

ACSW Competence Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The changes to the Competence Program are aimed at simplifying requirements for registrants while strengthening our ability to better regulate the growing social work profession in Alberta. Competence Program changes launched in January 2026, and information and resources are available on the ACSW website. Participation in the competence program is a mandatory requirement of registration.

Please see below, for answers to some of the most frequently asked questions and topics.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT	
<p>Where can I find more information about changes to the Competence Program?</p>	<p>These are further links to resources that can support you in completing the competence requirements. Please review carefully as there are changes to the program and some actions are required by ALL social workers by the end of January.</p> <p>The ACSW website for a video on completing the competence requirements Continuing Competence Program - ACSW Website</p> <p>The competence program guide Competence Program Guide - ACSW Website</p> <p>If you require further support, please email practice.consultation@acsw.ab.ca or book a consultation with one of our practice team members: Consultation Service - ACSW Website</p>
<p>I need help with the Competence Program requirements. I don't know where to start.</p>	<p>The competence program has changed, and the changes affect all social workers regardless of your renewal date. Completing and submitting the initial requirements takes on average 90 minutes.</p>



	<p>These are links to resources that can support you in submitting the competence requirements. Please review carefully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ACSW website for a video on completing the competence requirements: Continuing Competence Program - ACSW Website• The competence program guide: Competence Program Guide - ACSW Website• Join a webinar: Changes to ACSW's Continuing Competence Program! Join us to learn more. - ACSW Website• Competence FAQs: Continuing Competence Program FAQs - ACSW Website <p>If you require further support, please register for a webinar.</p>
<p>I am a new graduate, not yet employed, or unemployed.</p> <p>How do I complete the self-reflection or develop a professional development plan?</p>	<p>You are required to complete the self-assessment and develop a professional development plan. In the “describe your practice” section, describe what you are doing now outside of SW practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For your goals in the next five years, what are you planning (return to practice, further education, employment in the field etc)• Use N/A for questions you are unable to answer.• Regarding the professional development plan, you can indicate goals and activities. Perhaps there are courses related to your desired area of practice that might be helpful to take to add to your resume/portfolio and think about how you are going to engage with social workers - perhaps people from your class, the Social Work Association, Peer Circles etc. <p>For additional support please register for a webinar : (https://acsw.ab.ca/changes-to-acsws-continuing-competence-program-join-us-to-learn-more/)</p>



<p>Can you confirm if I have submitted my portfolio properly?</p>	<p>Once your submission has been successfully completed, a green confirmation box will appear in the top right corner of your screen stating:</p> <p>"Your competence module has been successfully submitted; you will receive an email confirmation within 24 hours."</p> <p>Confirmation emails are generated once daily. If you do not receive your email within 24 hours, please review your forms to ensure all required sections have been completed and resubmit if necessary.</p> <p>If all these things have been checked, please email us at practice.consultation@acsw.ab.ca. Please include your RSW number and put in the subject line "unable to submit".</p>
<p>How do I answer the Yes/No questions on the self-assessment?</p>	<p>Each of these questions relates to a specific standard of practice that requires one-time or ongoing competence activities (supervision or consultation, education or training).</p> <p>There is no right or wrong answer as this is a question asked at a single point in time and may change throughout the year. The intention is to draw your attention to the standards.</p> <p>Please review the associated Standards of Practice requirement before answering these questions and depending upon your response, consider whether you require a professional development activity in your plan to meet the Standards of Practice requirement.</p>
LOGGING IN	
<p>I am a new registrant. Why can't I access the competence module?</p>	<p>The "My Learning" option may not appear in the menu immediately after registration. It should become available within one hour of receiving your registration confirmation.</p>



	<p>If the option does not appear after this time, please contact the office for assistance so we can help troubleshoot the issue.</p>
<p>Do I need to verify my new login for the new registrant portal, before completing the new competence program requirements?</p>	<p>Yes, you will need to set up a new log in for the registrant portal. Please click here for instructions on how to do this.</p>
<p>Why is the timeline to complete the requirements (January 1 – January 31) so short?</p>	<p>The requirements due by February 1st include the three self-assessment activities and an initial professional development plan including planned goals and activities. You do not have to complete all the competence activities by February 1st.</p> <p>The professional development plan is a living document where your goals and activities can evolve and change through the year. You will have until December 31st to complete the activities you identify and the required reflections.</p> <p>On average, we expect this activity to take 90 minutes.</p> <p>The Competence Program Guide has additional information to help you write effective professional development goals.</p>
ACCESS TO THE OLD REGISTRANT PORTAL	
<p>The documents I uploaded when completing competency activities earlier this year don't seem to be on my profile any longer. Are those documents gone?</p>	<p>ACSW closed the former registrant portal in June 2025 and competence documents uploaded to the former portal, will not be available in Alinity.</p> <p>We no longer have access to these records as of December 31, 2025. This was communicated to registrants by email in June 2025, and posted on the ACSW website.</p> <p>Reminders were also provided to registrants in our FAQs and at all the Competence Program Change webinars.</p>



