**Information Regarding Recent News on ASWB Licensing Pass Rates**

In response to the [Association of Social Work Board’s recent release of social work licensing exam pass rate data](https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/) on August 5, 2022, we are sharing the following statements from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD) which represents Schools of Social Work across the United States and Canada. On September 8, 2022, [CSWE announced that it had removed the ASWB licensing pass rates](https://www.cswe.org/news/news/coa-removes-licensing-exam-pass-rates-from-the-2022-epas/) from the 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for Schools of Social Work, and on October 5, CSWE contacted the Maine State Board of Social Work Licensure to recommend that the Board suspend the use of the ASWB exam until a thorough analysis of the data has been completed by ASWB, and recommendations have been offered to correct for inequities.

The University of Maine School of Social Work is in broad agreement with the statements from these respected social work organizations, and we share their concern and sense of urgency in addressing the substantial racial, language and age disparities in the social work exam. We are closely following the action steps recommended by NADD for our state, and we will be considering and guided by NADD’s future work and recommendations regarding additional steps to be taken.

[**NASW’s statement 8/11/22**](https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2531/ASWB-social-work-licensing-exam-pass-rate-data-confirm-concern-over-racial-disparities)**:**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. -**The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) on August 5 published data in a [2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis](https://www.aswb.org/aswb-releases-data-analysis-on-social-work-licensing-exam-pass-rates/). This disclosure stems from years of advocacy by NASW and other social work organizations, schools of social work, and individual advocates to push ASWB to post data that it has been unwilling to release for decades.   
  
The data revealed glaring disparities in pass rates among racial groups, particularly for Black test takers. It also raised concerns about disparities in pass rates for other demographics, including social workers who are older adults.  
  
All social work institutions - including ASWB and licensing boards, NASW and other associations, and social work higher education programs - must openly confront systemic racism within our profession.  We must all commit to work to ensure reforms are made to ensure the licensing process is equitable for all, protecting the public without unnecessary gatekeeping and discrimination.  
  
NASW through its national office and its 55 chapters is committed to working closely with partners to develop a coordinated and timely response to this issue and propose innovative solutions that reduce harm and increase diverse representation at all levels of social work practice.

[**CSWE’s statement 8/25/22**](https://www.cswe.org/news/news/addressing-licensing-exam-pass-rate-data/)**:**

On August 5, 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released *2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis* which offers descriptive data on takers of the social work licensing exam, including state and program-level information. Further analysis is necessary, yet the descriptive data reveal that test takers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color do not pass the test at the same rate as White test takers.   
  
While many of us in social work education have believed this to be true for a long time, the disparities revealed in the data are shocking. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) appreciates the intention to release the data as part of ASWB’s commitment to participating in data-driven conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion, but we believe the descriptive data released by ASWB to be incomplete and contains flaws.  
  
There are other steps that CSWE believes can be taken to help rectify an egregious harm to the test takers and to our society that desperately needs social work practitioners to reflect the full diversity of its population.  
  
CSWE demands that a full analysis of the data be made available for review beyond the descriptive analysis that has been shared to date.  
  
CSWE also commits to exploring models that eliminate the need for a licensing exam. In many cases, a licensing exam may be redundant because graduating from an accredited program of social work is evidence of achievement of the competencies articulated by the CSWE and the social work education community.  
  
CSWE will collaborate with our social work education and practice constituents to develop a set of recommendations that will support more equitable outcomes.

**September 2, 2022**

[**NADD STATEMENT ON ASWB RELEASE OF REPORT ON LICENSURE PASSAGE RATES**](http://www.naddssw.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NADD-Statement-on-ASWB-Report-Release-Sep-2-2022.pdf)

As you may now know, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization currently responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring Social Work’s National Licensing Examination, recently released a report documenting exam passage rates across the profession. The report helps us to understand the disparities in the diversity of Social Work’s workforce nationally. Data clearly evidence extreme racial and age biases in the exam. Moreover, the report reflects an organization that perpetuated use of an exam that has substantively contributed to the documented shortage of diverse licensed social workers.

Suspecting disparities in exam passage rates, Social Work’s National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD) had requested these data from ASWB for many years to identify the extent of the issue across the profession. With increasing anecdotal evidence mounting, NADD established a National Licensing Exam Task Force a year ago to elevate the issue and explore alternatives to the existing exam. NADD’s primary concern is to ensure an unbiased assessment process such that achieving status as a professional social worker is accessible to all graduates of our accredited programs.

Now, having knowingly held data that clearly reflects extreme test bias, ASWB publicly released not only aggregate data across the profession, but individual State and program level data. The issue is even more egregious than anticipated and reflects a crisis in the profession. NADD calls on social work State licensing boards and legislators to urgently act to immediately address the current exam and assessment process to effect rapid equity in the nation’s workforce. Specific immediate and longer-term proposed actions include:

a. Immediately suspend all fees associated with test taking

b. Rebate fees paid to persons experiencing multiple test attempts, particularly by groups of people where data demonstrate consistent bias

c. Suspend Interstate COMPACT discussions based on a uniform ‘standardized exam’ until biased testing issues are addressed

d. Consider legislative remedies such as those passed in Illinois and Rhode Island limiting the ASWB test option, recognizing graduation from a CSWE accredited university/college program as an optional pathway toward some levels of licensure

e. Charge NADD, the academic leaders of the Social Work profession, to collaboratively explore alternatives to the existing exam and monitoring process

NADD is sending separate calls for action to other constituent groups, such as the Council on Social Education and the National Association of Social Workers to work together to identify and address issues that may be contributing to the noted disparities.

We know you share NADD’s concern and sense of urgency to effectively respond to these documented disparities. With Social Work workforce shortages across the nation, it is imperative for us all to work together to find responsible resolutions. Should you have any questions that we can help to inform, please contact Dr. Martell Teasley, President of NADD, at martell.teasley@utah.edu.

Sincerely,

Martell Teasley, PhD, MSW, President, NADD, University of Utah

Sheryl Kubiak, PhD, MSW, Co-Chair, NADD Task Force, Wayne State University

Tamara S. Davis, PhD, MSSW, Co-Chair, NADD Task Force, Indiana University