



## Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board

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### CSWMFT BOARD SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Chair
- New Rules in Effect
- Advanced Generalist exam
- Moving Out of State?
- Applying for a license or registration – Critical Reminders
- License Titles – What Can I Call Myself?
- Get to Know Board Member Alverta Muhammad
- Compact Updates – SW and Counseling
- How to Avoid Common Boundary Violations
- Board Actions/Discipline - May and July 2025 Board Meetings
- 2025 Board Meeting Dates

#### MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR ALVERTA MUHAMMAD, LSW

Dear Licensees and Stakeholders:

Thank you for taking the time to read the Board's newsletter.

I am honored to share that in July, I was selected by my colleagues to serve as Chairperson of the Board. I am excited to collaborate closely with Board members and staff to uphold and advance our mission of public protection.

One of the Board's ongoing challenges is adapting to a rapidly evolving world. For instance, developments in artificial intelligence and the increasing use of alternative therapies are expanding the tools available to our licensees. These are promising advancements, but they also present complex questions regarding their impact on clients and patients.

To address these evolving issues, the Board has established two ad hoc committees focused on ensuring public safety while supporting innovation. As new modalities and technologies emerge, our goal is to maintain appropriate safeguards without unnecessarily hindering progress. Please stay tuned for updates. Agendas for these committee meetings—held on the same days as Board meetings—are posted on the Board's website approximately one week in advance.

In addition, we anticipate significant changes in the months ahead with the implementation of the Counseling and Social Work Licensure Compacts. Board staff, along with professionals from across the country, are dedicating considerable time and effort to ensure these compacts are launched effectively.

Understandably, many licensees are eager to benefit from the increased flexibility these compacts will offer. I must admit, I was surprised by the complexity of the implementation process - the legislation was the "easy" part. Please be assured that once Ohio LPCCs can apply for Counseling Compact privileges or Ohio Social Workers can obtain multi-state licenses, the Board will communicate this information broadly and promptly.

Thank you again for your continued dedication to professional excellence and public service.

### **RULE CHANGES EFFECTIVE 8/18/2025**

Rules shared for comment earlier in the year were effective 8/18/2025. You can find an updated PDF of the laws and rules on the Board's website at <https://cswmft.ohio.gov/professionals/resources-for-professionals/laws+and+rules>. The changes cover updates to the code of ethics as well as changes to the CE rules to address requirements for LPATs and LPMTs.

### **ASWB ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM**

On July 10, 2025, the Social Worker Professional Standards Committee voted to discontinue using the ASWB Advanced Generalist exam as one of the qualifying exams for the Ohio Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) license. This decision was made to better align Ohio with the requirements for multi-state licensure through the Social Work Compact. However, this decision also reflects ongoing changes in the social work profession regarding mental health practice.

Starting July 10, 2026, an LISW can only be obtained by passing the ASWB Clinical Exam. The Board will consider exceptions for individuals who have started training supervision as of this date with the intention of taking the Advanced Generalist exam. If approved to take the Advanced Generalist exam, the LISW will have to acknowledge they understand that qualifying for the LISW using the Advanced Generalist exam may limit their ability to obtain a multi-state license through the Social Work Compact or to obtain a comparable license in other states through reciprocity or endorsement.

The discontinued use of the Advanced Generalist exam does not affect any current LISW licensed by passing the Advanced Generalist exam. No other licensure changes are being proposed. For example, supervision benchmarks to qualify for the LISW will remain the same.

With respect to the Social Work Compact, an exemption for independent social workers licensed using the Advanced Generalist exam is being considered. This proposed exemption, covering social workers licensed by a certain date, will help ensure those already practicing can continue to do so without taking another exam.

### **MOVING OUT OF STATE? WORKING WITH CLIENTS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS?**

Are you planning to move? We have guidance for professionals moving out of state here: <https://cswmft.ohio.gov/for-professionals/resources-for-professionals/moving-to-another-state>.

From their eLicense dashboard, licensees can request that a verification be sent to a board in other states. Please note this verification is no different than the verification that can be printed in the license look up on the Board's website. When processing out of state license applications, CSWMFT Board License Examiners often go to the website of a board in other states to verify a license. We have been encouraging our friends in other states to take a similar approach.

