

All social workers must pass a national examination before being licensed. They also must participate in continuing education each year to maintain and upgrade their knowledge and skills, and practice within professional standards established by law.

### **How can I tell if a social worker is licensed?**

Social workers must use their professional titles or initials in any professional use of their names, including advertising. Social workers must display copies of their licenses and the profession's code of ethics at their places of employment. If you have any questions about a social worker's license, you may contact the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners at the address and phone number listed in this brochure.

### **Where can I find a social worker?**

Social workers are listed in the Yellow Pages of your phone book under "Social Workers," "Mental Health Counselors," or "Psychotherapists." You may also find social workers employed by social service and mental health service agencies.

### **Are the services of a social worker covered by insurance?**

Generally, insurance companies in Texas that offer coverage for counseling and psychotherapy will pay for the services of a licensed master social worker-advanced clinical practitioner (LMSW-ACP). You should check with your insurance agent for more information.

### **What are my rights as a client of a social worker?**

You have the right to professional, ethical treatment regardless of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. You have the right to a clear description of the services, fee, and billing. You have the right to choose a social worker that you believe can help you and to be referred for other assistance if your social worker is unable to help you. Any communication during counseling is confidential unless otherwise provided by law.

### **What is misconduct?**

Any violation of ethics or other professional standards of social work practice is considered misconduct and may result in disciplinary action. Copies of the code of ethics and the regulations for social workers are available through the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners.

### **What do I do if my rights are violated?**

If you believe your rights have been violated by a social worker licensed by the state, you may file a complaint with the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners. Complaints must be in writing and notarized.

*For more information, or to file a complaint, contact:*

Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners

1100 W. 49<sup>th</sup> St.

Austin, Texas 78756-3183

Telephone: 1-800-232-3162

In Austin, call 512-719-3521

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<http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/hcqs/plc/lsw/>

[lsw\\_default.htm](#)

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*22 Texas Administrative Code, Part 34, Chapter 781*

### **781.401 Code of Ethics**

(a) A social worker must observe and comply with the code of ethics and standards of practice set forth in this Subchapter. Any violation of the code of ethics or standards of practice will constitute unethical conduct or conduct that discredits or tends to discredit the profession of social work and is grounds for disciplinary action.

1. A social worker shall not refuse to do or refuse to perform any act or service for which the person is licensed solely on the basis of a client's age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual

orientation, or political affiliation.

2. A social worker shall truthfully report or present her or his services, professional credentials and qualifications to clients or potential clients.
3. A social worker shall only offer those services that are within his or her professional competency, and the services provided shall be within accepted professional standards of practice and appropriate to the needs of the client.
4. A social worker shall strive to maintain and improve her or his professional knowledge, skills and abilities.
5. A social worker shall base all services on an assessment, evaluation or diagnosis of the client.
6. A social worker shall provide the client with a clear description of services, schedules, fees and billing at the initiation of services.
7. A social worker shall safeguard the client's rights to confidentiality within the limits of the law.
8. A social worker shall be responsible for setting and maintaining professional boundaries.
9. A social worker shall not have sexual contact with a client or a person who has been a client.
10. A social worker shall refrain from providing service while impaired due to the social worker's physical or mental health or the use of medication, drugs or alcohol.
11. A social worker shall not exploit his or her position of trust with a client or former client.
12. A social worker shall evaluate a client's progress on a continuing basis to guide service delivery and will make use of supervision and consultation as indicated by the client's needs.
13. A social worker shall refer a client for those services that the social worker is unable to meet and terminate service to a client when continued service is no longer in the client's best interest

(b) The grounds for disciplinary action of a social worker shall be based on the code of ethics or standards of practice in effect at the time of the violation.

## Can a Social Worker Help Me?

A social worker can help you with a wide range of problems - from anxiety to depression, from raising children to caring for the elderly, and from alcohol and drug abuse to smoking and weight loss. Social workers work in these areas and more.

## What does a social worker do?

A social worker is a professional who works with individuals, families, and community groups. A social worker may:

- Provide counseling,
- Help locate services and resources,
- Help establish social and health services, and
- Help shape public policies.

Social workers work in a variety of settings and are familiar with community resources. A social worker can help you become aware of your options and the possible results of your choices.

## What qualifications does a social worker have?

All social workers in Texas must be licensed. There are three categories of licensure, and two specialties are recognized. Each has its own set of qualifications.

- A Social Work Associate (SWA) does not have a social work degree but has qualified for licensure based on experience and supervision.
- A Licensed Social Worker (LSW) has a bachelor's degree in social work.
- A Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) has a master's degree in social work.
- An Advanced Practitioner (AP) is a LMSW with at least three years of general social work experience.
- An Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) is an LMSW with at least three years of clinical social work experience.

Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners

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# A Consumer's Guide to Social Work Licensing