



# MARYLAND Department of Health

## MARYLAND BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

4201 Patterson Avenue,  
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Phone Number: 410-764-4788

Toll Free: 1-877-526-2541

Website: <http://www.health.maryland.gov/bswe> Fax: 410-358-2469

**OPEN SESSION**  
**February 14, 2025**  
**10:30AM**  
**VIRTUAL**

**Meeting ID**  
**[meet.google.com/puh-bdxv-joe](https://meet.google.com/puh-bdxv-joe)**

**Phone Numbers**  
**(US)+1 402-839-8108**  
**PIN: 148 995 272#**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

**Susan Coppage, Board Chair**

*Are there any adjustments or additions to the agenda?*

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

January 10, 2025

**Leslie Iampieri, Secretary/Treasurer**

### **BOARD CHAIR REPORT**

- Welcome
- Overview of ASWB updates
  - 2024 Examination Committee
  - Licensing Exam Updates
  - Research Initiatives

**Susan Coppage, Board Chair**

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

- Staff Updates
- Testifying in Annapolis – Senate Finance Committee
  - Social Work Compact – January 28
  - SB 379 – February 4

**Karen Richards, Executive Director**

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

- Board bills - updates

**Lillian Reese, Legislative Liaison**

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Statutes and Regulations Committee
- Continuing Education Committee

**Kevin Meenan, Committee Member**

**Adrienne Ekas, Committee Chair**

### **QUESTIONS or COMMENTS**

*Agenda, February 14, 2025*

**ADJOURNMENT**

Attachments and links:

<https://www.aswb.org/exam/measuring-social-work-competence/yearbook/>

“ASWB Research Initiatives”

“ASWB Social Work Licensing Exam Updates”

## ASWB Research Initiatives

ASWB supports a comprehensive program for assessment and regulatory research to meet the needs of state and provincial social work regulatory authorities and our shared public protection missions.

### ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

#### > DETERMINANTS OF PASS/FAIL OF SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS

The research identifies individual, school, and community factors that affect candidates' exam pass/fail outcomes and analyze the data to unveil the effects of those factors and assist with contextualizing examination pass rate data publication with additional research and insights. Pass rates in context: An exam report series includes three reports:

- Demographic profile of exam-takers
- Determinants of exam outcomes from other professions
- Net effects of race/ethnicity on ASWB exam outcome

**Researcher:**

*Rutgers University School of Social Work*

*Joy Kim, Ph.D.*

*Michael Joo, Ph.D.*

#### > PASS/FAIL SUMMARY REPORTS

Summary reports published annually include aggregated exam pass rate data for all test-takers and for jurisdictions and schools of social work.

**Researcher:**

*Human Resources Research Organization*

*Jennifer Klafehn, Ph.D.*

*Jessie Harris*

#### > SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE CENSUS

The Social Work Census combines practice analysis with a workforce study to help ASWB and the social work profession understand the roles of social workers.

The 2024 Practice Analysis results will be presented in a report detailing the methodology, content outlines, and the exam blueprint for the 2026 licensing exams.

A two-part workforce study report is underway, to be released in early 2025.

The first part will analyze data from the US Census/BLS and state boards, comparing licensed vs. non-licensed social workers and providing rationales for the ASWB survey.

The second part will present detailed findings from the workforce survey, compare licensed social workers' characteristics with Census/BLS data, and set benchmarks for future studies.

**Researcher:**

*Human Resources Research Organization (practice analysis)*

*Joy Kim, Ph.D. (workforce study)*

➤ **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

This independent study gathered insights from social workers across the United States and Canada on their professional journeys and licensure exam experiences through a series of Community Conversations. Many findings from this qualitative research are being implemented by ASWB. Notably, ASWB is exploring a plan for the next iteration of the exams, set to launch in January 2026, to include the ability to retake only the content area(s) that a test-taker was unsuccessful on.

**Researcher:**  
*Human Resources Research Organization*  
*Jennifer Klafehn, Ph.D.*  
*Soner Dumani, Ph.D.*  
*Emily Borawski*

➤ **TEST MASTERY INCLUSION**

ASWB began providing support to unsuccessful test-takers through the Test Mastery Inclusion program in January 2023. The pilot program included a questionnaire, and customized materials designed to help test-takers achieve improved test preparation and readiness. Data collected offers important insights around success on the social work licensing exams. The success of the program led to ASWB offering it to all test-takers beginning in July 2024. ASWB is exploring a plan to conduct research that connects passing scores with completion of the TMI program to evaluate the effectiveness of the program for social work candidates.

