

Licensure by Endorsement: The key to social work practice mobility

How to use this resource

The Association of Social Work Boards provides support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection. As part of that mission, ASWB has prepared talking points about the importance of eliminating licensing exemptions in social work regulation. Feel free to use and share this information to support your education and advocacy efforts.

Who must be licensed?

The profession of social work is licensed in the United States and Canada. In most jurisdictions, the title of social worker and the practice of social work are protected by statute, meaning that individuals who call themselves social workers and practice the profession must be licensed.

Can a social worker practice in all U.S. jurisdictions after being issued a license?

No, social workers must be licensed in each state/territory where they practice. Practice mobility is challenging because each jurisdiction's requirements must be met. The good news: Most states/territories have provisions to expedite additional licensure.

What is licensure by endorsement?

"Endorsement" refers to the process of a state/territory granting a license to an applicant who is licensed in good standing at the equivalent designation in another jurisdiction.

Why is licensure by endorsement the key to social work practice mobility?

The endorsement model recognizes the due diligence of the jurisdiction(s) that previously licensed the social worker. An endorsing applicant does not have to undergo significant additional training, work experience, examination, or assessment except to fulfill jurisdiction-specific requirements. The licensure process for endorsing applicants is often expedited for these reasons.

Unlike the compact models used by nursing and medicine, the endorsement model can be administered independently by states/territories. Additional legislation is not needed, and states/territories do not have to wait for a compact to exist. Professionals licensed through a compact model may find their license status in jeopardy if a state withdraws or is terminated from a compact. In an endorsement model, a license remains valid as long as the licensed professional is in good standing in the state/territory where the license is issued.

How many jurisdictions are mobility friendly?

Out of 52 U.S. jurisdictions, 48 (92%) have a provision that could be used to make practice mobility a reality. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement makes labour mobility the default in Canada's 10 provinces.

States that offer licensure by endorsement accept the social worker's current license as sufficient evidence that the licensee has met some or all of the requirements for licensure, such as supervised experience. [MovingSocialWork.org/news](https://moving-social-work.org/news)