ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 850-X-2 DEFINITIONS

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850-X-2-.01 Definitions Of Terms.

(1) To the extent not defined within these rules and regulations, Code of Ala. 1975, §34-30-1 (1991) also provides for definitions of the following terms: Board; Social Work; Social Work Practice; Social Work Specialty; Social Work Method; Full-Time Social Work; Part-Time Social Work.

(2) **Social Work Practice.** The Board defines social work practice as including both direct and indirect practice. Direct practice includes the delivery of services to individuals, families, groups, and communities. Indirect practice includes conducting research into problems of human behavior and conflict, and applying principles and techniques of consultation, social planning, administration, and supervision. The teaching of social work by an individual employed in social work education and presenting him/herself to the public as a social worker is considered social work practice.

(3) **Social Work Method.** Areas of practice methods include the following:

(a) **Social Casework.** A method of helping people based on knowledge, understanding, and the use of techniques skillfully applied to helping individuals solve and manage problems. It is individualized and although scientific, i.e., derives its understanding from the disciplines of science, also includes artistic effort. It helps individuals with personal as well as external environmental difficulties. It is a matter of helping through a relationship that taps personal and other resources for coping with problems. Interviewing is a major tool of social casework.

(b) **Clinical Social Work Practice.**

1. Clinical social work shares with all social work practice the goal of enhancement and maintenance of psychosocial functioning of individuals, families, and small groups. Clinical social work practice is the professional application of social work theory and methods to the treatment and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, disability, or impairment, including emotional and mental disorders. It is based on knowledge of one or more theories of human development within a psychosocial context. The perspective of person-in-situation is central to clinical social work practice. Clinical social work includes interventions directed to interpersonal interactions, intrapsychic dynamics, and life-support and management issues.

2. Clinical social work is a specialized area of social work practice that includes assessment, diagnosis, treatment, client centered advocacy, evaluation and treatment of behavioral, mental, developmental or emotional disorders; including psychotherapy and counseling; client-centered advocacy; and evaluation. It includes direct client intervention, client centered supervision and client centered consultation. It involves the scientific, artful, ethical application of social work theories and methods of assessment, opinions, diagnosis, prevention and treatment. Assessment of interpersonal relationships, mental health status, family dynamics, environmental stresses and supports, social systems and the impact of physical, emotional and mental illness and disability on functioning are the emphasis of clinical social work practice.

3. Clinical social workers cannot practice outside their scope of practice. The scope of practice does not include the diagnosis, treatment, or provision of advice to a client for problems or complaints relating to conditions outside the boundaries of the practice of social work. For the purposes of this section, the terms diagnose and treatment, whether considered in isolation or in conjunction with the rules of the board, may not be construed to permit the performance of any act which a licensed clinical social worker is not educated or trained to perform including, but not limited to, any of the following: (1) Administering and interpreting psychological tests for intellectual, neuropsychological, personality, or projective instruments. (2) Admitting any individual to a hospital for treatment of any condition that is outside the boundaries of the practice of social work, as provided in subsection (b). Treating any individual in a hospital setting without medical supervision. (4) Prescribing medicinal drugs. (5) Authorizing clinical laboratory procedures or radiological procedures. (6) Using electroconvulsive

therapy. Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a requirement that any health benefit plan, group insurance plan, policy, or contract for health care services that covers hospital, medical, or surgical expenses, health maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, medical service organizations, physician-hospital organizations, or any other individual, firm, corporation, joint venture, or other similar business entity that pays for, purchases, or furnishes group health care services to patients, insureds, or beneficiaries in this state, including entities created pursuant to Article 6, commencing with Section 10A-20-6.01 of Chapter 20, Title 10A, Code of Ala. 1975, provide coverage or reimbursement for the services described or authorized in this section."

4. Clinical social work also includes crisis intervention, case management and client centered advocacy. Treatment methods are designed to provide the client and opportunity to express himself or herself, and foster an atmosphere of candid self observation, expectations of change and amenability to the social worker's efforts to facilitate such change.