**Researcher:**  
*FifthTheory*

**REGULATORY RESEARCH**

➤ **UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT LICENSING POLICIES HAVE ON SCALING-UP THE SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE AND MITIGATING HARM**

The project addresses two main questions: (1) What are the long-term impacts of licensure changes on the size of the social work workforce? (2) What potential impact will these policies have on mitigating public harm?

**Researcher:**  
*Brigham Young University*  
*Cole Hooley, Ph.D., LCSW,*  
*Katherine Marcal, Ph.D., MSW,*  
*Gabby Cunningham, Ph.D., MBA*

➤ **THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL WORK REGULATORY RULES ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

The project looks at the effects of social work regulatory rules on indicators of public safety through a focus on the regulation of clinical supervision. The study examines national guidelines and best practices for how state boards should regulate clinical supervision and describes the variation in state regulations.

**Researcher:**  
*Rutgers University School of Social Work*  
*Joy J. Kim, Ph.D., MSW*  
*Michael M. Joo, Ph.D., MSW*

➤ **IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE EQUITABLE PATHS TO SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE**

The study aims to address three research questions: (1) What factors impact disparity in pass rates for social work licensure? (2) What is the impact of disparity in licensure pass rate on the social work profession? (3) What are solutions to reduce disparity in pass rates for social work licensure?

**Researcher:**  
*Western Kentucky University*  
*Erin Warfel, DSW, MSS, MLSP,*  
*LCSW*  
*Whitney Harper, Ph.D., MSW*

**ASWB is committed to supporting test-takers while retaining the exam program's validity by making research-backed changes to the exam experience.**

## CONTINUED INNOVATIONS REDUCE BURDENS TO TEST-TAKERS

As part of continuous improvement efforts, ASWB is implementing changes to best support the testing experience and simplify processes on exam day. These changes incorporate feedback from test-takers while ensuring that the exams continue to be administered securely.

**Revised, modularized exam format** | New exams will launch in 2026 as ASWB develops the updated competence assessments.

- The new exam format will allow unsuccessful test-takers to retake only the content area(s) on which they did not earn a passing score. The modularization of the exams will reduce costs to test-takers, help them focus their studies, increase accuracy in the assessment of competence, and strengthen public protections.

**Accommodations and arrangements** | Certain test-takers – including individuals with a disability or health condition, and those who use English as a second language – are eligible for testing arrangements that may include additional breaks, extra time, or the use of a self-provided translation dictionary.

**Three-option multiple choice** | ASWB is phasing in three-option multiple-choice questions to improve the testing experience by reducing time pressure and ensuring focus on social work knowledge.

## SUPPORTING TEST-TAKERS WITH EXAM PREPARATION

ASWB is committed to providing test-takers with access to content outlines and other resources for preparing themselves for taking a licensing exam.

**ASWB Examination Guidebook** | A free download available to all test-takers that includes important information about taking the exam, including study plans, reference lists, content outlines, and sample questions.

**Test Mastery Inclusion** | A free program focused on test preparation and test readiness, available to all test-takers when they register for a licensing exam.

**Exam Resources for Educators** | A free suite of resources to help educators better understand what knowledge and skills their students will need as they enter the profession, including free group review practice questions.

## ASWB KEY FACTS

### **BROAD SUPPORT FROM THE PROFESSION:**

A significant majority of social workers nationwide, including those from diverse demographic backgrounds, support the continuation of the licensing exam. According to a recent survey, 78% believe that new social workers should be required to take the exam, and 73% think it would be a mistake to remove the exam as a requirement.

### **PROMOTES UNIFORM STANDARDS ACROSS STATES:**

The licensing exam provides a consistent and objective standard across states and provinces, facilitating mobility for social workers and ensuring that clients receive care from professionals who meet a national benchmark of competence.

### **RIGOROUS AND EVOLVING TESTING STANDARDS:**

The exam is developed and continuously updated by social workers and psychometric experts to reflect current practice standards and to avoid bias. This ongoing process ensures that the exam remains a valid, reliable, and fair measure of social work competence.

### **SUPPORT FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:**

ASWB has launched initiatives to address disparities in exam pass rates among demographic groups, reflecting a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the profession. Removing the exam would undermine these efforts to ensure that all social workers, regardless of background, are equally prepared and competent.