

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE MOBILITY IMPLEMENTATION

How to use this resource

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is committed to protecting the public by providing support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices. As part of that mission, ASWB has prepared talking points about the importance of social work regulation and its contribution to public protection and enhancement of the profession. Feel free to use and share this information to support your education and advocacy efforts.

Mobility is a complex topic, and developing a plan will be hard work; ...but it will be something that ASWB members can do that will enhance public protection and the profession for many years to come. We want to create our own destiny and our own plan (2015).
— Dorinda N. Noble, Ph.D., LCSW, ASWB President (2014-2015)

Background

In November 2017, ASWB members adopted a social work practice mobility strategy. The Mobility Strategy provides a process and resources through which member boards can quickly evaluate and determine eligibility when a **currently licensed** social worker seeks equivalent licensure in an **additional** jurisdiction.

Definition: Social work practice mobility refers to the physical and virtual mobility of social workers who elect to practice in multiple jurisdictions.

Mobility Strategy mission: The Mobility Strategy aspires to depoliticize the licensure process, maintain regulatory expertise, and implement a commonsense approach to addressing social work practice mobility.

Mobility Strategy outline: The Mobility Strategy establishes two core Standards for streamlining a current licensee's progression from **licensure applicant** in an additional jurisdiction to **licensed to practice**.*

Standard 1: Jurisdictional licensing boards recognize three license categories for all license titles:

- Licensed baccalaureate social worker (LBSW)
- Licensed master's social worker (LMSW) (includes macro practitioners, also known as advanced generalists)
- Licensed clinical social worker (LCSW)

Standard 2: Current licensees seeking **an equivalent license** in an additional jurisdiction must meet four essential criteria to be eligible for expedited processing:

- Graduation from an accredited school of social work
- A passing score on the appropriate ASWB licensing exam
- Completion of supervised practice [if required]
- No disciplinary action

*Member jurisdictions may require additional criteria for licensure such as background checks, jurisprudence exams, or additional supervision.

Each jurisdiction will operationalize the Mobility Strategy by developing an implementation plan that advances Mobility for social workers while working within its regulatory structure.

Mobility: Why?

To lawfully practice, social workers must be authorized to practice by obtaining a license issued by each state where they practice, whether in person or electronically.

It's a Workforce issue.

Social workers need and want flexibility to meet their employment and career goals.

It's a Practice issue.

Technological advancements have given social workers a means to practice social work electronically across state and international borders without a physical presence where the client is located.

Disasters—caused by nature or human nature—often require mobilization of social work professionals from multiple jurisdictions.

It's a Public Protection issue.

Clients need access to high-quality, safe, competent social work services whether delivered via technology or locally.

Clients relocate but want to maintain consistency with service providers and to understand the laws in the jurisdictions where they live.

Mobility: What and When?

ASWB already has resources for developing a mobility model that fits social work practice, including:

- **ASWB Social Work Registry:** a repository for education transcripts, supervision records, exam scores, and other credentials of licensed professionals that also serves as a verification source for licensing boards. In 2017, a total of 31 ASWB boards accepted documents and original source verification from ASWB's Social Work Registry,
- **ASWB's examination program:** national social work exams assess for minimum competency for bachelors, masters, and clinical categories of licensure. In 2017, all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and two Canadian provinces used the exams as part of their licensing decisions.
- **ASWB's Model Social Work Practice Act:** the model law provides the text of a sample regulatory statute for use by legislatures and social work jurisdictional boards when addressing issues related to regulating social work practice. The model law facilitates greater standardization of terminology and regulation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, which promotes increased mobility for qualified social workers among other benefits.
- **ASWB's Path to Licensure program:** Through partnerships with social work programs and educators, ASWB is bringing the discussion of regulation and public protection to students who will become the next generation of social workers. In fall 2018, a curricular guide that maps regulation and licensing to the EPAS standards schools of social work are expected to meet will be published by the Council on Social Work Education.
- **ASWB Model Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice:** Developed by an international task force, the standards offer guidance for regulating the use of technology in social work practice.

ASWB members adopted the Mobility Strategy in November 2017. In early 2018, the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia completed research into their statutes and regulations, practice acts, and other jurisdictional documents to establish the baseline for determining how all ASWB members can participate in the Mobility initiative. Implementation plans are currently in development.

Mobility: How will it be implemented?

The Mobility Strategy seeks to harmonize licensure eligibility criteria across all ASWB member boards so that equivalently licensed social workers can obtain licenses to practice in other jurisdictions.

- Efficient licensure eligibility decisions increase state board effectiveness and benefit the boards, licensees, and the consuming public by ensuring that licensed individuals can move between states and contribute to a competent workforce.
- Standards, *as agreed upon by ASWB members*, clarify social work licensure categories and criteria across jurisdictions.
- A centralized databank will provide member boards with verified primary source information to make decisions about equivalency, including supervision.

Licensing boards honor one another when they embrace that every jurisdiction has done a considerate vetting of the professionals that they license in their jurisdiction. This acknowledgment recognizes that public protection is not diminished by streamlining the licensing of eligible licensed candidates who meet the Standards of the Mobility Strategy and fulfill any additional criteria required by the jurisdiction.

Mobility: Who?

Achieving social work practice mobility and license portability requires the participation of the expanded regulatory community that includes not only ASWB members, but regulated practitioners, social work faculty, students, supervisors, state and provincial legislators, professional association members, and even non-licensed social workers.... and always at top of mind—clients and the public. Others who need to be at the table: regulators from other professions, especially those professions that are similar to social work.

Mobility: The case for implementation

The goal of Mobility implementation is to expedite licensure decisions in additional jurisdictions for currently licensed social workers when the licensee meets eligibility standards defined by the Mobility Strategy's four essential criteria. Expedited entry into the workforce resolves one perceived barrier to practice and has the following benefits:

- Licensees are more likely to follow the rules rather than practicing without a license in jurisdictions where additional practice is sought.
- Boards have the potential to grant an increased number of license transfers, thereby defusing potential tensions around accusations of inefficiency and threats of deregulation from state governments.
- Boards demonstrate that they are aligned with efforts to streamline licensure transfer for eligible licensees.
- Consumers of social work services will have greater access to competent providers and services provided by licensed practitioners.

Mobility: Other facts

The Mobility Strategy respects states' rights and offers solutions that work within these parameters.

The Mobility Strategy assists with formation of interstate license transfer agreements.

A total of 50 of 54 ASWB U.S. boards in 2017 had one or more provisions that facilitate social work licensure mobility through regulations for reciprocity, endorsement, and/or license by credential.

In 2017, a total of 31 ASWB boards accepted documents and original source verification from ASWB's Social Work Registry, which is the precursor to the new central databank system that can provide member boards with access to verified primary source documentation for enrolled social workers. Current candidate and licensee data contained in the ASWB Social Work Registry will be integrated into the databank.

About ASWB

The Association of Social Work Boards is the nonprofit association of social work regulatory bodies in the United States and Canada. Members include 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and all 10 Canadian provinces. ASWB's mission is to strengthen protection of the public by providing support and services to the social work regulatory community in order to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices. Learn more at www.aswb.org.