5. The primary focus of the clinical social worker is on the needs, interests and welfare of the client. The goal of clinical social work practice is to relieve a client's psychosocial distress; to help the client to modify barriers that are preventing the client from realizing his or her human potential or enjoying rewarding interpersonal relationships; and to improve the overall functioning of the client. The basic value postulates of social work practice are essential to the process.

(c) **Community Organization.** A conscious process of social interaction and method of social work concerned with bringing about and maintaining adjustment between needs and resources in a community or other areas; helping people to deal more effectively with their problems and objectives by helping them develop, strengthen and maintain qualities of participation, self-direction and cooperation, and bringing about changes in community and group relationships and in the distribution of decision-making power. The community is the primary client in community organizations. The community may be an organization, neighborhood, city, county, state or national entity.

(4) **Psychosocial Assessment.** The determination of psychosocial functioning involves a comprehensive process, assessment and evaluation conducted by the social worker in order to learn about the client. It includes four levels of analysis: the individual; the interpersonal system; the family unit and the family's interchange with its social network; and other environmental or ecological factors. Interviewing is the major tool of psychosocial

assessment. Psychosocial assessment does not include making diagnoses, nor interpreting of psychological tests.

(5) **Psychotherapy.** A specialized, formal interaction between a social worker and a client (individual, couple, family or group) in which a therapeutic relationship is established to help resolve symptoms of mental disorder, psychosocial stress, relationship problems and difficulties in coping in the social environment.

(6) **Counseling.** Counseling is to render evaluation and therapy that includes, but is not limited to, providing individual counseling, family counseling, martial counseling, group therapy, group counseling, play therapy, rehabilitation counseling, art therapy, human growth and development counseling, couples counseling, chemical abuse or dependency counseling, career counseling, and vocational disability counseling utilizing specific methods, techniques, or modalities.

(7) **Telehealth.** Telehealth is a mode of providing social work services through interactive audio, video or electronic communication occurring between a licensed social worker and the client, including any electronic communication for evaluation, assessment, treatment, and management of confidential information and case records in a secure platform.

(8) Independent Practice. The practice of social work outside of an organized setting, such as a social, medical, or governmental agency, in which the social worker assumes responsibility and accountability for services provided.

(9) Private Practice. The practice of Social Work by a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker who assumes responsibility and accountability for the nature and quality of the services provided to the Client in exchange for direct payment or third-party reimbursement.

(10) LBSW. Licensed Bachelor Social Work.

(11) LMSW. Licensed Master Social Work.

(12) LICSW. Licensed Independent Clinical Social Work.

(13) Practice of Clinical Social Work. Subject to the limitations set forth in Section 34-30-22(c), the practice of Clinical Social Work is a specialty within the practice of Master’s Social Work and requires the application of social work theory, knowledge, methods, ethics, and the professional use of self to restore or enhance social, psychosocial, or biopsychosocial functioning of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations and communities. The practice of Clinical Social Work requires the application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills in the areas of assessment, and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders, conditions and

addictions. Treatment methods include the provision of individual, marital, couple, family and group Counseling and Psychotherapy. The practice of Clinical Social Work may include Private Practice and the provision of Clinical Supervision. The practice of clinical social work is restricted to either a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, or a Licensed Master Social Worker under clinical supervision in employment or under a clinical supervision plan.

(14) Practice of Non-Clinical Social Work. The practice of non-clinical social work incorporates non-clinical work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and social systems which may involve locating resources, negotiating and advocating on behalf of clients or client groups, administering programs and agencies, community organizing, teaching, researching, providing employment or professional development non-clinical supervision, developing and analyzing policy, fund-raising, and other non-clinical activities.

(15) Supervision for Licensure. The professional relationship between a supervisee and an Approved Supervisor who provides oversight, direction, and evaluation over the services provided by the supervisee and promotes continued development of the supervisee's knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide social work services in an ethical and competent manner.

(a) Clinical Supervision. The interactional professional relationship between an Approved Clinical Supervisor and a licensed master social worker that provides evaluation and direction over the supervisee's practice of clinical social work and promotes continued development of the social worker's knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage in the practice of clinical social work in an ethical and competent manner.

