

Agency Purpose

The Board of Social Work was established in 1987 and is mandated by Minnesota Statutes 214 and 148D.001-148D.290 (MS 148E.001-148E.290 effective August 1, 2011), to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare through the licensure and regulation of persons who practice social work in this state.

The Board's public safety mission is to *ensure residents of Minnesota quality social work services by establishing and enforcing professional standards*. The Board's vision is to *protect the public through licensure of qualified social workers and to provide timely and impartial resolution of complaints against social workers*.

At a Glance

Licensing & Credentialing Services

- 5,784 Licensed Social Workers
- 1,518 Licensed Graduate Social Workers
- 765 Licensed Independent Social Workers
- 4,031 Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers
- 75 Temporary Licenses
- 12,173 Total Licenses
- 1,869 New Licenses Issued
- 9,359 Total Licenses Renewed
- 14 Professional Firms
- 438 License Verifications (paper verifications)

Staff FTE: 10.6

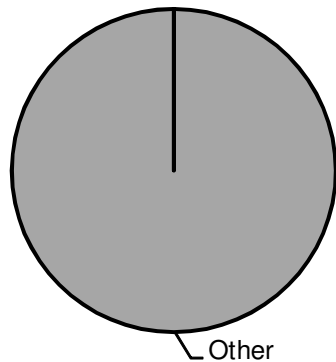
Discipline & Complaint Resolution Services

- Received 221 new complaints
- Resolved 246 complaints
- Board action involving 26 individuals

Education Outreach Services

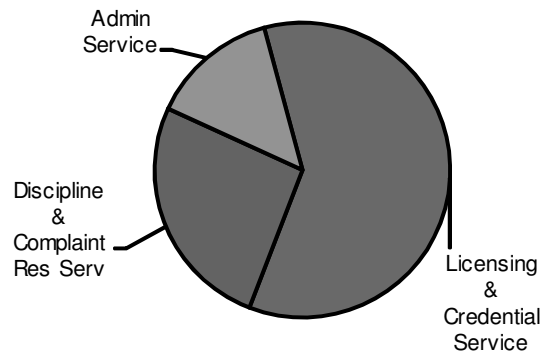
- Provided 86 training sessions on professional responsibilities, licensing, and standards of practice and ethics to social work academic programs, professionals, and public/consumer groups

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Fund



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement.

Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Service



Source: Board expenses allocated to the services provided by the board.

Strategies

The Board accomplishes its core public safety and regulatory mission of professional social workers by:

- setting and administering minimum educational, supervision, and examination requirements for initial licensure as a social worker, and setting and administering requirements for renewal of licensure;
- setting and enforcing standards of ethical practice; and responding to inquiries, complaints, and reports regarding applicants, licensees, temporary license holders, and unlicensed practitioners;
- investigating complaints of alleged violations of statutes, holding educational and disciplinary conferences, and taking legal action when appropriate against licensees who fail to meet minimum standards of practice;
- approving continuing education providers; and
- providing information about licensure and standards of practice through public education outreach efforts, the Board's website, online license verification services, brochures, and telephone and email inquiries.

Operations

The Board provides core public safety services through the regulatory oversight of social workers, as noted in the strategies listed above, to ensure both high standards of social work practice and excellent customer service. Services are provided to the general public, consumers of social work services, social work applicants and licensees, students and faculty in social work academic programs, employers, supervisors, other state and local agencies, and state and national professional social work associations.

Board Structure and Duties: The Board meets six times per year and consists of ten social work licensees and five public members appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms. In addition, various Board committees meet regularly. The Board develops legislative agendas to address policy issues, oversees the agency budget, acts to resolve complaints against social workers, and directs a staff of 10.6 FTEs.

Licensing/Credentialing Services: The purpose of regulation through licensing is to set and enforce standards of competence and ethical practice, and to ensure that persons licensed as social workers meet educational, examination, supervised practice, and continuing education standards. Requirements must be demonstrated at initial application for licensure and at each license renewal. Staff process applications, verify compliance with statutory requirements, provide assistance and information to a variety of customers, and work in collaboration with other agencies at the state, federal, and national levels.

Discipline/Complaint Resolution Services: Staff, Board Members, and the Office of the Attorney General work collaboratively to review, investigate, and take action, as appropriate, in alleged complaint cases against licensed social workers. When a licensee is determined to have engaged in conduct which is a violation of the Board's standards of practice, an appearance before Board Members occurs, with final action determined by the full Board. In addition, staff provide informational services to a variety of customers regarding the Board's statutory requirements and standards of practice, including how to file a complaint and the complaint resolution process. The Board also works with the Health Professionals Services Program (HPSP), the state's diversion program for regulated professionals who are impaired, as an additional method to ensure public protection.

Online Services: Information and many online services are provided via the Board's website. These services include robust online application services for both initial licensure and license renewal for applicants and licensees. Online license verification services allow the general public, employers, licensees, and credentialing entities to verify licensure status and to find out if public disciplinary/adverse action has been taken against a licensee. A video on the Board's compliance process, current and timely information on laws and regulations, downloadable forms, reports and brochures, and FAQs are available at the Board's website.

