



ALBERTA COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

Clinical Practice Enhancement

Policy and Procedures

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I. Definitions and Terms

Clinical Social Work	An advanced area of social work practice with a focus on the provision of mental health services based on the application of knowledge and theory of “psychosocial development, behaviour, psychopathology, unconscious motivation, interpersonal relationships and environmental stress” *. It utilizes social work methods to assess, diagnose and provide psychotherapeutic interventions across the lifespan with individuals, couples, families, and groups. <i>* National Institute for Clinical Social Work Advancement (as cited in Handbook of Clinical Social Work Supervision (3rd edition) Carlton E. Munson, PhD p. 9.)</i>
Clinical Practice Enhancement	The clinical practice enhancement is a distinguished category of registration, that recognizes registered social workers (RSWs) who have attained competence and practice experience in clinical social work practice. Pursuant to Section 2, Schedule 27 of the <i>Health Professions Act</i>, the titles “clinical social worker,” “registered clinical social worker,” and “RCSW” are protected in Alberta. Section 10(2) of the <i>Social Workers Profession Regulation</i> establishes the minimum eligibility criteria to qualify for the clinical practice enhancement. Accordingly, the ACSW is authorized to establish, qualify, maintain, and regulate the clinical practice enhancement. While the <i>Health Professions Act</i> and the <i>Social Workers Profession Regulation</i> does not prohibit RSWs who possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise to engage in clinical social work practice, only registered clinical social workers (RCSWs) who have met the clinical practice enhancement requirements are formally recognized as having such expertise by virtue of their designation.
Application Pathways	There are two (2) pathways through which RSW’s on the general registry may qualify for the clinical practice enhancement. Clinical practice enhancement applicants must be registered and in good standing on the general register for a minimum of two (2) years prior to applying for the clinical practice enhancement, or have been registered on a substantially equivalent register in another jurisdiction for at least two (2) years. Applicants must have acquired a minimum of three (3) years post-MSW clinical experience. This includes completion of at least 3000 hours of post-MSW direct clinical practice of which a minimum of 1600 hours must involve direct client contact. Applicants must also have completed a minimum of 100 hours of post-MSW clinical supervision with at least 50 hours provided by a registered clinical social worker or equivalent in another jurisdiction. Recognized jurisdictions include another Canadian province or territory, and a state within the United States of America. Additionally, applicants must provide two (2) letters of reference: one must be from the applicant’s clinical social work supervisor and one from a regulated mental health professional with direct knowledge of the applicant’s current clinical practice. Upon approval of their application, applicants will be authorized to register for the ASWB clinical exam. Following completion and obtaining a successful result on the

	exam, applicants will be approved to receive the clinical practice enhancement. Clinical Designation Transfer Pathway Applicants who hold a registered clinical social worker (RCSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) designation from a jurisdiction recognized by the ACSW, and have successfully completed the ASWB clinical exam can qualify to transfer their clinical designation through the registration application process. Recognized jurisdictions include another Canadian province or territory, and a state within the United States of America. Applicants are required to provide verification of registration/licensure, including good standing, from the applicable regulatory body or bodies in the jurisdiction where they are or have been registered. Upon meeting all registration requirements and obtaining approval of their application, applicants are approved to receive the clinical practice enhancement and recognized as an RCSW.
Direct Clinical Practice	Direct clinical practice is defined as time spent on activities directly related to the provision, delivery, and support of client services, including client contact, clinical documentation, consultation, case conferencing, file review, supervision, and client-specific preparation. Teaching, research, administrative duties not tied to specific clients, and other non–client-related activities are <i>not</i> considered direct clinical practice.
Clinical Supervision	Clinical supervision is defined as a structured professional relationship between a clinical supervisor and supervisee that looks at case dynamics and conceptualization, clinical theory, therapeutic interventions, and the use of self in practice. For the purposes of admission to the clinical practice enhancement, clinical supervision may be provided in the following formats: • Individual (dyadic) supervision • Group supervision • Case consultation
Clinical Supervisors	Clinical Social Work Supervisor (minimum 50 hours) Applicants to the clinical practice enhancement must complete a minimum of <u>100</u> hours of clinical supervision. At least <u>50</u> of these hours must be provided by a registered clinical social worker (RCSW) or an equivalent clinical supervisor from a recognized jurisdiction with a minimum of five years of post-MSW clinical experience. Advanced Clinical Practitioner Supervisor (maximum 50 hours) A maximum of 50 of the required 100 hours of clinical supervision may be provided by a regulated mental health professional who possesses a minimum of five (5) years of post–advanced degree (master’s or doctoral level in a mental health–related field) clinical experience. Such individuals must demonstrate independent clinical decision-making and experience working with diverse populations. They have also developed advanced expertise in one or more areas of clinical mental health practice, and

	provide supervision and consultation based on their professional knowledge and role. Supervisors must meet the following: i) Be competent in the area of practice they intend to supervise (see ACSW Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics); ii) Be familiar with the regulations, bylaws, and ACSW Standards of Practice; and iii) Have no conflict of interest with any relevant parties.
Clinical Committee	The Clinical Committee is a regulatory committee established by Council to make recommendations on the qualification and requirements for admission to the clinical practice enhancement. The committee is made up of registered clinical social workers from across the province of Alberta appointed by Council.

