

# Social Work Licensure and School Social Worker Certification



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## Overview

In New York State, social workers are both licensed professionals and certified school employees. In 2005 the State Education Department made changes to certification regulations to bring them into compliance with the professional licensure of social workers.

Effective September 1, 2004, the certified social worker (CSW) title was eliminated and two new titles for social work were created, the licensed master social worker (LMSW) and the licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). Individuals previously licensed as CSWs automatically became LMSWs as of September 1, 2004.

In addition to meeting the requirements of their profession, social workers in educational settings must also obtain certification as school social workers. In 2005 Regulations of the Commissioner of Education were amended to align the certification of school social workers with the licensure changes found in Education Law. These changes did not impose any new requirements on certified school social workers who were already employed in school settings in 2005.

In May 2014 the Board of Regents adopted regulations that require each licensed master social worker and licensed clinical social worker to complete **36 hours of continuing education** during each three-year registration period. The regulation provided a phase-in period in which licensees whose next registration period is during the first three years after January 1, 2015 will be required to complete only one hour of mandatory continuing education for each month in the registration period after January 1, 2015.

## Requirements for Social Work Licensure and Scope of Practice

Effective September 1, 2004, the statute

- Replaced the title Certified Social Worker (CSW) with a new title Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) but kept the same requirements;
- Added a new license, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), which requires three years of post-MSW supervised experience in clinical social work, and a specific educational requirement for the license, namely, "a core curriculum which includes clinical content." Clinical content has been defined in the Commissioner's Regulations as 12 semester hours or the equivalent of coursework that prepares the individual to practice as an LCSW. Applicants for licensure as an LCSW are also required to pass the ASWB Clinical exam;
- Retained the "R" psychotherapy privilege, which requires six years of supervised experience (three additional years following the LCSW); and
- Defined and restricted the practices of Licensed Master Social Work and Licensed Clinical Social Work to social work licensees or other authorized or exempt persons identified in the law.

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The following chart details the education, experience and examination requirements for licensure.  
**SOCIAL WORK Licensure**  
**Education Law Article 154**

	<b>Certified Social Worker (CSW)</b>	<b>Licensed Master Social Worker</b>	<b>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</b>
<b>Education</b>	Title eliminated in 2004  Individuals previously licensed as CSWs became LMSWs on 9/1/2004	Master's or equivalent in social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's or equivalent in social work that includes completion of core curriculum with at least 12 credit hours of clinical courses; <b>or</b></li> <li>• Master's or equivalent in social work with equivalent post-graduate clinical coursework</li> </ul>
<b>Experience</b>	Title eliminated (see above)	No experience requirement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 3 years full-time post-graduate clinical social work experience under supervision of a psychiatrist, licensed psychologist or licensed clinical social worker in diagnosis, psychotherapy, and assessment-based treatment plans; <b>or</b></li> <li>• 6 year part-time equivalent experience</li> </ul>
<b>Examination*</b>	Title eliminated (see above)	Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), Masters (formerly Intermediate)	ASWB Clinical examination
<b>Continuing Education Requirement</b>		36 hours of continuing education during each three-year registration period	36 hours of continuing education during each three-year registration period

\* Application must be approved by NYSED before registration for ASWB examinations.

The following chart contrasts the scope of practice of LMSWs and LCSWs.

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE**  
**Education Law Article 154**

