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State Board of Social Work Examiners Law

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45:15BB-1. Short title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Social Workers' Licensing Act of 1991."

L.1991,c.134,s.1.

45:15BB-2. Declarations

The Legislature declares that the profession of social work profoundly affects the lives of the people of New Jersey. The Legislature further declares that this act is intended to protect the people of New Jersey by setting standards of qualification, education, training and experience for those persons seeking to practice and be certified or licensed as social workers and by promoting high standards of professional performance for those presently practicing as social workers and for those who will be certified or licensed to practice social work in this State.

L.1991,c.134,s.2.

45:15BB-3. Definitions

As used in this act:

"Board" means the State Board of Social Work Examiners, established in section 10 of this act.

"Certified social worker" means a person who holds a current, valid certificate issued pursuant to subsection c. of section 6 or subsection c. of section 8 of this act.

"Clinical social work" means the professional application of social work methods and values in the assessment and psychotherapeutic counseling of individuals, families, or groups. Clinical social work services shall include, but shall not be limited to: assessment; psychotherapy; client-centered advocacy; and consultation.

"Director" means the Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs.

"Licensed clinical social worker" means a person who holds a current, valid license issued pursuant to subsection a. of section 6 or subsection a. or d. of section 8 of this act.

"Licensed social worker" means a person who holds a current, valid license issued pursuant to subsection b. of section 6 or subsection b. of section 8 of this act.

"Psychotherapeutic counseling" means the ongoing interaction between a social worker and an individual, family or group for the purpose of helping to resolve symptoms of mental disorder, psychosocial stress, relationship problems or difficulties in coping with the social environment, through the practice of psychotherapy.

"Social work" means the activity directed at enhancing, protecting or restoring a person's capacity for social functioning, whether impaired by physical, environmental, or emotional factors. The practice of social work shall include, but shall not be limited to: policy and administration; clinical social work; social work counseling; planning and community organization; social work education; and research.

"Social work counseling" means the professional application of social work methods and values in advising and providing guidance to individuals, families or groups for the purpose of enhancing, protecting

or restoring the capacity for coping with the social environment, exclusive of the practice of psychotherapy.

"Supervision" means the direct review of a supervisee for the purpose of teaching, training, administration, accountability or clinical review by a supervisor in the same area of specialized practice.

L.1991,c.134,s.3; amended 1995,c.66,s.1.

45:15BB-4. Certification or license required

a. No person shall engage in the practice of social work as a certified or licensed social worker or present, call or represent himself as a certified or licensed social worker unless certified or licensed under this act.

b. No person shall assume, represent himself as, or use the title or designation "social worker," "licensed clinical social worker," "licensed social worker," "certified social worker," "medical social worker," "social work technician" or any other title or designation which includes the words "social worker" or "social work," or any of the abbreviations "SW," "LCSW," "LSW," "CSW," "SWT" or similar abbreviations, unless certified or licensed under this act, and unless the title or designation corresponds to the certification or license held by the person pursuant to this act.

c. No person shall engage in the independent practice of clinical social work for a fee unless the person is licensed under this act as a licensed clinical social worker.

d. No certified social worker shall practice clinical social work and a licensed social worker may only practice clinical social work under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker.

L.1991,c.134,s.4.

45:15BB-5. Nonapplicability of act

The provisions of this act shall not apply to the following persons:

a. A person authorized by the laws of this State to practice medicine and surgery, psychology, marriage counseling, chiropractic, acupuncture, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and audiology, nursing or any other profession licensed by the State, when acting within the scope of the person's profession or occupation and doing work of a nature consistent with the person's training, if the person does not hold himself out to the public as possessing a license or certificate issued pursuant to this act;

b. A student enrolled in an educational program accredited, or in candidacy for accreditation, by the Council on Social Work Education, if the student is practicing as part of a supervised course of study and is clearly designated by the title "social work intern";

c. A person certified as a school social worker by the State Department of Education, but only when performing services on behalf of a local school district to students for whom the school district is responsible to provide services;

d. A rabbi, priest, minister, Christian Science practitioner or clergyman of any religious denomination or sect, when engaging in activities, which are within the scope of the performance of the person's

regular or specialized ministerial duties and for which no separate charge is made, or when these activities are performed, with or without charge, for or under the auspices or sponsorship, individually or in conjunction with others, of an established and legally cognizable church, denomination, or sect, and when the person rendering services remains accountable to the established authority thereof;

e. A person engaged in the practice of alcohol or drug abuse intervention, prevention, or treatment if the person does not advertise or use any title, name, or description, the use of which is restricted by section 4 of this act;

f. An employee of the State or a political subdivision thereof which is subject to the provisions of Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes, but only in the course of this employment;

g. An employee of a nonprofit organization with a master's degree in a mental health discipline other than social work, who performs psychotherapeutic counseling under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker or other State-licensed mental health professional; and

h. An employee or volunteer of a nonprofit organization who performs any social work service other than psychotherapeutic counseling, but only in the course of this employment or volunteer activity, and if the person does not advertise or use any title or name the use of which is restricted by section 4 of P.L.1991, c.134 (C.45:15BB-4).

