

Using your Master in Social Work in the USA

To be a social worker in the USA, one must have a degree in a college or university programme accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (<http://www.cswe.org/>). The undergraduate degree is the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). Graduate degrees include the Master of Social Work (MSW) and the Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) or PhD. An MSW is required to provide therapy.

Those who have completed their qualification in the UK would need to go through a review for degree equivalency conducted by the Council on Social Work Education, the national accreditation body for social work education, which usually takes six to 12 weeks.

Further information about this process and fees have a look at the International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service:

<http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/22207.aspx>

Licensing/ Registration

All social workers in the USA must be licensed to practice as a social worker. In the UK, we usually refer to this as registration and in Scotland social work students and qualified social workers who are in practice must register with the Scottish Social Service Council.

In the USA, legal regulation of licensed professions, including social work varies from state to state. Generally, states regulate up to four levels of social work preparation: a baccalaureate degree in social work (BSW); a master's degree in social work (MSW); an MSW with two years of postgraduate supervised experience; and an MSW with two years of postmaster's direct clinical social work experience. Visit the state regulatory board directly or the Association of Social Work Boards (<http://www.aswb.org/>), for a list of social work state licensing agencies or for a comparison of state regulations.

Some states regulate only one of these practice levels, but most regulate two or more levels of social work practice. Currently, all 50 states recognize and regulate master's degree level practice, 35 states recognize and regulate baccalaureate level practice, a few states license at an associate level, and a small number offer more than four licensure categories.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (established 1955)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (<http://www.socialworkers.org/>) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with 145,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. NASW also provides malpractice insurance for social workers in the U.S.A.

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