





STATE OF NEVADA  
**BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**  
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To: Senator Spearman, Chair  
Legislative Committee on Healthcare

From: Sandy Lowey, LCSW, LADC  
Interim Executive Director

Date: December 31, 2017

Re: Reporting per AB457

Per AB457, the Board of Examiners for Social Workers (Board) has conducted an analysis of the following items

- The necessity of the costs of the Board;
- Whether the fees charged by the Board are necessary and sufficient to pay those costs;
- The need for revision of the regulations of the Board;
- Recognition of licenses from jurisdictions outside of this state (endorsement); and
- Efforts to comply with the amendatory provisions of the act.

In 2017, the Board processed 3106 applications for initial licensure and renewal. Initial licensure is granted via examination or endorsement from another jurisdiction. In 2017, the Board endorsed 102 licenses from jurisdictions outside of this state. As the table below shows, the Board has almost doubled the number of licenses via endorsement issued in the prior two years and the majority of these licensees are Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs). As of December 31, 2017, Nevada has 2906 licensed social workers. In addition, there are currently over 200 social workers in post-graduate clinical internships, which can lead to a LCSW license.

Unfortunately, for every license issued, the state continues to lose social workers and this year saw the loss of 293 licensed social workers, the highest number in the last nine years. The Board continues to work with statewide stakeholders in workforce development activities to increase the number of social workers in our state.

<b>2017 – Applications</b>	
Applications for Licensure by examination	423
Applications for Licensure via endorsement	117
Applications for Renewal of Licensure	2566
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3106</b>

<b>Endorsed Licenses Granted</b>	
2015	53
2016	57
2017	102

The Board is a self-funded entity, receiving no money from the state's General Fund. Our budget is based on the fees that are collected annually. Fees limits for the Board are set through the legislature in NRS 641B. The following table shows the when the fee ceilings were set by the legislature, how the fees were administered through the NACs and the status of the fee ceilings at this time.

	Fee Ceilings – Legislature (NRS)			Fee Implementation – Board (NAC)				Current
	1987	1993	1995	Before 1994	1998	2002	2014	2017
<b>LSW / LASW</b>								
Application fee	25.00		40.00	25.00	40.00			At Ceiling
Initial issuance of license	100.00			50.00	60.00	75.00	100.00	At Ceiling
Renewal	150.00			50.00	60.00	75.00	100.00	
Restoration of revoked license	100.00		150.00	100.00	150.00			At Ceiling
Endorsement	100.00			100.00	100.00			At Ceiling
Initial issuance of provisional license		75.00		50.00	60.00			At Ceiling
Restoration of expired license			200.00		150.00		200.00	At Ceiling
Restoration of delinquent license			100.00		30.00	40.00	100.00	At Ceiling
<b>LCSW / LISW</b>								
Application fee	25.00			25.00	40.00			At Ceiling
Initial issuance of license	100.00			100.00				At Ceiling
Renewal	150.00			100.00	125.00	150.00		At Ceiling
Restoration of revoked license	100.00		150.00	100.00	150.00			At Ceiling
Endorsement	100.00			100.00				At Ceiling
Initial issuance of provisional license		75.00		75.00				At Ceiling
Restoration of expired license			200.00		150.00		200.00	At Ceiling
Restoration of delinquent license			100.00	50.00	60.00	75.00	100.00	At Ceiling

As the table shows, the Legislature has granted several new fee categories and one increase in fee ceilings since the inception of the Board in 1987. In several fee categories, it has taken the Board thirty years to reach the maximum fees allowed by the Legislature.

Based on a fiscal review, the Board is not asking for a global increase in fee ceilings even though all but one category is at its fee maximum. Rather, the Board is requesting consideration of two increases in the fee ceilings established by the Legislature.

1. The Board would like to increase the application fee from \$40.00 to \$100.00. The Social Work Board's application fees are the lowest of all the Occupational Boards. The last increase in the application fees was instituted in 1998.
2. The Board would like to change the initial licensure fee for the LCSW / LISW so that it matches the renewal fee. This would make the fee a consistent \$150.00 annually. This will correct a discrepancy that currently exists in the fee structure in which initial license fees don't match renewal fees for the LCSW/LISW level of licensure.

The fee increases approved in 2014 allowed the Board to begin to set aside money for the legislative mandate to engage in online processing of applications and renewals. Once sufficient funds were available, the Board began to search for a vendor that could provide the services needed to move our existing database into a format that could be managed online, could process renewal applications electronically and could provide online real-time verification of licensure.

In 2016, the Board identified several vendors and at the February 2017 meeting, the Board reviewed three vendors and selected one and authorized the process of contracting. The bid provided for the

entire project was larger than was allowable without going through the state RFP contracting process. The contracting process for projects larger than \$25,000.00 is cumbersome and lengthy. As the Board prepared to move into this process, information regarding the vendor chosen came to light and the Board withdrew the approval. Per AB 457, the Board has fillable forms available for initial licensure on our website. We are, as yet, unable to provide immediate, automatic feedback whether the applicant has submitted all required information. The information in applications is manually entered into our existing database.

We have identified a new vendor and are working with them to provide a bid for services. The Board has the money set aside to pay for the initial build of the eLicensing database and content management system. The Board has some concern about the cost of annual maintenance contracting and a portion of the revenue obtained by increasing the application fee will cover this expense.

