

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LSW/LCSW

1. Should I get my LSW or LCSW license?

The recommendation of PSCSW is that all social workers graduating from a MSW/MSS program should plan to get their LSW license. This is accomplished by passing an exam that you are eligible to take as early as the second semester of your graduating year. The LSW license will be granted after applying to the state, passing the Masters level exam (administered by the Association of Social Work Boards, ASWB), and providing documentation of graduation from an accredited Graduate School of Social Work. You may apply to the State Board and register for the exam as early as the second semester of your graduating year. Pennsylvania, and most other states, also has an advanced clinical LCSW license. PSCSW strongly encourages students and recent graduates who are anticipating careers in direct service, supervision, or leadership in the area of clinical social work to work towards earning their LCSW. To earn the LCSW, you will need to obtain your LSW, then complete 3000 supervised clinical hours (2- 6 years). Following the completing of your 3000 hours, you will then be eligible to take the Clinical Level exam and earn the LCSW.

2. How do I register for the exam, how much does it cost and where do I take it?

Exams are administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) which is a national organization. Before you can register for the exam, you will need to contact the PA State Licensing Board, obtain an application for the LSW, complete it and send it in. The State Board will pre-approve your application and send you a letter, which will allow you to contact ASWB to register for the exam.

Once you receive your approval letter from the state, register for the exam by contacting ASWB at www.aswb.org or calling 1- 888- 579- 3926. The cost is \$260. ASWB will send you a letter authorizing you to schedule the exam, along with a list of exam sites. Exam sites are at local test taking centers. There are accommodations for learning disabilities. You will receive your score immediately after completing the exam. Your test results will be forwarded to the State Board.

3. What if I don't pass the exam?

You must wait three months before retaking the exam. You will have to pay the \$260 fee again.

4. How do I receive the LSW license?

Contact the State Board to obtain the application for the license. Complete the licensing application and mail it to the Board with \$25. (Fee subject to change.) Two recommendations are required. In PA, if you are still in your final semester of graduate school, the Dean/Chair/Registrar of your program will also need to send in a form verifying your social work education.

Applications are available on the [State Board website](#)

Or email ST-SOCIALWORK@state.pa.us Or call 717- 783- 1389

Or write to The State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors; P.O. Box 2649; Harrisburg, Pa. 17105- 2649.

Contact your Graduate School Registrar after graduation to arrange to send a transcript to the State Board. The State Board will mail the license after receiving the transcript, application and test results. The entire process can take several weeks.

5. How many supervised clinical hours do I need to be eligible for the LCSW?

You must complete 3000 hours of supervised post Masters clinical experience. You have 2- 6 years to accumulate these hours. This means, that if you are working a 40 hour week in a clinical setting, you might accumulate these hours in two years. If you are working part time, or taking time off, you might take up to six years. You cannot use less than 500 supervised clinical hours in a 12 month period, and you can not use more than 1500 supervised clinical hours in a twelve month period towards your 3000 hours necessary to be granted the LCSW license. The 2- 6 year time period starts when you start your supervised clinical experience. (So, for example, if you receive your LSW license in 2008, but due to other obligations, you do not start your supervised clinical experience until 2010, the 2- 6 year time span begins in 2010.)

6. What is considered clinical experience?

The Board states that one half of the work experience must be spent providing Assessment, Psychotherapy, Psychosocial Interventions, Consultation, Family Therapy or Group Therapy. These interventions must be face- to- face, not on the phone. The other half of the work experience can be spent with paperwork, meetings, and other administrative responsibilities. If you are in a job defined as “Case Management”, face- to- face encounters that include supportive relationships and other interventions as defined above can be considered clinical. It is always wise to double check the eligibility of your clinical experience with the State Board by emailing [ST- SocialWork@state.pa.us](mailto:ST-SocialWork@state.pa.us)

7. What are the supervision requirements for the LCSW?

All clinical experience must be supervised to count towards the LCSW accreditation. There must be 2 hours of supervision for every 40 hours of clinical experience. If you are working part time, there must be a ratio and the supervision will extend over a longer period. The supervision must be provided in the same time period as the clinical experience, not at a later time. Social workers in school or academic settings can not count supervised hours during the summer if they are not seeing students at that time. 50% of the supervision must be provided by an LCSW social worker with at least 5 years of clinical experience. An LSW is not eligible to provide the required supervision. The other 50% of the supervision can be provided by a licensed professional (in another discipline) with a masters or doctoral degree and at least 5 years of clinical experience obtained within the last 10 years. MD Psychiatrists; Licensed Psychologists, LPC's; and LMFT's can be approved supervisors. 50% of the supervision must be individual supervision. The other 50% can occur in a group setting, but it must be facilitated by an eligible licensed practitioner and must occur concurrently with the individual supervision. (The board does not accept more than 1 hour of group supervision in any week, so two hour group supervision sessions every other week are not permitted.) Group supervision will not count towards accreditation if the hours are accumulated in a separate time frame from individual supervision.

8. What documentation is required for my hours and supervision?

Both you and your supervisor should keep your clinical and supervisory hours documented. It is advisable to have a supervisor sign off on your work hours on a regular basis, in case the supervisor leaves suddenly. It is also required that you define learning goals and that the supervisor provides quarterly evaluations of your work. There is no mandated form for this. Suggested documentation and evaluation forms are available for PSCSW members on our website.

9. What if my job does not offer an eligible supervisor?

Finding supervision can be stressful, and asking about LCSW supervision is an important component of a job search. Some workers have found qualified supervisors and have formed groups in their agencies to satisfy part of the LCSW requirements. Some social workers have had to find private individual and group supervisors to meet their needs. PSCSW offers a low fee supervision list to LCSW Candidates who are members and who qualify by income. The fee is set at \$50 per hour. The list can be found on the members only portion of the PSCSW website. Members may also use the PSCSW listserv to find supervisors and supervision groups.