



Content Outlines and KSAs Social Work Licensing Examinations

What are KSAs?

A KSA is a “Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities” statement. These statements describe the discrete knowledge components that may be tested in each part of the examination, and are the basis for individual test questions.

A note on the DSM:

The planned fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders is due for publication in May 2013 and will supersede the DSM-IV-TR, which was last revised in 2000. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) will be reviewing and evaluating the implications of DSM-5 for the social work licensing examinations before making any needed changes.

The current ASWB examinations reflect the content contained in the DSM-IV-TR. ASWB is always committed to providing sufficient information to social work candidates to prepare for ASWB examinations. No changes to the ASWB examinations that reflect only DSM-5 will be made before January 2015.

Masters Examination

I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY, AND BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT 28%

I.A. THEORIES AND MODELS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Developmental theories
- Systems theories
- Family theories
- Group theories
- Psychodynamic theories
- Behavioral, cognitive, and learning theories
- Community development theories
- Person in environment
- Addiction theories and concepts
- Communication theories
- Defense mechanisms
- Normal and abnormal behavior
- Indicators of normal physical growth and development
- Adult development
- Effects of life crises
- Impact of stress, trauma, and violence
- Emotional development
- Sexual development
- Aging processes
- Family life cycle
- Family dynamics and functioning
- Cognitive development
- Social development
- Child development
- Basic human needs
- Adolescent development
- Human genetics
- Gender roles
- Impact of environment on individuals
- Impact of physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities on human development
- Interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors
- Effects of family dynamics on individuals
- Dynamics of grief and loss
- Impact of economic changes on client systems
- Effects of body image on self and relationships
- Cultural, racial, and ethnic identity development
- Strengths perspective

I.B. ABUSE AND NEGLECT

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Abuse and neglect concepts
- Indicators and dynamics of sexual abuse
- Indicators and dynamics of psychological abuse and neglect
- Indicators and dynamics of physical abuse and neglect

I.B. ABUSE AND NEGLECT (continued)

- Characteristics of abuse perpetrators
- Indicators and dynamics of exploitation

I.C. DIVERSITY, SOCIAL/ECONOMIC JUSTICE, AND OPPRESSION

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Influence of culture, race, and/or ethnicity on behaviors and attitudes
- Influence of sexual orientation and/or gender identity on behavior and attitudes
- Influence of disability on behaviors and attitudes
- Effects of differences in values
- Impact of cultural heritage on self-image
- Impact of spirituality and/or religious beliefs on behaviors and attitudes
- Effects of discrimination
- Systemic (institutionalized) discrimination
- Professional commitment to promoting justice
- Impact of social institutions on society
- Impact of diversity in styles of communicating
- Influence of age on behaviors and attitudes

II. ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION PLANNING

24%

II.A. BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL HISTORY AND COLLATERAL DATA

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Psychopharmacology
- Components of a biopsychosocial history
- Components of a sexual history
- Common prescription medications
- Components of a family history
- Basic medical terminology
- Symptoms of mental and emotional illness
- Symptoms of neurologic and organic processes
- Indicators of sexual dysfunction
- Indicators of psychosocial stress
- Indicators of traumatic stress and violence
- Indicators of substance abuse and other addictions

II.B. USE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Use of collateral sources to obtain relevant information
- Methods used to evaluate collateral information
- Process used in problem identification
- Methods used to assess the client's communication skills
- Use of observation
- Methods of involving clients in identifying problems
- Indicators of client's strengths and challenges
- Use of assessment/diagnostic instruments in practice
- Methods used to organize information
- Current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual diagnostic framework and criteria
- Components and function of the mental status examination
- Process of social work assessment/diagnosis
- Methods used in assessing ego strengths

II.B.USE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES (continued)

- Methods used to assess community strengths and challenges
- Methods used in risk assessment
- Indicators of client danger to self and others
- Indicators of motivation and resistance
- Methods used to identify service needs of clients
- Use of interviewing techniques
- Process of assessing the client's needed level of care

