



Board Chair's Report

Dear Colleagues,

This will be my first newsletter as Board Chair. As such, I reflect on my time with the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE). I joined in July 2015 and have served under four different Board Chairs – Mark Lannon, LCSW-C, Denise Capaci, LCSW-C, Sheryl Silberman, LCSW-C and the first consumer member to serve as chair – Jerry Farrell. Their knowledge and leadership skills guide me in my final year.

During 2017, I began my third year on the Board. In that year, major changes were made to the Maryland Social Worker's Act, also known as Title 19 of the Health Occupations Code. That was the "Statute" change. Once the Statute was revised, the Statute and Regulations Committee at BSWE had to make additional changes to the "Regulations." Just to clarify – the "Statute" is the law and the "Regulations" are the means to clarify and enforce the law. I was not on that Committee. I have utmost respect for those who were. Regulation changes undergo several drafts at Committee level and are then reviewed at several other levels with the Department of Health which oversees all Health Occupations Boards. Several drafts are done before sending it out for public comment and finally having it codified into the Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR). Witnessing this process first hand was eye opening for me. A lot of thought and work goes into statute and regulation changes for a health occupation board – it made me wonder how bigger things get done. I could insert a cliché joke about "how sausage gets made" but will not.

While serving as Chair of the Continuing Education Committee, I oversaw a regulation change that required Board approved supervisors earn three Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) in supervision each license renewal period. Recently, the Committee worked with Board staff to clarify language in the CE regulations – making certain sections easier to understand. It is hopeful that these changes will move forward in 2022.

Another major proposed change to CE regulations is adding a requirement to earn three CEUs on the issues of anti-oppression.



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The Committee's work was in response to the unjust killing of George Floyd and the BLM social justice protests during summer 2020. The Social Workers Unraveling Racism (SWUR) Committee of NASW-MD presented a petition which had the signatures of many social workers. Letters sent to the Board called on us to act. I encourage all licensees to support this change as it moves forward.

I cannot reflect on my time without reflecting on COVID. March will mark two years since the first big wave and shut down. Time is marching on. Are we past this crisis? Have we adjusted to a new normal? Is COVID an endemic rather than a pandemic? Where do we go from here?

When I joined the Board in 2015, telehealth was a major discussion topic. A public health crisis moved that topic to the forefront! If not for telehealth, many clients would not have received care during the crisis. Telehealth is here to stay; its easy access to treatment is highly beneficial to clients in remote and underserved areas of the State. For the Board, with the mission of protecting the public, telehealth could lead to different types of complaints against licensees. I feel the Board is prepared for this challenge.

In the last 20 months, Board meetings have been virtual. If you do not already know, the Board is comprised of social workers from different social work specialties coming together from all over the state. Getting together in person and sharing experiences face to face has always been one of my favorite things about being a Board member (join us!). Still, I am grateful for the technology that has allowed us to continue our important work.

Two final thoughts: One, my Board service is almost up. Board members serve four-year terms and cannot serve more than two terms. We need a Board that continuously reflects the diversity of our profession and our State. Please check the Board's website to learn how to become a member. It can be challenging work but it is so worthwhile!

Two, during this pivotal time of a global pandemic and ongoing social unrest – a reflection on compassion. I found this quote from a recent book written by a physician on the front line of the COVID crisis. As a reflection on the compassionate work done by so many of you, I thought it a good way to end my own Board member reflection. My hope is that we all continue to seek and uplift the better angels among us all both in our profession and society.

“It is up to us to maintain the compassion that helped us through Covid-19, so that it becomes an enduring feature of our society, rather than a momentary phenomenon activated only in times of crisis. When challenges come, we have a choice to either embrace stigma and scapegoating or act with compassion. When challenges depart, the choice becomes whether or not we remember how the experience of shared threat brought out the better angels of our nature, and whether we allow them to continue guiding our actions.” - Dr. Sandro Galea – “The Contagion Next Time”

Karen Richards, LCSW-C
Board Chair

Security Incident Update

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has experienced a network security incident involving the MDH systems. The incident appears to have affected some of our partners including local health departments and other programs. At this time there are no indications that any data has been compromised.

The cyber incident required the Maryland Department of Health to shut down all computers and printers and prevented access to our databases. What this meant for the Board of Social Work Examiners was initially we could not deposit checks, could not issue licenses, and could not change items on our website including our license verification pages.

