

*SOCIAL WORKERS*

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CHAPTER 280  
LICENSURE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

**645—280.1(154C) Definitions.** For purposes of these rules, the following definitions shall apply:

“*Active license*” means a license that is current and has not expired.

“*ASWB*” means the Association of Social Work Boards.

“*Board*” means the board of social work.

“*Grace period*” means the 30-day period following expiration of a license when the license is still considered to be active. In order to renew a license during the grace period, a licensee is required to pay a late fee.

“*Inactive license*” means a license that has expired because it was not renewed by the end of the grace period. The category of “inactive license” may include licenses formerly known as lapsed, inactive, delinquent, closed, or retired.

“*LBSW*” means licensed bachelor social worker.

“*Licensee*” means any person licensed to practice as a social worker in the state of Iowa.

“*License expiration date*” means December 31 of even-numbered years.

“*Licensure by endorsement*” means the issuance of an Iowa license to practice social work to an applicant who is or has been licensed in another state.

“*LISW*” means licensed independent social worker.

“*LMSW*” means licensed master social worker.

“*Mandatory training*” means training on identifying and reporting child abuse or dependent adult abuse required of social workers who are mandatory reporters. The full requirements on mandatory reporting of child abuse and the training requirements are found in Iowa Code section 232.69. The full requirements on mandatory reporting of dependent adult abuse and the training requirements are found in Iowa Code section 235B.16.

“*Reactivate*” or “*reactivation*” means the process as outlined in rule 645—280.14(17A,147,272C) by which an inactive license is restored to active status.

“*Reciprocal license*” means the issuance of an Iowa license to practice social work to an applicant who is currently licensed in another state and that state’s board of examiners has a mutual written agreement with the Iowa board of social work to license persons who have the same or similar qualifications to those required in Iowa.

“*Reinstatement*” means the process as outlined in 645—11.31(272C) by which a licensee who has had a license suspended or revoked or who has voluntarily surrendered a license may apply to have the license reinstated, with or without conditions. Once the license is reinstated, the licensee may apply for active status.

[ARC 8371B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10; ARC 3744C, IAB 4/11/18, effective 5/16/18]

**645—280.2(154C) Social work services subject to regulation.** Social work services provided to an individual in this state through telephonic, electronic or other means, regardless of the location of the social worker, shall constitute the practice of social work and shall be subject to regulation in Iowa.

**645—280.3(154C) Requirements for licensure.** The following criteria shall apply to licensure:

**280.3(1)** The applicant shall submit a completed licensure application.

**280.3(2)** The applicant shall complete the application form according to the instructions contained in the application. If the application is not completed according to the instructions, the application will not be reviewed by the board.

**280.3(3)** Each application shall be accompanied by the appropriate fees payable by check or money order to the Board of Social Work. The fees are nonrefundable.

**280.3(4)** No application shall be considered by the board until official copies of academic transcripts have been received by the board except as provided in 280.4(6).

**280.3(5)** The applicant shall provide verification of license(s) from every state in which the applicant has been licensed as a social worker, sent directly from the state(s) to the Iowa board of social work office.

**280.3(6)** The candidate shall take the examination(s) required by the board pursuant to these rules.

**280.3(7)** An applicant for a license as an independent social worker shall have met the requirements for supervision pursuant to 645—280.6(154C).

**280.3(8)** Each social worker who seeks to attain licensure as an independent social worker shall have been granted a master's or doctoral degree in social work and practiced at that level.

**280.3(9)** Notification of licensure shall be sent to the licensee.

**280.3(10)** Licensees who were issued their initial licenses within six months prior to the renewal shall not be required to renew their licenses until the renewal date two years later.

**280.3(11)** Incomplete applications that have been on file in the board office for more than two years shall be:

*a.* Considered invalid and shall be destroyed; or

*b.* Maintained upon written request of the candidate. The candidate is responsible for requesting that the file be maintained.

**280.3(12)** In lieu of the requirements in subrules 280.3(4) and 280.3(5), the board will accept the ASWB Social Work Registry verification of academic transcripts and verification of licensure in other states.

