

History



Incorporated in 1979 as the American Association of State Social Work Boards (AASSWB), the organization was founded to develop an effective examination to measure minimum competency of entry-level social work practitioners to help social work regulatory boards carry out their mission of public protection. The association gave its first social work licensing exam in 1983 to 464 social workers in New York, Virginia, and Oklahoma. Today more than 50,000 candidates test annually.

The organization changed its name to the Association of Social Work Boards in 1999, its 20th anniversary year, to be more inclusive of its international membership that included at that time the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Canadian province of Alberta. By 2010, all ten Canadian provinces had joined the association. In 2014, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands joined ASWB. In 2016, California rejoined after a 17-year absence, bringing membership to its current number of 64 regulatory boards.

As the needs of social work boards have grown, the organization has responded with additional resources and services, such as forums where regulators and board staff members from different jurisdictions can connect with one another, training for new regulators and board staff, research services, and a model law and model regulatory standards for technology in social work practice to help boards and legislators develop consistent regulation across jurisdictions as they move toward greater social work practice mobility. To assist with members' practice mobility efforts, ASWB maintains a website, movingsocialwork.org, devoted to this important initiative.

Other ASWB initiatives include the Path to Licensure, a program designed to help social work faculty teach aspiring social workers about licensure. More than a quarter of the schools currently accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) are engaged with Path in some way. In conjunction with Path, CSWE published the *Curricular Guide on Licensing and Regulation* (2018), connecting these topics to the nine Education Policies and Accreditation Standards that schools of social work must meet to become and remain accredited.

ASWB's strategic framework for 2022–2023 focuses on the goals of expanding understanding and acceptance of the necessity for assessing social work competencies; positioning ASWB to be more inclusive, accessible, and responsive; and monitoring and responding to the regulatory landscape to strengthen consistent standards across all jurisdictions. The organization's long-term vision is that all social workers are licensed in order to protect clients and client systems.

Today ASWB is a vibrant, thriving organization. Construction of a new headquarters in Culpeper, Virginia, was completed in 2020. The building reflects ASWB values of openness and collaboration. It was designed as a green project and a business showcase in which both ASWB and community developers can take great pride.