



****This document is a product of the collective wisdom of NASW staff and volunteers who have worked on the licensure law. Please be advised that this fact sheet is intended to be a guide for NASW members on questions about licensure. This is not an official AzBBHE notice. Social Workers are reminded that the official documents of “the rules” are obtained through the AzBBHE and can be found at www.bbhe.state.az.us***

About the Law

What is a Practice Act?

A Practice Act is a piece of legislation that offers practice protection.

What is Practice Protection?

Practice Protection actually protects the practice (or behavior) of a profession, not just the title. Title protection protects a title so that another person cannot use that title. For example title protecting the name, “Licensed Social Worker” means that no one else can use the title “Licensed Social Worker”. However, practice protection actually protects the activity or scope of practice. So to give practice protection means that no one else can do that function unless they too are licensed. In the case of this law, psychotherapy is protected. Therefore, in the state of Arizona, only people licensed (by the Board of Behavioral Health Examiners, or by other boards, such as the psychologist or medical board) are allowed to practice psychotherapy.

What is the definition of psychotherapy?

The definition is included in the law. ARS Section 32-3251 states, “Psychotherapy means a variety of treatment methods developing out of generally accepted theories about human behavior and development.”

Why is the law only required for those practicing psychotherapy?

Because this is a practice act, it restricts others from engaging in the protected practice. By definition, the practice of social work is inclusive of more than just the practice of psychotherapy. For example, the activities of case management, grant writing, political advocacy, and non-profit management are skills considered vital to social workers in generalist and macro settings. However, if we were to protect the practice of social work with these diverse activities, then we would be saying that no one but a social worker can do case management, write grants, do political advocacy and manage non-profits. While these activities are very near and dear to many social workers, it is impossible to legislate that only social workers can do these activities. It is for this

reason that the licensure law is not required for all social workers, only those who do psychotherapy.

Can I be licensed even if I do not do psychotherapy?

Yes, you can. The LMSW and LBSW levels do not include psychotherapy in their independent scope of practice. If a person meets all of the requirements for licensure they can be licensed, even if they do not do psychotherapy.

Do I have to be licensed to get a job as a social worker in the state of Arizona?

As mentioned above, the area of practice that is protected by law is psychotherapy. If you are going to do psychotherapy in AZ, then you must be licensed. However, if you are not going to do psychotherapy, the law does not require a license. It is important to note that some employers may require licensure regardless and that is completely up to each individual employer's discretion.

What types of licenses are issued in AZ?

LBSW – Licensed Bachelor Social Worker

LMSW – Licensed Master Social Worker

LCSW – Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Reciprocity

Is there Reciprocity between states?

Reciprocity is a very detailed area of the licensure law. The federal government does not license social workers and they leave this regulatory act up to the individual states. Because of this, the requirements of states can be much different. Some states may require 4,000 hours of post graduate clinical work to get the clinical level, while another state may require a different number or different type of work experience. Because of these complex issues, any questions about reciprocity must be addressed directly with the BBHE.

Is reciprocity equivalent to a “license transfer”?

No. An applicant must complete the licensure reciprocity application and the social work supplement in its entirety. From these forms, the regulatory board will determine if the minimum qualifications are met for licensure in AZ.

What are some of the requirements for reciprocity?

- The applicant for licensure must have been licensed continuously for the past 7 years.
- They must complete the reciprocity application (which is different from the general application) and the social work supplement in its entirety.
- An applicant must have been practicing 5 of the last 7 years in the state in which they were licensed.
- They must have taken and passed an exam in the state in which they were licensed.

This will take time to gather all of the information for my application; What am I supposed to do in the meantime?

You may apply for and receive a temporary license that will allow you to practice in the state on a temporary basis until your application has been reviewed. (see info on temporary licenses)

How can I apply for reciprocity?

Go to the BBHE website and download and complete the applications found on <http://www.bbhe.state.az.us/licensure%20apps.htm> Additional forms for reciprocity can be found on <http://www.bbhe.state.az.us/forms.htm>.

****Hint from your professional association – Once you have compiled all of this information for your application, make a copy of it for yourself and keep it with other important documents in case you need to move again. This will help you with future licensure applications.*

Temporary License

Can I get a temporary license?

