

## MICHIGAN SOCIAL WORK (SW) LICENSING GUIDE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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### 1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

#### OVERVIEW

This guide looks at things that you, as a foreign-educated social worker must do to become eligible for a social work license in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background on the larger social work profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to build your career.

#### REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN MICHIGAN

The practice of social work in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) on behalf of the Michigan Board of Social Work. You must hold a license in order to practice as a social worker (SW) in Michigan.

This guide assumes that you hold the equivalent of a U.S. degree in social work and that the Michigan license will be your first U.S. social work license. As a foreign-trained SW, you are required to have your social work education evaluated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) at [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org). If your education was not taught in English, you will also be required to pass the TOEFL/TSE or TOEFLibT examination.

You will become a Social Worker through licensure by examination. The ASWB exam is administered at [www.pearsonvue.com/aswb](http://www.pearsonvue.com/aswb).

## ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

### OVERVIEW

Internationally educated social workers need to meet several requirements to receive licensure by examination as a SW in Michigan.

#### I. EVALUATE YOUR EDUCATION FOR EQUIVALENCY AND ASWB EXAM ELIGIBILITY

LARA requires that you have your foreign social work degree evaluated using the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service (ISWDRES).

- Submit and pay for the ISWDRES screening form online
- Complete and pay for the ISWDRES application form
- Submit official supporting documents
- If your social work education was not taught in English, you must submit a TOEFL with your supporting documents to CSWE

If your degree is not deemed equivalent to a U.S. degree, you will be provided information about the courses or subject areas in which you are deficient. If the Educational Credentials Review results in your education being found “not equivalent”, you may apply to for a re-evaluation of your educational credentials after submitting additional information about your education. You must work directly with your selected credentialing agency in correcting any deficiencies in your report; the Michigan Board of Social Work has no role in the re-evaluation process.

#### II. SUBMIT YOUR LICENSURE APPLICATION, REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, AND PAY APPLICATION FEE

Your application sent to the Michigan Board of Social Work should include:

- Licensure application from LARA that can be downloaded from [www.michigan.gov/healthlicense](http://www.michigan.gov/healthlicense)

- Fee: paid by a check or money order drawn on a U.S. financial institution and made payable to the State of Michigan
- A course-by-course credential evaluation completed by CSWE showing your educational program was substantially equivalent to a U.S. social work degree
- An applicant whose SW education program was taught in a language other than English shall satisfactorily complete the TOEFL or the TOEFLib
- Fingerprint/Criminal Background Check report
- Once all of the above documentation is received, you will either be scheduled for the ASWB clinical or macro exam OR you will be issued a Social Service Technician license.

The licensure application and fee are valid for 2 years. If you have not met all licensing requirements within these 2 years you will need to submit a new application and pay the processing fee again.

## LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

### Eligibility for a Full Master's Social Worker License (LMSW) by Examination

- Graduate with a master's degree from an educational program that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).
- Complete at least 4,000 hours of post-degree supervised social work experience over at least a two-year period. If the experience is gained in Michigan, must hold a Limited LMSW License. Must complete experience in a setting that includes work in the area of designation that will part of the MSW license; either Clinical, Macro (administrative), or both.
- Arrange for submission of verification of licensure in any state where licensed, even if the license is no longer active.
- Pass either the Clinical Examination (Clinical designation) or the Advanced Generalist (Macro designation) Examination that is conducted by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB).
- Submit the application fee with the LMSW by Examination application that is found at [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417\\_27529\\_27554---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417_27529_27554---,00.html)

- A fingerprint report and criminal background check are required if not previously taken for a Michigan health care license. Fingerprints must be taken using the instructions and ID numbers that are sent to the applicant after the license application and fee are received.

## Eligibility for a Full Bachelor's Social Worker License (LBSW) by Examination

- Graduate with a bachelor's degree from a CSWE- accredited educational program.
- Complete at least 4,000 hours of post-degree supervised social work experience over at least a two-year period. If the experience is gained in Michigan, must hold a Limited LBSW License.
- Pass the Bachelors Examination that is conducted by ASWB.
- Submit the application fee with the BSW License by Examination application found at [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417\\_27529\\_27554---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417_27529_27554---,00.html)
- A fingerprint report and criminal background check are required if not previously taken for a Michigan health care license. Fingerprints must be taken using the instructions and ID numbers that are sent to the applicant after the license application and fee are received.

## Eligibility for a Social Service Technician (SST) Registration

- Must have completed an Associate's degree in Social Work from a CSWE- accredited program, or be currently employed in social or human services and have either completed at least 2,000 hours of supervised social work experience over at least a one-year period, or have completed at least two years of college in a regionally-accredited institution with at least four courses relevant to human service needs.

- Submit the application fee with the Social Service Technician registration application found at [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417\\_27529\\_27554---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417_27529_27554---,00.html)
- A fingerprint report and criminal background check are required if not previously taken for a Michigan health care license. Fingerprints must be taken using the instructions and ID numbers that are sent to the applicant after the license application and fee are received.

### Eligibility for a Limited SST Registration

- Must have completed at least two years of college in any field from a regionally-accredited institution.
- Must either be currently employed in human or social services or have been made an offer of employment in the practice of social work.
- Submit the application fee with the Social Service Technician registration application found at [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417\\_27529\\_27554---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-27417_27529_27554---,00.html)
- A fingerprint report and criminal background check are required. Fingerprints must be taken using the instructions and ID numbers that are sent to the applicant after the license application and fee are received.

