



Background on Social Work Compact

June 2023

There are currently eight Compacts (which is essentially a multi-state agreement) in the United States that allow health care professionals to practice across state lines without having to be licensed in every state in which they wish to work (i.e., nursing, psychology, occupational therapy, etc). The mobility of clinical social workers and their patients makes the Compact a valuable asset to clinical social work practice. Here is a summary of how the Social Work Compact, funded by the Department of Defense and developed by the Council of State Governments, was created:

Potential Impact

There are approximately 320,000 licensed clinical social workers in the United States today. Despite the high demand for clinical social work services, licensees are limited to providing services within their own state borders. The Social Work Licensure Compact seeks to increase public access to clinical social work services, provide licensees with opportunities for multistate practice, support relocating military families, enhance public protection abilities and allow for expanded use of telemental health technologies.

History of the Social Work Compact

In October of 2021, the Technical Assistance Group, which included stakeholders of all the major social work groups, began the process of creating a bill which would allow states to consider joining a Social Work Compact. The final bill was released on February 27, 2023. The intent of the bill is to benefit states by:

- Enhancing mobility for clinical social workers who meet the Compact uniform licensure requirements;
- Allowing military personnel and spouses to more easily maintain their social work licenses when relocating; and
- Preserving and strengthening the current system of state licensure.

The Social Work Compact will allow LCSWs to work in other states without having to become licensed in these states under the following conditions:

- If the LCSW's home state joins the Compact
- If the LCSW then joins the Compact as an individual
- If the LCSW has no actionable complaints

The Social Work Compact is expected to benefit licensees, licensing authorities, and its member states in the following ways:

Benefits for Licensees

- Eases mobility for licensees.
- Expands employment opportunities into new markets
- Allows for continuity of care for clients who are moving to a new jurisdiction or who frequently relocate.
- Leverages technological innovations like telehealth.
- Supports relocating military spouses and families.

Benefits for Licensing Authorities

- Creates a shared data system which reduces administrative burdens
- Provides rapid access to information on licensees, investigations and discipline
- Reduces application processing time
- Expands cooperation among member states on investigations and disputes
- Enhances public safety

Benefits for States

- Provides a tool for addressing workforce shortages
- Expands consumer access to highly qualified social workers
- Preserves state sovereignty

Creating the Social Work Compact Commission

When seven states have joined the Compact, a Commission will be created to oversee the Compact and develop rules by which the Compact will be run. The Commission will be responsible for the functioning of the Compact and reviewing any problems that occur. The Commission will be funded by the individual social workers who join the Compact after their state has joined the Compact.

Licensure compacts for nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and counselors have been successful in increasing licensure portability for practitioners while allowing member state regulatory boards to better protect patients through enhanced sharing of licensure information.

Summary

The Social Work Compact will benefit access to mental health services by clinical social workers across state lines. It will allow patients to continue to work across state lines if the licensed clinical social worker and/or the client is outside the state in which the clinical social worker is licensed.

Contacts:

Kendra Roberson, PhD, LICSW, President
Clinical Social Work Association
president@clinicalsocialworkassociation.org

Laura Groshong, LICSW, Director, Policy and Practice
Clinical Social Work Association
lwgroshong@clinicalsocialworkassociation.org