



Competence Program Accommodation and Exception Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the process by which registrants of ACSW may request an accommodation, extension, exception or waiver related to the Competence Program requirements. The goal is to ensure equity, uphold professional standards, and maintain public trust.

Scope

This policy applies to all ACSW registrants, including those on the general or provisional registers or those with inactive registration status, who request accommodation, extension, exception, or waiver to the Competence Program requirements due to one of the following:

- Documented disabilities
- Protected grounds under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*
- Temporary or ongoing health conditions or extraordinary circumstances (e.g., illness, injury, bereavement, displacement, significant life event or unexpected personal circumstances)

Guiding Principles

- **Equity and Inclusion:** ACSW is committed to removing barriers to participation while maintaining professional standards.
- **Proportionate:** Requests will be assessed and decisions made in a manner that is reasonable, balanced, and responsive to the registrant's circumstances, while maintaining professional standards and public protection.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Decisions will be documented, communicated clearly, and subject to review.

Types of Accommodations and Exceptions

Type	Description	Duration
Accommodation	Modification to meet individual needs (e.g., disability, religious observance)	Ongoing or time-limited
Extension	Additional time to meet the competence requirements. This type of consideration does not adjust the number of hours required.	Time limited Max 3 months May be extended once after which registrant should submit a request for an exception



Exception	Approved release from completing competence requirements for a period, and/or the type of hours activities completed (e.g. continuing education or professional engagement)	Time-limited, annual update required
Waiver	Full release from competence requirements	Ongoing

Eligibility Criteria

Approval is granted based on demonstrated functional impact on competence requirements—not solely on diagnosis or circumstance.

To be considered, the registrant must:

- Demonstrate that the request is necessary and reasonable, based on documented barriers, protected grounds under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, or extraordinary circumstances.
- Be willing to collaborate with the College to identify appropriate modifications, timelines or alternative approaches that uphold professional standards and public protection.
- Accept and comply with any conditions or expectations specified in the approval to support continued competence and regulatory compliance.

Ineligibility

- Practicing outside the scope of social work practice and/or
- Registration with another regulated profession will not be considered eligible reasons for an exception to the Competence Program

Application and Review Process

Submission

Registrants seeking an accommodation, extension, exception, or waiver should:

- Submit a completed **Request for Competence Program Exception and Accommodation** form, available through the registrant portal under **my forms**.
- Provide sufficient information to allow assessment against the eligibility criteria, including an explanation of why the request is necessary and reasonable. Registrants should ensure that the request describes the functional impact. See step 3 in the policy for additional information.
- Participate in discussions with the College, as needed, to identify appropriate modifications, timelines, or alternative approaches that maintain professional standards and protect the public.
- Acknowledge and agree to any conditions or monitoring that may be imposed as part of an approved decision.



Review Process:

Step 1: **Completeness check**

- All required sections completed
- Reason for request clearly stated
- Timeframe specified
- Request type is described

Step 2: **Reason for request is identified**

- Medical/health-based (e.g. illness, injury, disability)
- Crisis/contextual based (e.g. evacuation, natural disaster, family crisis)

Step 3: **Demonstrated Impact**

Medical/Health Based Requests	Crisis/Contextual Requests
Registrant must demonstrate how their condition affects ability to complete competence requirements ○ Cognitive limitations (focus, memory, decision-making) ○ Physical limitations (mobility, fatigue, dexterity) ○ Emotional/psychological impact affecting engagement ○ Time constraints directly tied to condition/leave ○ Inability to complete specific competence activities	Registrant must clearly demonstrate how their circumstance is extraordinary and affects ability to complete competence requirements ○ Loss of time/capacity (e.g., unexpected relocation) ○ Loss of access (internet, workspace, stability) ○ Competing urgent responsibilities (family, housing, safety) ○ Inability to complete specific CP activities ○ Cognitive limitations (focus, memory, decision-making) ○ Emotional/psychological impact affecting engagement
Link to Competence Program ○ Clear connection between impairment and inability to complete requirements ○ Program requirements affected are identified (self-assessment, learning plan, activities, hours, etc.)	Link to Competence Program ○ Clear connection between circumstance and inability to complete requirements ○ Program requirements affected are identified (self-assessment, learning plan, activities, hours, etc.)
Supporting information ○ Personal statement ○ Supporting information if applicable ○ Duration and prognosis (temporary vs ongoing)	Supporting information ○ Personal statement ○ Clearly time-limited
Alternative Plan ○ Can the registrant reasonably participate in the Competence Program ○ Reasonable and proportionate	Alternative Plan ○ Can the registrant reasonably participate in the Competence Program ○ Reasonable and proportionate



