

Action Alert: End of Social Work Licensure Exemption Being Considered in Albany

Here's What You Can Do to Assure Licensing is Fully Implemented

Your action on this issue is crucial! Hold agencies accountable to the licensing requirements that were established in 2002. Stand with the New York Society for Clinical Social Work, NASW-NYS, NASW-NYC and the NYS Association of Deans of Schools of Social Work to preserve the quality of care for all New Yorkers seeking mental health services.

Email your Senate and Assembly member THIS WEEK

Or call and leave a message with their staff

Urge total implementation of social work licensure THIS YEAR!

Let's End the Exemptions.

- All New Yorkers deserve a licensed psychotherapist to provide mental health services.
- Agency exemptions establish two tiers of care for mental illness favoring those with insurance and wealth.
- Only licensed mental health professionals should be making assessments and diagnoses and providing psychotherapy.

To find your Senator: <https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator>

To find your Assembly member: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/search/>

Background:

In 2002, after at least 28 years of negotiation between the legislature, stakeholder provider groups and trade associations, the practice of social work became one of the state's licensed professions. In doing so, a minimum standard of education, experience and exam requirements was established to assure that individuals providing mental health services, specifically, the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness were qualified to do so.

Just prior to the passage of such legislation, several state agencies noted they would need time to move their workforce into compliance. As such, a temporary exemption from licensure (of 6 years beyond the delayed effective date, of 2004) was included in the law for individuals in the employ of programs and services regulated, operated, funded or approved by the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the former Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities now the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and local mental hygiene or social service districts. The list of "exempt agencies" was subsequently amended to add the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Department of Health (DOH), the State Office for the Aging (SOFA) and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).

Two additional extensions have been passed since the agencies reported they were unable to meet the dates for compliance, the last one passing in the 2013-14 budget giving the agencies until July 1, 2016 to meet the licensing requirements passed in 2002.

Proposal for an Additional 5 Year Exemption

After 14 years, exempt agencies are again requesting an extension. As such, the Executive Budget proposal and Assembly one house budget bill propose an additional five-year extension. The agencies have affixed a high price tag to compliance, citing the need to replace all non-licensed staff with licensees. Such an assertion is false. Only those providing a diagnosis of a mental illness need be licensed.

The Profession's Response

In response to the concerns of agencies, The New York State and City chapters of the New York Society for Clinical Social Work, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the New York State Association of Deans of the Schools of Social Work, have crafted language (which is currently the Senate one house language) that will mitigate cost concerns, move the field into compliance and preserve the quality of care.

What You Can Do to Assure Licensing is Fully Implemented?

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Call or email your Senate and Assembly member to urge implementation of social work licensure THIS YEAR! Let's End the Exemptions.

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