(b) Non-Clinical Supervision. The interactional professional relationship between an Approved Supervisor and a licensed master social worker or licensed bachelor social worker that provides evaluation and direction over the supervisee's practice of non-clinical social work and promotes continued development of the social worker's knowledge, skills and abilities to engage in the practice of non-clinical social work in an ethical competent manner.

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850-X-2-.02 Classification Of Social Workers.

The Board is required by statute to promulgate rules and regulations which set forth professional standards for the four classes of social worker. Alabama law recognizes four classes of Social Workers: Licensed Bachelor Social Worker; Licensed Master Social Worker; Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker; Private Independent Practice.

(1) Licensed Bachelor Social Worker (LBSW) is the basic licensing level. The LBSW must have a baccalaureate degree in social work from an accredited college or university whose social work program is approved or accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The candidate for the LBSW licensure must pass an exam as prescribed by the Board, then the LBSW is prepared to assume the beginning level professional role in public and private social service agencies. The Board requires that the LBSW work under the continuing supervision of a licensed graduate social worker or a licensed certified social worker for two (2) years or more, without further supervision as long as the LBSW remains in the same field of social work practice, job responsibilities are similar, and holds a current license. Licensed Bachelor Social Workers are prepared through beginning professional knowledge in human behavior in the social environment, generalist social work practice, knowledge of the history of social policy, knowledge of how to utilize social research finding in their practice and having had supervised field practicum experience. The LBSW provides generalist services in the role of social broker, enabler, counselor, case manager, educator, client advocate and mediator. Licensed Bachelor Social Workers may work with individuals, families, communities, groups and organizations. Licensed Bachelor Social Workers may conduct psychosocial assessments and may take social histories and/or conduct home studies. The LBSW utilizes the basic problem-solving process of gathering information, assessing that information at a beginning professional level, developing a plan of care, then assuming the roles enumerated above, implements the plan and conducts follow-up. An LBSW may not prescribe medication, nor make diagnoses, nor interpret psychological tests. An LBSW may take verbal orders from physicians only pertaining to social work practice.

(2) Licensed Master Social Worker Non-Clinical and Clinical (LMSW) - The LMSW must have a master of social work or a doctor of social work degree from a college or university approved or accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The candidate for licensure at the LMSW level must pass an exam as prescribed by the Board. An LMSW must keep a current license. The LMSW must make a designation of non-

clinical or clinical upon receiving their license. The Board requires that the LMSW Non-Clinical work under the continuing supervision of a Board approved supervisor to include: licensed master social worker or a licensed independent clinical social worker for two (2) years obtaining a minimum 96 hours of supervision. The Board requires that the LMSW Clinical work under the continuing supervision of a Board approved supervisor to include: licensed independent clinical social worker for two (2) years obtaining a minimum 96 hours of supervision. An LMSW provides a wide range of services. The LMSW has preparation as a generalist social worker, knowledge of the history of social policy, knowledge of how to utilize social research finding in their practice and having had supervised field practicum experience with additional specialization in either direct or indirect services such as work in a field of practice or with a specific population. The LMSW may evaluate and assess difficulties in psychosocial functioning, develop a plan to alleviate those difficulties and either carry out the plan or refer clients to other qualified resources for assistance. An LMSW may provide preventive and treatment services pertaining to individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations. The LMSW should be able to engage the client system, develop a relationship and employ a series of interventions that modify or eliminate targeted behaviors and can promote positive growth and development. The LMSW can explain and interpret the results of social evaluations in the problem-solving process. A LMSW Non-Clinical with three years post licensure experience who is a board approved supervisor may supervise a LBSW and a LMSW Non-Clinical toward their independent licensure status. A LMSW Clinical with three years post licensure experience who is a board approved supervisor may supervise a LBSW toward their independent licensure status. The LMSW Non-Clinical is able to practice in social casework, community organization, social work research, and social work administration. The LMSW Clinical may practice in all the aforementioned areas to include clinical. An LMSW may not prescribe medication An LMSW may take verbal orders from physicians only pertaining to social work practice.

