

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Board of Social Work Examiners
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2022



Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing
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**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Table of Contents

Identification of the Board	Page 1
Identification of the Staff	Page 2
Narrative Statement	Page 3
Budget Recommendations	Page 4
Proposed Legislative Recommendations	Page 10
Regulatory Recommendations	Page 11
Goals and Objectives	Page 12
Sunset Audit Recommendations	Page 15

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Identification of the Board

Board Member	Duty Station	Date Appointed	Term Expires
Brandon Ercanbrack Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Kotzebue	Jul 25, 2019	Mar 1, 2024
Sharon Woodward Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker	Juneau	Mar 8, 2021	Mar 1, 2026
Ann Applebee Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Anchorage	May 25, 2022	Mar 1, 2025
Gabriel King Public Member	North Pole	Jun 25, 2021	Mar 1, 2023
Geoffry McCormick Licensed Master Social Worker	Fairbanks	May 14, 2018	Mar 1, 2022
Mindy Swisher Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Fairbanks	Apr 2, 2019	Mar 1, 2022

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Identification of Staff

Stefanie Davis - Licensing Examiner

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**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Narrative Statement

The Board of Social Work Examiners is staffed by the Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing. The Board consists of licensed social workers and one public member. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature.

The primary function of the Board of Social Work Examiners is protection of the public, which is accomplished by adopting regulations to carry out laws governing the practice of social work in Alaska. The board makes final licensing decisions and takes disciplinary action against people who violate licensing laws.

During FY2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) there have been changes to the membership of the board. The board is currently comprised of three licensed social workers and one public member position. In March the former board chair left, and a new board chair was appointed. There was also one other board member that left. In FY2022 the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners held four regular scheduled meetings. These were all via Zoom. There are plans to hold an in person meeting later in the year.

With the ongoing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alaska State Board of Social Work Examiners will continue to work to remove barriers for licensees. There will be some changes to the required continuing education needed for licensure. Due to the emergence of telecommunication, telehealth, licensees may be required to have telehealth continued education with their initial application.

The board continues to work to identify outdated regulations and opportunities for improvement. The Right Touch Regulation Project will be readdressed. With the Administrative Order recently received this will be a priority.

The board is planning an in person in September to complete the renewal continuing education audit. Also, due to an increase in investigative cases the board is looking at developing a disciplinary matrix. Board members are able to attend trainings through the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), a nonprofit association of social work boards in the United States and Canada.

The board activities include but are not limited to reviewing applications for licensure, auditing continuing education credits, reviewing supervisor requests, reviewing requests for extension exam time, approving continuing education trainings, and writing regulation. Finally, the board works collaboratively with the Board Investigator to review licensing complaints and act on cases brought forward for determination.

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023

Budget Recommendations section anticipates the board's fiscal priorities for the upcoming year. Please complete all parts of this section with details about anticipated meetings, conferences, memberships, supplies, equipment, to other board requests. Meeting expenses that are being funded through third-party reimbursement or direct booking must be identified separately from expenses paid through license fees (receipt-supported services or RSS). Be sure to explain any items listed as "other" so they may be tracked appropriately.

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
September 13-14, 2022	Anchorage	3	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 1,045.90
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 1,200.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 200.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:			\$ 1,000.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 3,445.90

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
January 2023 TBD	Juneau	3	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			\$ 2,000.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			\$ 2,000.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			\$ 200.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:			\$ 1,000.00
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 5,200.00

Board Meeting Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Airfare:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
Total Estimated Cost:			\$ 0.00

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023 (continued)

Travel Required to Perform Examinations

Not Applicable

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

- Airfare:
- Hotel:
- Ground:
- Conference:
- Other:

Total Estimated Cost:

\$ 0.00

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023 (continued)

Out-of-State Meetings and Additional In-State Travel (Rank in order of importance)

#1 Rank in Importance or Not Applicable

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
Sept. 15-17, 2022	Alexandria, Virginia	3	0

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

The Association of Social Work Boards New Board Members Training is vital to new board members in understanding their roles as Social Work Regulators. Training topics including: roles and responsibilities of board regulators/members, licensure exams, advocacy of board members, political realities of the board, adjudication/discipline/enforcement and other current regulatory issues. Board members will network with other members to learn best practicing standards that work throughout the various states. New board members are invited to attend the training at no cost to the board.

