

Pathway to Licensure

Mentoring Program

Frequently Asked Questions About the Licensure Process

What is required to become licensed in Virginia?

An overview of the process can be found in the Board of Social Work's Licensure Process Handbook at http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/social/Licensure_Process.pdf

In general, you will earn 3,000 post-MSW "clinical social work" hours at a Board-approved job, of which you must have at least 1,380 face-to-face client hours. You will accrue 100 hours of supervision under a Board-approved Clinical Supervisor (50% of these hours can be earned in group supervision).

How long will it take?

You may complete your hours in not less than 2 years and not more than 4 years.

How do I start the licensure process?

Go to https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/social/Online_Application_Handbook.pdf to find the guidance you will need to start the application process. It's a somewhat complex process, and you'll want to read the requirements carefully and submit exactly what the Board needs to approve your educational and field experiences, plus your Clinical Supervisor and employment, in a timely manner.

How do I know if I have the appropriate educational experience to pursue licensure?

The Board requires a clinical course of study from an MSW program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. "Clinical course of study" is defined in Virginia code as

graduate course work that includes specialized advanced courses in human behavior and the social environment; social justice and policy; psychopathology and diversity issues; research; clinical practice with individuals, families, and groups; and a clinical practicum that focuses on diagnostic, prevention, and treatment services.

If you did not take all of these courses, you will likely have to complete the missing ones before applying for licensure. Your clinical field placement must total at least 600 hours of work.

How do I find the right job?

Look for job listings that mention "license eligible" or "clinical social work," but not "licensed clinical social work." In most markets, there are hospitals, dialysis clinics, inpatient psychiatric facilities (for adults and children), and community mental health agencies that hire Social Work Supervisees. Local Community Services Boards (CSBs) also hire Supervisees in Clinician I positions. These may be case management or emergency services positions that will gradually afford clinical opportunities. Another option is Medicaid-funded agencies that provide therapeutic day treatment, intensive in-home services, or Mental Health Skill Building services. These jobs are recently going to QMHPs, who don't need to have an MSW, so make sure you're clear about your needs for experience and supervision.

Private practices can hire Social Work Supervisees to perform psychotherapy with Medicaid and Medicare clients, as long as the proper licensed professionals are available to bill for their services. This is a wonderful opportunity, but you'll want to comply with Medicare and Medicaid regulations (your Supervisor and Mentor can provide further guidance). Supervisees may perform clinical services for self-pay or sliding scale clients, but their services may not be billed to private insurance companies.

The NASW has a job listing for members that can be found at joblink.socialworkers.org.

Online job listings/applications can feel frustrating, so you might want to do what social workers do best – get out and network to meet folks within the field. With any job you are considering, keep in mind that you must provide a job description to the Board for approval. Be sure you will be getting regular, face-to-face, clinical time with clients.

How do I find a Clinical Supervisor?

There are several ways to go about this:

- *Ask your friends and colleagues*
- *Join the VSCSW and attend local programming to meet LCSWs and other MSWs*
- *Join other local networking groups*
- *Join the statewide Therapists R Us Facebook group*
- *Access the NASW list of supervisors available in the “Store” link at naswva.org.*

Some agencies offer clinical supervision onsite at no cost. However, this is becoming more rare, and many licensees now work with a Supervisor outside of their workplaces and pay them out of pocket.

Guidelines about Clinical Supervisors can be found here:
www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/social/SupervisorFAQs.pdf

How do I transfer an out-of-state license?

To apply for Virginia licensure “by endorsement,” you must hold an active license in another state and have an active practice there. You will submit documentation of your clinical supervision, current practice, licensure history and verification, and your score on the ASWB clinical exam. If you have not already passed the exam, the Virginia Board of Social Work may approve you to take it here.

Virginia has some of the strictest licensure regulations in the country, and you might need to be prepared to comply with requirements you did not have to meet elsewhere. For more information, see the Licensure Process Handbook at http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/social/Licensure_Process.pdf

Please contact a mentor in your region for further assistance:

Blue Ridge (C'ville, Harrisonburg, Culpeper)

Joe Lynch, LCSW, (540) 421-4345
lynchj@newmanavenue.com

Eastern (Williamsburg, Hampton Roads, E. Shore)

Paula Crooks, MSW, (757) 287-5030
paulacrooks@cox.net

Richmond

Henry Morris, LCSW, (804) 282-8282
hemorris@verizon.net

Roanoke

Susan Witt, LCSW (540) 537-9833
shwitt@cox.net

The Virginia Society for Clinical Social Work (VSCSW) promotes the highest standards of professional education and clinical social work practice throughout Virginia.

More info at vscsw.org