

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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Chapter II: School Social Work Practice

Objective: To describe the licensure requirements of school social work, the four levels of social work licensure, the kinds of services that social workers provide at each licensure level, identify resources regarding standards of practice and requirements for supervision.

School Social Work Licensure Requirements

School social workers must hold both a license from the Board of Social Work and the Board of Teaching. They must also graduate with a baccalaureate degree or master's degree from an accredited social work program and have passed the national examination provided by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), or a comparable examination as determined by the Board in order to work in the schools. It is the responsibility of the school social worker to maintain current licensure.

The Board of Social Work licenses social workers at the following level of licensure: Licensed Social Worker (LSW), Licensed Graduated Social Worker (LGSW), Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) and Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). The Board of Social Work requires 40 hours of continuing education for every two-year renewal period. Two continuing education hours must be obtained in ethics content at each license renewal. For specific topic requirements for continuing education, contact the [Board of Social Work](#). Renewal is required by the last day of the month of the social worker's birthday.

LSW and LGSW must be supervised for at least 4000 hours of supervised practice following licensure (please see Levels of Social Work Licensure for more information).

Questions regarding social work licensure can be answered at the [Minnesota Board of Social Work](#), 612-617-2100.

The Board of Teaching licenses social workers as School Social Workers. After the initial two-year license, a School Social Work license must be renewed every five years. To renew a five-year School Social Work license, every staff member needs to have 125 clock hours of continuing education every five years. The Board of Teaching requires that of these 125 clock hours, a social work licensure candidate needs to have completed clock hours in positive behavior interventions, accommodation, modification, and adaptation of curriculum, materials and instruction, and recognizing early warning signs of children and adolescent mental health disorders.

Information regarding license renewal can be obtained on the [Department of Education](#).

Levels of Social Work Licensure

Like teachers, social workers in Minnesota can be licensed at both the bachelors and masters level to work as school social workers. But the social work license, issued by the Minnesota Board of Social Work and required for a school social work license, is complicated because it has four levels of licensure. Level of licensure determines the kinds of services that social workers may provide.

Licensed Social Worker (LSW)

The Licensed Social Worker (LSW) must have a baccalaureate degree in social work and pass a licensing exam.

The LSW is educated to help people in the context of their social environments. This means that the social worker does not simply focus on a student who is struggling, but also considers the environmental causes (home situation, peer interactions, neighborhood conditions, classroom climate, etc.) of student behavior. This holistic approach also considers the effect a student has on others (like other students, teachers, and parents). A LSW might provide services to help a group of students with difficulties in peer interactions, helping a teacher re-structure a class to better meet a student's need or helping parents create a discipline program or develop a bedtime routine so as to improve a student's ability to concentrate in school. Because of their emphasis on the environment, LSW social workers might also work with a local low-income housing project to coordinate safe study areas or after-school care. LSW social workers might also implement school-wide intervention or prevention programs such as decreasing bullying or creating a respectful climate. LSWs are able to help a school deal with such crisis situations as child abuse or help a family to find resources to prevent being evicted or to apply for medical assistance.

The LSW must be supervised by another social worker for the first two years of practice after becoming licensed,. This supervisor may be a social worker with a MSW degree or one with a BSW degree who has completed supervision requirements as identified by the Board of Social Work.

Licensed Graduate Social Workers (LGSW)

A Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW) has obtained an MSW degree and passed a licensure examination. Both the education and the exam cover theoretical constructs, research and social work practice and policy in greater depth. The LGSW has experienced two internships and advanced social work coursework.

The LGSW must be supervised for two years of full-time practice (or its part-time equivalent) by a person with an independent license (either a LISW or a LICSW who has completed supervision requirements as identified by the Board of Social Work. See below). Depending on personal goals and the needs of the position, the LGSW can either engage in clinical practice or generalist practice. Generalist practice would include the same activities that LSW social workers do in a school setting (short-term individual counseling, group counseling, helping parents with student learning issues, consulting with classroom teachers, helping in family or school crises, implementing school-wide prevention efforts, finding resources and reporting child abuse). This social worker could be supervised by either a LISW or a LICSW.

If the social worker is practicing clinical social work, he or she would be able to conduct all of the practice activities that the LSW performs. In addition to this, the clinical LGSW would be able to diagnose and treat psychosocial problems, disabilities, addictions, emotional impairments and behavior disorders (Minnesota Statute 148D.010, subd 6, 2014). If a LGSW were performing diagnosis and treatment of emotional or behavior problems in students, or billing medical assistance for services, he or she would need to be supervised by an LICSW social worker who has completed supervision requirements as identified by the Board of Social Work.

After the equivalent of two years of full-time practice under the supervision of either of LISW or a LICSW, the LGSW social worker is required to take a licensing examination at either the LISW or LICSW level.