	Registrants were informed they must download the documents or reach out to ACSW prior to December 31, 2025 for assistance.
FEES	
Do I continue to renew my registration and by my annual fees as usual?	Registration fees will be paid at the time of your annual registration renewal. Your annual renewal date has not changed.
CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS	
Can I include the competence hours that I have completed and accrued in the 2025 year?	<p>In this transition year, you can include competence hours/activities you have completed and accrued in 2025 since your registration renewal up to a maximum of 20 credits.</p> <p>If you are using these activities, you must enter them into your new professional development plan in the associated goal and category, and complete the reflection activities.</p> <p>Enter them with the actual start date e.g. Sept 15, 2025 For Status choose complete and complete all the associated reflection questions.</p> <p>Starting in 2027, all competence activities will need to be completed in the competence calendar year (e.g. 2027, 2028 etc.)</p>
Can we count time we spend completing the self-assessment and professional development plan?	The purpose of the ACSW Continuing Competence Program is to ensure that Registered Social Workers engage in ongoing, substantive learning activities that enhance their professional knowledge, skills, and ethical practice. While the self-assessment and professional development plan are essential components of the competence cycle, they are foundational reflective tools, not learning activities themselves.
Does the competence program set mandatory learning requirements on	



<p>specific topics or issues? For example, mandatory ethics learning.</p>	<p>ACSW's new competence program includes minimum hours for the two categories: Continuing Education - 15 hour minimum Professional Engagement - 15 hour minimum. There is a total of 40 hours required, so the other 10 could be in one or both of the categories.</p> <p>There are no mandatory learning requirements. The idea is that social workers participate in meaningful activities, relevant to their practice context. Those could be courses, or intensive workshops focused on topics of learning relevant to your social work practice.</p>
<p>Are social workers required to have all 40 credits completed by February 1?</p>	<p>Registrants are required to complete the self-assessment activities and develop an initial professional development plan (at least 1 goal and 1 activity for both continuing education and professional engagement. You will have the activities and reflections completed by December 31.</p>
<p>How do I submit my professional development plan and competence hours to ACSW?</p>	<p>Registrants are no longer required to upload their credits to the registrant portal. You are required to maintain your own personal competence portfolio in a digital or paper form, including documentation for a period of five (5) years.</p>
<p>Will there be pro-rated credits for registrants who register or re-instate later in the year?</p>	<p>If you register or reinstate after January 31, pro-ration of competence hours will be as follows:</p> <p>January - March – 40 hours April - June – 30 hours July - September – 20 hours October - December – 10 hours.</p> <p>These hours will be divided equally between continuing education and professional engagement activities. You will have 4 weeks from your registration or reinstatement to complete the self-assessment and PD Plan</p>



<p>What are the minimum and/or maximum hour requirements?</p>	<p>All registrants must complete 40 credits annually regardless of employment status, registration status, or register you are on (practice enhancements). You are required to complete 40 hours of professional development with a minimum of 15 hours in each of the two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• continuing education and• professional engagement. <p>The remaining 10 hours can be distributed however you like across the two categories.</p> <p>Further information is available in the Competence Program Guide - ACSW Website</p> <p>If you require further support, please register for a webinar: Changes to ACSW's Continuing Competence Program! Join us to learn more. - ACSW Website</p>
<p>How can I enter activities that I have not yet completed?</p>	<p>The Competence Program requires you to outline your goals for the year and to identify possible types of activities that could support those goals. Think of these as placeholders. This can be broad and exploratory. We do <i>not</i> expect you to predict the exact sessions they will take or to pre-plan all 40 hours in January. You are <i>not</i> required to identify specific workshops, conferences, or scheduled training events in your January submission and you do not need to have all the activities completed by January 31st.</p> <p>We recognize that many learning opportunities are announced only a few weeks or months in advance, and that social workers' learning needs often shift based on emerging practice issues, client needs, and workplace realities. The program is intentionally designed to be flexible and responsive, not prescriptive.</p> <p>A few key points for reassurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your plan can include general categories of learning (e.g., workshop, certificate, other.) rather than specific events.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are unsure of a date or the number of hours you can leave the start date empty and you can enter the number of hours based upon the total competence hours required.• You are free to update your plan throughout the year (Feb-Dec) as new opportunities arise or as your goals evolve.• The purpose of the January submission is to encourage intentional goal-setting, not to lock anyone into sessions that haven't even been scheduled yet. <p>For additional support, please register for a webinar: Changes to ACSW's Continuing Competence Program! Join us to learn more. - ACSW Website</p>
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MAINTAINING A PORTFOLIO