(3) Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) - The LICSW must have a master of social work or a doctor of social work degree from a college or university approved or accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and hold a current LMSW license. The LICSW must have received a minimum of 96 hours or more of postgraduate continuing clinical supervision provided by a board approved supervisors LICSW and not less than 3,000 work hours prior to application for the LICSW exam. This may be pursued concurrently. The LICSW candidate must pass an exam as prescribed by the Board. The LICSW should be able to exercise independent judgment. The LICSW should be able to demonstrate skill and interventions directlyrelated to individuals, families, groups, communities,

or organizations. In at least one of these client groups, the LICSW shall demonstrate in-depth knowledge and skills. The LICSW should be able to employ practice theory and research findings in all aspects of their practice. The LICSW may supervise Licensed Bachelor Social Workers and Licensed Master Social Workers toward their independent licensure status. An LICSW may not prescribe medication. An LICSW may take verbal orders from physicians only pertaining to social work practice. An LICSW may engage in the private practice of social work in all areas except for social case work.

(4) Private Independent Practice (PIP) - Private practice of social work means that portion of social work practice in which a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker is engaged in the private practice of social work services which includes practicing as an independent contractor in social casework.

(a) The applicant for certification for private independent practice in the area of social casework must present verifiable information regarding the appropriate degree, experience as defined in this section and appropriate supervision. The LICSW applying for PIP certification in the area of social casework only must have:

1. a current LICSW license;

2. three (3) years full-time or five (5) years part-time postgraduate experience and legally practicing in the specified social work method of social casework. For purposes of this section, the term "postgraduate" refers to that portion of experience acquired after having received one's master or doctoral degree in social work; or

3. one (1) year full-time or two (2) years part-time postgraduate experience in the specified social work method of social casework after receiving the LICSW.

(b) The applicant must present all information in relation to that defined practice method. An applicant may submit information relating to the practice method and may be certified, at the outset, in that practice method.

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850-X-2-.03 Supervision.

(1) "Supervision" for this and all other sections wherein it is addressed means guidance in the professional application of social work practice as defined by law. Supervision is seen as a relationship between a supervisor and supervisee designed to promote responsibility, competency, and accountability, and which teaches the skills and techniques associated with social work practice.

(a) Individual supervision is defined as one supervisee meeting "face-to-face" with one supervisor.

(b) Group supervision is defined as a maximum of six supervisees with similar responsibilities meeting "face-to-face" with one supervisor.

(2) Supervision can occur within an agency, institution, or group practice setting.

(3) Supervision for the purpose of these rules is not necessarily synonymous with the relationship of employer/employee. It is considered to be the responsibility of the licensee to negotiate a supervisory relationship, if such a relationship is not available within the employing agency.
Author: Alabama Board of Social Work Examiners
Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §34-30-57(6) (1991).
History: Repealed and Replaced: Filed October 31, 1997; Operative December 5, 1997; effective January 1, 1998 (See Rule 850-X-1-.19).

850-X-2-.04 Telehealth.

(1) An individual who provides social work via telehealth to a client located in Alabama shall have an active license in the State of Alabama and be in good standing with the Board and shall comply with the standards of professional conduct and ethics, section 850-X-9-.01 of the administrative code.

(2) Upon initiation of telehealth services, a licensee shall

(a) Obtain informed consent from the client. The consent shall be documented.

(b) Assess whether the client is appropriate for telehealth.

(c) Utilize best practices for telehealth to ensure both client confidentiality and the security of the communication.

(3) The client must be located within the borders of the State of Alabama.

(4) The licensee shall ensure that the electronic communication is secure to maintain confidentiality of the client's health information as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

(5) A licensee who uses telehealth to provide services shall make reasonable effort to become and remain knowledgeable about the advantages and drawbacks of professional online relationships.
Author: Alabama Board of Social Work Examiners
Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §34-30-57(6) (1991).
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