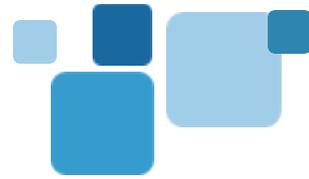


# Chapter 2



## School Social Work Practice

This chapter looks at:

- School social work licensure requirements
- Levels of social work licensure
- Supervision requirements
- Accredited social work programs in Minnesota
- Minnesota Board of Social Work Standards of Professional Practice and Compliance Provisions
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards for School Social Work Practice
- Standards for cultural competence
- Confidentiality
- Record keeping

## Chapter II: School Social Work Practice

### Objective

To describe school social work licensing requirements, levels of social work licensure, services provided by licensure level, standards of practice-related resources, and supervision requirements.

### School Social Work Licensure Requirements

School social workers hold two professional licenses: one from the Board of Social Work (BOSW), and another from the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). School social workers also hold either a baccalaureate or master's degree from an accredited social work program. And have passed either 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. In addition, school social workers assume ongoing responsibility for maintaining current licensure.

### Minnesota Board of Social Work (BOSW) Licensure Levels

The Minnesota Board of Social Work (BOSW) offers licensure at four levels: Licensed Social Worker (LSW), Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW), Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) and Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). For all levels of licensure prior to every two year renewal period, you must complete 40 hours of continuing education hours (CEU's), two of which must pertain to CEU's ethics content. At the LICSW level, 12 of 40 CEU's must include clinically based content. For supervisors, 6 of 40 CEU's must include supervision based content. For specific topic requirements for continuing education, contact the [Board of Social Work](#).

In terms of additional Minnesota Board of Social Work information, this manual offers two additional reminders. First, please note that licenses must be renewed on the last day of each licensee's birthday month. Second, remember that all LSW-and LGSW- level social workers must be supervised for at least 4000 hours of supervised practice following licensure (please see Levels of Social Work Licensure for more information). Further questions can be directed to the [Minnesota Board of Social Work](#), 612-617-2100.

### Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) License

The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board licenses social workers as school social workers. After the initial two-year licensing period, school social work licenses 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. The Board of Teaching requires that of these 125 clock hours, all social work licensure candidates must have completed clock hours in various content areas, subject to change. Information regarding license renewal can be obtained via the [PELSB website](#).

### Levels of Social Work Licensure

Like teachers, as social workers in Minnesota can be licensed at both the bachelor's and master's level to work as school social workers. Social work licenses--issued by the Minnesota

Board of Social Work and required for school social work licenses--is complicated by its four levels of licensure. Licensure levels dictate what services as social workers may provide.

### ***Licensed Social Worker (LSW)***

To become a Licensed Social Worker (LSW), a baccalaureate degree in social work from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited program must be earned and a licensing exam must be passed.

LSWs are educated to help people within the context of their social environments. This means that social workers do not simply focus on students who struggle, but also consider environmental causes (home situation, peer interactions, neighborhood conditions, classroom climate, etc.) that may contribute to students' behavior. This holistic approach also considers the effect students have on others (like other students, teachers, and parents).

LSWs may provide services to help a group of students with difficulties in peer interactions, helping teachers re-structure their classes to better meet students' need or helping parents create a discipline program or develop a bedtime routine so as to improve a students' ability to concentrate in school. Because of their emphasis on the environment, LSW social workers might also work with local low-income housing 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 help schools deal with crisis situations as child abuse or help families find resources to prevent being evicted or to apply for medical assistance.