Expenditure	License Fees (RSS)	Third-Party Reimbursement	Third-Party Direct Booked	Total
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airfare:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground:	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference:				\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	\$0.00	\$720.00	\$0.00	\$720.00
Describe "Other" (break out all sections): Meals				
Net Total:	\$ 0.00	\$ 870.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,870.00

Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023 (continued)

Out-of-State Meetings and Additional In-State Travel

#2 Rank in Importance

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
November 17-19, 2022	Scottsdale, Arizona	4	1

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

The Association of Social Work Boards Annual Meeting of the Delegates Assembly. The Assembly provides board members with developing long-range regulatory goals and provides the latest information in regulatory research. This three-day meeting includes Board member exchanges where board members have the opportunity to interact with other members of ASWB and where member boards and colleges share experiences in a self-structured session designed to support ongoing regulatory leadership development. The meeting also includes an Administrative Forum which is intended for staff of ASWB member boards and colleagues, with the focus of the meeting primarily on administrative processes and issues. The intent of the meeting is to give staff an opportunity to discuss issues with other administrators doing the same type of work. ASWB offers scholarships at no cost to the board.

Expenditure	License Fees (RSS)	Third-Party Reimbursement	Third-Party Direct Booked	Total
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airfare:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground:	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference:				\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	\$0.00	\$540.00	\$0.00	\$540.00
Describe "Other" (break out all sections): Meals				
Net Total:	\$ 0.00	\$ 615.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,615.00

Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023 (continued)

Out-of-State Meetings and Additional In-State Travel

#3 Rank in Importance

Date	Location	# Board	# Staff
TBD Spring 2023	TBD	1	1

Description of meeting and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

The Association of Social Work Boards Spring Education Conference provides board members with developing long-range regulatory goals. Topics have included continuing competence, social work practice mobility and working with legislators. ASWB offers scholarships at no cost to the board.

Expenditure	License Fees (RSS)	Third-Party Reimbursement	Third-Party Direct Booked	Total
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airfare:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground:	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference:				\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	\$0.00	\$450.00	\$0.00	\$450.00
Describe "Other" (break out all sections):				
Net Total:	\$ 0.00	\$ 525.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,025.00

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Budget Recommendations for FY 2023 (continued)

Non-Travel Budget Requests

- Not Applicable Resources Examinations
 Membership Training Other

Product or Service	Provider	Cost Per Event
Membership	Association of Social Work Boards	\$500.00

Description of item and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

The Association of Social Work Boards provides the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners with trainings and guidance on the regulation of social work practice to include: comparison studies of the blueprint of successful boards within other states and national examinations for licensees. In addition, ASWB has created a rigorous review process for social work continuing education, called the ACE program. This simplifies the process for our licensees in finding approved continuing education activities.

Other Items with a Fiscal Impact

- Not Applicable

Cost Per Event:

Number of Events:

Product or Service	Provider	Cost Per Event

Description of item and its role in supporting the mission of the Board:

Summary of FY 2023 Fiscal Requests

Board Meetings and Teleconferences:	\$8,645.90
Travel for Exams:	\$0.00
Out-of-State and Additional In-State Travel:	\$18,510.00
Dues, Memberships, Resources, Training:	\$500.00
Total Potential Third-Party Offsets:	- \$18,510.00
Other:	\$0.00
Total Requested:	\$9,145.90

Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report

Legislative Recommendations - Proposed Legislation for FY 2023

No Recommendations

The Board has no recommendations for proposed legislation at this time.

Recommendations

The Board has the following recommendations for proposed legislation:

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners would like to respectfully recommend legislative changes be made to current statutes that would allow an employee of the department designated by the board to issue a license when it is clear that the applicant has met all the requirements as outlined in statute. Recently the Board and department staff have created a simplified checklist following statute that creates a simple and easy way to determine if someone has met all the requirements for licensure. It is the Boards belief that this will streamline the licensing process for several applications, leaving only those applications that require professional review to be approved by the Board. This will greatly decrease the turnaround time from time of application to issuance of license. This proposal is also in accordance with Administrative Order 335 issued on May 23, 2022, by Governor Mike Dunleavy.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners would also like to recommend that legislative changes be made to current statute to change the verbiage “clinical social worker” to “licensed clinical social worker”. This change would allow Alaska Statute to be consistent with several other states who refer to the same license level as a “licensed clinical social worker”. This could help Board members and department staff in easily determining equivalence for those applying for licensure by credentials.

Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report

Regulation Recommendations - Proposed Regulations for FY 2023

No Recommendations

The Board has no recommendations for proposed regulations at this time.

