# Chapter 37 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia

# Social Work

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# Article 1. Social Work.

## § 54.1-3700. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Administration" means the process of attaining the objectives of an organization through a system of coordinated and cooperative efforts to make social service programs effective instruments for the amelioration of social conditions and for the solution of social problems.

"Baccalaureate social worker" means a person who engages in the practice of social work under the supervision of a master's social worker and provides basic generalist services, including casework management and supportive services and consultation and education.

"Board" means the Board of Social Work.

"Casework" means both direct treatment, with an individual or several individuals, and intervention in the situation on the client's behalf with the objectives of meeting the client's needs, helping the client deal with the problem with which he is confronted, strengthening the client's capacity to function productively, lessening his distress, and enhancing his opportunities and capacities for fulfillment.

"Casework management and supportive services" means assessment of presenting problems and perceived needs, referral services, policy interpretation, data gathering, planning, advocacy, and coordination of services.

"Clinical social worker" means a social worker who, by education and experience, is professionally qualified at the autonomous practice level to provide direct diagnostic, preventive and treatment services where functioning is threatened or affected by social and psychological stress or health impairment.

"Consultation and education" means program consultation in social work to agencies, organizations, or community groups; academic programs and other training such as staff development activities, seminars, and workshops using social work principles and theories of social work education.

"Group work" means helping people, in the realization of their potential for social functioning, through group experiences in which the members are involved with common concerns and in which there is agreement about the group's purpose, function, and structure.

"Master's social worker" means a person who engages in the practice of social work and provides non-clinical, generalist services, including staff supervision and management.

"Planning and community organization" means helping organizations and communities analyze social problems and human needs; planning to assist organizations and communities in organizing for general community development; and improving social conditions through the application of social planning, resource development, advocacy, and social policy formulation.

"Practice of social work" means rendering or offering to render to individuals, families, groups, organizations, governmental units, or the general public service which is guided by special knowledge of social resources, social systems, human capabilities, and the part conscious and unconscious motivation play in determining behavior. Any person regularly employed by a licensed hospital or nursing home who offers or renders such services in connection with his employment in accordance with patient care policies or plans for social services adopted pursuant to applicable regulations when such services do not include group, marital or family therapy, psychosocial treatment or other measures to modify human behavior involving child abuse, newborn intensive care, emotional disorders or similar issues, shall not be deemed to be engaged in the "practice of social work." Subject to the foregoing, the disciplined application of social work values, principles and methods includes, but is not restricted to, casework management and supportive services, casework, group work, planning and community organization, administration, consultation and education, and research.

"Research" means the application of systematic procedures for the purpose of developing, modifying, and expanding knowledge of social work practice which can be communicated and verified.

"Social worker" means a person trained to provide service and action to effect changes in human behavior, emotional responses, and the social conditions by the application of the values, principles, methods, and procedures of the profession of social work.

1976, c. 608, § 54-941; 1979, c. 398; 1981, c. 555; 1988, c. 765; 2018, c. [451](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?181+ful+CHAP0451).

## § 54.1-3701. Exemption from requirements of licensure.

The requirements for licensure provided for in this chapter shall not be applicable to:

1. Persons who render services that are like or similar to those falling within the scope of the classifications or categories in this chapter, so long as the recipients or beneficiaries of such services are not subject to any charge or fee, or any financial requirement, actual or implied, and the person rendering such service is not held out, by himself or otherwise, as a licensed practitioner.

2. The activities or services of a student pursuing a course of study in social work in an institution recognized by the Board for purposes of licensure upon completion of the course of study or under the supervision of a practitioner licensed under this chapter; if such activities or services constitute a part of his course of study and are adequately supervised.

3. The activities of rabbis, priests, ministers or clergymen of any religious denomination or sect when such activities are within the scope of the performance of their regular or specialized ministerial duties, and no separate charge is made or when such activities are performed, whether with or without charge, for or under auspices or sponsorship, individually or in conjunction with others, of an established and legally cognizable church, denomination or sect, and the person rendering service remains accountable to its established authority.

4. Persons employed as salaried employees or volunteers of the federal government, the Commonwealth, a locality, or of any agency established or funded, in whole or part, by any such governmental entity or of a private, nonprofit organization or agency sponsored or funded, in whole or part, by a community-based citizen group or organization. Any person who renders psychological services, as defined in Chapter 36 (§ [54.1-3600](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/54.1-3600/) et seq.) of this title, shall be subject to the requirements of that chapter. Any person who, in addition to the above-enumerated employment, engages in an independent private practice shall not be exempt from the requirements for licensure.

