

**ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE**

**CHAPTER 850-X-2
DEFINITIONS**

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, marital 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.

Author: Alabama Board of Social Work Examiners

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §34-30-1; §34-30-57(6).

History: Repealed and Replaced: Filed October 31, 1997;

Operative December 5, 1997; effective January 1, 1998 (See Rule 850-X-1-.19).

Amended: Filed November 6, 2007; effective December 11, 2007. **Amended:** Published July 31, 2023; effective September 14, 2023.