Licensed Independent Social Workers (LISW)

The Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) can provide short-term counseling of students related to specific, short-term concerns (such as problems in peer interaction or bullying), help parents with parenting issues related to school functions (such as attendance), facilitate groups for students around specific concerns (such as anger management or divorce), implement school-wide prevention programs (such as diversity initiatives), develop prevention programs or crisis management policies, consult with classroom teachers (e.g., regarding peer problems in a classroom), help the school find resources (such as glasses or dental care for students, give in-service trainings (such as about child abuse reporting) and work with local agencies in collaborative relationships (such as county mental health teams). LISW social workers do not need to be supervised, except as needed “when appropriate or necessary for competent and ethical practice” (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D.200, subd. 2).

Like LGSW social workers, LISW social workers may engage in clinical practice (see above), but if they do so, they must be supervised by an LICSW social worker who has completed supervision requirements as identified by the Board of Social Work for a period of two years (or its equivalent), at which time they would be required to sit for the LICSW examination.

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW)

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers may provide all of the services that LISW social workers may provide. They may also practice clinical social work, including the diagnosis and treatment of psychosocial problems, disabilities, addictions, emotional impairments and behavior disorders (Minnesota Statute 148D.010, subd 6, 2014). The LICSW may practice independently as there is no mandate for supervision for the LICSW social worker, except as needed “when appropriate or necessary for competent and ethical practice” (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D.200, subd. 2).

Supervision Requirements

The purpose of supervision is threefold: 1) to provide education in social work knowledge, values, and skills; 2) to provide support to social workers as they may be exposed to difficult social situations; and 3) to provide evaluation for the purpose of accountability (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). By definition, social work supervision is provided by a social worker with more experience to one with less.

The social work license requires that all social workers receive a total of 100 hours during the first 4000 hours of practice (approximately two years full-time practice) after a social worker is licensed (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D), which translates into approximately 4 hours of supervision per month for social workers working full time. After a certain length of time (4000 hours for BSW-level social workers and 4000-8000 hours for MSW-level social workers), supervision is no longer mandated, however social workers are charged to obtain supervision or consultation “when appropriate or necessary for competent and ethical practice.” (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D.200, subd. 2).

At least half of this supervision must be individual, face-to-face supervision. Half may be conducted in a group, and up to one-fourth may be conducted electronically (via telephone or e-mail).

The Minnesota Board rules for supervision specifically state that supervision is to be provided by a licensed social worker who has completed supervision requirements set by the Board of Social Work. Social workers who have a BSW degree may be supervised by another BSW social worker who has at least 2 years of experience or by an MSW-level social worker, or a licensed social MSW-level social worker. Supervision for MSW-level social workers must be provided by a MSW-level social worker who has completed two years of supervised practice and passes a licensure examination at either a licensed independent social worker (LISW) or a licensed independent social worker (LICSW). If the MSW-level social worker is practicing “clinical social work” (“differential diagnosis and treatment of psychosocial function, disability, or impairment, including addictions and emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders” (Minnesota Statute 148D010 subd 6), he or she must be supervised by a social worker with a LICSW license. In situations where a social worker with the appropriate level of licensure is not available to provide supervision, the worker may request a variance from the board of social work, requesting that another mental health professional provide the supervision (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D).

The content of the supervision is to be social work knowledge, values, skills, ethics, standards of practice, with emphasis on standards of practice, ethical conduct, roles, responsibilities, boundaries, power dynamics and permissible scope of practice (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D).

In larger school districts that employ many social workers, experienced social workers often provide social work supervision to those with less experience. In smaller districts, experienced social workers may not be available to provide supervision. In such situations, the social worker must seek a qualified social worker outside the district to provide the necessary social work supervision. Because this supervision is a requirement for licensure, social workers should negotiate time and payment for supervision with the school district.

References

Kadushin, A., & Harkness, D. (2002). *Supervision in Social Work*. (4 ed.) New York: Columbia University Press.

Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D. Office of the Revisor, State of Minnesota, retrieved from <http://mn.gov/boards/social-work/licensees/supervisedpractice.jsp>.

Accredited Social Work Programs in Minnesota

To practice school social work in Minnesota, the following are required:

1. Graduation with a baccalaureate or Masters in Social Work degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education;
2. Licensure by the Board of Social Work; which includes passing the national examination provided by the **Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)**, or a comparable examination as determined by the Board in order to work in schools.
3. Licensure as a School Social Worker through Minnesota Department of Education,

For more licensing information, fees, and process please contact:

Minnesota Board of Social Work

2829 University Avenue SE
Suite 340
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3239
Telephone: (612) 617-2100
Toll Free: (888) 234-1320
TTY: (800) 627-3529
Fax: (612) 617-2103
<http://www.socialwork.state.mn.us/index.htm>

Minnesota Department of Education

1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113-4266
Telephone: (651) 582-8691
TTY: (651) 582-8201
Fax: (651) 582-8809
Hours: 8:00am to 4:20pm - Monday thru Friday
Personnel.Licensing@state.mn.us
<http://education.state.mn.us/mde/index.html>