Administrative Services Unit: The Health-Licensing Boards (HLBs), including the Board of Social Work, are co-located, and collaborate through the Administrative Services Unit (ASU) to reduce duplication of services and expenses, and to create greater efficiencies. ASU provides the centralized functions of accounting and finance, purchasing, payroll, human resources, contracts, and IT services to all HLBs. ASU is supervised by the HLB Executive Directors Forum through a Management Committee.

Key Activity Goals & Measures

The Board's primary goal is to promote and ensure public safety for the residents of Minnesota. This goal can be measured by the following data which demonstrates positive output, outcome, and efficiency measures.

Public Protection through Licensing Professionals Who Demonstrate Licensure Standards:

	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Applications Received	1231	1333	1418	1451	1457
Licenses Granted	748	881	925	892	977
Licenses Renewed	4400	3945	4604	4849	4510
Supervision Plans Reviewed	1070	1010	1141	1068	1061
Supervision Verifications Reviewed	1726	1686	1719	1835	1610
Continuing Education Providers Approved	N/A	266	255	270	280

Measures demonstrate a trend in which there is a gradual increase in the number of licensees and applications processed. Staffing was decreased in 2006, and has remained constant even with the increase in services provided to customers, due to internal process improvements and increased utilization of online services.

Modify Current Licensing Exemptions – The Board identified a 10-year goal to modify the current social work licensing exemptions in MS 148D.065, to improve the Board’s ability to ensure public safety and consistent standards for both private and public sector social work professionals, and to provide consumers of social work services access to the Board’s complaint resolution process. A Legislative Task Force was convened in 2005 and charged with this initiative. The Task Force has met with ten key stakeholder groups, and continues these meetings, and public forums. The Board plans to bring forward a legislative proposal in the 2011 Legislative Session. It is estimated there are approximately 2,000 unlicensed persons employed by Minnesota counties providing “social work” services.

Increased Licensing Standards - Changes enacted by the 2007 Legislature will increase standards for clinical practice, including academic coursework, supervision, licensing supervisors, and continuing education (CE). Additional changes will increase standards related to supervision, licensing supervisors, and continuing education for all other licensees. The new provisions are based on the Department of Human Services Task Force Report on Clinical Standards, and will take effect August 1, 2011.

Public Protection through Complaint Resolution:

	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Complaints Received	89	107	121	120	101
Complaints Resolved	113	94	111	138	108
Board Action Taken	24	14	8	6	20

Measures demonstrate a trend in which complaints have remained fairly constant. However, recent complaints are reported to be more complex in nature. Two contested cases in the last biennium were resolved, which impact the budget. The Board has been proactive in presenting educational sessions on the standards of practice and ethical decision making to professionals and students, and created a compliance video which is accessible from the Board’s website. Processing time has decreased in recent years as demonstrated in the data below; however, cases which require investigation by the Office of the Attorney General require more time to resolve.

Complaint Resolution Time:

- 50% of complaints are resolved in three months or less
- 75% of complaints are resolved in six months or less
- 90% of complaints are resolved in nine months or less
- 3% of complaints are resolved in nine to 18 months

e-Compliance Initiative: A strategic goal, implemented in 2009, was to improve the complaint review process and move from a “paper system” that was expensive, non-green, labor-intensive, and required copying and mailing reams of investigative data to Board Members, while ensuring that copied data was disposed of securely. Utilizing the new “e-Compliance system” allows all investigative data to be scanned and accessed by Board Members from laptop computers via a secure internet connection. The positive outcomes include increased security, decreased time to process complaints, greater efficiencies in record retention, and decreased costs. There was an estimated savings of \$700 for one high-volume case meeting.

24/7 Access to Online Services and Information: The Board has provided online services 24/7 to customers since 2004. The Board has identified, as a key priority, the development and utilization of electronic methods to provide online customer services and increase efficiencies throughout Board operations, as demonstrated in the data below.

- Visits to the Board’s website: 4,000 per month
- Online License Verification/Lookup: 49,377 since 2006
- Online Board Action Search to View Public Disciplinary/Adverse Action: 10,458 since 2006
- Online License Application: 30,431 since 2006 (52% in 2006; increased to 84% in 2010)
- Online License Renewal: 49,069 since 2006 (4% in 2004; and increased to 73% in 2010)
- Downloadable Forms: 19,042 since 2007
- Online Streaming Compliance Process Video since 2008

Outreach and Public Education: The Board provides information regarding licensing requirements and standards of practice to the public and stakeholder groups. Board members and staff provided approximately 86 public education programs during FY 2009 and FY 2010 at state and national conferences and to bachelors and masters social work academic programs throughout the state. During this time period the Board updated the “Minnesota Social Work Licensure: A Handbook for Students”, and created new brochures on topics such as the complaint resolution process, continuing education, supervised practice, and when a social work license is

required. In addition, at the request of the Legislature, after 14 months of work, a report was provided to the Legislature in December 2008, regarding the need to increase the number of Social Workers serving underserved communities. The report also explored alternative options to obtain licensure rather than requiring a standardized examination.