<b>Certified Social Worker</b>	Title eliminated. Individuals licensed as CSWs automatically became LMSWs on September 1, 2004.
<b>Licensed Master Social Worker</b>	<p>The practice of licensed master social work shall mean the professional application of social work theory, principles, and the methods to prevent, assess, evaluate, formulate and implement a plan of action based on client needs and strengths, and intervene to address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities, and of the psychosocial aspects of illness and injury experienced by individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society.</p> <p>Licensed master social workers engage in the administration of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, social work advocacy, case management, counseling, consultation, research, administration and management, and teaching.</p> <p>Licensed master social workers provide all forms of supervision other than supervision of the practice of licensed clinical social work as defined in subdivision two of this section.</p> <p>Licensed master social workers practice licensed clinical social work in facility settings or other supervised settings approved by the department under supervision in accordance with the commissioner's regulations.</p>
<b>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</b>	<p>The practice of clinical social work encompasses the scope of practice of licensed master social work and, in addition, includes the diagnosis of mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities and of the psychosocial aspects of illness, injury, disability and impairment undertaken within a psychosocial framework; administration and interpretation of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning; development and implementation of appropriate assessment-based treatment plans; and the provision of crisis oriented psychotherapy and brief, short-term and long-term psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic treatment to individuals, couples, families and groups, habilitation, psychoanalysis and behavior therapy; all undertaken for the purpose of preventing, assessing, treating, ameliorating and resolving psychosocial dysfunction with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the mental, emotional, behavioral, and social functioning and well-being of individuals, couples, families, small groups, organizations, communities and society.</p> <p>Diagnosis in the context of licensed clinical social work practice is the process of distinguishing, beyond general social work assessment, between similar mental, emotional, behavioral, developmental and addictive disorders, impairments and disabilities within a psychosocial framework on the basis of their similar and unique characteristics consistent with accepted classification systems.</p> <p>Psychotherapy in the context of licensed clinical social work practice is the use of verbal methods in interpersonal relationships with the intent of assisting a person or persons to modify attitudes and behavior which are intellectually, socially, or emotionally maladaptive.</p> <p>Development of assessment-based treatment plans in the context of licensed clinical social work practice refers to the development of an integrated plan of prioritized interventions, that is based on the diagnosis and psychosocial assessment of the client, to address mental, emotional, behavioral, developmental and addictive disorders, impairments and disabilities, reactions to illnesses, injuries, disabilities and impairments, and social problems.</p>

## Requirements for School Social Worker Certification

In 2005, the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education were amended to include the following:

- The Certified Social Worker (CSW) title is replaced with Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) titles (requirements for provisional certification as a School Social Worker remain the same);
- Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) becomes the minimal license for permanent certification as a School Social Worker; and
- The scope of practice language for certified School Social Workers is made consistent with the scope of practice found in the new practice-protected licensed professions in social work.

### SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER Certification NYCRR §80-2.3(f)

	Prior to August 2005	Effective August 2005
<b>Provisional Certification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• 30 semester hours of graduate study in social work</li> <li>• College supervised internship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change</li> <li>• Valid for five years</li> </ul>
<b>Permanent Certification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years of experience in pupil personnel services</li> <li>• Master of Social Work (MSW) degree</li> <li>• Registered as a certified social worker (CSW)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years of experience in pupil personnel services</li> <li>• Master of Social Work (MSW) degree or "equivalent degree" (as determined by the NYSED)</li> <li>• Licensed and registered as licensed master social worker (LMSW) <u>or</u> licensed clinical social worker (LCSW)</li> </ul>

## Appendix I

*Source: NYS Education Department's Office of the Professions webpage ([www.op.nysed.gov](http://www.op.nysed.gov))*

### **Frequently Asked Questions Q&A regarding Social Work Licensure Information on LMSW and LCSW titles**

The following information provides answers to the questions most frequently received from current and prospective licensees and other interested parties regarding the 2005 changes to the law. These materials are subject to change without notice, based on changes in the law or regulations.