[ARC 8371B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10; ARC 3744C, IAB 4/11/18, effective 5/16/18; ARC 5771C, IAB 7/14/21, effective 8/18/21]

#### **645—280.4(154C) Written examination.**

**280.4(1)** The applicant is required to take and pass the ASWB examination at the appropriate level as follows:

*a.* Bachelor level social worker—the basic level examination.

*b.* Master level social worker—the intermediate level examination.

*c.* Independent level social worker—the clinical level examination.

**280.4(2)** The electronic examination shall be scheduled with ASWB.

**280.4(3)** Application for any required examination will be denied or deferred by the board if the applicant lacks the required education or practice experience.

**280.4(4)** The applicant and the board shall be notified of the ASWB examination results, and the applicant may receive the results at the time of the examination. The board will accept only official results from the ASWB examination service that are sent directly from the examination service to the board.

**280.4(5)** The ASWB passing score will be utilized as the Iowa passing score.

**280.4(6)** An applicant may sit for the examination if the applicant meets the requirements stated in 645—280.3(154C). Upon written request of the applicant, the board may authorize a student to sit for the examination prior to the receipt of the official transcript if the student is in the last semester of an approved master of social work program. The student shall submit an application for licensure at the master's level and the fee, and, in lieu of a transcript, the student shall request that the school submit a letter directly to the board office. The letter shall state that the student is currently enrolled in a master of social work program and the student's expected date of graduation. Upon completion of degree requirements, the applicant shall have the transcript showing the date of the degree sent directly from the school to the board office at the Board of Social Work, Professional Licensure Division, Fifth Floor, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075.

**280.4(7)** In lieu of the requirements in subrule 280.4(4), the board will accept the ASWB Social Work Registry verification of the ASWB examination results.

[ARC 8371B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10]

**645—280.5(154C) Educational qualifications.**

**280.5(1)** Bachelor level social worker. An applicant for a license as a bachelor level social worker shall present evidence satisfactory to the board that the applicant possesses a bachelor's degree in social work from a college or university accredited by the Council on Social Work Education at the time of graduation.

**280.5(2)** Master level social worker. An applicant for a license as a master level social worker shall present evidence satisfactory to the board that the applicant:

*a.* Possesses a master's degree in social work from a college or university accredited by the Council on Social Work Education at the time of graduation; or

*b.* Possesses a doctoral degree in social work from a college or university approved by the board at the time of graduation.

**280.5(3)** Independent level social worker. An applicant for a license as an independent level social worker shall present evidence satisfactory to the board that the applicant:

*a.* Possesses a master's degree in social work from a college or university accredited by the Council on Social Work Education at the time of graduation; or

*b.* Possesses a doctoral degree in social work from a college or university approved by the board at the time of graduation.

**280.5(4)** Foreign-trained social workers shall:

*a.* Provide an equivalency evaluation of their educational credentials by International Educational Research Foundations, Inc., Credentials Evaluation Service, P.O. Box 3665, Culver City, California 90231-3665, telephone (310)258-9451, website [www.ierf.org](http://www.ierf.org) or email at [info@ierf.org](mailto:info@ierf.org); or obtain a certificate of equivalency from the Council on Social Work Education, 1701 Duke Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3457, telephone (703)683-8080, website [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org). The professional curriculum must be equivalent to that stated in these rules. The candidate shall bear the expense of the curriculum evaluation.

*b.* Receive a final determination from the board regarding the application for licensure.  
[ARC 3744C, IAB 4/11/18, effective 5/16/18; ARC 6996C, IAB 4/19/23, effective 5/24/23]

**645—280.6(154C) Supervised clinical experience.** An applicant for licensure as an independent level social worker must complete a supervised clinical experience as set forth in this rule.

**280.6(1) Minimum requirements.** The supervised clinical experience must satisfy all of the following requirements:

*a. Timing.* The supervised clinical experience cannot begin until after licensure as a master level social worker.

*b. Duration.* The supervised clinical experience must be for a minimum of two years.

