



STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Office of the Dean

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April 26, 2018

To the Texas Sunset Commission:

We are writing to express our concern about the current Texas social work licensure process and supervision approval process. The DiNitto Center for Social Work Career Services, which is housed in the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, provides support for students and alumni preparing for the Texas Social Work Licensing Exam. We have heard from many of our students and alumni about their frustrations, extensive delays, and difficult experiences with The Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners. The complex procedures and long delays in the licensure process and supervision approval process have caused our students and alumni great stress and have negatively impacted their ability to accrue the required supervision hours and to find employment. This is unacceptable, and something must change.

The following are just some of the stories that we have heard from our students and alumni about their challenges with The Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners:

- "I am still waiting for approval to take the LMSW Exam. My current internship has stated that they would work with me if I pass my test and have my "license pending" until I receive my transcripts and am able to officially receive my license. Unfortunately, with 2 weeks left in my internship (9 weeks since I submitted my application) and still no word from the Board, I am unable to even apply right now since I cannot confirm my passing of the Exam. Additionally, I went to graduate school to become a licensed social worker and all of the future employment opportunities require a license."
- "I am an independent board approved supervisor and the return time on plan approvals is too long. Supervisees cannot proceed and as an independent supervisor my supervision work cannot proceed."
- "My job is contingent upon graduation and licensure. I will not have a job due to not being able to sit for the exam prior to graduation now."
- "I am employed as an LCSW for a large hospital. For my last renewal in the Fall of 2016, I was audited and required to submit supporting CEU certificates/evidence. Although I submitted the supporting documents 63 days before my license expired, the length of time to receive my license renewal was long and created quite a panic for me, as I would not be allowed to work until I received the physical renewal in the mail. After 6 weeks of checking the status online and not receiving my license in the mail, I ended up contacting the board by phone and email to check the status of my renewal. I waited on the phone for over an

hour, and ended up faxing a second set of supporting documents (copies of ceu certificates) directly to the board. Although I had a confirmation of the fax going through, I called the board back to confirm receipt and requested my renewal be expedited. I was told that it took 2 weeks for mail to be received and to allow a little more time to receive and process the mail ("a week or so"). I received an online approval after a week and the physical renewal the following week, 5 days before my license expired and 15 days after contacting the board. Had I not received the physical renewal, I would have been on unpaid leave until receipt of the license."

- "I am currently applying to jobs with hopes to begin immediately after graduation. The majority of the positions I am interested in require a license or projected date of a license within 3-6 months. The following is an account of my experience with the board after waiting the recommended 4 weeks before inquiring about status updates:
 - **4/6/18:** 9:35am-11:02am: On hold until 11am, M----- answered stating she is a temp hired to take messages that will be responded to within 24-48 hours. M----- spoke with my supervisor and assured her someone will respond by the end of today, call ended 11:06am.
 - 3:30-4pm: Called, on hold until line hung up at 4pm.
 - **4/9/18:** 9am-9:35am: On hold, C----- answered and took a message stating responses will be sent between 8-9am and 4-5pm, call ended 9:37am.
 - 9:35-10:01am: Called back, on hold until 10am, line picked up and states all representatives are at a mandatory training and ended the call 10:02am.
 - 1:44pm-2:10pm: On hold, M----- answered "I cannot transfer you to them but I can put you in the queue. They are answering but there are so many calls that people are just on hold. This is just a call center. They are so backed up with calls that we have been told to take messages. There are 3 of us answering calls." Asked M----- to transfer me to the queue, she agreed and then the line disconnected 2:14pm.
 - 2:19-3pm: Called again, I hung up at 3pm.
 - **4/10/18:** 9:45am-2:22pm: On hold. Call ended by stating that staff was in mandatory training.
 - **4/12/18:** 6pm: received a call from A-----: ask for update on application. A----- states: Check goes to fiscal department, payment submitted and application sent to office to be entered into system; currently they are at the end of February, and once it is entered it will be sent to A----- B----- . Once she has reviewed it, expect to wait 8-12 weeks from that date to hear back."

The Steve Hicks School of Social Work fully supports the National Association of Social Work Texas Chapter's recommendations on how to improve the licensure process in Texas (reproduced below).

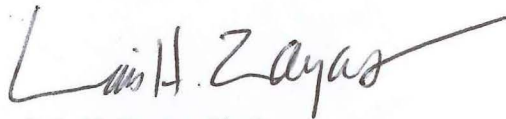
- **"We agree** with the Sunset Staff recommendation in the report to create the Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC). The BHEC would house the independent boards of social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists and psychologists under a consolidated agency. The Behavioral Health Executive Council will leverage the benefits of consolidation

without sacrificing the quality, independence, accessibility and accountability of the four behavioral health licensing boards. In addition, this collaborative effort allows BHEC to realize economies of scale in the areas of information technology, human resources and staff training while fostering a spirit of cooperation to achieve regulatory best practices, protect the public and better serve their respective constituencies.

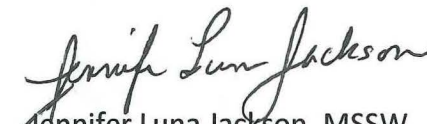
- **"We disagree** with the Sunset Staff recommendation for the Behavioral Health Executive Council composition and authority. The current recommendation in the report has 9 total members on the BHEC: five public, voting members (one from each board and a fifth appointed as chair by the Governor), and four professionals (one each from the social workers, LPC's, LMFT's and psychologists) serving as ex officio members, which means they can offer input but not vote. Instead, we are recommending that the BHEC be structured as proposed during the last Sunset Review and include 9 total voting members: one professional and one public member appointed by each board and the presiding officer be a public member appointed by the Governor. Each of the four behavioral health boards would have full rule-making authority over scope of practice, qualifications and training. This model has proven to be very effective for other regulatory entities such as the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Boards."

Thank you for your consideration of our feedback. We urge you to strongly consider our recommendations in order to support our common goal of making the profession of social work in Texas the best that it can be.

Respectfully,



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