THE VIRGINIA BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK
REGULATORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Friday, February 24, 2012

The Regulatory Committee of the Virginia Board of Social Work ("Board") convened at 10:05 a.m. on Friday, February 24, 2012, at the Department of Health Professions, 9960 Mayland Drive, Richmond, Virginia. Yvonne Haynes, Chair called the meeting to order.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Yvonne Haynes, Chair
Jennifer Blosser
Willie T. Greene, Sr.
Susan Horne-Quatannens
Patricia Smith-Solan

STAFF PRESENT: Catherine Chappell, Acting Executive Director
Sarah Georgen, Administrative Assistant
Patricia L. Larimer, Deputy Executive Director – Discipline
Elaine Yeatts, Senior Policy Analyst

ORDERING OF AGENDA

Ms. Haynes opened the floor to any changes in the order of the Agenda. Ms. Chappell requested that the Committee discuss Title Protection regarding unlawful designation as a social worker. The agenda was accepted as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Committee received public comment from Debra Riggs, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Virginia Chapter who asked that a letter be included in the meeting minutes as attached.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 28, 2011 Board Meeting

Ms. Horne-Quatannens moved that the minutes of the October 15, 2010, meeting be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Greene and passed.

TITLE PROTECTION

Ms. Yeatts noted that the upcoming Title Protection law §54.1-3709 which will become effective on July 1, 2013, may impact the Board with an increase in applications for licensure.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED L.M.S.W. LICENSURE

The Committee discussed the possible implementation of a master's-level social work license (L.M.S.W.) as an option to individuals who may not intend to seek clinical level licensure, but wish licensure higher than the Licensed Social Worker level. Ms. Haynes requested that Board staff receive more information

from the Association of Social Work Boards ("ASWB") regarding the benefits of this licensure by other states and asked that the Committee further discuss this at the next Regulatory Committee Meeting.

DISCUSSION OF DISTANCE THERAPY

The Committee discussed adding language to the Regulations regarding distance therapy between a Virginia licensee and a client in another jurisdiction. The need for clarification of distance therapy and distance supervision is a growing national trend, attributed to movement of clients with temporary work assignments, lack of providers/supervisors in rural communities, and the rapid growth of "electronic-world" communications.

The Committee expressed concern about the confidentiality of online therapy sessions. Ms. Chappell noted that the Board of Counseling has provided a guidance document on "Technology-Assisted Counseling and Technology-Assisted Supervision" and stated that it is the responsibility of the counselor to protect client confidentiality.

Ms. Haynes asked that this issue be further discussed by the full Board at the next Board meeting.

DISCUSSION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Committee reviewed the CE requirements regarding face-to-face contact hours, as requested by Ms. Horne-Quatannens.

The Committee discussed the option of requiring a minimum amount of face-to-face CE hours. Ms. Haynes requested Board counsel input regarding creating a guidance document regarding the acceptability, quality and competency of CE hours.

The matter will be further discussed at the next Regulatory Committee meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Ms. Haynes requested that the next meeting of the Regulatory Committee be scheduled for April 20, 2012 immediately following the Board of Social Work Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

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Yvonne Haynes, Chair

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Catherine Chappell, Acting Executive Director

Summary of Statement to
Regulatory Committee of Virginia Board of Social Work
Re: Licensure Requirements for LCSWs
February 24, 2012

Debra A. Riggs, Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers, Virginia Chapter

The purpose of my statement today is to address the effect of changes over the past several years to the regulations, guidelines and application process for state licensure of Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

We are calling this to your attention because NASW-VA believes that the Board of Social Work has acted with the intent to protect and serve the public. We want to be sure that the Board is aware of the unintended and detrimental consequences of these changes.

In particular, I will highlight five issues of concern to Virginia's social work licensees, applicants, and students. These issues have been identified through conversation with numerous NASW members –experienced social workers both in- and out-of-state and recent graduates – as well as the 900 responses to our June 2011 Licensing survey.

- Social work students in MSW programs at Virginia universities and elsewhere do not know what combination of courses will meet the requirements for clinical licensure in Virginia. This does not serve the best interests of the public, including Virginia's social work students and our institutions of higher learning.
- The requirements to meet the definition of *social work practice in a clinical setting* are not clear. Social workers in Virginia who have worked in good faith, over a period of years, toward clinical licensure are now informed that their clinical experience in previously acceptable placements does not meet the current licensure requirements.
- Experienced out of state applicants are also encountering confusion and unwarranted obstacles to obtaining licensure in Virginia.
- The Board has not clearly articulated the current standards for review of LCSW applications nor has it identified the minimum qualifications of the reviewers.
- Common concerns with the administration of the LCSW application process include lengthy delays in response, recurring requests by the Board staff for additional information, lack of transparency, and apparent inconsistency in application reviews.

The impact of these flaws in the current LCSW licensure process is illustrated by the growing number of calls and emails NASW-VA receives from applicants and students, and even more starkly by the dramatic decline in the acceptance of LCSW applications. After reviewing past minutes from the Credentials Committee, it appears that currently, only about only about five percent of the applications reviewed each quarter, or four applications per year are accepted for the LCSW. This decline is already having a profound effect on students and other clinical social workers seeking to practice in the state; and even doubling the acceptance rate would produce far too few LCSWs to adequately serve Virginians in the years to come.

Although we realize that not all social workers qualify for the LCSW nor should be, NASWVA urgently requests action by this Committee and by the Board of Social Work to neutralize these unintended consequences, immediately and for the long term. Thank you for your consideration.