*c. Minimum number of hours.* The supervised clinical experience must consist of at least 3,000 hours of practice.

*d. Minimum number of direct client hours.* The supervised clinical experience must consist of at least 1,500 hours of direct client contact.

*e. Minimum number of direct supervision hours.* The supervised clinical experience must consist of at least 110 hours of direct supervision equitably distributed throughout the supervised clinical experience, including at least 24 hours of live or recorded direct observation of client interaction. A maximum of 50 hours of direct supervision may be obtained through group supervision. Direct supervision can occur in person or by using videoconferencing. After 110 hours of direct supervision are complete, ongoing direct supervision must continue to occur for the remainder of the supervised clinical experience.

*f. Number of supervisors.* A supervisee may utilize a maximum of four supervisors at any given time. A supervisee is responsible for notifying each supervisor if another supervisor is also being utilized to allow for coordination as appropriate.

*g. Number of supervisees.* A supervisor shall determine the number of supervisees who can be supervised safely and competently and shall not exceed that number.

*h. Content.* The supervised clinical experience must involve performing psychosocial assessments, diagnostic practice using the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and providing treatment, including the establishment of treatment goals, psychosocial therapy using evidence-based therapeutic modalities, and differential treatment planning. The supervised clinical experience must prepare the supervisee for independent practice and must include training on practice management, ethical standards, legal and regulatory requirements, documentation, coordination of care, and self-care.

**280.6(2) Eligible supervisors.** A supervisor must satisfy all of the following requirements:

*a.* A supervisor must hold an active license as an independent level social worker, mental health counselor, or marital and family therapist in Iowa.

*b.* A supervisor must have a minimum of three years of independent practice.

*c.* A supervisor must have completed at least a six-hour continuing education course in supervision or one graduate-level course in supervision.

*d.* A supervisor must be knowledgeable of the applicable ethical code and licensing rules governing the supervisee.

*e.* Any request for a supervisor who does not meet these requirements must be approved by the board before supervision begins.

**280.6(3) Supervision plan.** Prior to beginning supervision, the supervisee must submit a written supervision plan to the board using the current form published by the board. The supervisee must also submit a written supervision plan to the board prior to beginning supervision with a new supervisor.

**280.6(4) Supervision report.** When supervision is complete, or when a supervisor ceases providing supervision to the supervisee, the supervisee must ensure a completed supervision report using the current form published by the board is submitted to the board. If the supervisor reports that the supervisee is not adequately prepared for independent licensure, or reports violations of the board's rules or applicable ethical code, the board may require the supervisee to complete additional supervision or training as deemed appropriate prior to licensure.

**280.6(5) Supervised clinical experience in other states.** An applicant who completed some or all of the supervised clinical experience in another state without obtaining licensure in that state should contact the board to determine whether some or all of the supervised clinical experience completed can be used to qualify for licensure in Iowa.

[ARC 6357C, IAB 6/15/22, effective 7/20/22]

#### **645—280.7(154C) Licensure by endorsement.**

**280.7(1)** An applicant who has been a licensed social worker under the laws of another jurisdiction shall file an application for licensure by endorsement with the board office. The board may receive by endorsement any applicant from the District of Columbia, another state, territory, province or foreign country who:

*a.* Submits to the board a completed application;

*b.* Pays the licensure fee;

*c.* Shows evidence of licensure requirements that are similar to those required in Iowa;

*d.* Provides official copies of the academic transcripts;

*e.* Provides official copies of the appropriate or higher level examination score sent directly from the ASWB; and

*f.* Provides verification of license from the jurisdiction in which the applicant has most recently been licensed, sent directly from the jurisdiction to the board office. The applicant must also disclose any public or pending complaints against the applicant in any other jurisdiction. Web-based verification may be substituted for verification direct from the jurisdiction's board office if the verification provides:

- (1) Licensee's name;
- (2) Date of initial licensure;
- (3) Current licensure status; and
- (4) Any disciplinary action taken against the license.

