

What are the license requirements?

There are four social work licenses in Minnesota. Qualifying for a license requires a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited social work degree and supervised practice. An applicant for licensure must also pass the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) national licensing examination and authorize a criminal background check.

Licensed Social Worker (LSW)

- Accredited CSWE BSW degree
- Bachelors ASWB exam
- Supervised practice not required for initial licensure; but once licensed, 100 hours supervision over 4000 hours social work practice, documented at license renewal

Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW)

- Accredited CSWE MSW or DSW degree
- Masters ASWB exam
- Supervised practice not required for initial licensure; but once licensed, 100 hours supervision over 4000 hours social work practice, documented at license renewal

Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW)

- Accredited CSWE MSW or DSW degree
- Advanced Generalist ASWB exam
- 100 hours supervision over 4000 hours social work practice, documented at application

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)

- Accredited CSWE MSW or DSW degree, including 360 clock hours in 6 clinical knowledge areas earned through MSW coursework, other graduate coursework, or up to 90 CE hours
- Clinical ASWB exam
- 200 hours supervision over no less than 4000 and no more than 8000 hours of clinical practice, including 1800 hours of direct clinical client contact hours, documented at application

How is clinical practice defined?

Minnesota Statutes, Section 148E.010, subdivision 6, defines clinical practice as applying professional social work knowledge, skills, and values in the differential diagnosis and treatment of psychosocial function, disability, or impairment, including addictions and emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders. Treatment includes a plan based on a differential diagnosis. Treatment may include, but is not limited to, the provision of psychotherapy to individuals, couples, families, and groups. Clinical social workers may also provide the services described in the definition of practice of social work.

Who can provide clinical services?

Licensed Social Worker (LSW)

- **Not** authorized for clinical practice

Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW) and Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW)

- Authorized for clinical practice with ongoing supervision from Board approved licensing supervisor, not to exceed 8000 hours of clinical supervised practice without obtaining LICSW license

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)

- Authorized for independent clinical practice

Is there more information about the license requirements and application process?

Complete information about licensing requirements and application process, online application and renewal services, and downloadable forms are available at the Board's website.



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"To ensure to the residents of Minnesota quality social work services by establishing and enforcing professional standards."



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Who must be licensed?

Minnesota Statutes, Sections 148E.055 and 148E.280 require that all persons either 1) practicing social work based on a social work degree accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or 2) representing themselves as a “social worker” must be licensed, except when practicing in an exempt setting. Persons may not begin social work practice where licensure is required until they hold a valid license or temporary license.

The Board has legal authority to determine whether a person in a specific position is engaged in social work practice and must be licensed. If the duties performed in a position include services defined as “social work practice” in Minnesota Statutes, Section 148E.010, subdivision 6 or 11, and the basis for the position is the person’s Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) degree in social work, then licensure is required, even if the job title is not “social worker” and even if an employer does not require licensure.

If an individual is unsure whether a social work license is required for a specific position, contact the Board for a determination.

What are the new licensing requirements beginning July 1, 2016?

Beginning July 1, 2016, licensure is required for newly employed persons in a city or state agency, or a private nonprofit agency with a primary service focus addressing ethnic minority populations and the individual is a member of an ethnic minority population.

Who is exempt from licensure?

- Students engaged in practice in an internship program required for a social work degree
- Persons employed by county agencies
- Persons employed by federally recognized tribes
- Other licensed professionals
- **Persons hired before July 1, 2016, employed by a city or state agency, or a private nonprofit agency with a primary service focus addressing ethnic minority populations and the individual is a member of an ethnic minority population**

How is social work practice defined?

Minnesota Statutes, Section 148E.010, subdivision 11, defines social work practice as working to maintain, restore, or improve behavioral, cognitive, emotional, mental, or social functioning of clients, in a manner that applies accepted professional social work knowledge, skills, and values, including the person-in-environment perspective, by providing in person or through telephone, video conferencing, or electronic means one or more of the social work services described. Clinical social work is defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 148E.010, subdivision 6.

Social work services may address conditions that impair or limit behavioral, cognitive, emotional, mental, or social functioning. Such conditions include, but are not limited to, the following: abuse and neglect of children or vulnerable adults, addictions, developmental disorders, disabilities, discrimination, illness, injuries, poverty, and trauma.

Practice of social work also means providing social work services in a position for which the educational basis is the individual’s degree in social work.

What services do social workers provide?

Social work services include:

- Providing assessment and intervention through direct contact with clients, developing a plan based on information from an assessment, and providing services
- Providing for the direct or indirect benefit of clients through administrative, educational, policy, or research services including, but not limited to:
 - Advocating for policies, programs, or services to improve the well-being of clients
 - Developing and administering programs providing social work services
 - Engaging in community organization to address social problems
 - Supervising individuals who provide social work services to clients or to comply with the Board’s supervised practice requirements
 - Teaching professional social work knowledge, skills, and values to students
- Engaging in clinical practice

Why is licensing important?

Social workers provide services to vulnerable populations. Licensing social workers is essential to ensure public protection for the residents of Minnesota.

The Board ensures that licensed social workers are qualified, professional, ethical, and accountable. Clients can be assured that licensed social workers meet education, examination, supervision, continuing education, and ethical standards of practice. If a licensee fails to meet the Board’s standards of practice, a client has access to the Board’s complaint resolution process.

Through licensure, licensees gain enhanced professional identity, credibility, marketability, and parity with other licensed professionals and may be eligible for third party reimbursement.