Board staff are often asked about requirements for moving to another state. Each state has its own requirements for licensure. We cannot provide any specific guidance about other states' requirements. Our best advice is to refer to the board in the state where you wish to work to determine application requirements and any practice restrictions. Importantly, this Board cannot give someone permission to practice in any other state. Similarly, we cannot give a licensee permission to work with clients outside of the U.S. Frequently we are asked if a licensee can continue to see a client moving overseas for work or extended travel. We cannot give a licensee permission to see a client anywhere other than Ohio. Licensees must identify their ethical obligations to the client when deciding whether services should be provided. It is important to keep in mind that if any ethical violations occur, the Board may not be able to resolve the issue as the services were delivered in another jurisdiction. Clients should be made aware of this constraint.

### **APPLYING FOR A LICENSE OR REGISTRATION - REMINDERS FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED LICENSEES**

The application process can be confusing. Depending on when one is applying, there may still be school related issues to resolve or professional responsibilities to manage. The following is basic guidance that can help to make the application process as easy as possible:

1. Review the directions on the Board's website. Do not rely on word of mouth or informal guidance from others.
2. Apply and **then** get background checks.
3. Background checks must be completed by a qualified provider and submitted directly to the Board through Ohio BCI. The Board cannot accept a background check completed for a third party. See the instructions for background checks on the Get Licensed page of the Board website at [www.cswmft.ohio.gov](http://www.cswmft.ohio.gov).
4. If you are applying for an independent license, have you confirmed that your supervision is complete AND submitted by your last supervisor? MFTs, LPCs, and LSWs can view submitted training supervision hours by selecting "Options" on their current dependent license tile, not independent license application, and then "View Supervised Training Hours" to confirm submitted hours of supervision.
5. You can check the status of your application by logging into the Ohio eLicense Center portal at <https://eLicense.ohio.gov>; click on "Options" on the license application tile and

select "Review Status" to view your application status. Review this checklist to confirm submission and receipt of your background checks, transcripts, exam scores, etc. before contacting the Board.

6. Transcripts should be sent by your school to [transcripts@cswb.ohio.gov](mailto:transcripts@cswb.ohio.gov). This will ensure we can review and record your transcript efficiently.
7. If you have any questions, refer first to the Get Licensed page of the Board's website. If you cannot find answers to your questions there, go to the contact page at <https://cswmft.ohio.gov/about-the-board/contact> to identify the appropriate contact. Note that License Examiners are assigned based on the first letter of an applicant's last name.

## **LICENSE TITLES - WHAT CAN I CALL MYSELF?**

Questions often arise regarding job titles or additional descriptions of what services a licensee provides. Board licensees occasionally create professional titles that do not exist in law. Doing so can result in confusion regarding what license is held and the qualifications of the licensee.

Staff recommend using the license title, and then, in your online profile or other marketing or professional materials, describing the types of services you provide and any specializations. This ensures there is less confusion regarding your professional role and responsibilities.

Trainees will often use a title such as "Clinical Intern" or another title. Trainees must use the title "Counselor Trainee, Social Worker Trainee, or Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee". If the student is not a registered trainee with the Board, the student and internship site can select a title they believe reflects the work the student is doing, provided it does not suggest licensure or registration with this or a similar board.

Some LSWs use the title LMSW (Licensed Master Social Worker). There is no LMSW license in Ohio. An Ohio social worker is either an LSW or LISW. We are contacted by LSWs who have recently completed a post-licensure MSW. They inquire about taking the Masters Exam through ASWB. LSWs who currently hold a license with the Board cannot be approved to take the Masters Exam. However, an LSW who has recently completed an MSW can start using LSW/MSW in the signature and in other professional settings.

Also, IMFTs and MFTs should keep in mind that in Ohio, there is no "Licensed" before either title. This is the case in some states, which can create some confusion. The converse occurs with some LPCCs who drop the "L" from LPCC. The official title is "Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor".

## **GETTING TO KNOW BOARD MEMBER ALVERTA MUHAMMAD, LSW, BOARD CHAIR BY: TRACEY HOSOM, CSWMFT BOARD INVESTIGATOR**

*"I am humbled that I've been able to help people... I couldn't think of anything else I would rather do."* - Alverta Muhammad, LSW, community crisis clinician.

Alverta Muhammad was elected as the new Board Chairperson in July. She was appointed to the Board by Governor DeWine in 2020. She currently works for the Columbus Public Health Department, as a community crisis clinician, in the Right Response Unit, embedded with the Columbus Police Department. She has been with the unit since its inception as a pilot program. Right Responders have been successful in triaging help to the community by linking callers to the

services they need. Be that police, firefighters, mental health treatment, or community-based services.