**280.7(2)** A person who is licensed in another jurisdiction but who is unable to satisfy the requirements for licensure by endorsement may apply for licensure by verification, if eligible, in accordance with rule 645—19.1(272C).

In lieu of the requirements in paragraphs 280.7(1) “*d*,” “*e*,” and “*f*,” the board will accept the ASWB Social Work Registry verification of academic transcripts, examination scores, and licensure in other states.

[ARC 0093C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 5771C, IAB 7/14/21, effective 8/18/21; ARC 6996C, IAB 4/19/23, effective 5/24/23]

**645—280.8** Reserved.

**645—280.9(154C) License renewal.**

**280.9(1)** The biennial license renewal period for a license to practice social work shall begin on January 1 of odd-numbered years and end on December 31 of the next even-numbered year. Every licensee shall renew on a biennial basis. The licensee is responsible for renewing the license prior to its expiration. Failure of the licensee to receive notice does not relieve the licensee of the responsibility for renewing the license.

**280.9(2) Renewal procedures.**

*a.* A licensee seeking renewal shall:

(1) Meet the continuing education requirements of rule 645—281.2(154C,272C) and the mandatory reporting requirements of subrule 280.9(3). A licensee whose license was reactivated during the current renewal compliance period may use continuing education credit earned during the compliance period for the first renewal following reactivation; and

(2) Submit the completed renewal application and renewal fee before the license expiration date.

*b.* An individual who was issued a license within six months of the license renewal date will not be required to renew the license until the next renewal two years later.

*c.* Those persons licensed for the first time shall not be required to complete continuing education as a prerequisite for the first renewal of their licenses. Continuing education hours acquired anytime from the initial licensing until the second license renewal may be used. The new licensee will be required to complete a minimum of 27 hours of continuing education per biennium for each subsequent license renewal.

*d.* Persons licensed to practice social work shall keep their renewal licenses displayed in a conspicuous public place at the primary site of practice.

*e.* Failure to receive the notice of renewal shall not relieve the licensee of the responsibility for submitting the required materials and the renewal fee to the board office 30 days before license expiration.

*f.* A social worker whose Iowa license is inactive, delinquent, closed, retired, voluntarily surrendered, suspended, or revoked cannot advance to a higher level until the license is again active.

**280.9(3) Mandatory reporting of child abuse and dependent adult abuse.**

*a.* Effective July 1, 2019, a licensee who regularly examines, attends, counsels or treats children in Iowa shall complete an initial two-hour child abuse mandatory reporter training course offered by the department of human services within six months of employment, or prior to the expiration of a current certificate. Thereafter, all mandatory reporters shall take a one-hour recertification training every three years, prior to the expiration of a current certificate.

*b.* Effective July 1, 2019, a licensee who regularly examines, attends, counsels or treats adults in Iowa shall complete an initial two-hour dependent adult abuse mandatory reporter training course offered by the department of human services within six months of employment, or prior to the expiration of a current certificate. Thereafter, all mandatory reporters shall take a one-hour recertification training every three years, prior to the expiration of a current certificate.

*c.* The requirement for mandatory training for identifying and reporting child and dependent adult abuse shall be suspended if the board determines that suspension is in the public interest or that a person at the time of license renewal:

(1) Is engaged in active duty in the military service of this state or the United States.

(2) Holds a current waiver by the board based on evidence of significant hardship in complying with training requirements, including waiver of continuing education requirements or extension of time in which to fulfill requirements due to a physical or mental disability or illness as identified in 645—Chapter 281.

*d.* The board may select licensees for audit of compliance with the requirements in paragraphs “a” and “b.”

**280.9(4)** Late renewal. To renew a late license, the licensee shall complete the renewal requirements and submit the late fee within the grace period.

**280.9(5)** Inactive license. A licensee who fails to renew the license by the end of the grace period has an inactive license. A licensee whose license is inactive continues to hold the privilege of licensure in Iowa, but may not practice as a social worker in Iowa until the license is reactivated. A licensee who practices as a social worker in the state of Iowa with an inactive license may be subject to disciplinary action by the board, injunctive action pursuant to Iowa Code section 147.83, criminal sanctions pursuant to Iowa Code section 147.86, and other available legal remedies.

