

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2020

Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners



**Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development**

**Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing**

This annual performance report is presented in accordance with
Alaska statute AS 08.01.070(10).

Its purpose is to report the accomplishments, activities, and the
past and present needs of the licensing program.

**Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners
FY 2020 Annual Report**

Table of Contents

Identification of the Board	Page 3
Identification of the Staff	Page 4
Narrative Statement	Page 4
Budget Recommendations	Page 5
Proposed Legislative Recommendations	Page 11
Regulatory Recommendations	Page 12
Goals and Objectives	Page 13
Sunset Audit Recommendations	Page 16

**Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners
Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives

Part I

FY 2020's goals and objectives, and how they were met:

- 1) 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 advocate for in-person meetings during FY2020. The January 2020 in-person meeting was denied however the board chair wrote a letter to the Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing Division Director explaining the value and importance of holding an in-person meeting for the Right Touch Regulation Project. As a result the board was able to meet its goal of completing the project and moving it forward.

- 2) The board will continue collaborative relationships to strengthen current partnerships with other agencies.**

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners has partially accomplished this goal. The board chair has provided the "Path to Licensure" training to the 2020 UAF social work graduates. The board has not worked to strengthen its relationships with NASW-AK and UAA.

- 3) Continue to maintain financial stability with fees being adjusted as necessary.**

The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners has maintained its surplus and worked with the Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing to set appropriate fees to maintain its surplus. Due to COVID-19 the fees were not increased for the 2020 renewal cycle therefore the board will need to remain fiscally conservative to offset this procedure.

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

The board has completed this goal; a full board was maintained through FY2020.

**Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners
Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives

Part II

FY 2021's goals and objectives, and proposed methods to achieve them.

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

1) 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 ~~Pages 11~~ relationships 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.

- **Strengths:** The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners is committed to public protection by applying the statutes and regulations appropriately and ensuring that licensees meet the requirements for initial licensing and/or renewal. Additionally, the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners works with the Department of Law to review complaint investigations and provide advisement as to whether a licensee is practicing within their code of ethics and adhering to the statutes and regulations. This practice allows the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners to safeguard the public from unethical and/or unlawful practice.
- **Weaknesses:** The board has agreed that in-person board meetings are the most effective way for the board to conduct business. The ability for in-person meetings has been threatened by the delayed approval of travel and/or denial of travel by the state department.
- **Opportunities:** The board has worked to identify issues that may arise during in-person board meetings that distract the board from completing board business including cellphone usage, tardiness, ineffective use of board time, etc. In an effort to minimize these distractions and maximize the use of meeting times the board has drafted a guideline of expectations for board members to adhere to during board meetings. An additional opportunity may be the Division's investment in a sufficient program that allows for effective distance delivery meeting opportunities. Finally, the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners may seek opportunity to present at the NASW-AK biannual conference in September to provide an overview of the role of the board and review statutes and regulations.
- **Threats:** Threats to the board's ability to meet this goal include state travel restrictions, board member travel restrictions, and poor performance by board members.
- **Required Resources:** The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners is a financially self-sustaining board. The board will need to maintain a fiscally responsible budget in order to support the cost of in-person meetings.

2) The board will continue collaborative relationships to strengthen current partnerships with other agencies.

- **Strengths:** The board has maintained a strong relationship with the Association of Social Work Boards. This relationship allows the board to participate in unique training opportunities that strengthens their operations and knowledge. Additionally, ASWB provides the Alaska Board of Social Work examiners with regulatory guidance and interstate collaborations for social work licensure mobility practices.
- **Weaknesses:** The board does not have a relationship with the National Association of Social Workers due to a lack of in-state NASW-AK representatives.
- **Opportunities:** ASWB hosts meetings and training opportunities throughout the year. A representative from the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners attends these training events in order to strengthen the board's understanding of social work regulation and ensure effective training for board members and staff. The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners may elect to assign a board member liaison to attempt to develop a relationship with the NASW-AK chapter. Additionally, the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners may have future opportunity to present at the NASW held biannually.
- **Threats:** Travel restrictions may prevent the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners from taking part in the above listed opportunities.
- **Required Resources:** The Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners is a financially self-sustaining board. The board will need to maintain a fiscally responsible budget in order to support the cost of in-person meetings.

**Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners
Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report**

Goals and Objectives (continued)

Part II (continued)

FY 2021's goals and objectives, and proposed methods to achieve them.

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

3) 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:** Fees were not increased as proposed by the division due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Opportunities:** The board has the opportunity to adjust the licensing fees when determined necessary and maintain a sustainable budget.
- **Threats:** A significant cost to the board could financially devastate that board's operating budget and cause licensing fees to rise to an unmanageable level. If this happens licensees may elect to forgo licensing renewal resulting in a financial crisis that may prevent the board from continued operations.
- **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.

4) 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 his 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 DCBPL 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:** The board chair sent a letter to the Boards and Commissions staff October 2018 to notify them of the issue with lack of information prior to appointment and how this was affecting the board's ability to function effectively. A response was received from the Boards and Commissions staff with a commitment to better inform candidates however it was explained that as staff transition through positions this may not always occur. An additional response was received from DCBPL staff notifying the chair that they are working on drafting an informative document that will provide board members with clarification of their duties and responsibilities.
- **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.

**Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners
Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report**

Sunset Audit Recommendations

Date of Last Legislative Audit: October 24, 2017
Board Sunset Date: June 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.

Date Completed: TBD

Sunset Audit Recommendations (continued)

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

Date Completed: April 02, 2019