If you have any other question, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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### **Cost and Fee Analysis**

The Committee is referred to the Board's current 2-year operating budget, 2016-2018, which is attached as an Appendix to this report. The Board developed a 2-year budget to align with our biennial licensing schedule. Also to allow the Board to evaluate our progress a tentative update has been provided for the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

The Board operates on revenue derived primarily from application, registration, examination, and licensing fees for Psychologists, Behavior Analysts, Behavior Analyst Assistants, Psychological Assistants, and Psychology Interns. Following the passage of SB162 in the 79<sup>th</sup> legislative session, we will begin to charge a fee for the registration of Psychology Trainees. Notably, the licensing fees for Psychologists have not changed in over 20 years.

As reflected in the attached budget summary, The Board is financially stable. Our income covers essential expenses aimed at meeting our mission responsibly and diligently: Payroll for Board Staff, Professional Services (Legal Counsel, Board Lobbyist), Legal Expenses for managing complaints and discipline, Travel for Board Member strategic planning (in-state) and Board Member/Executive Director training and participation in national training conferences (i.e. The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards and The Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation), Office Rent and Operations, Exam Development and Administration. We enter each 2-year budget cycle with reserves and we maintain "rainy day" savings in a CD.

Looking ahead, 2019 will bring reduction in income to the Board as the result of the Behavior Analysts (BA) removal from our mandate and placed under the responsibility of the Division of Aging and Disability Services. The reduction of approximately \$54,000 in income will be balanced with revenue from registration costs of Psychology Trainees as well as a reduction in BA examination development, administration expenses and in-state travel (dedicated to BA-exam administration). Additionally, the administrative costs which were directed towards the BA administration will now be transferred to the registration and application services of all Psychological levels. Additional savings will be explored to minimize the impact of this reduction in income. For example, the Board is exploring the possibility of streamlining procedures for Board staff to save money (e.g. creating on-line registration forms).

### **Efforts to Comply with AB457**

In response to the charge placed by AB457 to implement policies and procedures to recognize licenses from jurisdictions outside of Nevada, The Board established a sub-committee which meets monthly. This committee was charged with evaluating all states (and jurisdictions) to determine the extent to which each state's licensing requirements is equivalent to those in Nevada. The committee developed 3

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lists: 1) States with fully-equivalent licensing requirements (Per NAC 641). Individuals applying with a license from these states will be granted a license by endorsement. 2) States with substantially equivalent licensing requirements but for minor differences in required supervised, direct-service training hours. Individuals applying with a license from these states and 5 years of licensure will be granted a license by endorsement. Without 5 years of licensure, the application requires additional Board review. 3) States with substantially non-equivalent licensing requirements. Individuals applying from these states must complete a full application with the Board. The committee is also charged with the individualized review and evaluation of applicants who come from NON-APA accredited doctoral programs.

Since January 2014, the Board has recognized 80 licensees from jurisdictions outside of Nevada: 32 (or 40%) of which activated immediate and full temporary licensure prior to completing the final requirement of licensure- the state law and ethics examination.

In addition, The Board has taken a number of steps aimed at meeting the provisions of AB457 including but not limited to

- Meeting with employees of DHHS, and the mental health commission to receive clarification of the expectations of this Act. As well, our Board Executive Director has worked closely with representatives of the other mental and behavioral boards to share and receive information.
- In these meetings all parties discussed operations that would be beneficial: sharing ideas regarding streamlining office procedures, cutting costs, meeting necessary guidelines and increasing online access for applications, renewals and payment.
- Our Executive Director has begun to work with our current database developers to utilize the online renewal process that was built into the original database. We are on track to have our next renewal cycle be entirely online (i.e. no later than October 1, 2018).
- Finally, the Board is holding a full-day strategic planning retreat on January 28, 2018. This retreat will focus on meeting the challenges of 2018 head on. We will evaluate the requirements of AB457 and provide detailed plans and timelines to meet them. Additionally, the retreat will serve the requirement of section 35.5 for each board member "...To complete the orientation required of a new member of the Board ... pursuant to section 3."

## **Revision of Board Regulations**

After each legislative session, the Board evaluates the need for regulation changes. One challenge to efficiently making necessary regulation changes (e.g. for SB162) this fall, was the absence of uncodified regulation changes from the 78<sup>th</sup> legislative session. The Board finally received a codified version for review and edits on January 5, 2018. The Board hopes to make the appropriate changes to mirror the changes made in the 79<sup>th</sup> legislative session and looks forward to changes that are needed to assist the profession as a whole. Our highest priority in regulation changes at this time are providing for SB162's

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addition of Psychological Trainee as registrants and providers of services eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. Setting this as a top priority will ensure increased access to quality mental health care to the community and enhance the development of Nevada's mental health workforce.

Regarding recommendations for the 80<sup>th</sup> session of the Nevada legislature, the Board respectfully requests that a 7<sup>th</sup> member be placed back on the Board. With the removal of the Behavior Analyst licensees, our BA member was removed, leaving our Board at 6. Returning our Board to 7 members reduces logistical problems associated with an even number of board members (e.g. tie votes that result in confusion regarding choices or best decisions). But, more importantly, we believe that a 7<sup>th</sup> member should be designated to be a Psychologist who has previous years of experience as a core or full-time faculty at an accredited program or internship who understands national standards of education and training and who could lead the Board in maintaining clear equivalency standards and staying up to date with the profession's expectations for competency. Indeed, the profession's ability to self-regulate and protect the public is stronger when the education/training and regulatory worlds work in tandem. Having a designated seat on the Board for an educator would ensure this cooperation and partnership.