In addition to serving on the Board, and her crisis clinician work, Ms. Muhammad is on the ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) Nominating Committee.

Interview with Ms. Muhammad

Ms. Hosom: You have a unique job, working with first responders- can you tell me more?

Ms. Muhammad: We are a resource for people in crisis. What do they need? Can we de-escalate the situation? I had a caller who was suicidal. She had a gun to her head. I was able to get her talking about her cat, and to hold her cat. She put the gun down and we were able to get her help. We can also gather information for responders, so that they know what they are walking into. We can refer callers to the actual help they need, such as mental health treatment. Because we work as part of an interdisciplinary team, we do a lot of psychoeducation with first responders. Not to train them to be social workers, but to give them knowledge and tools that help them to recognize mental health issues.

Ms. Hosom: What led you to become a social worker?

Ms. Muhammad: I grew up in a small college town, Oberlin, but they didn't have a social work program. So, I went to Cleveland State and landed in the social work classes. I discovered that I loved it. It felt natural to me. It is how I think. I am so grateful that I get to do this every day. I love direct service.

Ms. Hosom: How did you become a board member?

Ms. Muhammad: I had worked with Arianna Galligher (Board member) with the Care Coalition. When the Board was looking for a dependent level social worker she put my name forward. It was an honor. The Board is a resource for practitioners, and the public. I like how people can come to board meetings and talk about issues. Things don't happen in a vacuum. There is a lot of research and deliberation. Ohio is progressive, like becoming one of the first to join the multi-state licensing compact.

Ms. Hosom: Congratulations on becoming the new Board Chair. What will you bring to that role?

Ms. Muhammad: As a dependent level social worker, I have a different lens. I am boots on the ground. I look at things and ask the question- Does this make sense? I have years of experience doing the work, direct client care. I ask so many questions. I use my personal paid leave time because it is important to me to serve on this board and ASWB.

In her free time, Ms. Muhammad volunteers with her son's little league, and is a volunteer dance mom for her daughter's dance team. She has enough excitement professionally, so a relaxing night at home will include re-runs of *Frasier*.

For information on how to apply to become a Board member click [here](#).

## **COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK COMPACTS**

The Compact Commissions for both Counseling and Social Work are diligently working to set up both Compacts. The Counseling Compact is working to implement its database and finalize the rules necessary for issuing privileges. The Compact is targeting autumn of 2025 for issuing Counseling Compact privileges.

The social work multistate license will be available once the Social Work Compact has all the requirements in place. Presently the Social Work Compact is identifying funding partners and starting on rule writing and database development. At present, there is no anticipated deadline for implementing the Social Work Compact. All parties working on the project want to have it in place as soon as possible.

As noted by Board Chair Alverta Muhammad in her message, the Board will widely share details regarding applying through either Compact as each is implemented. We are anxious to make these options available to qualified Ohio licensees as well as help those seeking to work in Ohio.

### **BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS: COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM BY: WHITNEY CAUDILL, CSWMFT BOARD INVESTIGATOR**

Most boundary violations start with good intentions but end with unintended harm. Even minor missteps can escalate into ethical complaints, which can result in disciplinary action. Here are some of the most common pitfalls that lead to complaints to the Board:

#### **Social Media and Digital Boundaries**

Examples: Accepting friend requests, texting clients outside of sessions, or giving out your personal cell phone number.

Why it's a pitfall: Potential breach of confidentiality; can lead to personal or sexual relationships.

Tip: Create a social media policy for your practice and educate clients on boundaries in your informed consent.

#### **Over-Involvement in Client's Life**

Examples: Helping clients move, driving clients to sessions, buying clients dinner, attending client weddings, or taking client calls late at night.

Why it's a pitfall: Blurs professional boundaries; creates potential role confusion; may encourage emotional dependency.

Tip: Consult with peers and reflect on your role – helper vs. friend.

#### **Self-Disclosure**

Examples: Talking about your own trauma, family, marital issues, or political views.

Why it's a pitfall: Shifts focus away from the client; creates potential role confusion; inserts inappropriate opinions into sessions not relevant to the client's care.

Tip: Ask yourself, "is this for me or my client?" before disclosing anything personal.

#### **Dual Relationships**

Examples: Counseling a family member, your friend's child, or a client you also coach.

Why it's a pitfall: Conflict of interest; risk of bias.

Tip: Avoid it when possible and refer out. Always document your risk analysis and actions taken, especially if it is unavoidable (e.g. small rural areas).

