



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.

Clinical Examination

I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY AND BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT 31%

I.A. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIFE CYCLE

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

- The theories of human growth and development
- Personality theories
- The process of social development
- The indicators of normal physical growth and development
- The impact of physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities on human development
- Adult development
- The interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors
- Emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development
- Normal sexual development
- Gerontology
- The concept of attachment and bonding
- Child development
- Basic human needs
- Adolescent development
- Self-image throughout the life cycle
- Human genetics
- Dynamics of loss, separation, and grief
- The impact of aging parents on adult children
- The biopsychological responses to illness and disability
- Family life cycle
- Parenting skills and capacities
- Impact of trauma

I.B. HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT

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

- The Person in Environment (PIE) theory
- Theories of human behavior
- Psychological defense mechanisms
- Normal and abnormal behavior
- The effects of social context on behavior
- The effects of family dynamics on individuals
- Dysfunctional family dynamics
- The impact of physical illness on family dynamics
- The dynamics of sexual abuse
- The dynamics of psychological abuse and neglect
- The dynamics of physical abuse and neglect
- The impact of mental illness on family dynamics
- The characteristics of perpetrators of abuse
- The effects of abuse and neglect on victims
- The effects of life events and crises on the family
- The effects of life events and crises on individuals
- The effects of trauma on behavior
- The effects of trauma on self-image

I.C. EFFECTS OF DIVERSITY

- This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Differences in culture, race, and ethnicity
- The influences of culture, race, and/or ethnicity
- The impact of culture, race, and/or ethnicity on self-image
- The effects of discrimination based on culture, race, and/or ethnicity
- Differences in sexual orientation and/or gender
- The influences of sexual orientation and/or gender
- The impact of sexual orientation and/or gender on self-image
- The effects of discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender
- Differences in age and/or disability factors and characteristics
- The influences of age and/or disability
- The impact of age and/or disability on self-image
- The effects of discrimination based on age and/or disability
- The impact of diversity on styles of communicating
- The effects of spirituality

I.D. ADDICTIONS

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

- Substance abuse and/or dependence
- The effects of substance abuse and/or dependence on relationships
- The effects of substance abuse and/or dependence
- Addiction theories
- The effects of drugs and alcohol on behavior
- Other addictions
- The effects of other addictions on behavior and relationships

II. ASSESSMENT, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PLANNING

26%

II.A. INFORMATION GATHERING

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

- The principles and techniques of interviewing
- The components of a biopsychosocial assessment
- The use of collaterals to obtain relevant information
- The use of standardized instruments in practice

II.B. ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS

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

- The factors and processes used in problem formulation
- The methods used to assess the client's communication skills
- The use of observation
- The methods of involving a client in identifying the presenting problem
- The methods used to assess a client's strengths and weaknesses
- The indicators of motivation and resistance
- The factors used in determining the client's ability to use intervention/treatment
- Psychopathology
- The indicators of biopsychosocial stress
- The components and function of the mental status exam
- Medications

II.B.ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS (continued)

- The process of social work assessment/diagnosis
- The methods used in assessing clients' ego strengths
- The current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association
- Basic medical terminology
- The biopsychosocial factors related to mental health
- Co-occurring disorders and conditions
- The indicators of sexual abuse
- The indicators of physical abuse and neglect
- The indicators of psychological abuse and neglect
- Risk factors for dangerousness to self and others
- Risk factors related to suicide
- The methods used to assess needed level of care (e.g. geriatrics, other special needs, foster or group care)
- The methods used to assess trauma

II.C.TREATMENT PLANNING

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

- The criteria used in selecting intervention/treatment modalities
- The components of intervention, treatment, or service plans
- The methods used to match interventions to client problems
- The methods used to develop an intervention/treatment plan
- Discharge, aftercare, and follow-up planning
- The use of measurable objectives in intervention, treatment, or service plans
- The difference between objective and subjective data
- The application of research to practice
- The methods used to formulate a timeframe for interventions

III. PSYCHOTHERAPY, CLINICAL INTERVENTIONS AND CASE MANAGEMENT

25%

III.A.THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

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

- The concept of feedback
- The concept of congruence in communication
- The methods used in summarizing communication
- The methods used to facilitate communication
- Verbal and nonverbal communication techniques
- The methods for feedback
- The concept of empathy
- How the client's behavior with a social worker is representative of his/her relationship patterns
- The concept of acceptance
- The principles of relationship building
- Professional objectivity in the social worker-client relationship
- The social worker-client relationship
- Methods to clarify the role of the social worker
- Techniques to clarify client responsibilities
- Concepts of transference and counter-transference
- The social worker-client relationship in facilitating treatment

III.B.THE INTERVENTION PROCESS

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

- Biopsychosocial models
- The problem-solving model
- Crisis intervention/treatment approaches
- Cognitive approaches
- Psychodynamic approaches
- Task-centered approaches
- Behavioral approaches
- The types of social work interventions/treatments
- Psychotherapies
- Solution-focused and brief interventions
- Recognition of functional roles in family dynamics
- Approaches used in working with traumatized clients
- Methods of conflict resolution
- Empowerment strategies in interventions
- Prevention strategies
- The use of objectives to guide the intervention process
- The techniques used to evaluate a client's progress
- The phases of intervention/treatment
- The indicators of client readiness for termination
- Partializing techniques
- Supportive techniques
- Motivational approaches
- Contracting with clients
- Approaches for engaging involuntary/mandated clients
- The use of goal-setting
- Various intervention/treatment strategies
- The techniques to teach coping and other skills to clients
- The use of out-of-home placement as an intervention/treatment method
- Client self-monitoring techniques
- Techniques for stress management
- Techniques for anger management
- Techniques for harm reduction
- Permanency planning
- Models of family life education in social work practice
- Models of family-centered social work practice
- The approaches to family therapy
- Couples intervention/treatment approaches
- The approaches to social group work
- The approaches to group psychotherapy
- Differential use of group process
- The techniques for managing group process and maintaining group functioning
- Differential use of therapeutic techniques
- Integrative case management
- The indicators of client readiness to change

III.C.MANAGEMENT OF CASES

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

- Case recording for practice evaluation or supervision
- Methods for performance appraisal and evaluation
- The effects policies, procedures, regulations, and laws have on practice
- Client education about service/benefit policies
- The effects of agency functioning on service delivery
- The concept of client advocacy
- The impact of social welfare legislation
- Documentation and the management of practice records
- Written communication skills for a variety of professional responsibilities

III.D.CONSULTATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

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

- Models of peer supervision
- The expertise of other professions
- Consultation approaches
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Multidisciplinary team approaches
- Elements of a case presentation
- Elements of client reports
- Client referral for services
- Coordination of client services
- Methods of networking

IV. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND VALUES

18%

IV.A.ETHICAL ISSUES

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

- The principles and processes of informed consent
- Professional boundary issues
- Dual relationships
- Identification and resolution of ethical dilemmas
- Ethical and legal issues

IV.B.CONFIDENTIALITY AND ITS LIMITS

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

- Legal and ethical issues regarding confidentiality, including electronic information
- Ethical and legal issues regarding mandatory reporting of abuse

IV.C.VALUE ISSUES

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

- The influence of the social worker's own values and beliefs on the social worker-client relationship
- The effects of culture, race, and ethnicity on values
- Professional values and ethics
- Client self-determination
- Stages of professional development
- The influence of the social worker's own values and beliefs on interdisciplinary collaboration
- Respect for client values and beliefs