L.1991,c.134,s.5; amended 1995, c.66, s.2; 1997, c.140, s.2.

45:15BB-6. Licensing of "licensed clinical social worker," "licensed social worker;" certification of social worker

a. The board shall issue a license as a "licensed clinical social worker" to an applicant who has:

(1) Received a master's degree in social work from an educational program accredited, or in candidacy for accreditation, by the Council on Social Work Education, or a doctorate in social work from an accredited institution of higher education;

(2) Had at least two years of full-time experience in the practice of clinical social work under the supervision of a clinical social worker licensed by this State or who, by virtue of the supervisor's education and experience, is eligible for licensure in this State as a licensed clinical social worker, or any other supervisor who may be deemed acceptable to the board;

(3) Satisfactorily completed minimum course requirements established by the board to ensure adequate training in methods of clinical social work practice; and

(4) Passed an appropriate examination provided by the board for this purpose.

b. The board shall issue a license as a "licensed social worker" to an applicant who has:

(1) Received a master's degree in social work from an educational program accredited, or in candidacy for accreditation, by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctorate in social work from an accredited institution of higher education; and

(2) Passed an appropriate examination provided by the board for this purpose.

c. The board shall certify an applicant who has:

(1) received a baccalaureate degree in social work from an educational program accredited, or in candidacy for accreditation, by the Council on Social Work Education ; or

(2) on or before the effective date of this act, acquired a baccalaureate degree in a field related to human services from an accredited institution of higher education and has engaged in full-time social work for at least one year prior to the effective date of P.L.1995, c.66.

L.1991,c.134,s.6; amended 1995,c.66,s.3.

45:15BB-7. Exemptions from examination requirements

An applicant may be exempted from the requirement of taking and passing any examination provided for in this act if the applicant satisfies the board that the applicant is licensed or registered under the laws of a state, territory or jurisdiction of the United States, which in the opinion of the board imposes substantially the same educational and experiential requirements as this act, and, pursuant to the laws of the state, territory, or jurisdiction, has taken and passed an examination similar to that from which exemption is sought.

L.1991,c.134,s.7.

45:15BB-8. Substitution of work experience for certain license or certification requirements, grandfathering

a. For 180 days after the date procedures are established by the board for applying for licensure under subsection a. of section 6 of this act, any person who engaged in full-time clinical social work for three of the last five years immediately preceding the enactment date of this act, including clinical social work in a career service in civil service or social work certified by the State Department of Education, and who meets the educational and experiential requirements set forth in subsection a. of section 6 of this act, may acquire a license as a licensed clinical social worker without sitting for a board approved examination.

b. For 180 days after the date procedures are established by the board for applying for licensure under subsection b. of section 6 of this act, any person who engaged in full-time social work for three of the last five years immediately preceding the enactment date of this act, including social work in a career service in civil service or social work certified by the State Department of Education, and who meets the educational requirements set forth in subsection b. of section 6 of this act, may acquire a license as a licensed social worker without sitting for a board approved examination.

c. For 180 days after the date procedures are established by the board for applying for certification under subsection c. of section 6 of this act, any person who engaged in full-time social work for two of the last five years immediately preceding the enactment date of this act, including social work in career service in civil service or social work certified by the State Department of Education, may acquire a certificate as a certified social worker without proof to the board that the person has met the educational criteria set forth in subsection c. of section 6 of this act.

d. For 180 days after the date procedures are established by the board for applying for licensure under section 6 of this act, any person who does not meet the educational and experiential requirements set forth in subsection a. of section 6 of this act may acquire a license as a licensed

clinical social worker without sitting for a board approved examination if the applicant: (1) has a baccalaureate degree in social work or in a closely related field from an accredited institution of higher education; (2) has at least 20 years of professional experience of which at least 10 have been in the full-time practice of social work; and (3) is a certified school social worker and a certified instructor in parent effectiveness training, has a background and experience in medical social work, has worked for the State as a caseworker dealing with youth and family services, has experience and training in crisis intervention, and is recognized by the courts in the State as a qualified expert witness as a social worker.

L.1991,c.134,s.8.

45:15BB-9. Requirements for renewal of license or certificate

a. In addition to any other requirements for licensure or certification, at the time of renewal an applicant shall execute and submit a sworn statement made on a form provided by the board that the certification or license for which renewal is sought has not been revoked, suspended or not renewed by the board or any other jurisdiction.

b. Each applicant shall present satisfactory evidence when seeking certification or license renewal that in the period since the certificate or license was issued or last renewed any continuing education requirements have been completed as specified by the board.