Recommendations

The Board has the following recommendations for proposed regulations:

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners completed the Right Touch Regulation Project in January 2020. The board proposed several regulation changes. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the Right Touch Regulation Project was put on hold. It is the intention of the Board to finish this project for the upcoming fiscal year.

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives

Part I

FY 2022's goals and objectives and how they were met:

Public protection will continue to be the goal of this board. Face-to-face/in-person meetings ensure less distraction, instant feedback and creates strong bonds between board members. The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners will continue to advocate for in-person meetings and work with the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing to complete its duties.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners continued to take guidance from the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing and the State of Alaska regarding current COVID rules and restrictions. To date all of the board meetings have been via Zoom in the FY 22. Unfortunately, we have also seen a high turnover rate with board members during this time period. As we work to fill those positions it will be much more efficacious to meet in-person to get new board members up to speed. This will allow better use of visual aides and explanations that are not as easily explained with Zoom.

The board will continue to review upcoming legislation, evaluate the need for additional licensure types including teletherapy practice.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners through the help of the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing was made aware of legislation that could affect their licensing body. The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners was available to offer their expertise and opinion in all legislative matters.

Continue to maintain financial stability.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners has been able to maintain financial stability through the FY22. However, it was noted on reports provided by the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing staff that investigative costs have been steadily increasing. As a preventative measure, the Board sent out a letter to all of it's licensing body reminding them of the importance of ethical practice which in turn can lower these costs.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners will maintain a full board with all positions filled.

As stated above this goal was not reached and the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners experienced a high turnover in board members. We are grateful for those board members who had served and wish them the best in their future plans. Hopefully, these positions will be filled in the upcoming fiscal year. As an added note, a checklist document was created for new board members to assist in learning how to review and approve applications in a timely manner.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners will create a disciplinary matrix.

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners received a copy of a disciplinary matrix used by another state to review and start the creation of their own disciplinary matrix. Unfortunately, due to high turnover in board members this project was not completed yet.

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives (continued)

Part II

FY 2023's goals and objectives, and proposed methods to achieve them.

Describe any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and required resources:

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners will look for ways to reduce licensing delays in accordance with Administrative Order 335 issued by Governor Dunleavy on May 20, 2022.

Strengths: The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners has already had discussion on how to streamline the licensing process and eliminate unnecessary or redundant steps in the licensing process (see Legislative Recommendations section).

Weaknesses: The Board of Social Work Examiners has experienced turnover which has made it hard to maintain consistency on the board.

Opportunities: The board has the opportunity to make regulation changes when necessary that will expedite the licensing process.

Threats: There continues to be discussion about making a combined mental health professional licensing board. This would involve combining with other boards that do not have the same Statutes and Regulations as this board. It would also require more administrative and investigative costs. In Administrative Order 335 issued on May 20, 2022, it stated that we should "empower CPBL to focus on mission critical tasks". Combining boards would only add a long list of monumental tasks to be completed by an already overburdened staff. It is counterintuitive to streamlining the licensing process.

Required resources: The board will need responsive Legislators who will work with the Board and Division staff to make the necessary corrections/changes to Alaska Statutes

Continue to maintain financial stability with fees being adjusted as necessary.

Strengths: The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners will continue to work with the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing to conduct financial audits and adjust licensing fees as appropriate.

Weaknesses: There appears to be licensing complaints requiring more time of board members and Division staff. This additional time comes with the increased costs for Division staff members to address those issues.

Opportunities: The board has the opportunity to adjust the licensing fees when determined necessary and to maintain a sustainable budget.

Threats: As stated above, there is discussion of making a combined mental health professional licensing board. On the surface this may seem to be the more fiscally responsible move, however, the unintended consequences could easily outweigh the initial perceived benefit. As stated this will require an enormous amount of Division staff time and resources to make this happen. It could also create more of a burden on board members as they will then have to review investigative issues of additional license types.

Required resources: The board will need to remain fiscally responsible and consider the cost associated with board actions and/or decisions. Additionally, the Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing will need to continue to supply the board with a division update that includes the schedule of revenues and expenditures for the board to review during scheduled board meetings.

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives (continued)

Part II (continued)

FY 2023's goals and objectives, and proposed methods to achieve them.

Describe any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and required resources:

The Alaska Board of Social Worker Examiners will maintain a full board with all positions filled.

Strengths: The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners remains active in its commitment to maintain a full board at all times. Upon seat vacancy, board members often reach out to their colleagues to notify them of an available position on the board.