Yes, you can, if you are licensed or certified by another state behavioral health regulatory body, if you do not have a pending complaint before any regulatory board, and if you do not have a criminal history or history of disciplinary action by another regulatory board.

Can I practice independently with a temporary license?

No, you cannot. You must work under direct supervision.

I just graduated with my MSW, can I get a Temporary License?

Yes, the applicant submits an application for licensure within **12 months of graduation** from the education program submitted to meet licensure education requirements; the applicant has completed all the requirements to become licensed, as determined by the credentialing committee, other than passage of the required examination; and the applicant has not previously taken the required examination.

Can I start my paperwork for my temporary license prior to my graduation? No, however you can begin collecting the appropriate documentation. For example: requests for college transcripts, NPDB and HIPDB reports within 90 days of the projected application date, and other documentation prescribed by the BBHE, etc. Please consult the BBHE web site for specific application requirements.

Continuing Education

How many hours of continuing education must I complete?

You must complete 40 hours of continuing education prior to licensure renewal.

Section R4-6-802 of the Licensure rules defines the specific requirements of continuing education activities that will be approved by the Board of Behavioral Health Examiners.

To be eligible to renew a license, a licensee must complete three clock hours of continuing education in behavioral health ethics or mental health law and a minimum of three clock hours of continuing education in cultural competency and diversity during the two years before the licensure renewal process.

Are there requirements of maintaining documentation of continuing education?

Yes, you must maintain documentation of continuing education activities for 48 months following the date of the licensure renewal. The license requires copies of certificates of attendance which need to include a signed certificate that notes the title of the program, name, address and phone number of the sponsoring organization, names of the presenters, dates of the program and clock hours involved.

For graduate or undergraduate courses, an official transcript noting the class was taken during the time period up to two years prior to the licensure renewal is required.

Are there specific continuing education credits I must complete as a clinical supervisor?

Yes, beginning July 1, 2006, an individual providing clinical supervision in Arizona to qualify for licensure as a social worker shall initially complete a minimum of 12 clock hours of continuing education during the two years before the clinical supervisor's license renewal date. After the required initial training, the clinical supervisor shall obtain a minimum of six clock hours of continuing education during the two years before the clinical supervisor's licensure renewal date. Training or coursework required is limited to the following:

1. The roles and responsibilities of the clinical supervisor.
2. Skill sets involved in providing oversight and guidance to a supervisor engaged in diagnosing, treatment planning, and treatment of clients.
3. Conceptual knowledge of supervision methods and techniques.
4. Evaluation of a supervisor's role, performance and capacity to conceptualize and implement clinical assessment and treatment process.

Note: Clinical supervision training required shall be waived if the clinical supervisor holds any of the following certificates or designations if the certification or designation is current as of the clinical supervisor's licensure renewal date:

- NBCC/CCE Approved Clinical Supervisor Certificate
- ICRC Clinical Supervisor Certification
- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists Clinical Member with Approved Supervisor designation.

Supervision

To become a LBSW is there a supervised work experience requirement?

No, to qualify to become a LBSW you are required to show evidence of a baccalaureate degree in social work from a regionally accredited college or university in a program approved by the Council on Social Work Education or an equivalent foreign degree as determined by the Foreign Equivalency Determination Service of the Council on Social Work Education; to have received a passing score on an approved examination for the level of licensure; and to have submitted other requested documentation prescribed by the board.

On becoming a LBSW can I practice independently?

No. A licensed baccalaureate social worker shall only engage in the independent practice of nonclinical social work after obtaining a minimum of 3200 hours of supervised work experience in social work in no less than 24 months after being licensed as a bachelor social worker by the Board. Once you have completed this requirement you are able to practice independently with the exception of clinical practice. LBSW shall only engage in clinical practice under direct supervision as prescribed by the board.

What are examples of non-clinical social work practice by a LBSW? Typically this would be case management or administrative functions.

To become a LMSW is there a supervised work experience requirement?

No, to qualify to become a LMSW you are required to show evidence of a master's degree in social work from a regionally accredited college or university in a program approved by the Council on Social Work Education or an equivalent foreign degree as determined by the Foreign Equivalency Determination Service of the Council on Social Work Education; to have received a passing score on an approved examination for the level of licensure; and to have submitted other requested documentation prescribed by the board.

