

## ***Alaska's Licensing Laws Why?***

The State of Alaska has Licensing Laws for professions that serve the people of Alaska. Social Work is one of those professions and the Licensing Law is designed to protect the public. This profession requires special knowledge, education and training. Before we had these laws, there was no protection for the public from persons who were incompetent or unethical, and still were working with people. The licensing laws set basic standards of qualification, education, training, experience and professional competence for persons who work in this professional area. *Information on these requirements is available from the Board of Social Work Examiners and the Alaska Statutes.*

Only persons licensed under the Social Work Law may call themselves Social Workers. Only person licensed as a Clinical Social Worker, under the Social Work Law, may call themselves a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Although the laws for the helping professions may vary some, all the helping professions have standards and ethics that must be followed.

## ***What is a State Board?***

Each Board licenses professionals in their fields of expertise. The various Boards are voluntary and are appointed by the governor. They are responsible for setting standards for licensing; identifying individuals who meet those standards; and making sure licensing examinations are given as needed.

## ***How can a State Board help me?***

The Boards protect you by making sure that a licensed professional meets national standards for their qualifications, knowledge and experience before being given a license. The Boards also look into complaints made by people about possible abuses by professionals. The Boards decide on consequences for professionals when a violation has happened. The Boards make sure professionals in these areas maintain their skills and update their knowledge by taking continuing education courses in their respective professions.

The Board are committed to making sure that when you ask for help from a professional in one of the helping professions, including Social Work, you can know you are getting the best possible services.

## ***How do I check a professional's qualifications?***

When choosing a professional Social Worker, you may want to call the State Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Board of Social Work Examiners, at (907) 465-2551. Not all persons who call themselves professional have a license. The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing can tell you whether the Social Worker, you are interested in working with, is licensed. Licensing is your assurance that the professional has met the education, experience and examination requirements for professional Social Work practice set out in Alaska's laws.

The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing can tell you if the person's license is current and whether that person has ever been in trouble for violating professional standards of conduct. The Division address is:

Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing  
P.O. Box 110806  
Juneau, AK 99811-0806  
Phone: (907) 465-2551

## ***What are my rights as a client?***

You have the right to professional and ethical treatment regardless of your age, sex, race, color, religion, sexual preference, national origin or disability. you have the right to a clear description of services, fee and how you (and your insurer) will be billed. Client records and communications are confidential and may not be released by anyone without the client's consent. Alaska Statutes allow only a few exceptions to this confidentiality rule.

## ***What if I have a complaint?***

If you believe that a licensed Social Worker has performed improperly or incompetently, or that someone is working without the required license, please contact the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing investigative staff in Anchorage, at (907) 269-8437 or E-mail them at: [License@commerce.state.ak.us](mailto:License@commerce.state.ak.us)

A written complaint should be filed with the Division, if a licensed Social Worker has:

- Abused or mistreated you or any client in any way, verbally, financially or sexually.
- Lied to or misled you in the provision of services or billing.
- Been under the influence of alcohol or drugs, while treating you.
- Released information without your consent (except as allowed by law.)
- Been negligent in your treatment.
- Shown an inability to practice safely and competently for any reason.
- Developed a relationship that appears to be in conflict with the therapy.

***What happens after I file a complaint?***

The Division and the Board of Social Work Examiners have the authority to discipline the licensed professional. An investigation will be made into the complaint by an investigating officer for the Board. The professional will have opportunity to respond in writing or in a face-to-face meeting. If the investigating officer decides that it should investigate the complaint further, the person who complained or others with knowledge of the complaint may be asked for additional information. Once the investigating officer gathers the necessary information, the Board reviews the information and it may take disciplinary action.

If the investigation shows that a licensed professional violated laws, rules or ethical standards that govern them, the individual may face:

- Formal disciplinary action, including suspension or revocation of the license, and a financial penalty.
- Probation with limitations added to the license to assure that the acts that led to the disciplinary action do not occur again.

The licensed Social Worker may, with the Board's approval, voluntarily take corrective actions to assure that similar violations do not occur in the future.

If there is not enough evidence of a violation, the Social Work Board and the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing will dismiss the complaint. In every case, the Division will inform the person, who has complained, of the result of the disciplinary process.

You can obtain a complaint form or information regarding a Licensed Social Worker from the

Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing  
P.O. Box 110806

Juneau, Alaska 99811-0806

Phone: (907) 465-2551

or

550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1500

Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3567

Phone: (907) 269-8184

# ***What you need to know about your Social Worker***