Through the efforts of MDH's IT specialists, the Board has developed alternate ways to provide the basic functioning of the Board. This along with the purchase of new equipment has us up and running again. However, there is a backlog of applications for licensure. Board staff have prioritized these applications to enable social workers to become licensed in Maryland as soon as possible. As a result, we are not able to respond to other inquiries in as timely a fashion as we would like. The Board asks that our licensees and applicants understand that we are working hard to correct these problems as soon as possible.



Effective July 1, 2022, all license applications must be submitted through the online application system. The application types are as follows: New License by Examination or Endorsement, Application for Continued Approval to sit for the Examination, Reactivation, Reinstatement, Renewal, and Re-licensure.

NO PAPER APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED

Welcome New Board Member– Jamie N. Wilson, LCSW-C



Ms. Wilson was appointed by Governor Hogan to a four year term on the Board of Social Work Examiners effective July 1, 2021. A resident of Baltimore County, Ms. Wilson previously served on the Board from 2018-2020, filling the remainder of another member's term. She served on the Statutes and Regulations Committee of the Board. A 2006 graduate of the University of Maryland School of Social Work, she is currently a Program Manager, Behavioral Health Services, at the Children's Guild Alliance. An experienced clinician, she is a Certified Trauma Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapist and Certified in Structural Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress.

Welcome New Board Member– Margaret A. Kern



Ms. Kern was appointed by Governor Hogan to a four year term as a consumer member of the Board of Social Work Examiners effective July 1, 2021. Ms. Kern is a resident of Anne Arundel County. A graduate of State University of New York at Buffalo she has enjoyed a long career as a Licensed Dental Hygienist. She has also been a field instructor for over 20 years at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, Department of Dental Hygiene and Baltimore City Community College, Department of Dental Hygiene. She has previously served on the Maryland Board of Dental Examiners for 16 years and was Dental Hygiene Committee Chair.

The Board of Social Work Examiners is fortunate to add 2 experienced members to our Board.

Recent Changes to the Social Work Practice Act

On October 1, 2021, a number of changes were made to the Social Work Practice Act as a result of a bill passed by the 2021 General Assembly. There were two major changes:

- (1) The requirement to complete criminal background checks by social workers who have not previously completed this requirement was postponed until 2023-2024.
- (2) A decrease in the required hours of supervision necessary to qualify for the LCSW-C License. The change meant needing only 100 hours of supervision instead of the 144 hours previously required. This enables Maryland to be consistent with our neighboring states, and increases social workers' desire for mobility.

Other changes contained in the bill include discontinuing new applications for the LCSW License after December 31, 2023. As of October, 2021 there were only 343 active social workers with the LCSW License out of over 17,000 social workers licensed in Maryland.

There were some language changes such as changing mental health and mental health disorders to behavioral health disorders. LBSW and LMSW social workers approved at the independent level were approved to provide supervision. The LBSW supervisor could supervise an LBSW and the LMSW supervisor could supervise an LBSW or an LMSW in non-clinical social work within their scope of practice. Lastly, the Social Worker Rehabilitation Committee was changed from a committee to a process to assist social workers.

**BSWE CODE OF ETHICS
VS
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS**
REPRINTED FROM 2019 FALL NEWSLETTER WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There is frequently confusion for licensed social workers over what ethical code to follow: the Board's or the NASW code. The Association of Social Work Boards created a Venn Diagram (see next page) that presents the commonalities between these two groups of standards along with some differences.