Step 4: Decision

- Approved
- Approved with modifications to request
- Request additional information
- Denied

Step 5: Communicate decision to registrant

Requests are reviewed by the professional practice administrative support professional for completeness and returned for completion if required. Completed submissions are reviewed by the director of professional practice or designated staff.

Reviews will include a review of the registrant's registration history, participation in the Competence Program, and may include consultation with the registrant, legal, and/or executive director and registrar.

1. Acknowledgement of Request

- Registrant receives an acknowledgement of the request upon submission through the portal.
- Forms that have been started but not submitted will be deleted within 14 business days from the date the form was initiated.

2. Decision:

- Registrant receives written notification of the decision within 10 business days of submission of the request.
- If approved, terms and duration will be specified.
- If denied, rationale will be provided and appeal options outlined.

3. Review of a Decision:

- A registrant may request a review of the decision by the executive director and registrar by email at competence@acsw.ab.ca
- A written decision will be provided within 30 business days. If approved the decision will outline any change to the requirements for the registrant and any associated timelines. Decisions may include accommodation(s), deferral, exception and/or waiver of requirements.

4. Appeal:

- Registrants may appeal decisions through the ACSW Appeals Committee within 30 calendar days of notification of the review of the decision.
- Appeals after this timeline will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the executive director.



Confidentiality

All requests and related documentation will be handled in accordance with ACSW's privacy policies and applicable legislation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Approved requests are subject to review as identified in the decision matrix to ensure ongoing compliance and effectiveness.

Registrants will notify the ACSW if there are changes in their registration status, or circumstances that necessitated the request.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed minimally every three years or as required by changes in legislation or regulatory standards.



Appendix A: Definitions

- **ACCOMMODATION:** A modification or support provided to a registrant to enable participation in Competence Program (CP). Accommodation is designed to address barriers related to disability, protected human rights grounds, or other documented needs, without compromising public safety or professional standards.
Example: A social worker requests assistive technology or additional time to complete an on-line assessment; they are required to do as part of the Competence Program.
- **EXTENSION:** A temporary postponement of the Competence Program deadline(s), granted upon request due to documented personal, medical, or professional circumstances. Extensions are time-limited and subject to review, and do not exempt the registrant from completing the 40 required hours.
Example: a social worker requests an extension of their competence requirements due to evacuation or an unexpected health event. They are granted a one-month extension but still must complete the 40 hours.
- **EXCEPTION:** An approved release from participating in all or some of the Competence Program requirements, granted under specific conditions where compliance is not feasible or reasonable. Exceptions may be conditional and are assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure continued competence and public protection.
Example: A social worker requests an exception from completing the wellness worksheet and in lieu provides another tool used at their place of employment, or a social worker requests an exception from participating in the program because they are unwell, experience a disability or a life circumstance that prevents them from completing the requirements.
- **WAIVER:** A complete release from participation in the Competence Program, typically granted in rare or exceptional circumstances. Waivers are considered only when the requirement is deemed unnecessary, unduly burdensome, or incompatible with the social worker's practice context, and must be justified through documented evidence.
Example: a social worker who has end stage cancer diagnosis and is volunteering to facilitate a group for other people experiencing the same illness and diagnosis, requests a waiver of competence requirements. Another example is a social worker who retains registration on the ACSW general register but resides in another province and is registered in that home province.



