



Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development

Information Bulletin

LEAD 23-001

January 2023

Date: Monday, January 30, 2023

To: School social workers, District Administrators, CESA Directors, Other Interested Parties

From: LEAD Team (Licensing, Educator Advancement, and Development)

Subject: School Social Worker License

This bulletin is meant to answer questions regarding how school social workers are licensed in Wisconsin public school districts. Specific topics covered include:

- [Eligibility for a license after completing an approved school social work program](#)
- [Eligibility for a license if holding a credential or license through the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services](#)
- [Eligibility for a licensing coming from an out-of-state program](#)
- [Completing statutory requirements \(stipulations\)](#)
- [Employment without a license](#)
- [School district looking to hire someone without a full license](#)
- [Substitute teaching](#)
- [How to apply](#)
- [Renewal requirements](#)
- [National certification for licensure](#)
- [Additional resources](#)

1. How do I know if I am eligible for a full, Tier II, license as a school social worker?

A Tier II license is available to those who have completed an approved school social worker program at [a Wisconsin educator preparation program](#) or a comparable, approved school social worker program outside Wisconsin. A social work credential

from the social worker section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board at the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services is not required if an applicant has completed an approved program or an out-of-state program approved in another state leading to a school social worker license in that state.

The Tier II provisional license as school social worker requires graduate level preparation resulting in a master's degree that includes coursework and practicum experiences that specifically prepares the applicant to serve in schools.

Before enrolling into a program from another state, it is important to know if the preparation is approved by that state's department of education and leads to an educational license.

If there are questions, the Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development (LEAD) Team may assist in making this determination so that applicants know if the program they have selected qualifies them for a Tier II provisional license immediately upon its completion or if more training or a different program will be necessary.

2. I completed my master's degree at an approved Wisconsin preparation program, but never applied for a license through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). How do I know if I qualify for a school social worker license?

You should contact the certification officer in the school, department, or college of education at the institution you attended. They will tell you if they did, or can, endorse you for a school social work license with the Department of Public Instruction.

3. I never completed a program to be a school social worker but have my degree in social work and a social work credential. Am I eligible for a license?

If you have a master's degree in social work and a valid social work certificate or license issued by the social worker section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board at the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services you are eligible for a Tier I, one-year license with stipulations under Wisconsin Administrative Code [PI 34.028\(e\)](#), clinically-trained social worker pathway.

If you are hired by a school district, have a bachelor's degree in social work, and are enrolled in an approved master's degree program leading to a school social work license you are eligible for a Tier I, one-year license with stipulations under Wisconsin Administrative Code [PI 34.028\(c\)](#) based on school district need.

After working under a Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction one-year license with stipulations for at least one school year, and completing the stipulations and requirements identified in Wisconsin Administrative Code [PI 34.040 \(2\)\(k\)](#), you may apply for a Tier II provisional license in social work. Additional information on stipulations can also be found under questions [five and six](#) in this bulletin. All requirements under PI 34.040 (2)(k) must be satisfied by no later than August 31 in

the year you are applying if you would like the Department of Public Instruction to consider your application for a provisional license for the upcoming school year.

4. I completed my master's degree in another state. Am I eligible to apply for a school social worker license through the Wisconsin DPI?

Your eligibility for a school social worker license depends on whether the program you completed was authorized to offer an educational preparation program at the master's degree level that required comparable, K-12 school-based preparation, resulting in a school social worker license. If the master's degree program you completed did not have specific K-12 school-based preparation, you will be required to hold the one-year license with stipulations while completing additional requirements for full, Tier II provisional licensure in Wisconsin.

If your license from another state is classified as a school social worker program, you may be eligible to apply directly for the Tier II provisional license through the [out-of-state pathway](#) to license. If you qualify, there may be applicable stipulations from Wisconsin state statute and administrative rule that are cited when the department issues the initial Wisconsin school social worker license.

If your license was not in school social work, but social work, you may be eligible for a license through the clinically-trained or district need pathways as laid out in [question number three](#) in this bulletin.

5. What does it mean to have a statutory stipulation on my license?

A statutory stipulation on your license means there is a requirement you still need to complete. There are two instances where the department will cite statutory stipulations on a license issued to you.

The first is when someone applies via the out-of-state pathway to license for those who have completed comparable, approved preparation programs outside Wisconsin. All state-approved educator preparation programs in Wisconsin must incorporate the applicable statutory requirements in Wisconsin Statutes 118.19 and Wis. Admin. Code PI 34 subchapter IV into their approved programs. Under these provisions licensed Wisconsin educators must show that they have had specific education and have demonstrated their competence in certain identified areas. Some of these requirements are specific to a particular license type, and some of these requirements apply to all educator licenses.

Educator preparation programs based outside of Wisconsin, however, are not subject to the same statutory requirements in their programs. As a result, applicants for a Wisconsin educator license who completed their program outside of Wisconsin will typically not have fulfilled all the statutory requirements for a Wisconsin educator license. The following are the applicable statutory stipulations for school social worker licensure for the person who has completed an approved program:

- Minority Group Relations, and
- Conflict Resolution.