II.C.INTERVENTION PLANNING

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Factors used in determining the client's readiness/ability to participate in services
- Criteria used in selecting intervention modalities
- Components of an intervention or service plan
- Human development considerations in the creation of an intervention plan
- Methods used to develop an intervention plan
- Techniques used to establish measurable intervention or service plans
- Methods used to involve clients in intervention planning
- Methods for planning interventions with groups
- Methods for planning interventions with organizations and communities
- Cultural considerations in the creation of an intervention plan

III. DIRECT AND INDIRECT PRACTICE

21%

III.A.DIRECT/MICRO

- This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Client advocacy
- Empowerment process
- Methods used in working with involuntary clients
- Psychosocial approach
- Components of the problem-solving process
- Crisis intervention approach
- Task centered practice
- Short-term interventions
- Methods used to provide educational services to clients
- Methods of conflict resolution
- Use of case management
- Techniques used to evaluate a client's progress
- Use of contracting and goal-setting with client systems
- Use of timing in intervention
- Phases of intervention
- Indicators of client readiness for termination
- Techniques used for follow-up in social work practice
- Use of active listening skills
- Techniques used to motivate clients
- Techniques used to teach skills to clients
- Use and effects of out-of-home placement
- Methods used to develop behavioral objectives
- Client self-monitoring techniques
- Technique of role play

III.A.DIRECT/MICRO (continued)

- Assertiveness training
- Role modeling techniques
- Limit setting
- Methods used to develop learning objectives with clients
- Models of intervention with families
- Couples intervention/treatment approaches
- Interventions with groups
- Techniques for working with individuals within the group context
- Use of expertise from other disciplines
- Approaches used in consultation
- Processes of interdisciplinary collaboration
- Methods used to coordinate services among service providers
- Multidisciplinary team approach
- Case recording and record-keeping
- Methods used to facilitate communication
- Verbal and nonverbal communication techniques
- Techniques that explore underlying meanings of communication
- Methods used to obtain/provide feedback
- Methods used to interpret and communicate policies and procedures
- Methods used to clarify the benefits and limitations of resources with clients
- Use of case recording for practice evaluation or supervision
- Use of single-subject designs in practice
- Evaluation of practice
- Interpreting and applying research findings to practice
- Process used to refer clients for services
- Use of cognitive behavioral techniques
- Culturally competent social work practice

III.B.INDIRECT/MACRO

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Applying concepts of organizational theories
- Impact of social welfare legislation on social work practice
- Methods used to establish service networks or community resources
- Techniques for mobilizing community participation
- Techniques of social planning methods
- Techniques of social policy analysis
- Techniques to influence social policy
- Techniques of working with large groups
- Use of networking
- Approaches to culturally competent practice with organizations and communities
- Advocacy with communities and organizations
- Impact of agency policy and function on service delivery

IV. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, VALUES, AND ETHICS

27%

IV.A. PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ETHICAL ISSUES

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Professional values and ethics
- Client self-determination
- Intrinsic worth and value of the individual
- Client's right to refuse service
- Ethical issues regarding termination
- Bioethical issues
- Identification and resolution of ethical dilemmas
- Applying ethics to practice issues
- Responsibility to seek supervision
- Use of professional development to improve practice
- Professional boundaries

IV.B. CONFIDENTIALITY

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Legal and ethical issues regarding confidentiality, including electronic communication
- Use of client records
- Ethical and legal issues regarding mandatory reporting
- Obtaining informed consent

IV.C. SOCIAL WORKER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- Social worker-client relationship patterns
- Concept of empathy
- Process of engagement in social work practice
- Concept of a helping relationship
- Principles of relationship building
- Professional objectivity in the social worker-client relationship
- Concepts of transference and countertransference
- Use of the social worker-client relationship as an intervention tool
- Social worker-client relationships in work with communities and organizations
- Social worker-client relationships in work with small groups
- Methods used to clarify roles of the social worker
- Social worker's roles in the problem-solving process
- Client's roles in the problem-solving process
- Influence of the social worker's values on the social worker-client relationship
- Dual relationships
- Influence of cultural diversity on the social worker-client relationship