

# Licensing Requirements for Oregon Social Workers

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Oregon State Board of Licensed Social Workers

Presentation at Portland State University –  
MSW Evening Program

- Martin Pittioni, Executive Director,  
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# Oregon Licensing Requirements for Social Workers

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## MODULE CONTENT:

- What has changed with respect to licensure requirements and why?
- What type of social work practice requires licensure?
- What type of titles are protected and require licensure?
- Not Included: Review of Basic Licensing Concepts – an explanation of what licensure is or means. Please refer to the presentation on that topic on the Board's web site at [www.oregon.gov/blsw](http://www.oregon.gov/blsw)

# Licensure Requirements prior to January 1, 2011

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- No licensure requirement for any social work practice - voluntary licensure only
  - Clinical-level social work licensure option only
  - No Bachelor level licensing option
  - Two licensure options / protected titles:
    - Clinical Social Work Associate (CSWA)
      - agency-work only, under supervision, MSW level, precursor to LCSW
    - Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
      - independent clinical license, allows private practice
      - may permit access to insurance panels

# Drivers for legislative action in 2009

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- Protect consumers – no licensure requirement for clinical work
- Lack of authority over conduct of revoked licensees
- Oregon one of the last states to not have some form of licensure requirement for social work
- No licensing options for field of non-clinical social work
- Advocacy issue – lift image of the profession by restricting who can use the title “social worker” to those who have a degree in social work and are licensed
- These drivers led to passage of SB 177 (2009) which reformed social work regulation in Oregon  
(main provisions went into effect January 1, 2011)

# Current Regulations - Part 1: Practice Act (Mandatory Licensure)

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- Practice Act = Mandatory Licensure for those who practice clinical social work only
- Practice Act regulates conduct
- Anyone who engages in the conduct of practicing clinical social work must be licensed as a CSWA or LCSW or qualify for one of the exemptions from the licensure requirement
- LCSW and CSWA remain protected titles (practice act does not remove title protection)
- Access to the title “social worker”

# Exemptions to the Mandatory Licensure Requirement / Practice Act

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- Does not apply to non-clinical social work
- Exempts Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors (CADCs) practicing within the scope of CADC
- Exempts QMHAs and QMHPs acting within the lawful scope of their employment or contract
- Exempts recognized members of the clergy who are acting in their ministerial capacity
- Exempts those who already hold a mental health licensure from a State of Oregon entity
- Graduate MSW students in clinical practicum

## Current Regulations - Part 2: New Voluntary Licensure Options (non-clinical)

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- New Voluntary options at Bachelor and Masters level for those not practicing clinical social work
- Title-Protected (LMSW and RBSW)
- Registered Baccalaureate Social Worker (RBSW)
- Licensed Master's Social Worker (LMSW)
- Available since January 1, 2011
- Applications down-loadable on-line
- Both options allow use of title “social worker”
- RBSW/LMSW scope of practice not defined due to legislative history; no clinical practice permitted

# Part 2A – RBSW Program Specifics

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- Registered Baccalaureate Social Worker Certificate
- “RBSW” is a protected title
- Allows use of protected title “social worker”
- Requirements:
  - BSW (CSWE accredited or in CSWE candidacy)
  - Passage of national (ASWB) Bachelor-level exam  
(NOTE: requirement waived until December 31, 2012)
  - criminal background check, compliance with Board rules
  - 2-year certification with 20-hour CE requirement
    - Half of the CE requirement can be met by employer in-service credit

# Part 2B – LMSW Program Specifics

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- Licensed Master’s Social Worker (LMSW)
- Voluntary, title-protected, non-clinical license
- Allows use of protected title “social worker”
- LMSW Program Requirements
  - No practice experience or supervision required
  - MSW from a CSWE-accredited school
  - Passage of national (ASWB) Masters-level (non-clinical) exam (requirement waived until December 31, 2012)
  - criminal background check
  - Compliance with Board ethics code
  - 2-year certification with 30hour CE requirement

