

September 1, 2026 CLAS Committee Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting focused on the LMSW licensing exam and its impact on the social work workforce in Connecticut. Dawn Brown, Executive Director of NASW Connecticut and Maine, provided an update on legislative efforts to eliminate or extend the suspension of the licensing exam. She explained that House Bill 5166 passed the House with a strong majority vote but died in the Senate due to lack of time for discussion rather than opposition. Dawn noted that other states have eliminated the exam requirement, and she continues to advocate for changes, particularly regarding language accessibility for candidates from Puerto Rico and other territories. The group discussed how the exam currently impacts hiring practices at agencies like DCF and DMHAS, with some positions requiring LCSW while others accept LMSW licenses. Dawn also mentioned the upcoming Social Work Compact implementation, which would allow for portable licenses across participating states. The conversation ended with updates about an upcoming consumer conference and the launch of mental health courts in Connecticut, with Alice offering to keep the group informed about opportunities for consumer involvement in the new court program.

Next steps

Co-Chair Alice Forrester

- [Send a note to Amy Soto \(DPH\) to request data related to the impact of the licensing exam on workforce issues.](#)
- [Send the agenda topics for November and December to David Kaplan for distribution.](#)
- [Keep the group informed about the development of the mental health courts, particularly regarding consumer participation.](#)

Co-Chair Brenetta Henry

- [Share information about the upcoming iCAN Conference \(September 24th\) and solicit support \(vendors, sponsorship, participation\).](#)

Carlos Blanco

- [Follow up separately with Brenetta about the presentation on community health workers and peer support.](#)

Dawn Brown

- [Continue to advocate for the extension or elimination of the LMSW licensing exam requirement, and engage with coalition partners, the Nonprofit Alliance, ASWB lobbyists, and DPH regarding this issue.](#)
- [Share the link to the Social Work Compact information with the group and follow up on whether Puerto Rico is participating.](#)
- [Attend future meetings of this group and provide updates from other coalitions \(e.g., Mental Health Parity Coalition\).](#)

Dr. Stephney Springer

- [Provide specifics about the CLAS group presentation scheduled for October, including who will be presenting.](#)

Summary

LMSW Exam Requirement Update

Dawn Brown, Executive Director of NASW Connecticut and Maine, provided an update on the LMSW licensing exam situation. She explained that Connecticut legislature initially paused the exam requirement in 2023, but this suspension ended on January 1, 2026. While a bill to extend the suspension was passed by the House with strong majority support, it died in the Senate on the last day of the legislative session. Dawn noted that NASW continues to advocate for exam reform due to concerns about pass rate disparities based on race, language, and age, and will seek support from organizations like the one represented at the meeting.

Social Work Licensing Exam Update

Dawn explained that while the Senate did not pass the legislation to eliminate the social work licensing exam, they agreed to extend its suspension rather than make it permanent. She noted that several other states have eliminated or extended suspensions of the LM-level exam and discussed the challenges it creates for recent MSW graduates who have completed field placements but cannot return to agencies without passing the exam. Dawn mentioned plans to continue collecting data on workforce impacts and will present information about behavioral health workforce concerns at an upcoming NASW Connecticut meeting.

Social Worker Licensing Requirements Discussion

The group discussed licensing requirements for social workers, with Stephney clarifying that DCF positions require only a master's degree unless they serve as a clinical consultant, while Rob Haswell noted DMHAS has tiered requirements with some supervisory positions requiring LCSW. Co-Chair Alice Forrester raised concerns about how licensing changes might impact hiring of social work interns, noting previous issues where graduates couldn't find employment due to licensing requirements. Dawn explained that a bill addressing these workforce issues failed to pass in the

Senate despite extensive outreach efforts, though she couldn't specify the exact reasons for its defeat.

Social Work Licensing and Updates

The group discussed the status of social work licensing data, with Dawn explaining that while some data exists, ASWB has not released demographic information beyond general pass rates. Carlos Blanco raised concerns about language barriers for Spanish-speaking social workers from Puerto Rico, leading Dawn to explain the upcoming Social Work Compact which could facilitate reciprocity between states. The meeting also covered upcoming presentations on CLAS work in October and plans for November-December agendas, with discussion of including system of care model presentations in January. Co-Chair Brenetta Henry announced the annual consumer-driven iCAN conference on September 24th, and Alice shared that she was appointed to an advisory committee for Connecticut's new mental health courts pilot program in New Haven.

Dawn Brown - NASW-CT Executive Director, dbrown.naswct@socialworkers.org

[Social Work Licensure Compact](#)

Attendees: David Kaplan, Mark Vanacore, Jaya Daptardar, CWILLIAMS, Mark Vanacore (DMHAS), Brenetta Henry, Stephney Springer (DCF), Robert Haswell (DMHAS), Donyale Pina, Kelly Phenix, Noel Casiano-The Life Center of CT, Lois Berkowitz State of CT DCF, Yvonne Jones (Carelton), Carlos Blanco, Sabrina Selk CT Health, Dawn Brown (NASW-CT), Neva Caldwell, Teresa, Alice Forrester

Key Outcomes

The meeting focused on the current status of **LMSW licensing exams** in Connecticut, noting that a legislative attempt to extend the exam suspension failed to pass the Senate. Dawn Brown (NASW) provided updates on the **Social Work Compact** for license portability and discussed the impact of exam requirements on the behavioral health workforce.

Social Work Licensure Status

- **Exam Suspension:** The suspension of the LMSW exam ended on January 1, 2026.
- **Legislative Failure:** House Bill 5166, which sought to extend the suspension or eliminate the exam, passed the House with a significant majority but died in the Senate on the final day of the session because it was never brought up for a vote.
- **Equity Concerns:** ASWB released a report in August 2022 showing disproportionate pass rates based on race, language, and age.

- **Alternative Pathways:** Some states, such as Illinois and Utah, have eliminated the exam, while Rhode Island extended its suspension for five years.

Workforce and Professional Impact

- **Hiring Barriers:** The exam is viewed as a barrier to entry for new graduates who have completed clinical internships but cannot be hired without licensure.
- **Impact by Agency:**
 - **DCF:** Generally requires a master's degree; LCSW is only required for clinical consultants.
 - **DMAHS:** Certain supervisory positions require independent licensure (LCSW).
 - **Community Clinics:** LMSW licensure is most critical here for providing outpatient or in-home clinical work.
- **Language Barriers:** There is a noted need for exams in Spanish to support practitioners from Puerto Rico and other Spanish-speaking regions.

Professional Portability and Resources

- **Social Work Compact:** Connecticut is a compact state, which will eventually allow licensed social workers to practice in other participating states without separate licenses. Implementation is expected in approximately 9 to 11 months.
- **NASW Support:** NASW Connecticut continues to advocate for licensure reform and offers education on the process in collaboration with the DPH.

Other Business

- **Consumer Conference:** A consumer-driven iCAN conference is scheduled for September 24th at the Artist Collective, themed "Paving the Way for a Solid Future in Whole Person Health".
- **Mental Health Courts:** Connecticut is piloting mental health courts, starting in New Haven in mid-September.

Action Items

- **Alice Forrester:** Contact Amy Soto (DPH) to request data on licensure and workforce issues.
- **Dawn Brown:** Provide contact information and the Social Work Compact link to the group.
- **Dr. Springer:** Confirm the specific DCF team members who will present on CLAS work in October.