Can I practice independently as a LMSW? Yes with one MAJOR EXCEPTION. You are able to practice independently with the exception of clinical practice. LMSW shall only engage in clinical practice under direct supervision as prescribed by the board.

Who can conduct independent clinical social work practice?

A licensed clinical social worker, LCSW.

Who can apply for the LCSW ?

Any Arizona social worker who is a LMSW, or an out-of-state social work applicant who meets the prescribed qualifications. Please refer to BBHE rules that cover qualifications for LCSW.

To become a LCSW is there a supervised work experience requirement?

Yes. An applicant for LCSW shall complete a minimum of 3200 hours of supervised work experience in the practice of clinical social work in no less than 24 months.

What is supervised work experience?

Supervised work experience means practicing clinical social work for remuneration or on a voluntary basis under direct supervision. Supervised work experience in the practice of clinical social work is limited to the use of psychotherapy for the purpose of assessment, diagnosis and treatment of individuals, couples, families and group.

Please note: For LCSW applicants supervised work experience must be obtained while an individual is licensed as an LMSW

How many hours of supervised work experience is required for the LCSW?

3200 hours. The 3200 hours of supervised work experience in clinical social work shall include a minimum of 1600 hours of direct client contact.

During the period of required supervised work experience, an applicant for LCSW shall not engage in independent clinical practice.

Please note: For LCSW applicants supervised work experience must be obtained while an individual is licensed as an LMSW

Is it true that a behavioral health technician, BHT, employed in an Arizona State regulated agency is exempted from licensure?

Yes, however. please note that after January 1, 2006 if you are a BHT employed in an Arizona State regulated agency and apply for LCSW you must be a licensed master's social worker, LMSW. This would mean that in order to have your supervised BHT clinical work experience accepted by the board to qualify for the LCSW you would need to be a LMSW while performing the BHT clinical work experience.

Prior to January 1, 2006 a BHT is allowed to use their BHT clinical work experience to qualify for the LCSW without having been a licensed master's social worker.

What if I work for a Veterans Administration Medical Center, which may be exempted from state licensure, do I still need to be licensed?

The conditions of your employment at the VA is determined by the VA administration. However, if you do apply for state licensure, you would need to follow the same rules as other applicants with one exception. Similar to the BHT who is employed at an Arizona

stare regulated agency, prior to January 1, 2006 you would be allowed to use your clinical work experience to qualify for the LCSW without having been a licensed master's social worker. After January 1, 2006 you must be a LMSW in seeking the LCSW.

What is direct supervision?

Direct supervision means immediate responsibility and oversight for all services provided by a supervisee. A direct supervisor must be employed by the same entity as the supervisee. Typically a director supervisor is your administrative boss.

Am I required to receive clinical supervision while I am completing my 3200 hours of supervised work experience?

Yes. An applicant for LCSW shall receive a minimum of 100 hours of clinical supervision in no less than 24 months. The clinical supervision is to be provided by a LCSW who demonstrates having obtained training in clinical supervision as prescribed by the BBHE.

What is meant by clinical supervision?

Clinical supervision means face-to-face, videoconferencing or telephonic direction or oversight provided by a qualified individual to evaluate, guide and direct all behavioral health services provided by a licensee to assist the licensee to develop and improve the necessary knowledge, skills, techniques and abilities to allow the licensee to engage in the practice of behavioral health ethically, safely and competently.

Please note that clinical supervision may be obtained at your place of employment or off site. Clients are to be informed that you are receiving clinical supervision and given your clinical supervisor's contact information.

Who is qualified to provide clinical social work supervision?

An LCSW who has completed the required courses in Clinical Supervision as prescribed by the Board.

Are there alternatives to an LCSW in providing clinical social work supervision?

Yes, at the time of the application for the LCSW an applicant may submit a written request to the social work credentialing committee for an exemption from the requirement of having a LCSW provide 100% of the clinical supervision. There is not a procedure for prior authorization. Approval is given retrospectively at the time of your application for the LCSW. An applicant is expected to be familiar with the licensing requirements and to adhere to the specifications. It is important to read the applicable rules found in section R4-6-401 of the licensure law covering social work.

