



## ***Clinical Social Work Association***

The National Voice of Clinical Social Work

Dear Affiliated Societies,

### **CSWA – Questions and Answers about the Compact**

February 13, 2023

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The information about the Compact development has led to a number of questions which I will try to answer here. However, there are some basic misunderstandings about the way that CSWA functions which need to be clarified first.

The Clinical Social Work Association is an independent membership organization; to have access to staff and the materials that CSWA has created, LCSWs need to join CSWA. State Societies are affiliated with CSWA and receive some materials for all their members, even those who are not CSWA members. This causes some confusion because being a member of a state Society does not mean you are a member of CSWA. You can join CSWA if you are a member of a State Society for a reduced rate at [www.clinicalsocialworkassociation.org](http://www.clinicalsocialworkassociation.org). You can also join CSWA as an individual member if you are not a member of a State Society. This underlying structure is one that has been hard to grasp at

times. I hope this clears it up. Now on to the questions that have been raised by the Compact information.

### ***Compact Questions and Answers***

CSWA members who reached out to me had mixed emotions about the outcome of the Compact meetings this week. In general, the outcomes were consistent with the goals that CSWA has explained to members for the past year and a half during the development of the Compact. Please review the information on the CSWA website for more background on how CSWA has worked to implement the Compact during this time.

One important piece of information is that NO STATE OR JURISDICTION belongs to the Compact yet. We are in about step three of a process that has many more to go and will require up to two years to accomplish. We will need seven individual states/jurisdictions to sign on before we can begin the process of establishing a Commission to oversee the Compact. Thus, we will need everyone's help to get the Compact passed in as many states as possible and eventually in each state/jurisdiction. Once the final language of the Compact bill is available on February 27, CSWA will be explain how to advocate for the Compact in your state/jurisdiction.

In no particular order, here are the questions that have come in about the Compact and answers to them:

1. **How would we know if our state legislature is interested in pursuing the compact? Do you reach out to legislators or should we? I'm in Florida.** *When the final draft of the Compact bill comes out on February 27, I will send it to all CSWA members with instructions on how to advocate to your legislators to create a bill and pass it in your state.*

2. **Any idea how much the fee for social workers will be?** *The fees will be determined by the Commission.*
3. **My question is around the licensed home state issue as I was initially licensed in Delaware in 2018, but in 2021 moved to Georgia. Would my move impact my ability to be a part of the compact? I still have an office in Delaware, would that count?** *You will only be able to have one home state for purposes of the Compact; your home state must be the state in which you are licensed AND the state in which you reside.*
4. **I have been able to obtain an LCSW licensing in Georgia and Louisiana but would like the opportunity to work in other states as a client moves but would like to maintain the relationship.** *Your ability to do so will depend on which states join the Compact.*
5. **Do you know which states are planning on joining? Can you get the multistate approval if your state is not joining?** *You can only join the Compact if your home state joins.*
6. **Do PhD's have to sit for an exam?** *That depends on your state laws. No one who became licensed without taking the exam will have to take it to join the Compact, if the LCSW has no actionable complaints.*
7. **I received my MSW in 1984. When ASWB came up with its exam, I was grandfathered in. After 39 years of clinical practice, am I understanding the above memo to say that in order to join the Compact, I would now have to take the ASWB exam?** *The language of the bill says that those who were grandfathered into licensure and have no actionable complaints do not have to take the ASWB exam now.*
8. **While it's hard to say as we haven't seen final language yet and are unsure whether Illinois will even be eligible to join the Compact, we join the national NASW office in not**

**supporting the Compact so long as it continues to codify the ASWB exam.** *There was much discussion about whether states that do not have licensure and/or an exam requirement at the BSW or new MSW levels will be able to join the Compact. The final decision was that it will be optional for each state to offer the ASWB exam at these levels for those who wish to join the Compact, even if the state does not require the exams and/or licensure at these levels.*

9. **It sounds like having already completed the clinical licensing exam for your state of residence is not going to be enough to qualify for participation in the Compact, and that those of us who are already clinically licensed in our state will need to take the ASWB exam.** *See #7. You will not have to take the exam if you were licensed without taking it.*
10. **I am an acquaintance of my State Senator. What do I need to do to move this compact forward to her? I just sent her a message on Facebook. Do you have a list of the states that are currently included in the Compact? Do you have information about Michigan specifically?** *No states are currently in the Compact as the language for state legislators is not available yet. All these questions will be answered when the final language comes out on February 27, along with guidance on how to make legislators aware of the Compact.*
11. **I am glad about the progress with the Compact but very disappointed about the requirement of the ASWB exam. I passed the NY CSW exam in 1982. I was later grandfathered into the licensure when it became available in 1991 in NJ. I have been actively practicing since with advanced qualifications.** *There has been a lot of confusion about this issue. See #7 and #10.*

