

Social Work Licensing

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Know Your State Licensing Requirements

Since every state has its own licensing requirements, review the [licensing board website for the state](#) in which you wish to practice posted on the Association of Social Work Board website *early* in your education. If you have questions, phone the board during its office hours to speak with an expert.

Professional Association Resources

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) or the regional NASW chapter where you wish to practice often include licensing information. Many states also have clinical social work societies which can be rich sources of information about licensing, job hunting, networking, and continuing education for that state. Clinical society board officers and members are available via email and social media.

Social Networks

Recent SSW alums can be excellent licensing resources, and your best tool for finding them is a LinkedIn alumni search. The Smith SSW maintains [connections with alumnae/i nationwide](#) through regional Area Coordinators and listservs. There are also SSW Facebook groups listed there and other Smith College and SSW LinkedIn and Facebook groups to join and post questions to.

Licensing Process Overview

Consult the [ASWB Examination Candidate Handbook](#) for additional details.

1. Earn your degree from a CSWE accredited program.
2. Contact the social work board of the state jurisdiction where you wish to work to request a license application.
3. Submit your application to your social work board.
4. Receive approval to register for the ASWB exam from your social work board (within about two weeks). In some states you may begin the exam process before graduation and may need a letter from the SSW Registrar on official letterhead stating that you will be receiving your MSW and when. Email sswregistrar@smith.edu for this and to request official transcripts.
5. Register with ASWB for the master's-level exam (\$230). One must wait one week to schedule the test.
6. Receive the ASWB Authorization to Test.
7. Make an exam appointment: Contact Pearson VUE, ASWB's testing contractor.
8. Receive email confirmation of your testing appointment within 24 hours from Pearson VUE.
9. Bring two valid forms of acceptable ID to the test center on your test day.
10. Take the ASWB exam and receive your unofficial score report. Your social work board will receive your official score report within two weeks.
11. Receive your license from the social work board in the jurisdiction in which you applied. Note that one is not licensed until the license fee is paid.

Test Preparation

The ASWB exam, a computer-based test taken at a Pearson VUE testing center of your choice, consists of 170 multiple choice questions broken down into 10 content areas. There is a four-hour testing window, and special accommodations may be requested for ESL candidates and those with disabilities. The ASWB offers an electronic test prep guide for \$15 (\$20 for print edition), and you may take an online practice test for \$85. As long as your Smith email is active, you may access the electronic version for free through the [Neilson Library website](#) by searching for ASWB exam guide master's level. The NASW Massachusetts chapter has offered a Saturday test prep session for \$150 early each summer on campus coordinated by the SSW. There is a 75% pass rate nationally (89.5% in Massachusetts), and you may re-test if you fail.

Reciprocity Between States*

License reciprocity permits you to earn a license in one state based on holding a license in another. There is no system of reciprocity for social work licenses across states though most states allow license applicants to transfer ASWB exam scores. Applicants can often prove that they have met the supervised work experience requirement for a new state license by documenting previous supervised work experience from another. Additional requirements for applicants moving from one state to another may include state-specific courses such as social work ethics or state law; additional clinical or supervision hours; letters of reference and original transcripts; and a letter of endorsement from the previous state's licensing board. ASWB updates are available at [Social Work Practice Mobility](#).

*From Social Work Guide.

Additional Links

[Social Work Guide](#)

[Compare License Requirements by State](#)