### III. GET FINGERPRINTED VIA A MICHIGAN-APPROVED VENDOR FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

Directions for completing the fingerprint requirement are mailed to you from the Department upon receipt of your application.

## **2. TESTS**

To become a license SW in Michigan, you must take and pass the ASWB exam.

The Social Work ASWB exam consists of 170 multiple choice questions of which 150 are scored. You have a total of 4 hours to complete the exam. The passing score on this exam is 75 (test scores are reported on a scale from 93-106 correct of the 150 scored questions).

### **FAILING THE ASWB**

Candidates who fail the ASWB exam will be supplied with diagnostic information outlining their performance on the test. The Michigan Board does not limit the amount of times you may retake the ASWB exam, however you must wait 90 days before taking another exam. You will need to re-register and pay the full examination fee again.

### **PRACTICING FOR THE ASWB**

There are many different resources that can help you prepare for the content and the computer-based testing technology. There are a variety of test preparation resources available for low cost. ASWB offers a Guide to the Social Work Exams for a small fee for the e-book version. There is also an online practice test available which can be found <https://www.aswb.org/exam-candidates/exam-materials/>. Consider investing in test preparation as it may save you money by not having to pay to retake the test and by entering the job market faster.

## **3. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS**

### **LOWER-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES**

You may want to consider if taking a lower-level job in healthcare in the short-term can help you meet longer-term goals of licensing as a social worker.

Preparing for the Association of Social Work exam (ASWB) can take time. Working in healthcare in a different way and with fewer responsibilities may offer you some advantages, such as

- employers paying for tuition and fees associated with the ASWB and licensing
- more energy to focus on studying
- a chance to adapt to the U.S. healthcare system and workplace culture in a lower-pressure environment

You should be honest with your employer about your long-term plans, you may find that some employers offer benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

## HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you are bilingual and a strong communicator, you may want to research opportunities for work in hospitals as an interpreter. This type of role is not regulated in Michigan, so standards for employment as well as pay and benefits may be very different depending on the employer. You are more likely to have benefits such as tuition reimbursement if you find work as a direct employee of a healthcare facility, instead of working for a company that provides interpretation services to hospitals. You may want to begin your research by directly contacting human resource departments at hospitals.

## 4. BEYOND LICENSING

### MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Social Workers must renew their license every 3 years. Licenses expire on April 30th every three years. LARA sends a notice reminding you to renew your license, so be certain to keep your contact information up-to-date with their office. You are responsible for renewing your license even if you do not receive a notice from the Department. You must renew online. You will have sixty days after the expiration date in which you may continue to practice without a lapse in your license as long as you renew within that sixty day grace period. If you do not renew during that grace period, the expiration date of your license will revert to April 30. Be careful: if you continue to practice after your license has expired (lapsed), you could have disciplinary action taken against you. If your license does expire, you will be required to apply for relicensure to reactivate your license.

Every time you renew your license you must state that you have met the 45 hour Continuing Education requirement or CE. You are also required to complete training in identifying victims of human trafficking. You need to keep this information on file for 4 years in case you are audited. There are many opportunities to earn these hours, but special rules apply. You should check the LARA website for details, or consider joining a professional association that offers CE opportunities to members.

The requirements for continuing education for social workers are explained in the link below:

[SOCIAL WORK CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS](#)

## LICENSING MOBILITY (RECIPROCITY)

The state of Michigan does not have any shared agreement to honor the social work licenses of other states. It grants licensing to social workers by either examination (the process described in this topic) or endorsement (where a social worker licensed in another state must meet all Michigan requirements for licensing).

## 6. IMPORTANT LINKS

### LICENSING AND REGULATION:

- The main page for the licensing of any health profession is [www.michigan.gov/healthlicense](http://www.michigan.gov/healthlicense). The page that specifically concerns social work can be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600\\_72603\\_27529\\_27554---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600_72603_27529_27554---,00.html) and it includes information regarding the boards, applications and frequently asked questions.



- Contact information: Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing, PO Box 30670, Lansing MI 48909
- Telephone Number 517-335-0918; Fax: 517-373-1044 Email: [bplhelp@michigan.gov](mailto:bplhelp@michigan.gov)
- The law that regulates licensing for all health professions for can be read at <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-368-1978-15>.
- The administrative rules governing social work practice in Michigan can be located at: [http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/AdminCode.aspx?AdminCode=Department&Dpt=LR&Level\\_1=Bureau+of+Professional+Licensing](http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/AdminCode.aspx?AdminCode=Department&Dpt=LR&Level_1=Bureau+of+Professional+Licensing)

## CREDENTIAL REVIEW AGENCIES

- The CSWE's Council on Social Work Education- CSWE program evaluates the educational records of foreign-educated social workers for equivalency to a U.S. degree. Contact at [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org) or by phone at (703)683-8080 or by e-mail at [info@cswe.org](mailto:info@cswe.org)
- A list of the educational programs that are approved by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is available at [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)

## TESTING

- Information and the application for the ASWB exam [www.aswb.org](http://www.aswb.org)
- TOEFL examination information at [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)