12. **What to do about differing standards of care. A member state might forbid a clinician from discussing abortion or a member state might require a clinician to provide conversion therapy to queer folks. The conveners simply ignored the concerns and I haven't heard a thing about that since. I hope this has been worked out—does anyone have new information on this topic?** *The language of the Compact deliberately says nothing about state laws and regulations or scopes of practice. These are left to the states, though they may be problematic.*
13. **I have been following all of these but not closely. The most recent email talks about a possible requirement that people would have to have taken or take the national exam or demonstrate competency. I am wondering what ways one could demonstrate competency. See answers to #7, #10, and #11.**

### ***ASWB Report***

ASWB has put out a report on the ways that they intend to correct the disparities in the pass rates for the exams. See below for their update, or find it on their website at this link: <https://www.aswb.org/aswb-social-work-examination-update/>

*As we enter 2023, the Association of Social Work Boards wants to provide an update on our social work licensing examinations. Last year, we took the groundbreaking step of publishing the national, state, and school exam pass rate data to contribute to*

*and lead engagement in profession-wide conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion.*

*The data highlighted disparities in exam pass rates for different demographic groups. For Black test-takers and older test-takers, pass rates were particularly low. The discrepancies seen in the data are unacceptable. Recognizing that multiple factors impact a test-taker's performance and need to be addressed, we remain committed to doing our part and working with other members of the social work community to address the societal inequities that are reflected in the pass rate differences.*

*We are actively exploring the causes of these gaps with educators and practitioners and are already taking action to better prepare all social workers for licensed practice while continuing to support our members—social work regulators—with their public protection mandate.*

*We welcome the chance to share our latest efforts with the profession. The initiatives outlined below build on our previously communicated pledge to include a [more diverse set of voices in our exam development process](#) and recent efforts to [provide support and resources for educators and supervisors](#) as they prepare licensing candidates.*

*ASWB is taking seriously the feedback we have received from the social work community and is committed to continue listening. ASWB has engaged [HumRRO](#), an independent nonprofit research and consulting firm, to collaborate with community partners in facilitating inclusive and productive conversations about the social work licensing exams. This [series of community conversations](#) launched in January and will continue through May. The sessions are designed to gather information to be used as we develop exams for the future of social work. For anyone not able to participate in a session, we are also offering a self-paced*

*online survey to gather additional feedback and ensure the largest possible number of voices can be heard.*

*We are also exploring additional or alternative assessments, in line with our [strategic framework](#). As we re-envision competence assessment, we are looking at ways that candidates can demonstrate competence beyond the use of a multiple-choice examination format. We are carefully weighing the feasibility of numerous assessment options. Our primary concern is to ensure the validity and reliability of any assessment format we choose; however, we are also reviewing the impacts of changes on test-taker well-being and the potential for cost increases for test-takers. We anticipate that qualitative data gleaned from the community conversations will influence decision making.*

*In addition, we are [continuously reviewing our exam administrative policies and procedures](#). We are considering, for example, the possibility of offering secure, remote proctoring of examinations. As each possibility is explored and measured, the goal of keeping the exam fair and accessible for all will remain at the forefront.*

*Finally, we will [issue a call for proposals for third-party research](#) in March. ASWB will provide data sets and limited funding for approved proposals through its research arm, the American Foundation for Research and Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation. ASWB has committed to investing in this important work. Areas that would benefit from research include exploring how the professional standard of competency is defined and measured and gaining a more complete understanding of pipeline variables that account for differences in pass rates.*

*While these important research initiatives are underway, ASWB is continually evaluating other ways of supporting test-takers that are*

*appropriate to our work as stewards of a professional competency assessment program. In January, we began [piloting a free test mastery program](#) for test-takers who did not pass the social work licensing exams. We have engaged Fifth Theory, an independent firm with expertise in helping individuals understand and develop the test mastery mindset required to succeed on high-stakes exams. Rather than teaching specific exam content, Fifth Theory provides tools that strengthen general skills needed to pass important exams, like anxiety reduction and preparation strategies. ASWB will solicit feedback from users during this pilot phase of the initiative.*

*We look forward to more collective conversations and action in the future. Look for updates on [aswb.org](http://aswb.org).*