5. Persons regularly employed by private business firms as personnel managers, deputies or assistants so long as their counseling activities relate only to employees of their employer and in respect to their employment.

6. Any person who is licensed to practice as a clinical social worker in another state, the District of Columbia, or a United States territory or possession and who is in good standing with the applicable regulatory agency in that state, the District of Columbia, or that United States territory or possession who provides behavioral health services, as defined in § [37.2-100](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/37.2-100/), to a patient located in the Commonwealth when (i) such practice is for the purpose of providing continuity of care through the use of telemedicine services as defined in § [38.2-3418.16](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/38.2-3418.16/) and (ii) the clinical social worker has previously established a practitioner-patient relationship with the patient. A person who is licensed to practice as clinical social worker who provides behavioral health services to a patient located in the Commonwealth through use of telemedicine services pursuant to this subdivision may provide such services for a period of no more than one year from the date on which the clinical social worker began providing such services to such patient.

1976, c. 608, § 54-944; 1986, c. 581; 1988, c. 765; 2022, c. [275](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?221+ful+CHAP0275).

## § 54.1-3702. Administration or prescription of drugs not permitted.

This chapter shall not be construed as permitting the administration or prescribing of drugs or in any way infringing upon the practice of medicine as defined in Chapter 29 (§ 54.1-2900 et seq.) of this title.

(1976, c. 608, § 54-945; 1988, c. 765.)

## § 54.1-3703. Board of Social Work; members.

The Board of Social Work shall regulate the practice of social work.

The Board shall be composed of nine nonlegislative citizen members appointed by the Governor, seven of whom shall be licensed social workers who have been in active practice of social work for at least five years prior to appointment and two of whom shall be nonlegislative citizen members at large. The terms of the members of the Board shall be four years.

(1976, c. 608, § 54-942; 1981, cc. 447, 555; 1986, c. 464; 1988, cc. 42, 765; 2006, c. 685.)

## § 54.1-3704. Nominations.

Nominations for professional members may be made from a list of at least three names for each vacancy submitted to the Governor by the Virginia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and by the Virginia Society for Clinical Social Work. The Governor may notify such organizations of any professional vacancy other than by expiration. In no case shall the Governor be bound to make any appointment from among the nominees.

(1986, c. 464, § 54-942.1; 1988, c. 765.)

## § 54.1-3705. Specific powers and duties of the Board.

In addition to the powers granted in § [54.1-2400](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/54.1-2400/), the Board shall have the following specific powers and duties:

1. To cooperate with and maintain a close liaison with other professional boards and the community to ensure that regulatory systems stay abreast of community and professional needs.

2. To conduct inspections to ensure that licensees conduct their practices in a competent manner and in conformance with the relevant regulations.

3. To designate specialties within the profession.

4. Expired.

5. To license baccalaureate social workers, master's social workers, and clinical social workers to practice consistent with the requirements of the chapter and regulations of the Board.

6. To register persons proposing to obtain supervised post-degree experience in the practice of social work required by the Board for licensure as a clinical social worker.

7. To pursue the establishment of reciprocal agreements with jurisdictions that are contiguous with the Commonwealth for the licensure of baccalaureate social workers, master's social workers, and clinical social workers. Reciprocal agreements shall require that a person hold a comparable, current, unrestricted license in the other jurisdiction and that no grounds exist for denial based on the Code of Virginia and regulations of the Board.

1976, c. 608, §§ 54-929, 54-931; 1983, c. 115; 1986, cc. 64, 100, 464; 1988, c. 765; 1994, c. [778](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?941+ful+CHAP0778); 2018, c. [451](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?181+ful+CHAP0451); 2020, c. [617](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0617).

## § 54.1-3706. License required.

In order to engage in the practice of social work, it shall be necessary to hold a license.

(1979, c. 408, § 54-943.1; 1988, c. 765.)

## § 54.1-3707. Licenses continued.

All licenses heretofore issued by the Board of Social Work and its predecessors shall continue in effect, and be renewable under this chapter.

(1976, c. 608, § 54-943; 1988, c. 765.)

## § 54.1-3707.1. Educational requirements.

The Board shall accept proof of the successful completion of the following as evidence of the satisfaction of the educational requirements for licensure as a clinical social worker: (i) a master's degree in social work with a clinical course of study from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, (ii) a master's degree in social work with a non-clinical concentration from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education together with successful completion of the educational requirements for a clinical course of study through a graduate program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, or (iii) a program of education and training in social work at an educational institution outside the United States recognized by the Council on Social Work Education. For the purposes of this section, "clinical course of study" means graduate coursework that includes specialized advanced courses in human behavior and the social environment, social justice and policy, psychopathology, and diversity issues; research; clinical practice with individuals, families, and groups; and clinical practicum that focuses on diagnostic, prevention, and treatment services.