II. Application and Admission to the Clinical Practice Enhancement

A. Clinical Practice Enhancement Application Pathway

Application Information	i. All applicants must complete the clinical practice enhancement application by logging into their Alinity member profile. ii. Upon review, if an application requires additional clarification or revisions, the applicant will be notified of the specific items that must be addressed prior to re-submission. iii. Any applicant who is charged with a criminal offence, subject to professional conduct finding by ACSW or an employer, or involved in any other matter that may impact their ability to provide professional social work clinical services, must report this status to the Registrar if not already disclosed. iv. Applicants must pay the application fee to complete submission of the application v. Applicants who meet <u>all</u> eligibility requirements will be approved for admission to the ACSW clinical practice enhancement.
Coursework Requirements	Applicants must have completed a minimum of 45 hours in each of the three required categories: i. Human Development and Behaviour from a Biopsychosocial and Sociocultural Perspective ii. DSM Diagnosis, Clinical Assessment, and Treatment Planning iii. Psychotherapy and Evidence-Informed Clinical Practice Coursework must be at a post-secondary level or equivalent with an evaluative component. The required hours within each category may be completed through one course or training program, or accumulated across multiple courses or trainings, provided the total hour requirement for each category is met. Documentation demonstrating completion of coursework requirements must be uploaded as part of the application and may include course outlines or descriptions, syllabi, etc. in addition to proof of completion (e.g., transcripts, certificates of completion, etc.).

B. Clinical Designation Transfer Pathway

The clinical designation transfer pathway is available to applicants who actively hold a clinical social work designation/credential from another recognized jurisdiction and have successfully passed the ASWB clinical exam. Upon registration approval, applicants will then be admitted to the clinical practice enhancement and must comply with all annual registration renewal and continuing competence requirements to maintain their registered clinical social worker (RCSW) status.

Minimum Qualifications to Apply

All applicants to the transfer pathway for the clinical practice enhancement must meet the following minimum qualifications prior to application:

- a) Hold a registered clinical social worker (RCSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) credential from a jurisdiction recognized by the ACSW. Recognized jurisdictions include a Canadian province or state from within the United States of America
- b) Ensure the credential is current preceding the date of registration application

C. Clinical Exam

All applicants of the ACSW clinical practice enhancement must successfully complete the ASWB clinical exam. Upon approval of their application, applicants will be authorized to register for the ASWB clinical exam. Clinical transfer applicants must already have successfully completed the ASWB clinical exam in another recognized jurisdiction.

General Information and Exam Policy

Applicants who have met all application requirements, will be authorized to register for the ASWB clinical exam.

- a) Once approved, the applicant's name is submitted to the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the designated testing vendor, to authorize exam eligibility. Applicants are then provided with instructions for exam registration. Authorization to sit for the exam is valid for up to one (1) year.
- b) Applicants who do not pass the exam must wait a minimum of 90 days before retaking it.
- c) Applicants are responsible for all exam-related costs and for familiarizing themselves with all ASWB policies and procedures regarding registration, scheduling, administration, preparation materials, accommodation procedures and missed exams.
- d) If the exam is not completed within one (1) year of authorization, the application will be closed. Applicants whose applications have been closed and who wish to pursue the process at a later date must submit a new application, including the associated application fee.

	e) In extenuating circumstances, candidates may request a one-time extension of up to six (6) months. Such requests must be submitted within six (6) months of the application being closed. f) Applicants who have failed the clinical examination three (3) times and wish to request a fourth and final attempt must submit a written request to the Clinical Coordinator. The Clinical Coordinator will arrange a meeting with the applicant to review the circumstances related to the unsuccessful exam attempts. If deemed appropriate by the Clinical Coordinator, the applicant will be required to submit a written study plan to the Clinical Coordinator, outlining the steps they will take to support successful completion of the examination. The applicant's clinical supervisor(s) must be included in the development and submission of this plan.
The Clinical Social Worker Protected Title	Registrants approved for the clinical practice enhancement are authorized to use protected titles of RCSW, clinical social worker, and registered clinical social worker in accordance with the <i>Health Professions Act</i>. a) Maintaining status on the clinical practice enhancement is subject to additional annual registration renewal and competence requirements (see Section IV: Annual Renewal) b) Registrants approved for the clinical practice enhancement will have the clinical designation identified on the public register "Verify a Social Worker", which is published and available on the ACSW website. The clinical practice enhancement will also appear on the practice permit. Registrants must make their practice permit available to clients, employers, insurers, and third parties upon request.
D. Request for Review of Clinical Practice Enhancement Application Decision	An applicant who disagrees with a clinical practice enhancement application decision may request a review. Applicants who wish to appeal a decision related to their application may submit a written request for review within 30 days of receiving the decision to the Clinical Coordinator. The appeal must outline the grounds for the request and include any relevant supporting documentation. Grounds for appeal may include procedural error, new relevant information, concerns regarding fairness or consistency in the decision-making process, or an alleged misinterpretation of the information submitted. Appeals will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee of Council.

III. Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor

An Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor is an RCSW who has advanced standing and expertise in the practice area of clinical supervision. They are automatically qualified to serve as the Clinical Supervisor of Record for applicants to the clinical practice enhancement pathway.

A. Application Process

To be approved as an Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- i. be a registrant with the ACSW clinical practice enhancement
- ii. have a minimum of five (5) years of post MSW experience in clinical social work
- iii. have completed a minimum of 30 hours of clinical supervision course work/training within the past three (3) years since the date of application (an applicant may be provisionally approved pending completion of these course work/training hours)
- iv. have provided a minimum of 100 hours of clinical social work supervision within the past three (3) years since the date of application
- v. have received a minimum of 15 hours of supervision, that is focused on their abilities in providing supervision, by a mental health professional within the past three (3) years since the date of application
- vi. provide two (2) references from mental health professionals who can attest to their supervision skills and practice (Form D.2)
- vii. meet standard G.1(1) of the *ACSW Standards of Practice – Professional Accountability* within the Profession
- viii. complete Form D.1 and submit with references to Registration for approval

B. General Information	i. An Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor can act as the Clinical Supervisor of Record for any candidate to the clinical practice enhancement without having to apply for each individual applicant under Form C.1 ii. Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor designation is identified on the public register “Verify a Social Worker”, which is published and available on the ACSW website. The clinical practice enhancement will also appear on the practice permit. Registrants must make their practice permit available to clients, employers, insurers, and third parties upon request. iii. Renewal of the designation of Approved Clinical Social Work Supervisor occurs with annual renewal of registration and the successful completion of requirements to maintain status on the clinical practice enhancement.
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IV. Annual Registration Renewal and Maintenance of RCSW Status

A. Annual Registration Renewal & Competence Requirements

The following requirements must be met to maintain registration on the ACSW clinical practice enhancement:

All registrants are required to participate in ACSW's annual Competence Program, regardless of their registration category, clinical practice enhancement status, or employment status. Registrants who have the clinical practice enhancement designation are also required to pay the applicable additional annual renewal fee as part of the ACSW registration renewal process. Failure to complete annual renewal requirements, including participation in the Competence Program and payment of applicable fees, may result in removal from the clinical practice enhancement program.

B. Reinstatement of Clinical Practice Enhancement

In cases where a registrant's registration and clinical practice enhancement status has lapsed due to prolonged inactive registration status, cancelled registration status or voluntary withdrawal from the clinical practice enhancement designation, the following requirements must be met in order to reinstate the clinical practice enhancement status in addition to payment of the applicable administrative fee.

Cancelled Practice Permit

Where a registrant is removed from the clinical practice enhancement program due to failure to renew registration resulting in cancellation of their practice permit, upon registration reinstatement, the registrant can reinstate the clinical practice enhancement if the period of registration lapse is 0-3 years. The three (3) year period will be calculated from the effective date of the cancellation. All applicable reinstatement fees will apply.

Where a registrant's registration is lapsed for a period of three (3) years or more, the registrant must submit a new application for the clinical practice enhancement including evidence of competence to practice clinical work has been maintained and they must successfully complete the ASWB clinical exam.

Removal from the Clinical Practice Enhancement Program Only

Where a registrant is removed from the clinical practice enhancement program at their own request or due to non-payment of the clinical practice enhancement renewal fee, the three (3) year period will be calculated from the applicable withdrawal or cancellation date.

The same clinical practice enhancement reinstatement requirements listed above will apply. All application reinstatement fees will apply.

	Inactive Status Where a registrant changes their registration status to inactive, the three (3) year period will be calculated from the effective date of the status change. a) Registrants who have been inactive or removed from the registry for three (3) years or less must submit a written request for readmission to the Clinical Coordinator and provide evidence of competence to practice clinical social work. b) Registrants who have been inactive or removed from the registry for more than three (3) years must submit a written request for readmission, provide evidence of competence to practice clinical social work and successfully write the ASWB clinical exam.
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