**280.9(6)** Upon receiving the information required by this rule and the required fee, board staff shall administratively issue a two-year license. In the event the board receives adverse information on the renewal application, the board shall issue the renewal license but may refer the adverse information for further consideration or disciplinary investigation.

[ARC 8371B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10; ARC 9934B, IAB 12/28/11, effective 2/1/12; ARC 3744C, IAB 4/11/18, effective 5/16/18; ARC 4981C, IAB 3/11/20, effective 4/15/20; ARC 5771C, IAB 7/14/21, effective 8/18/21]

**645—280.10 to 280.13** Reserved.

**645—280.14(17A,147,272C) License reactivation.** To apply for reactivation of an inactive license, a licensee shall:

**280.14(1)** Submit a reactivation application on a form provided by the board.

**280.14(2)** Pay the reactivation fee that is due as specified in 645—subrule 5.19(4).

**280.14(3)** Provide verification of current competence to practice social work by satisfying one of the following criteria:

*a.* If the license has been on inactive status for five years or less, an applicant must provide the following:

(1) Verification of the license from the jurisdiction in which the applicant has most recently been practicing during the time period the Iowa license was inactive, sent directly from the jurisdiction to the board office. The applicant must also disclose any public or pending complaints against the applicant in any other jurisdiction. Web-based verification may be substituted for verification from a jurisdiction’s board office if the verification includes:

1. Licensee’s name;
2. Date of initial licensure;
3. Current licensure status; and
4. Any disciplinary action taken against the license; and

(2) Verification of completion of 27 hours of continuing education within two years of application for reactivation or verification of active practice, consisting of a minimum of 2,080 hours, in another state or jurisdiction during the two years preceding an application for reactivation.

*b.* If the license has been on inactive status for more than five years, an applicant must provide the verifications in both subparagraphs (1) and (2) below plus the verification in either subparagraphs (3) or (4) below.

(1) Verification of the license from the jurisdiction in which the applicant has most recently been practicing during the time period the Iowa license was inactive, sent directly from the jurisdiction to the board office. The applicant must also disclose any public or pending complaints against the applicant in any other jurisdiction. Web-based verification may be substituted for verification from a jurisdiction’s board office if the verification includes:

1. Licensee’s name;
2. Date of initial licensure;

3. Current licensure status; and
4. Any disciplinary action taken against the license; and
- (2) Verification of completion of 27 hours of continuing education within two years of application for reactivation or verification of active practice, consisting of a minimum of 2,080 hours, in another state or jurisdiction during the two years preceding an application for reactivation; and
- (3) Verification of passing the ASWB examination within the last five years at the appropriate or higher level as follows:
  1. Bachelor level social worker – the bachelor’s level examination; or
  2. Master level social worker – the master’s level examination; or
  3. Independent level social worker – the clinical level examination; or
- (4) Verification of continued social work practice at the appropriate or higher level in another state for a minimum of two years immediately preceding the application for reactivation.

[ARC 0093C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 5771C, IAB 7/14/21, effective 8/18/21; ARC 6996C, IAB 4/19/23, effective 5/24/23]

**645—280.15(17A,147,272C) License reinstatement.** A licensee whose license has been revoked, suspended, or voluntarily surrendered must apply for and receive reinstatement of the license in accordance with 645—11.31(272C) and must apply for and be granted reactivation of the license in accordance with 645—280.14(17A,147,272C) prior to practicing social work in this state.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapters 17A, 147, 154C and 272C.

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◊ Two or more ARCs

<sup>1</sup> Effective date of rules 161.212 to 161.217 delayed 70 days by the Administrative Rules Review Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Effective date of 280.100(154C) is July 1, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Effective date of **ARC 9102A** delayed 70 days by the Administrative Rules Review Committee at its meeting held July 13, 1999; delay lifted at the meeting held August 3, 1999, effective August 4, 1999.