(2013, c. [533](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?131+ful+CHAP0533).)

## § 54.1-3708. Continuing education requirements.

The Board shall establish in regulations requirements for the continuing education of licensed social workers.

The Board may approve persons who provide continuing education or accredit continuing education programs in order to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(1999, c. 575.)

## § 54.1-3709. Unlawful designation as social worker.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person not licensed under this chapter to use the title "Social Worker" in writing or in advertising in connection with his practice unless he simultaneously uses clarifying initials that signify receiving a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from an accredited social work school or program approved by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctorate in social work.

B. If a complaint or report of a possible violation of this section is made against any person who is licensed, certified, registered, or permitted, or who holds a multistate licensure privilege issued by any of the health regulatory boards within the Department of Health Professions, that complaint shall be referred to the applicable board within the Department for disciplinary action. A violation of this section shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, any individual meeting the qualifications provided for in 42 C.F.R. Part 483 may practice as a "qualified social worker" in any licensed nursing home using such title. However, any such individual may only use the title "social worker" in connection with the activities of the nursing home.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, any individual meeting the qualifications provided for in 42 C.F.R. § 418.114(b) (3) may practice as a "social worker" in any licensed hospice using such title. However, any such individual may only use the title "social worker" in connection with the activities of the hospice.

E. That nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring the Department of Social Services, or any other entity, to hire licensed social workers or social workers with a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from an accredited social work school or program approved by the Council on Social Work Education or a doctorate in social work.

(2011, c. 794.)

# Article 2. Music Therapy.

## § 54.1-3709.1. Definitions.

As used in this article, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Music therapist" means a person who has (i) completed a bachelor's degree or higher in music therapy, or its equivalent; (ii) satisfied the requirements for licensure set forth in regulations adopted by the Board pursuant to § [54.1-3709.2](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/54.1-3709.2/); and (iii) been issued a license for the independent practice of music therapy by the Board.

"Music therapy" means the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship through an individualized music therapy treatment plan for the client that identifies the goals, objectives, and potential strategies of the music therapy services appropriate for the client using music therapy interventions, which may include music improvisation, receptive music listening, songwriting, lyric discussion, music and imagery, music performance, learning through music, and movement to music. "Music therapy" does not include the screening, diagnosis, or assessment of any physical, mental, or communication disorder.

2020, cc. [103](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0103), [233](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0233).

## § 54.1-3709.2. Music therapy; licensure.

A. The Board shall adopt regulations governing the practice of music therapy, upon consultation with the Advisory Board on Music Therapy established in § [54.1-3709.3](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/54.1-3709.3/). The regulations shall (i) set forth the educational, clinical training, and examination requirements for licensure to practice music therapy; (ii) provide for appropriate application and renewal fees; and (iii) include requirements for licensure renewal and continuing education. In developing such regulations, the Board shall consider requirements for board certification offered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists or any successor organization.

B. No person shall engage in the practice of music therapy or hold himself out or otherwise represent himself as a music therapist unless he is licensed by the Board.

C. Nothing in this section shall prohibit (i) the practice of music therapy by a student pursuing a course of study in music therapy if such practice constitutes part of the student's course of study and is adequately supervised or (ii) a licensed health care provider, other professional registered, certified, or licensed in the Commonwealth, or any person whose training and national certification attests to his preparation and ability to practice his certified profession or occupation from engaging in the full scope of his practice, including the use of music incidental to his practice, provided that he does not represent himself as a music therapist.

2020, cc. [103](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0103), [233](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0233).

## § 54.1-3709.3. Advisory Board on Music Therapy; membership; terms.

A. The Advisory Board on Music Therapy (Advisory Board) is hereby established to assist the Board in formulating regulations related to the practice of music therapy. The Advisory Board shall also assist in such other matters relating to the practice of music therapy as the Board may require.

B. The Advisory Board shall have a total membership of five nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Governor as follows: three members shall be licensed music therapists, one member shall be a licensed health care provider other than a music therapist, and one member shall be a citizen at large.

C. After the initial staggering of terms, members shall be appointed for a term of four years. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. All members may be reappointed. However, no member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

2020, cc. [103](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0103), [233](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0233).