Association of Social Work Boards

400 South Ridge Parkway, Suite B
Culpeper, VA 22701
Telephone: (540) 829-6880
Toll Free: (800) 225-6880
Fax: (540) 829-0142 fax
(888) 579-EXAM Candidate Registration Center
(888) 332-EXAM Hearing impaired candidate registration/TTY
<http://www.aswb.org>

To identify accredited schools of social work, please contact

Council on Social Work Education

1701 Duke Street, Suite 200^[L]_[SEP]
Alexandria, VA 22314^[L]_[SEP]
(703) 683-8080^[L]_[SEP]
<http://www.cswe.org/default.aspx?id=17491>

Minnesota Board of Social Work Standards of Professional Practice and Compliance Provisions

School social workers in Minnesota are licensed by the Board of Social Work and the Board of Education. As such, they must adhere to the Standards of Practice (<https://mn.gov/boards/social-work/licensees/standardsofpractice.jsp>) determined by the Board of Social Work Examiners. These standards describe professional and ethical conduct, responsibilities to clients and former clients, recording practices, professional boundaries and prohibitions against personal, business, or sexual relationships with clients or their families. Because these statutes are a part of Minnesota law, failure to adhere to these professional standards can result in penalties up to and including forfeiture of the license to practice social work.

NASW Code of Ethics

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is a professional organization that many social workers choose to join. NASW sets professional standards for school social workers, cultural competence and professional behavior. A social worker who joins NASW agrees to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics, which, although voluntary, constitutes the “gold standard” of professional ethics. This Code is based on the cardinal social work values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. It summarizes ethical principles and provides standards by which both social workers and others outside the profession may assess a social worker’s professional behavior. The Code of Ethics lists responsibilities to clients, colleagues, employers, the profession and society at large.

NASW Standards of Practice for School Social Workers

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is a professional organization that provides support and information for social workers. They have a school social work section whose purpose is to provide support and education for school social workers. They have identified Standards of Practice for School Social Workers that provide guidelines for professional practice, requirements for preparation and development for the practice of school social work, recommendations for administrative structure and support and a summary of the NASW Code of Ethics.

NASW Standards for Cultural Competence

School social workers interact with students and families who come from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has developed Standards for Cultural Competence (http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWculturals_tandards.pdf). These standards mandate that social workers function within the values of the profession and have an awareness of potential differences in values, customs and beliefs of various groups. As such social workers need self-awareness, knowledge of community resources and the cultures with which they work. They need skills to understand, empower and advocate for clients from diverse backgrounds. Social workers must obtain professional development and ongoing education to stay abreast of changes in professional practice and the

changing needs of their client populations.



Confidentiality

The practice of confidentiality in a school setting can pose challenging decisions for a school social worker due to the holistic approach used to meet the needs of a student and multiple factors such as the age of the student, the purpose of the social work involvement, the interests of the parents, teachers and administrators and the ethical and legal parameters of confidentiality. School social workers must adhere to their ethical and legal responsibilities when making professional decisions regarding confidentiality. School social workers must have knowledge and understanding of the Social Work Code of Ethics, standards of school social work practice, federal and state laws and local school district policies that govern client confidentiality and school records. An NASW Practice Update on Confidentiality and School Social Work can be viewed at <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/school/cfs0202.asp?back=yes>

The social work Code of Ethics and Standards of School Social Work practice can be viewed at the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) website (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp>).

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that protects the privacy of student education records can be viewed at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html> and the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) that protects health data can be viewed at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HIPAAGenInfo/>.

There are times when a school social worker must make a difficult decision about confidentiality and disclosure. The Confidentiality Checklist by Raines (See Appendix) can guide and assist a school social worker with their decision.

Record Keeping

Records created or held by school social workers are considered educational records under Minnesota law. See Minnesota Statutes section 13.32, subd. 1 and 3. Educational records are private data about an individual - the student who is the subject of the record. Generally, such records cannot be released without parental consent. However, they are accessible by parents upon request, and they may be accessible without parental consent by school officials, including teachers, contractors, and volunteers, who have a legitimate educational interest in accessing the records. See 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.10 and 99.31(a)(1). Under federal law, schools must use reasonable methods to ensure that school officials obtain access to only those education records in which they have a legitimate educational interest, and that physical, technological, or administrative controls are in place to restrict access to records. 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1). Although school social work records are part of the individual student's educational record, the social work records themselves may be stored in a location separate from the central educational record, such as the social work office, in order to increase privacy protections and facilitate the use of the records by the school social worker. If the social work records are stored separate from the student's central educational record, the central educational record should contain a notation that the records are stored elsewhere, including a basic description of the type and nature of the data and the location of the data.

The Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act, Minnesota Statutes section 148D.225, subd. 4(a) and (b), outlines the minimum records that social workers must maintain; other laws also may apply to school social workers. Because school social workers are employed by an entity, they should follow the school's record retention schedule, which must be in compliance with Minnesota Statutes section 13.32, for guidance as to how to maintain their social work

