

Important
Answers to

**Frequently
Asked
Questions**

*for Associate
Clinical Social
Workers (ASWs)*

Board of Behavioral Sciences
1625 N Market Blvd Suite S-200
Sacramento CA 95834
(916) 574-7830
TDD: (800) 326-2297
<http://www.bbs.ca.gov>
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Associate Clinical Social Workers

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.

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1. Should I be concerned about abandonment of my application?

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.

If an *Application for Examination Eligibility* is abandoned, the applicant 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 Examination Eligibility*. See question #5 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 does not sit for an examination within one (1) year after being notified of initial eligibility to take the examination;
- Applicant 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.

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

2. 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 and Regulations cited: Business and Professions Code (BPC) sections 4991.1, 4992.3, 4996, and Title 16, CCR section 1881

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

Hours of work experience and supervision can only begin counting after the issuance of an ASW registration number. The law does not allow the Board to grant exceptions.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4996.18 and 4996.23

4. What is the breakdown for the required hours of experience 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 (of the above 2,000)
Client-centered advocacy, consultation, evaluation, and research	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 (of the above 52)

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; and,
- A maximum of five (5) hours of individual or group supervision in any week.

An applicant for examination eligibility cannot be approved to sit for the licensing exams without completing both the 3,200 hours of professional experience and the 104 required supervised weeks.

Statutes & Regulations cited: BPC section 4996.23 & Title 16, CCR section 1874

5. 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 LCSW examination eligibility. The law does not allow the Board to grant exceptions.

For example, Susan applies for LCSW examination eligibility. The Board receives her application on 4/27/2012. All of the hours she gained (under all ASW numbers) between 4/27/2006 and 4/27/2012 will be acceptable if all other requirements are met.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

6. How does the ratio of supervision hours to client contact hours work for the required 750 hours of direct psychotherapy or counseling?

ASWs are required to obtain one (1) hour of individual supervision or two (2) hours of group supervision during any week in which supervised experience is gained. If the ASW provides more than 10 hours of direct psychotherapy during a given week, he or she will need to obtain one (1) additional hour of individual supervision or two additional (2) hours of group supervision to cover the additional direct psychotherapy hours for that week.

For example, Applicant A accumulates 16 hours of direct psychotherapy in a week. Usually, this applicant receives only one (1) hour of individual supervision, but for this week, the applicant needs to obtain one (1) additional hour of individual supervision or two (2) hours of group supervision to cover the extra six (6) hours of direct psychotherapy provided.

However, Applicant B accumulates only eight (8) hours of direct psychotherapy in the same week. This applicant will not be required to gain additional supervision for the week over the minimum one (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision. The one (1) hour of individual supervision this applicant receives for the week covers up to the first 10 hours of psychotherapy and all other applicable work experience for the week.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

7. 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 (LPCC)
- Licensed Clinical Psychologists
- Licensed Physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

A supervisor must maintain a current valid California license, and have been licensed in California or any other state for at least two (2) years prior to the commencement of supervision.

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The supervisor must 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 Psychologists and Physicians certified in Psychiatry do not need to take the supervision course.

Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1870 and 1874

8. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer? 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 associate'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 associate 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 associate clinical social worker.
- Monitor and evaluate the ability of the associate 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 and Regulations cited: BPC sections 4996.18 and 4996.23, and Title 16, CCR section 1870

9. Can I be paid as an independent contractor (on a 1099 basis) as an Associate? Can I work as a volunteer?

All ASWs must be either a paid W-2 employee or a volunteer employee. ASWs cannot bill clients directly.

- **If Employed:** You must provide a W-2 for each year of employment with the application for examination eligibility.
- **If Volunteering:** You must provide the Board with a letter from your employer verifying employment as a volunteer with the application for examination eligibility. A sample letter verifying volunteer status is available on the Board's website.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

10. Do I need to send in originals of my W-2s or most recent pay stub with my application for examination eligibility?

Photocopies of W-2s are acceptable. These are to be sent with the *Application for Examination Eligibility*. For the current tax year, applicants are to include a photocopy of their most recent pay stub. W-2s are required for all prior tax years from which the applicant claims experience. A copy of your 1040 or other tax filing form is not acceptable.

Statute cited: BPC section 4996.23

11. 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

12. Can I work in a private practice setting under my second ASW registration number?

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. 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

14. How many people 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

15. When do I need to send in supervisory forms?

All supervisory forms (*Supervisor Responsibility Statement*, *Supervisory Plan*, and *Experience Verification* forms) are to be submitted with the *Application for Examination Eligibility*.

Statutes and Regulations cited: BPC section 4996.2 and Title 16, CCR section 1870

16. 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
- 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

17. 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: BPC sections 4996.17, 4996.18

18. What additional coursework do I need to take prior to submitting an Application for Examination Eligibility?

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 Examination Eligibility*, 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 1807.2 • 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)
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 and Regulations cited: BPC sections 4996.2, 4996.17, 4996.18, and 4996.25; Title 16, CCR sections 1807; 1807.2 and 1810

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

No. Additional coursework may be completed through an accredited college or university, an approved continuing education provider, or a governmental entity. The Board does accept web based approved continuing education providers. A list of web based providers is available on the “Forms and Publications” section of the BBS website.

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

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

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

21. Do I need to resubmit my fingerprints when I apply for LCSW examination eligibility or for a second ASW registration number?

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.
- Applicant is in the exam cycle.

22. Do I need to maintain a current ASW registration number to participate in the examination?

The ASW registration and the examination process are separate matters. Once your hours have been approved and you are in the exam cycle they are unrelated. However, you are required to keep an active and current registration if you are continuing to gain hours 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

23. Must I continue to have supervision while in the exam process?

All exam applicants must receive a minimum of one (1) hour of supervision per week for each work setting from an acceptable licensed mental health professional as required by Title 16, CCR section 1874.

Statutes and Regulations cited: BPC section 4996.23 and Title 16, CCR section 1874

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

No. A successful examinee must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and fee before the Board will issue a LCSW license. This form will be provided to the applicant upon completion of all licensure requirements. 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