The social work credentialing committee shall accept a minimum of 75 hours of clinical supervision provided by an alternative behavioral health professional. Typically an alternative would be a behavioral health professional at the master's or higher level certified or licensed at the independent level by a state behavioral health regulatory entity, a licensed psychologist, or a medical doctor with a specialty in psychiatry.

An applicant must obtain a minimum of 25 hours of clinical supervisor by a social worker at the master's or higher level certified or licensed at the independent level by a state behavioral health regulatory entity.

What if I do not have access to a qualified clinical social work supervisor at my place of employment?

You may seek supervision from an alternative clinical supervisor at your place of employment or you may seek clinical supervision from an LCSW off site from your place of employment. If you seek a supervisor who is not employed by your agency, then you must make certain that your agency is amenable to arrangements that will allow your supervisor to have access to client records and the ability to observe the sessions in person or via electronic means. Note that if there is not a formal arrangement with the place of employment, there may be a question of failure to protect client confidentiality.

Can a spouse or relative provide my direct or clinical supervision?

No.

Please note that you are required to verify that there is no conflict of interest between you and your supervisor; and to verify that there is no conflict of interest between you and your clients.

Am I supposed to receive prior authorization for my designated clinical supervisor?

There is not a procedure for prior authorization. Approval is given retrospectively at the time of your application for the LCSW. An applicant is expected to be familiar with the licensing requirements and to adhere to the specifications. It is important to read the applicable rules found in section R4-6-401 of the licensure law covering social work.

What if I change jobs or change supervisors during the time I am preparing for the LCSW?

An applicant is allowed up to four clinical supervisors during the period of time they are pursuing the required clinical supervision.

Can I receive clinical supervision in a group setting?

Yes, however please note that group supervision is not to exceed individual supervision hours.

What if I am working at a distance from where my supervisor is located? Is there an alternative to face-to-face supervision?

Yes, supervision may be delivered by video teleconferencing and/or by telephone. Please note that no more than 25% of clinical supervision may be acquired telephonically, and that telephonic supervisory contact is to be at a minimum of 30 minutes in length.

Does the clinical supervisor need to directly observe my clinical practice?

Yes, as of July 1, 2006 an applicant for the LCSW must receive a minimum of 10 hours of direct clinical observation by their clinical supervisor; or have their clinical practice reviewed by audiotapes or videotapes by the clinical supervisor.

What type of documentation is required to provide evidence of clinical supervision?

Written documentation is required for each supervision session. Clinical supervisors are required to maintain the records for a minimum of seven years.

What needs to be documented?

- Date and duration of the supervisory session.
- Comprehensive description of the clinical topics/issues discussed, though identifying client data is not required.
- Beginning July 1, 2006 the name and signature of the supervisee will be required.
- Type of clinical supervision: individual or group
- Mode of clinical supervision: face-to-face or video teleconference vs. telephonic.
- Though it is not required, it is best to include the supervisor's signature on the documentation.

Do I need to inform my clients that I am receiving clinical supervision?

Yes, you need to give written notice of your status as a LMSW who is receiving clinical supervision and the name and telephone number of your clinical supervisor. Consult your agency on how this notification is to be provided to clients.

Once I obtain my LCSW what is required in becoming a clinical social work supervisor?

A clinical supervisor is expected to have experience, training and competence adequate to perform and direct the services provided by the supervisee.

Beginning on July 1, 2006, an individual providing clinical supervision shall initially complete a minimum of 12 clock hours of supervision continuing education training (see next paragraph) during the two years before the clinical supervisor's license renewal date. After the required initial training, the clinical supervisor shall obtain a minimum of six clock hours of supervision continuing education.

Topical areas of supervision training/continuing education:

- The roles and responsibilities of a clinical supervisor.
- Skill sets involved in providing oversight and guidance to a supervisee engaged in diagnosing, treatment planning, and treatment of clients.
- Conceptual knowledge of supervision methods and techniques.
- Evaluation of a supervisee's role, performance and capacity to conceptualize and implement clinical assessment and treatment process.

Clinical supervision training may be waived if the clinical supervisor holds any of the following certifications or designations if the certification or designation is current as of the clinical supervisor's license renewal date:

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