CCR section 1807 • Course must be based on Calif. law
Human Sexuality	All applicants	10 hours	16 CCR section 1807.2
Alcoholism and Chemical Substance Abuse & Dependency	All applicants	15 hours	16 CCR section 1810
Aging, Long Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse	Applicants who entered a MSW program after 1/1/2004	10 hours	BPC section 4996.25(a)
California Law and Professional Ethics	Out-of-State applicants ONLY	18 hours	BPC section 4996.17
Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection, and Intervention (OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS)	All applicants with out-of-state education, experience or licensure	15 hours	BPC 4996.2(f)

Course	Required of:	Length	Content Required
Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection, and Intervention (IN-STATE APPLICANTS)	All in-state applicants EXCEPT for those who entered a MSW program prior to 01/01/1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific number of hours for those who entered a MSW program prior to 12/31/03, but must be of sufficient length to cover the topics of assessment, detection and intervention 15 hours for those who entered a MSW program after 1/1/2004 	BPC section 4996.2(f)

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4996.2, 4996.17, 4996.18, and 4996.25; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1807; 1807.2 and 1810

36. Do I need to take my additional coursework at a university?

No. Additional coursework may be completed through an accredited college or university, a CE provider, or a governmental entity. The Board does accept web based CE providers.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1807, 1807.2, 1810 and 1874

37. Is my additional coursework too old? Can the coursework be gained at the undergraduate level?

Coursework taken to meet the additional coursework requirements do not ever expire, and may be gained at the undergraduate level.

38. How can I provide verification of my experience if my supervisor can no longer be located?

The Board will review documentation on a case by case basis in order to make a determination. However, we recommend that you submit all of the following:

- Documentation of your attempts to locate and contact your supervisor
- If your supervisor is deceased, documentation such as a copy of the obituary
- The previously signed, original *Supervisor Responsibility Statement*
- The previously signed, original *Supervisory Plan*
- Documentation of logged hours
- Documentation by the employer verifying employment of the supervisor and supervisee
- The letter of agreement for supervision by an individual not employed by your employer

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR section 1870 and 1870.1

39. Do I need to resubmit fingerprints with my *Application for Licensure and Examination*?

Applicants do not need to resubmit fingerprints if one or more of the following is true at the time the Board receives the application:

- Applicant still possesses a current ASW registration number.
- Applicant has an ASW number that has been cancelled for less than 30 days.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815

40. What happens once I submit my *Application for Licensure and Examination*?

The Board will evaluate your application and notify you either that:

- There are one or more deficiencies in your application. You will have one (1) year from the date of the initial deficiency notice to clear all deficiencies

OR

- You have been found eligible for examination, and will be provided with information on how to register.

Once you pass both required exams: Download the *Request for Initial License Issuance* form from the Board's website, and submit it with the required fee. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806

41. Do I need to maintain a current ASW registration number to participate in the clinical exam?

No. Once your hours have been approved the Board no longer requires you to retain an ASW registration except under certain circumstances. You are required to keep an active and current registration if you are continuing to gain hours of experience or if you are working in any setting OTHER THAN a school, a government agency, or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable. Also, you may want to check with your employer to see if they require you to remain registered.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4996.14 and 4996.23

42. Must I continue to have supervision after my experience hours have been approved?

Applicants must receive a minimum of one (1) hour of supervision per week for each work setting from an acceptable licensed mental health professional.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1874

43. Once I pass my exams, can I start practicing independently?

No. A successful examinee still must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and fee before the Board will issue a LCSW license. You will need to download and submit this form and fee upon completion of all licensure requirements. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt. Independent practice cannot begin until the Board issues a license. Otherwise it is considered unlicensed practice, which is subject to disciplinary action by the Board.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996