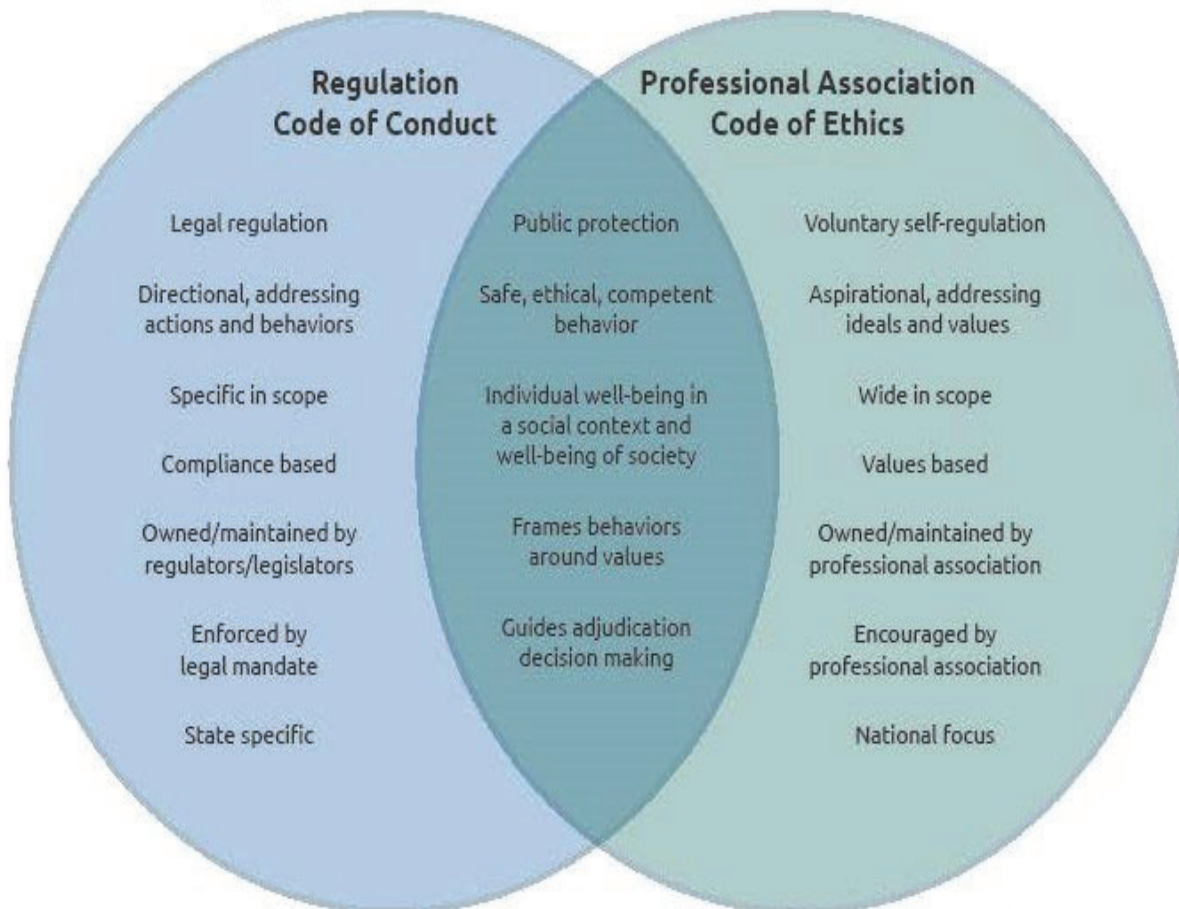
Please note that a contributor to this diagram has been a major leader in professional ethics, Professor Frederick Reamer, Ph.D., from the School of Social Work, Rhode Island College. He played a major role in the development of the NASW Code of Ethics revised in 2017. "The NASW Code of Ethics sets forth...values, principles and standards to guide social workers conduct". Since this article was published, the 2021 revisions to the NASW Code of Ethics became effective June 1, 2021.



Both Codes of Ethics are important for all social workers. However, the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners focus is on its statutory authority and regulatory language as outlined in C.O.M.A.R. 10.42.03 Code of Ethics. Its objective is the protection of the public and it provides guidance on appropriate professional conduct (regulations revised 2019). The NASW Code of Ethics "offers a set of values, principles, and standards to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise". This includes the wider coverage of such topics as the responsibilities to the Social Work Profession and to the Broader Society.

Why including NASW's code of ethics in law is not in regulation's best interests

The purpose of regulation's code of conduct is to protect the public in individual jurisdictions. The purpose of the professional association's code of ethics is to guide social workers' conduct.



Although 13 states incorporate NASW's code of ethics into their law, 10 of these states have also adopted enforceable standards. An additional five states reference the code of ethics as a guide for licensees to help define moral character, or as a tool to resolve ambiguity that may occur with the standards prescribed by the licensing authority. For more information visit aswb.org.