#### **Physical Contact**

Examples: Hugs or physical comfort after sessions; putting your hand on client's arm, shoulder, or leg.

Why it's a pitfall: Could be a misinterpreted; may trigger a trauma response; might lead to a sexual relationship (inappropriate relationships often develop faster than the parties realize).

Tip: Just avoid it.

### Giving & Accepting Gifts

Examples: Accepting gift cards or anything of nominal value; buying clients material items like a laptop, camera, etc.

Why it's a pitfall: the power imbalance and boundary confusion could harm the therapeutic relationship; could be perceived as manipulative.

Tip: Include not being able to accept gifts in the boundaries section of the informed consent.

### Financial Boundaries

Examples: Waiving fees inconsistently; loaning money; paying for client sessions.

Why it's a pitfall: Compromises objectivity and professional ethics.

Tip: Follow written fee policies. Offer referrals when necessary.

### Helpful tips:

- Consult with peers and supervisors - early and often.
- Document boundary decisions and rationales.
- Do not have sex with your clients.

"Ethical boundaries don't limit care - they protect it." – Anonymous

## **BOARD ACTIONS/DISCIPLINE**

Consent agreements for the actions listed below can be found at <https://cswmft.ohio.gov/for-the-public/disciplined-licensees>.

### **May and July 2025 Board Meetings:**

#### **Social Workers:**

- Centraya Forbes (LSW) 4757-5-02 (A)(2), (D)(1), (H)(2); 4757-5-03 (A). Monitored supervision; EBAS exam.
- Craig Ward (LISW-S) 4757-5-02 (A)(2); 4757-5-09(B). Retire, Inactive-Expired status.
- David Meadows (LISW) 4757-5-04. Surrender.
- Donald Hupp (LISW-S) 4757-5-02 (E). Suspension; Monitored supervision; no solo private practice; cannot provide training supervision.
- Nadia Russell (LSW) 4757-5-02 (A)(1). Reprimand; EBAS exam.
- Tara Crouso (LISW-S) 4757-5-04 (C); Suspension; Monitored supervision; no solo private practice; Personal counseling; EBAS exam.
- Amy Gibson-Snyder (LSW suspended) Suspension; Personal counseling; EBAS exam; Monitored supervision.
- Michael Lesko (LISW-S) 4757-11-01 (C)(8). Surrender.
- Johannah Lujan (LSW) 4757-5-03 (A). Monitored supervision; Personal counseling; no solo private practice.
- Sarah Robb (LISW-S) 4757-11-01 (C)(6). Suspension; Monitored supervision; supervision designation revoked; no solo private practice; EBAS exam.
- Crystal Valentine (LISW) 4757-5-04 (A); 4757-5-03 (A)(4)(b); 4757-5-02 (D)(1); 4757-5-09(B). Suspension; Personal counseling; Monitored supervision; no solo private practice; EBAS exam.

**Counselors:**

- Ashley Altomare (LPCC) 4757-5-03 (A)(4)(c). Suspension; Monitored supervision; EBAS exam; no solo private practice.
- Brianna Miller (LPC) 4757-5-03 (A). Surrender.
- Angelena Bertolini (LPCC) 4757-11-01 (C)(4). Reprimand.
- Abbigale McCormick (LPC) 4757-5-03 (A)(4)(c). Suspension; Personal counseling; EBAS exam.
- Brittany Riffle (CT) 4757-5-02 (D)(1), (G)(1). Monitored supervision; EBAS exam.
- Cara Sussman (LPCC-S) 4757-5-03 (A); 4757-6-01 (F). Reprimand; Monitored supervision; EBAS exam.
- Michael Weatherford (LPCC-S) 4757-5-03 (A)(4)(b). Suspension; Training supervision designation revoked; Personal counseling; Monitored supervision; EBAS exam.
- Stevie Williamson (LPCC-S) 4757-5-02 (I); 4757-5-04(A). Surrender.
- Maggie Naseem (LPCC-S) 4757-5-02 (D)(1). Personal counseling; EBAS exam.
- Joseph Marzano (LPCC suspended) Retire, Inactive-Expired status.

**2025 BOARD MEETING DATES**

The CSWMFT Board meets at least six times per year. Below are the planned meeting dates. Usually, the Board only meets on the first day listed but reserves the second day in case there is sufficient business or a hearing. Details regarding Board meetings are posted to the CSWMFT Board website a week or so prior to the meeting. You can access meeting information at <https://cswmft.ohio.gov/about-the-board/news-and-events/events>.

- September 11/12
- November 13/14