L.1991,c.134,s.9.

45:15BB-10. State Board of Social Work Examiners created.

There is created within the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety, the State Board of Social Work Examiners. The board shall consist of 10 members who are residents of the State, two of whom shall be public members appointed pursuant to the provisions of subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1971, c.60 (C.45:1-2.2) and one of whom shall be the Commissioner of Human Services, or the commissioner's designee, and one of whom shall be the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee, the latter two appointed in fulfillment of the requirement of subsection c. of that section. Of the six remaining members, three shall have been actively engaged in the practice of social work for at least five years immediately preceding their appointment, and, except for the members first appointed, one shall be a licensed clinical social worker, one shall be a licensed social worker, and one shall be a certified social worker pursuant to this act. Of the three remaining members, two shall be social work educators, one of whom shall represent a baccalaureate level program and one of whom shall represent a master's level program; and one shall be a social worker with a doctorate level degree, and, all of whom, except for the members first appointed, shall be licensed or certified pursuant to this act.

The Governor shall appoint each member, other than the State executive department member, for terms of three years, except that of the social worker members first appointed, two shall serve for a term of three years, two shall serve for terms of two years and two shall serve for terms of one year. Any vacancy in the membership shall be filled for the unexpired term in the manner provided by the original appointment. No member of the board may serve more than two successive terms in addition to any unexpired term to which he has been appointed. The Governor may remove any member of the board, other than the State executive department member, for cause.

L.1991, c.134, s.10; amended 2012, c.16, s.133.

45:15BB-11. Powers, duties of board

The board shall, in addition to such other powers and duties as it may possess by law:

- a. Administer the provisions of this act;
- b. Examine and pass on the qualifications of all applicants for license or certification under this act, and issue a license or certificate to each qualified successful applicant, therefor attesting to the applicant's professional qualification to practice as a certified social worker, as a licensed social worker or as a licensed clinical social worker;
- c. Examine, evaluate and supervise all examinations and procedures;
- d. Adopt a seal which shall be affixed to all licenses and certificates issued by it;
- e. Adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) as it may deem necessary to enable it to perform its duties under and to enforce the provisions of this act;
- f. Adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) that set professional practice standards for licensed clinical social workers in the independent practice of clinical social work for a fee;
- g. Annually publish a list of the names and addresses of all persons who are licensed or certified under this act as licensed clinical, licensed or certified social workers, as the case may be;
- h. Establish standards for the continuing education of social workers; and
- i. Prescribe or change the charges for examinations, certifications, licensures, renewals and other services performed pursuant to P.L.1974, c.46 (C.45:1-3.1 et seq.).

L.1991,c.134,s.11.

45:15BB-11.1. Continuing education for social workers.

The State Board of Social Work Examiners shall require that the number of credits of continuing education required of each person licensed or certified by the board as a condition of renewal include at least one credit of educational programs or topics concerning prescription opioid drugs, including the risks and signs of opioid abuse, addiction, and diversion.

L.2017, c.341, s.11.

45:15BB-11.2. State Board of Social Work Examiners; rules, regulations.

The State Board of Social Work Examiners, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), shall adopt such rules and regulations as are necessary to implement the provisions of sections 1 through 20 of P.L.2019, c.59 (C.26:16-1 et seq.) concerning the duties of a licensed clinical social worker pursuant thereto.

L.2019, c.59, s.25.

45:15BB-12. Appointment of Executive Director

The Executive Director of the board shall be appointed by the director and shall serve at the director's pleasure. The salary of the Executive Director shall be determined by the director within the limits of available funds. The director shall be empowered within the limits of available funds to hire any assistants as are necessary to administer this act.

L.1991,c.134,s.12.

45:15BB-13. Disclosure of confidential information by social worker

A social worker licensed or certified pursuant to the provisions of this act shall not be required to disclose any confidential information that the social worker may have acquired from a client or patient while performing social work services for that client or patient unless:

- a. Disclosure is required by other State law;
- b. Failure to disclose the information presents a clear and present danger to the health or safety of an individual;
- c. The social worker is a party defendant to a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from the social work services provided, in which case a waiver of the privilege accorded by this section shall be limited to that action;
- d. The patient or client is a defendant in a criminal proceeding and the use of the privilege would violate the defendant's right to a compulsory process or the right to present testimony and witnesses on that person's behalf; or
- e. A patient or client agrees to waive the privilege accorded by this section, and, in circumstances where more than one person in a family is receiving social work services, each such member agrees to the waiver. Absent a waiver from each family member, a social worker shall not disclose any information received from any family member.

L.1991,c.134,s.13.