#### **1. What did the 2005 amendments change in licensing social workers?**

The law features three fundamental changes:

- It replaces the title Certified Social Worker (CSW) with a new title Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) but retains the same requirements;
- It adds a new license, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), which requires three years of post-MSW supervised experience in clinical social work, and a specific educational requirement for the license, namely, "a core curriculum which includes clinical content." Clinical content has been defined in the Commissioner's Regulations as 12 semester hours or the equivalent of coursework that prepares the individual to practice as an LCSW. Applicants for licensure as an LCSW are also required to pass the ASWB Clinical exam. Defines and restricts the practices of Licensed Master Social Work and Licensed Clinical Social Work to social work licensees or other authorized or exempt persons identified in the law; and
- It defines and restricts the practices of Licensed Master Social Worker and Licensed Clinical Social Worker to social work licensees or other authorized or exempt persons identified in the law.

The 2005 amendments also

- Retain the "R" Reimbursable Psychotherapy Privilege, which requires six years of supervised experience (three additional years following the LCSW).

#### **2. Is all social work practice restricted to licensees?**

No. Some social work functions are defined and listed as "functions that do not require a license." While the Regents do not have regulatory authority over unlicensed persons providing those functions, they will have authority over LMSWs or LCSWs providing them.

#### **3. If I was already a CSW when the law changed, what did I need to do regarding my license?**

Nothing. On September 1, 2004, you became a LMSW. The State Education Department (SED) automatically sent you a new license parchment and registration certificate with "LMSW" rather than CSW. Your license number did not change nor did your registration period so that your LMSW registration will always expire on the same date your CSW registration expires.

**4. If I was a CSW with the "P" (Psychotherapy Privilege) or the "R" (Reimbursable Psychotherapy Privilege) or both, did I need to do anything regarding my license?**

No. On September 1, 2004, you became a LCSW. SED should have automatically sent you a new license parchment and registration certificate with LCSW rather than CSW. Your license number did not change nor did your registration period so that your LCSW registration will expire on the same date your CSW registration expires.

**5. If I was a CSW but did not have either the "P" or the "R" and I had not completed three years of clinical social work experience by the end of the "grandparent" period, what would I have to do to become a LCSW?**

First of all, to continue practicing after September 1, 2004 as an LMSW providing clinical social work services, you would have had to secure appropriate supervision as required in the law. Supervision is defined in the regulations as at least one hour per week of supervision by a licensed clinical social worker, licensed psychologist or psychiatrist. When you completed three years of supervised clinical social work experience, you would have to file an application and fee of \$270 just like any new applicant. You would be required to pass a clinical licensing exam and you would have to provide evidence that you had met the requirement for at least 12 semester hours in clinical coursework in the MSW degree.

**6. If I become a LMSW and at some later date meet the requirements for the LCSW, will I have to maintain both licenses?**

No. While you are licensed for life as an LMSW and as an LCSW, you may let your LMSW become inactive so that you will not have to pay two \$155 triennial registration fees. Essentially, once you have the LCSW, you will no longer need the LMSW. You can respond "no" on question one of the LMSW registration form when you receive it. Answer the remaining questions, sign the form, and return it with **no** fee. Your LMSW license will become inactive.

**7. If I am licensed as a social worker in another state, can I be licensed in New York State by endorsement?**

No, there is no endorsement for social work licensing in New York State. You must apply for licensure and meet the requirements for the LMSW or the LCSW. If you passed a licensing examination offered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) in another jurisdiction, you may be able to transfer your examination score.

**8. If I have my MSW degree, and practiced for a number of years without being licensed as a CSW, what will I have to do now to become a LMSW?**

The law includes a specific "grandparent" clause that allows persons with an MSW degree and five years of post-MSW degree social work experience by September 1, 2004 to file an LMSW application and fee of \$270. If your education and experience are acceptable, you could be licensed without having to take the ASWB examination.

**9. If I previously received a license as a CSW but I am not currently registered to practice, what will I have to do now to become an LMSW or LCSW?**

If you are not registered, you must contact the Registration Unit of the Office of the Professions at (518) 474-3817 ext. 410 or [opregfee@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:opregfee@mail.nysed.gov). If you have not been practicing the profession you may only have to reactivate your license. If you have been practicing the profession without a license, that is, acting as a Certified Social Worker, you may be responsible for delinquent registration fees and a penalty of \$10 per month.