Appendix B: Guidance when completing a request form

When to Submit your request

Submit your request as early as possible so ACSW has sufficient time to review your circumstances and determine whether an accommodation, extension, exception, or waiver is appropriate.

Known circumstances

If you know in advance that a circumstance may affect your ability to complete the Competence Program requirements, complete and submit your request as soon as the Competence Program opens for the year. Do not wait until your registration renewal or until the Competence Program deadline is approaching.

Submitting your request early allows ACSW to work with you to identify appropriate modifications, timelines, or alternative approaches before the requirements are due.

Unexpected circumstances

If an unexpected circumstance arises during the competence year, submit your request as soon as you determine that you will be unable to complete the Competence Program requirements or meet the required deadlines.

Depending on the nature and severity of the situation, you may not be able to complete the request form immediately. If this is the case, contact ACSW as soon as you are able at competence@acsw.ab.ca. ACSW will work with you to determine what information is needed and what options may be available based on your circumstances.

Where possible, do not wait until after a Competence Program deadline has passed to contact ACSW. Early communication helps ensure that your circumstances can be considered and that any approved accommodation, extension, exception, or waiver can be appropriately documented.

Maternity and Parental Leave

ACSW recognizes that maternity and parental leave can create a temporary barrier to participating in the Competence Program. The Accommodation and Exception Policy provides a way to address these barriers while maintaining professional standards and public protection.

Why 18 months?

ACSW uses 18 months as the maximum timeframe for maternity or parental leave for Competence Program purposes. This provides a clear and predictable boundary and aligns with the federal EI extended parental-benefit window of up to 78 weeks (18 months) following the birth or placement of a child.



The 18-month timeframe is not a recommendation about how long a parent should take leave and does not create an expectation that a registrant return to practice at 18 months. It establishes when ACSW will generally treat an absence as a temporary maternity or parental leave for Competence Program purposes.

If you're starting maternity or parental leave part way through a competence year

Before you leave

- Continue with your Competence Program requirements.
- Contact competence@acsw.ab.ca to advise of your upcoming leave
- Once you know the start date of your leave and your anticipated return-to-practice date, submit your request as soon as possible. Do not wait until registration renewal or until the Competence Program deadline is approaching.

Your request will be reviewed, and your Competence Program requirements for the applicable year will be adjusted based on the start date of your maternity or parental leave.

What if my leave crosses two competence years?

- That's okay. Include the full period of your leave in your request. You do not need to submit a new request simply because your leave crosses from one competence year into the next.

Example:

A registrant begins parental leave on June 15, 2026, and plans to return to practice on February 1, 2027. The leave crosses two competence years. The registrant should identify the full leave period in their request. ACSW will review the request in relation to each applicable competence year and, where approved, the exception will be applied separately to each year. The registrant will not need to submit another request for the second year.

What if my leave lasts longer than 18 months?

After 18 months, the absence will generally no longer be treated as a temporary maternity or parental leave exception for Competence Program purposes.

If you are not returning to practice after 18 months, contact the Registration department at registration@acsw.ab.ca to discuss registration options.

If your circumstances continue to create a barrier to meeting Competence Program requirements, you may submit a request for an exception or other consideration under the Accommodation and Exception Policy. The request will be assessed based on the eligibility criteria outlined in the policy.



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While you're on leave

You are not expected to participate in the Competence Program when an exception has been approved. You may continue professional learning during your leave if you choose.

When you return

Ensure you have reinstated your registration or changed your registration status to active before engaging in social work practice. Email competence@acsw.ab.ca to advise of your return to practice.

Complete the Competence Program plan within four weeks of your return to practice.

To learn more visit [ACSW Competence Program](#)

For questions not answered in this policy, please email competence@acsw.ab.ca