BUYER BEWARE CONTINUING EDUCATION ALERT

When seeking out trainings to earn your Continuing Education Units (CEUs), it is wise to pay attention for those trainings that are offered by two or more organizations hence the term “co-sponsored”. The Association of Social Work Board (ASWB) defines co-sponsorship as the following:

“More than one organization works together in the development, distribution, and/or presentation of a continuing education training (e.g., workshops, conferences, distance learning, etc.) that will offer continuing education credit to social work licensees. Organizations serving only as financial sponsors of that event are not considered cosponsors under this definition.”

OK, so what is the big deal if a training has co-sponsors? Unfortunately, it can be an issue. Situations in which you might get in trouble is when one of the sponsors appears to be a board authorized provider but is actually only serving as a conduit to provide specific activities such as collecting the evaluation tool; producing the actual CEU certificate; and/or collecting fees. The training brochure has them listed as sponsoring the offering. Looks good you say, I have taken a course from this sponsor or provider in the past – should be fine!

Not fine if the actual presenter(s), content and learning objectives of the training are not reviewed and board approved. What if the content of the training is questionable? Often, some presenters/organizations get around the approval process and review by using an approved sponsor/provider to offer CEUs.

The bottom line is this. Before you register for a training, review the brochure/announcement/flyer thoroughly. If the training is co-sponsored, review the specific language describing how the CE requirements are handled, who is responsible for this program and maintains documentation, etc. The Board Authorized Sponsors may co-sponsor trainings with other Board Authorized Sponsors as well as ACE Providers, and NASW Providers. If you are still unclear, check with the Board.

As a reminder, when looking for trainings to earn your CEUs, it is often best to begin with checking the MD Board Authorized Sponsor Listings. Also, ASWB and NASW approved providers/organizations, and accredited social work academic institutions who have the mission of advancing the social work profession. They provide quality training that is most often approved because of the focus on improving one’s professional skills, knowledge, and competence.

**CLARIFICATION TO THE ETHICS AND SUPERVISION
CONTINUING EDUCATION REGULATIONS
REPRINTED FROM 2018 SUMMER NEWSLETTER**

- (1) A supervision course may include ethics as part of the overall training. However, your certificate should document the number of CEUs earned for supervision only. One may not earn both supervision and ethics CEUs for the same training.
Ex: One training course held on Supervision and Ethics
- (2) The certificate you receive after completing an ethics or supervision training should specify the learning activity on the certificate.
Ex: 3 CEUs earned in Ethics (Category I or Category II) **OR**
3 CEUs earned in Supervision (Category I or Category II)
- (3) If a conference is held with multiple workshops on various topics and you attend a workshop with the entire focus on ethics, will this workshop count towards the ethics CE requirement?
Yes, as long as you attended this workshop and the authorized sponsor designates it on the certificate.
Ex: 3 Category I CEUs earned in Ethics

ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION

It is the Board Authorized Sponsor's (BAS) responsibility to determine the program/training they will provide to licensed social workers. The program/course will meet the Continuing Education Requirements (COMAR 10.42.06) and the content will be described in the course description and learning objectives. Based on these factors, the BAS will designate the training as meeting the Ethics OR Supervision requirement for license renewal. It is NOT the decision of the licensee.

If you see a course description offered by a BAS or receive a CE Certificate that states this training/workshop qualifies for either Ethics or Supervision, please alert the Board for follow up.

THANK YOU

The Board of Social Work Examiners would like to thank Deborah A. Evans, Riya Rahman, and Tyrone D. Willoughby, Jr. for their commitment and dedication to protecting the public and ensuring that licensees adhere to the statute and regulations. They will be missed and are wished the best in their new endeavors.

DEBORAH A. EVANS

Ms. Evans joined the Board as a contractual employee in 2003 and retired from her work at the Board on November 1, 2021.

From 2003 to 2005, Ms. Evans was the first employee to staff the Disciplinary Unit. She processed complaints, coordinated the disciplinary process with the Executive Director and the Board Liaisons.

In 2005, Ms. Evans was the first staff member who was solely dedicated to matters related to Continuing Education. She conducted site visits with sponsors, completed pre & post renewal audits, reviewed the continuing education certificates for social workers applying for reactivations and reinstatements of their licenses. As a liaison to social workers and continuing education providers, she provided support and direction in understanding the continuing education regulations and requirements.