LSWs must be supervised by social worker(s) for the first two years of their practice, at a minimum of 4000 hours of practice after becoming licensed. Supervisor may be social workers with possess 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)***

To become a Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW), an MSW degree from a CSWE accredited social work program must be earned and a licensure examination must be passed. Both MSW education and LGSW exams cover theoretical constructs, research, and social work practice and policy in greater depth. LGSWs have completed two internships as well as advanced social work coursework. LGSWs must be supervised for two years of full-time practice (or its part-time equivalent) by someone with who possesses independent license (either a LISW or a LICSW who has completed supervision requirements as identified by the Board of Social Work). Depending on personal goals and the needs of the position, LGSWs 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 LISWs or a LICSWs. If the social worker is practicing clinical social work, they can practice activities that the LSW performs. In addition to this, clinical LGSWs can diagnose and treat psychosocial problems, disabilities, addictions, emotional impairments and behavior disorders (Minnesota Statute 148D.010, subd 6, 2014). If LGSWs perform diagnosis and treatment of emotional or behavior problems in students, or billing medical assistance for services, they 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, LGSW social workers must take a licensing examination to advance to either the LISW or LICSW level.

### ***Licensed Independent Social Workers (LISW)***

Licensed Independent Social Workers (LISWs) can provide short-term counseling for 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 LICSW social workers who have 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 (LICSWs) may provide all of the services that LISW social workers 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). LICSWs may practice independently as there is no mandate for supervision at this level of licensure, 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 social workers with more experience to one with less experience.

Social work licensure requires that all social workers receive a total of 100 hours of supervision during their first 4000 hours of practice (approximately two years full-time practice) after they become licensed (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D). This translates into approximately 4 hours of supervision per month for social workers who work full time. While after 4000 hours for BSW-level social workers and 4000-8000 hours for MSW-level social workers supervision is no longer mandated, social workers should still maintain supervision or consultation “when appropriate or necessary for competent and ethical practice (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D.200, subd. 2).”

As social workers work toward their total of 100 hours of supervision during their first 4000 hours of practice, at least half (50 hours) of this must be provided through one-on-one supervision: a minimum of 25 hours should be in-person supervision, and no more than 25 hours of supervision should take place via eye-to-eye electronic media (while maintaining visual contact, excluding email). The remaining 50 hours must be provided through one-on-one supervision, or group supervision which is limited to 6 supervisees. Supervision may be in person, by telephone or via eye-to-eye electronic media while maintaining visual contact, excluding email.

The Minnesota Board of Social Work (BOSW) states that supervisors must both be licensed and complete BOSW's supervision requirements. Social workers who have earned their 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 MSW-level social workers who have completed two years of supervised practice and passed a licensure examination at either the licensed independent social worker (LISW) or a licensed independent social worker (LICSW) level. If MSW-level social workers is practice "clinical social work" [provide "differential diagnosis and treatment of psychosocial function, disability, or impairment, including addictions and emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders" (Minnesota Statute 148D010 subd 6)], they must be supervised by LICSW licensed social workers. In situations where social workers who possess the appropriate level of licensure are unavailable to provide supervision, social workers may request a variance from the board of social work that other mental health professionals provide supervision (Minnesota Statutes 2014, Chapter 148D).

In terms of its focus, social work supervision focuses upon the acquisition of 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).

Within larger school districts who 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* (4th ed.). 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),
3. or a comparable examination as determined by the Board in order to work in schools.
4. Licensure as a School Social Worker through the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.

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  
<https://mn.gov/boards/social-work/>

#### Minnesota Professional Licensing & Standards Board

1021 Bandana Blvd E. Suite 222  
St. Paul MN 55108  
Telephone: (651) 539-4200  
Fax: (651) 582-8872  
Walk-in hours: Mon. - Fri. thru Friday 8am-4pm  
Phone hours: Tues - Thurs 9am - 12pm  
[peslb@state.mn.us](mailto:peslb@state.mn.us)  
<https://mn.gov/pelsb/>

#### 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 the Council on Social Work Education at <https://www.cswe.org/>

#### 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>) as 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 and 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. 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.

NASW Practice Update on Confidentiality and School Social Work information 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 at <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 (HIPAA) 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 contain private data about individuals - the student who is the subject of the record. Generally, such records cannot be released without parental consent. However, records 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. See 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1).

Although school social work records are part of an individual student's educational record, 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 records.