# Part 3 – Clinical CSWA Program Specifics

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- Clinical Social Work Associate (CSWA) Certification
- Agency based, clinical practice under supervision
- Completion = eligibility for LCSW licensure
- Program completion = 3500 work hours, 2000 direct client hours, 100 hours supervision (up to 50 can be group)
- Allows use of the title “social worker”
- CSWA Program Entry Requirements
  - MSW from a CSWE-accredited school
  - criminal background check
  - Compliance with Board ethics code
  - Passage of Oregon Laws and Rules Examination
  - Supervision plan with Board-approved LCSW supervisor

# Part 4 – Fees for Licensing Options (CSWA, LCSW, LMSW and RBSW)

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- Application Fees: LMSW/RBSW \$50 / others \$150
- Initial license:
  - RBSW - \$50 ( 2 years) / LMSW - \$100 (2 years)
  - CSWA - \$60 ( 1 year) / LCSW - \$130 ( 1 year)
- Existing fee for criminal background check applies (\$50)
- Renewal of Licensure / Certification:
  - RBSW - \$100 / 2 year certification
  - LMSW - \$200 / 2 year license
  - CSWA - \$60 / yearly renewal
  - LCSW - \$130/ yearly renewal

# Current Regulations – Part 5

## “Social Worker” Title Protection

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- Anyone using the title “social worker” in Oregon must hold one of the four licenses offered by the Board: RBSW, LMSW, CSWA, LCSW
- Does not prohibit the practice of non-clinical social work by those that are not licensed
- Use of the educational titles MSW or BSW by those that are not licensed through the Board is not prohibited
- No social worker “registry” – there is no requirement for all who practice social work to register with the Board
- TSPC-licensed school social workers are allowed use of the title “school social worker” (no other variation) without licensure through the Board of Licensed Social Workers

I am a graduating student in a BSW/MSW program / or have earned a social work degree and now plan to become licensed – what is the impact on me?

- Do not use protected titles (“social worker” / RBSW / CSWA / LMSW / LCSW) until you have license/certification in hand
- If you plan on becoming licensed non-clinically (RBSW and LMSW), additional exam requirements (national exam) apply after December 2012
- If you plan on engaging in clinical social work, you must become certificated first as a CSWA before engaging in clinical work, unless an exemption applies to your specific situation
- If you want to call yourself a “social worker” – you must become licensed (CSWA/LCSW/RBSW/LMSW); there is no exemption other than for TSPC-licensed “school social workers”
- Conclusion – Impact depends on two tests for each individual:
  - 1) Conduct: is my work clinical-level social work?
  - 2) Title: Am I / Will I use the title “social worker” ?

# I am an employer / manager of those who practice social work – how does this impact me?

- Jurisdiction:
  - Board does not have direct jurisdiction over employers
  - Board licensure is at individual level (not facilities-level)
  - Employer is free to set expectations higher than law requires
- Employer interest originates in desire to:
  - Comply with laws that apply to individual employees
  - Assure clients through accountability of licensed personnel
  - Use licensure preference or requirement as qualification tool
  - Conform HR practice including position descriptions to laws protecting titles and criteria for mandatory licensure
- Employers must apply same two tests of conduct and title:
  - Is the employee/position performing clinical-level social work?
  - Is the employee/position using the title “social worker”?
  - Employer should apply test at the position level, not unit level

# What else is new?

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- Legislative Concept for 2013 with scope of practice definition for RBSWs and LMSWs, and updated clinical social work definition
- Constant updates about this and the Board and social work regulations at [www.oregon.gov/blsw](http://www.oregon.gov/blsw)
- Applications - all application materials and payments now go directly to Board Office
- Applications downloadable from web site
  - On-line application option under development

# Questions / Application of Information to Needs of Audience

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- THANK YOU FOR YOUR QUESTIONS

For any questions not answered today:

- For statutes and rules questions, please contact Martin Pittioni at 503-373-1163
- For licensing and application questions, please contact Pam Johansen at 503-373-1159
- General Board Office number: 503-378-5735