**10. Is there any provision for licensing baccalaureate Social Workers?**

No, the law does not include licensure at the BSW level. However, BSWs and BSW students are included in the categories of exempt persons, that is, those who may practice those activities defined as licensed master social work without a license.

**11. Who else may practice social work without a license?**

The law exempts BSW and MSW students in supervised field work under the supervision of an LMSW or a LCSW and:

- Licensees in other professions whose practice includes similar services, e.g., medicine, psychology, nursing, occupational therapy;
- Student interns supervised in educational programs for other professions whose practice includes similar services;
- Persons providing "instruction, advice, support, encouragement or information" to individuals, families and relational groups
- Attorneys, rape crisis counselors, alcohol and substance abuse counselors, and pastoral counselors;
- Public and private employees providing clinical social work services on or before September 1, 2004 for as long as they continue to provide those same services in that job; and
- Employees of agencies operated, regulated or financed by the New York State Office of Mental Health, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Office of Children and Family Services or local social service districts until January 1, 2010, so long as the person does not use the titles of LMSW or LCSW.

**12. Does the law require LMSWs or LCSWs to complete a specified number of continuing education hours to maintain the license?**

Yes. Commissioner's Regulations adopted in spring 2014 require licensed master social workers and licensed clinical social workers to complete 36 hours of continuing education during each three-year registration period beginning January 1, 2015. The regulation provided a phase-in period in which licensees whose next registration period is during the first three years after January 1, 2015 will be required to complete only one hour of mandatory continuing education for each month in the registration period after January 1, 2015.

**13. Does the law include LMSWs and LCSWs as mandated reporters of suspected child neglect or abuse?**

Yes. The law adds the category "social worker" to the list of professionals identified as mandated reporters of suspected child neglect or abuse. Effective September 1, 2004, applicants seeking an initial license as an LMSW or LCSW must complete a two-hour Department-approved course on the identification and reporting of child abuse in order to be licensed. Information about the training and the listing of approved providers is available from the Office of the Professions web site [www.op.nysed.gov/camemo.htm](http://www.op.nysed.gov/camemo.htm). Programs registered by NYS that lead to social work licensure are now required to include training in the identification and reporting of child abuse and maltreatment. Graduates of these programs are not required to take additional training or submit documentation.

If you have questions not addressed above, you may contact the office of the State Board for Social Work, at (518) 474-3817, ext. 450; or e-mail [swbd@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:swbd@mail.nysed.gov).

## Appendix II

### **Section 80-2.3 Certificates valid for pupil personnel service (school attendance teacher, school counselor, school dental hygiene teacher, school nurse-teacher, school psychologist and school social worker).**

#### **f) School social worker.**

##### **(1) Provisional certificate.**

(i) The candidate shall hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or from an institution approved by the department, and in addition shall have completed 30 semester hours of graduate study, including a supervised internship, in the field of social work.

(ii) Time validity. The provisional certificate shall be valid for five years from date of issuance.

(2) Permanent certificate. The candidate shall have completed two years of school experience in the field of pupil personnel services, hold the degree of master of social work or an equivalent degree as determined by the department, and be licensed and registered by the department as a licensed master social worker or a licensed clinical social worker.

(3) Scope of practice. The provisional or permanent certificate in school social work shall authorize the holder of the certificate to practice licensed master social work, as defined in sections 7701(1) and 7702 of the Education Law, in public schools of New York State or any other school for which the law requires certification as a school social worker pursuant to Part 80 of this Title. For such individual to practice licensed clinical social work, as defined in section 7701(2) of the Education Law, in the public schools or any other location in New York State, the individual must be licensed and registered by the department as a licensed clinical social worker when performing such services, unless such individual is exempt from licensure in licensed clinical social work pursuant to section 7706 or other provision of article 154 of the Education Law.