Board Strategic Plan Initiative: The Board conducted a strategic planning exercise in August 2007, which resulted in a strategic action plan containing over 100 tasks, of which 83% were executed by early 2010. A follow-up Strategic Realignment Workshop was conducted in May 2010, to reassess and reprioritize the Board Strategic Plan. A new action plan is being developed to prioritize goals in order to further track outcomes.

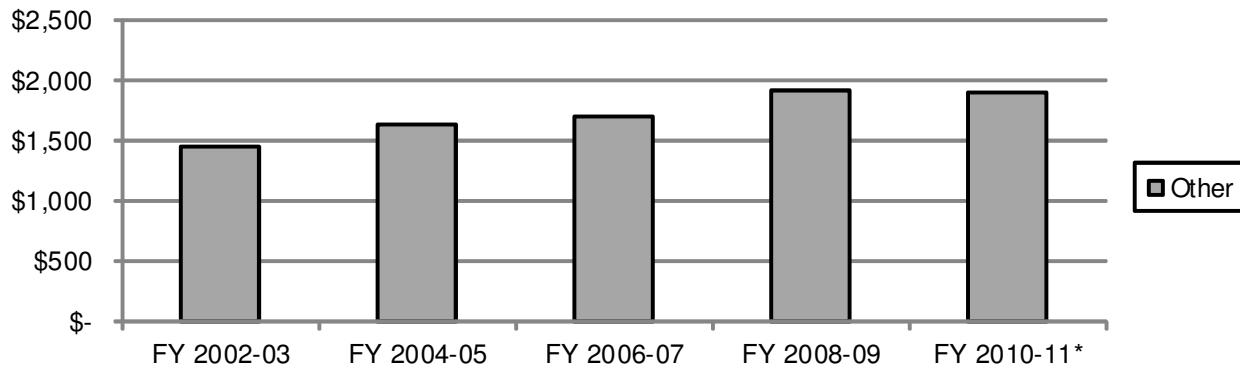
Budget Trends

The board is responsible for collecting sufficient revenue to cover both direct and indirect expenditures. The board is estimated to collect \$1.944 million in FY 2010-11, which is deposited as non-dedicated revenue into the state government special revenue fund.

From this fund, the board receives a direct appropriation to pay for agency activities such as salaries, rent, costs for disciplinary/contested cases and operating expenditures. It also pays statewide indirect costs through an open appropriation. In FY 2010-11, total expenditures for these purposes are estimated at \$1.872 million. The chart below shows funding trends over the last five biennia for the direct and open appropriation.

The Board of Social Work proposed a 10% licensing fee reduction during the 2009 Legislation Session which was enacted, and took effect July 1, 2009. The Board has been committed for years to holding down expenditures, such as, reducing the frequency of meetings, limiting travel, not filling staff positions due to attrition, successfully promoting online services, and moving to paperless meetings. The Board collects fees just sufficient to conduct business, minimizing the financial impact on applicants and licensees served, while providing an excellent level of customer service to the residents of Minnesota.

**Total Expenditures by Fund
\$ in Thousands**



* FY 2010-11 is estimated, not actual

Source data for the previous chart is the Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 07/31/10.

Board fees are also responsible for covering a prorated share of support functions provided outside of the Board itself. These include legal support (Attorney General), statewide e-licensing system development and operations (Office of Enterprise Technology), centralized administrative support (Health Boards Administrative Services Unit) and funding for services to health professionals (Health Professionals Services Program). In FY 2010-11, some of the health boards' reserves in the state government special revenue fund were also transferred to the general fund. The table on the next page displays direct and open appropriation expenditures, external support costs (prorated share), and the general fund transfers (prorated share) estimated in FY 2010-11.

	FY 2010-11 (in thousands)
Board's Direct and Open Appropriations	\$ 1,872
Board's External Support Costs and Transfers (prorated Share)	
• Attorney General support	166
• E-licensing support	80
• Central administrative service unit	92
• Health professional service program	40
• General fund transfer	852
	Total 3,102
Fees Collected by Board	\$1,944
	Prorated Surplus/(Deficit) (1,158)

In most years, Board fee revenues exceed direct expenditures and external support costs, and as directed by law, the surplus is used to maintain a reserve in the state government special revenue fund. It should be noted here that the FY 2010-11 transfers to the General Fund, along with unanticipated increases in the support costs discussed above, have resulted in the Board's fee revenue not covering its prorated costs and transfers.

The number of licensees regulated by the Board continues to rise, as do the number of complaints and the complexity of the cases. Also, professional factors and trends include the growth of accredited Masters of Social Work degree programs in Minnesota; increased demand for third-party reimbursement for social work services; increased demands on licensing supervisors; and the emerging trend of social workers providing tele-mental health services to clients. Societal and demographic factors and trends include social work workforce shortages, particularly in underserved ethnic and racial minority communities, and greater and rural Minnesota; and an increasing need for persons from ethnic and racial minority communities to join the licensed social work professional workforce.

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