Moving to the Licensing Unit in 2019, Ms. Evans was an essential and integral member of the unit's mandated function to assure that all applicants/licensees met the minimum qualifications for licensure and renewal according to the statute and regulations in Maryland; she was responsible for analyzing the results of the Maryland and Federal criminal history records check and when the applicant answered "YES" to any of the "Character and Fitness" questions; she coordinated approvals for applicants to sit for the licensing examination with the Association of Social Work Boards.

Ms. Evans was a quintessential customer service employee throughout her 18 years.

RIYA RAHMAN

Ms. Rahman devoted 18 years of service to the Board. Riya started her employment with the Board in December, 2003 following her academic training in Capilo College in Canada and UMBC. Her area of specialization was as a Database Specialist. In this position, she created and maintained our databases, our website, the information technology needs of staff, our renewal system, and our verification database. However, these tasks were only a small part of her contributions to the Board. She was reliable and continuously focused on how to improve Board operations.

Ms. Rahman accepted a new position with the State Department of Education.

TYRONE D. WILLOUGHBY, JR.

Mr. Willoughby Jr., worked for the Board for 11 years first as the Staff Social Worker and then as the Social Work Supervisor in the Licensing Unit. After taking the Department's course in leadership in 2017, Mr. Willoughby, Jr. immediately incorporated the skills and knowledge gained into a management style in which he empowered staff through relationship building, cross training and fostered a collegial culture. From the beginning of his employment with the Board, he always approached management through a proactive posture and after the course he expanded that vision to the need for transition planning at the Board.

Under his leadership he created an internship program for BSW students from Coppin State University. C. Ochoa was the first intern from 2018 to 2019 and S. Augustus was the second intern from 2019 to 2020. Unfortunately the internship program was interrupted by the COVID-19 emergency and the Board did not have an intern for the 2020 – 2021 academic year.

Mr. Willoughby, Jr., was the only staff member in the licensing unit who reported to the office every day during the State of Emergency and processed over 1,500 applications for advanced licensure during that time. This is an example of his professionalism and his commitment to the applicants seeking licensure.

Mr. Willoughby, Jr. accepted a new position as a School Social Worker in Baltimore City.



- (1) Two years ago, the Board temporarily reduced the licensing fees for the 2020 and 2021 renewal cycles. Please note that the 2022 license renewal fees will go back to the fees outlined in the C.O.M.A.R. 10.42.05 Fee Schedule.
- (2) Effective July 1, 2018, the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners no longer generates paper license verifications. The **PRIMARY AND SOLE SOURCE** to verify a Maryland social work license is by using the Board's website.
LINK: <https://mdbnc.health.maryland.gov/bsweVerification/Default.aspx>
All Social Work Boards were informed of the above.
- (3) In addition, the Board does not generate Letters of Good Standing, paper verifications of licenses nor does it complete the form provided by other SW Boards.

Per The Association of Social work Boards' website:

"The Association of Social Work Boards' Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program identifies and recognizes high-quality continuing education providers that can deliver quality programs in many topics, through in-person or distance learning settings."

For more information, click on <https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/ACEdswb/Prod/cgi-bin/ACESearchDSWBDLL.dll/acesShowProviders>

Discipline

Public Orders (formal disciplinary actions) from 2005 – present may be viewed on the Board's website: <https://health.maryland.gov/bswe/Pages/default.aspx>. The link is to the right under Public Orders/ Disciplinary Actions– view by Name or by License Number.

Sponsors

If you have a concern around an approved sponsor and/or the trainings or activities you have taken, please contact the approved sponsor directly. If you would like to speak with a staff member, please contact: Stacie Rigby, Continuing Education Associate at stacie.rigby@maryland.gov

Post Renewal Continuing Education Audit

If one is chosen for the Post Renewal Continuing Education Audit, the licensee may want to consider sending a copy of the required documentation to the Association of Social Work Boards via certified mail. As you know, mail can get lost and without a receipt of your documentation being sent, one may not be in compliance.

Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue, Room 318, Baltimore, Maryland 21215
Phone: 410-764-4788 , Toll Free — 1-877-526-2541, TDD: 1-800-526-2541
Fax — 410-358-2469
mdh.socialwork@maryland.gov