Weaknesses: Seat positions are filled through the Office of the Governor/Boards and Commissions and the board is notified of a newly appointed board member via CBPL staff. The board is not directly involved in this process. Various board members have advised the board that upon appointment they received little information about the duties, workload, and time requirements of the board. This has caused board members to relinquish their positions due to an inability to fulfill the needs of the board.

Opportunities: This creates the opportunity for the current board members to work more closely with the Office of the Governor/Boards and Commissions in selecting new board members. It also creates the opportunity to create a more streamlined and educationally focused onboarding process for new board members.

Threats: The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners is an ongoing active board that requires significant commitment from voluntary board members. This includes but is not limited to traveling, taking personal leave from work for board meetings, regularly reviewing applications, complaints, and special requests, drafting regulations, etc. When new board members are not fully informed of the required commitments prior to appointment they may be unable fulfill their duties, leaving the bulk of the workload on the remaining board members, resulting in delayed service delivery, burnout, frustration, and unwillingness to continue serving on the board.

Required Resources: The Boards and Commissions' staff who are responsible for the vetting process should fully inform potential board members of the commitments of the board members to ensure that these duties can be fulfilled.

The Alaska Board of Social Worker Examiners will create a disciplinary matrix.

Strengths: The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners has received training by Division staff assigned to investigate license violations. Newer board members have now had the opportunity to complete disciplinary reviews and gain experience on the process.

Weaknesses: Often there is not a clear disciplinary path when reviewing possible license violations.

Opportunities: This creates the opportunity for the current board members to continue to create a disciplinary matrix as seen in other licensing boards. This would ensure more uniformity and consistency in disciplinary actions. It would also alleviate much of the stress on board members who are trying to make the best decision in such cases. It would allow for future board members to be able to quickly learn how to complete those reviews.

Threats: Any significant changes to statutes and regulations could hinder this process. Also, if there is high turnover with Division staff and/or board members, it could slow the process down. Not being able to meet in person to create the matrix could unnecessarily extend the completion date.

Required Resources: The board will more than likely require some guidance from the investigative staff within the Division and possible the Department of Law.

**Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2022 Annual Report**

Sunset Audit Recommendations

Date of Last Legislative Audit: 10/24/2017

Board Sunset Date: 06/30/2026

Audit Recommendation:

DCBPL's director should improve procedures to ensure board-required documentation is obtained prior to licensure. One of 25 licenses tested as part of the audit did not contain sufficient evidence that the licensee had met regulatory requirements. The Board of Social Work Examiners appropriately approved licensure pending receipt of key documentation. However, the license was issued without obtaining proper documentation by DCBPL staff, resulting in noncompliance with regulatory requirements. Licensing a person that has not met the requirements for licensure increases the risk to public safety. According to AS 08.01.050(a)(3), (9), and (14), DCBPL is responsible for overseeing the licensing activity for the board. The audit identified a lack of procedures to ensure board-required documentation is received prior to licensure. We recommend DCBPL's director improve procedures to ensure board-required documentation is obtained prior to licensure. Additionally, corrective action should be taken to address the noncompliant licensee.

Action Taken:

The board has met with the licensee and after obtaining more information and reviewing the regulations the board notified the licensee that she did not meet the licensing requirements. The board chair drafted a letter to send to the licensee on 7/19/2019 and is awaiting response from division staff.

Next Steps:

Awaiting response from division staff.

Complete : **No** **Yes** **If yes, date completed:**

Audit Recommendation:

The Office of the Governor, Boards and Commissions director should work with the board to identify potential applicants for the board's vacant clinical social worker position. One clinical social worker position on the board became vacant March 2017 and remained vacant through October 2017. Per AS 08.95.010(a), the board is statutorily required to consist of five members appointed by the governor, including two clinical social workers. One of the five board members must be a social worker who is not employed by a federal, state, or local government or a federally tax-exempt non-profit organization. According to Boards and Commissions staff, the stringent requirements make it difficult to find qualified applicants. The lack of a clinical social worker may limit the board from conducting business with appropriate professional input and perspective. The Office of the Governor, Boards and Commissions section is responsible for actively recruiting, interviewing, and vetting board applicants. The board is in the unique position to help identify potential applicants. We recommend the Boards and Commissions director work with the board to identify potential applicants for the board's vacant clinical social worker position.

Action Taken:

As of April 2019, there are no vacancies on the board.

Next Steps:

None.

Complete : **No** **Yes** **If yes, date completed:** 4/2/2019