<p>In the former program, registrants could write a paragraph for our portfolio on activities completed. Is that still a way to show "evidence"?</p>	<p>It will be up to you to determine what evidence you want to put in your portfolio to support your learning activity. Evidence could include a self-reflection about the learning, it could be a certificate, a paragraph about the activity etc. that will be up to you. Refer to the Competence Program guide for additional information.</p>
<p>How do I upload my documents?</p>	<p>You do not upload anything to the registrant portal related to competence. You maintain all your competence related documents in your own personal digital or paper portfolio.</p> <p>You will need to use your personal judgment and discretion in deciding how you document and keep evidence of completed learning activities.</p> <p>Further information about portfolios is available in the competence program guide.</p> <p>Please find links below to additional resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The competence program guide: Competence Program Guide - ACSW Website



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a professional portfolio guidance document: Portfolio ACSW
TEMPORARY LEAVES	
During a temporary leave, such as maternity/parental, sick leave, or unexpected life event are RSWs still required to meet 40 credit hours?	<p>All registered social workers, whether they have an active or inactive registration status are required to complete the competence requirements.</p> <p>In some circumstances a change to the requirements may be approved. Please refer to the accommodation and exception policy.</p> <p>Working outside the scope of social work practice is not a reason for non-participation in the competence program.</p>
Do I qualify for an exception?	<p>Please review the policy and forms which are available here: (https://acsw.ab.ca/registrants/annual-renewal/competence-program/#1746919562126-f445aa01-9b06)</p> <p>If your circumstance meets our criteria, please submit a completed request form. Please provide us with enough information to support the proposal you are suggesting regarding your competence requirements so that we can make a reasoned decision. We do not require reports from physicians. Please email competence@acsw.ab.ca to submit your completed request form or if you require additional information.</p>
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS	
Do case reviews with other social work colleagues count in the professional engagement category?	<p>The intent of professional engagement is to connect with other social workers. In determining whether this activity would be acceptable consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the purpose of the case review?• What is the opportunity within the case review to talk about social work standards, ethical principles and practices?



<p>Will mentorship and training of new staff count, even if they are not social workers?</p>	<p>Supervision and mentorship of social workers will be counted, but not supervision of other staff. The intent of professional engagement is to engage with other social workers to talk about practice related issues, the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.</p>
<p>How do I determine whether an activity is professional engagement or continuing education?</p>	<p>Further information is available in the program guide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competence Program Guide Competence Program Guide - ACSW Website• Guidance document: Is this continuing education or professional engagement: Understanding What's What <p>If you require further support, please register for a webinar: Changes to ACSW's Continuing Competence Program! Join us to learn more. - ACSW Website</p>
QUALITY ASSURANCE/AUDITS	
<p>Will the competence self-assessment be reviewed by someone at ACSW?</p>	<p>A component of the competence program is quality assurance audits and program compliance. This is an important part of ACSW's public protection mandate and in ensuring that registrants are competent, safe and ethical in their practice and service provision to Albertans. ACSW staff will be reviewing the competence self-assessments and professional development plans as part of our mandate and as part of our ongoing quality and process improvement processes.</p>
COMPLETING THE COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS	
<p>How do I know if I have submitted my self-assessment successfully?</p>	<p>Within 24 hours of successful submission, you will receive an email to the email address listed on your registrant profile.</p>



<p>Can I obtain a PDF copy of my submission?</p>	<p>Yes. After a successful submission, a PDF version will automatically be generated and saved as a report under “My Documents.”</p> <p>Please note that each new submission will overwrite the previously saved version. If you wish to retain copies of multiple submissions, you will need to download or print each version and keep them for your personal records.</p>
<p>I am having trouble submitting. What should I do?</p>	<p>There are a variety of reasons that you may not be able to submit. Please review your work to ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A goal is required for both continuing education and professional engagement• Each goal you create must have a related activity• All goals and activities require data in the field – if you added an extra goal or activity by mistake, delete it using the red garbage can icon on the right-hand side• Have you saved your changes before clicking submit?• ‘Activity in Progress and will be Carried over’ is used for activities with a formal start date in one competence year and an end date the next (2027)• If you have chosen complete and chosen to do the reflection questions, you must complete all the questions <p>Please review the step-by-step video Continuing Competence Program - ACSW Website for additional support or register for a webinar: Changes to ACSW's Continuing Competence Program! Join us to learn more. - ACSW Website</p>