The second instance, is when the Department of Public Instruction issues the one-year license with stipulations to the clinically-trained social worker. This person has a master's degree in social work and the valid social work credential or license through the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board at the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services. This license holder will either enroll into an approved program and finish any post-master's degree program requirements for that program's endorsement or will complete all stipulations cited when our office issued the one-year license with stipulations before they are eligible to apply for the Tier II provisional license.

The required stipulations found under Wisconsin Admin. Code sec. [PI 34.040 \(2\)\(k\)](#) include:

- Has fulfilled the duties as a school social worker for at least one year in a Wisconsin school while holding a license issued under PI 34.028.
- Has successfully completed training in all of the following:
 1. Developmental psychopathology,
 2. Assessment of children,
 3. [Child abuse and neglect](#),
 4. Working with children and families,
 5. School social worker practice,
 6. [Children with disabilities](#),
 7. Minority group relations, and
 8. Conflict resolution.

6. How do I satisfy the required stipulations?

If you feel that you have already completed coursework that covers any of your required stipulations, provide a copy of the stipulation letter emailed to you to the college or university where you believe the content was provided. Ask that an official from this institution review our requirements, review your coursework and the specific course content for the course or courses that you believe meet Wisconsin's requirements, and have that person write us a letter, on that institution's letterhead and bearing a signature, attesting that a specific course satisfies all of the requirements for a stipulation. Do not simply provide the department with a transcript or a course description. The department must have an official who is in a position to meaningfully exercise their professional knowledge and judgment about your coursework make that determination. Then, attach the letter to an email using the department's online help desk at <https://dpi.wi.gov/support/contact-us/>.

The conflict resolution stipulation can be met with either approved [coursework or professional development](#), or a letter from the school social worker's school supervisor attesting that the candidate has demonstrated competency in all of the following:

- a. Resolving conflicts between pupils and between pupils and school staff.
- b. Assisting pupils in learning methods of resolving conflicts between pupils and between pupils and school staff, including training in the use of peer mediation to resolve conflicts between pupils.

- c. Dealing with crises, including violent, disruptive, potentially violent or potentially disruptive situations that may arise in school or at activities supervised by a school as a result of conflicts between pupils or between pupils and other persons.

Minority group relations requires completion of approved professional development or coursework in each of the following specific areas:

- a. The history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
- b. The history, culture and contributions of women and various racial, cultural, language and economic groups in the United States.
- c. The philosophical and psychological bases of attitude development and change.
- d. The psychological and social implications of discrimination, especially racism and sexism in the American society.
- e. Evaluating and assessing the forces of discrimination, especially racism and sexism on faculty, students, curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the school program.
- f. Minority group relations through direct involvement with various racial, cultural, language and economic groups in the United States.

The children with disabilities (special education) stipulation requires the candidate to have completed [training](#) in procedures used for assessing and providing education for children with disabilities, including the roles and responsibilities of regular and special education providers.

7. I have a social work credential; can I be employed by a school district to work as a school social worker without a school social work license from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI)?

No. All professionals fulfilling the responsibilities and job description of a school social worker must have a school social work license issued by DPI.

8. May a school counselor fulfil the job description of a school social worker and use that title, or vice versa?

No. School counselors and school social workers have different training, theoretical background, practice frameworks, and skill sets. In order to practice as a school counselor or as a school social worker an individual must possess the appropriate license to do so.

9. I am a school district looking to hire someone who hasn't completed all requirements for a license. What options do I have?

Candidates must meet the requirements under WI Admin. Code sec. [PI 34.028](#). The following scenarios are outlined in this section and require different documentation as part of the application process.

- *Approved program*
This person has completed all coursework, including practicum experiences and has earned their master's degree, but may have outstanding program requirements to satisfy before the program can endorse for licensure (e.g. portfolio requirements). The applicant will submit the master's degree transcript and an Institutional Endorsement Form ([PI-1612](#)) signed by the program's certification officer.
- *District Need*
This person has not yet completed their approved program or does not qualify for license via the clinically-trained pathway to licensure. Initial requests for those who only hold a bachelor's degree must include the district-completed [PI-1624-LWS1](#) form, bachelor's degree transcript, and evidence of enrollment into an approved school social worker licensure program (e.g admission letter). Initial requests for those who hold a master's degree who don't hold a credential or license as a social worker from the Department of Safety and Professional Services will require the district-completed PI1624-LWS1 form and master's degree transcripts. Ongoing renewals will also require the [PI-1624-PROG](#) form signed by the program's certification officer attesting that at least six semester credits were completed annually toward the approved program in school social work.
- *Clinically-trained social worker:*
This person has the master's degree in social work and the valid clinical social worker credential or license through the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board at the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, but has not yet satisfied all stipulations identified under Wisconsin Administrative Code sec. [PI 34.040 \(2\)\(k\)](#). This person can apply without the school district request with the master's degree transcript and valid license or credential. This individual should work to complete all stipulations in a timely manner so that they qualify for a Tier II provisional license.

10. Am I able to teach in a classroom or substitute teach for a teacher with my school social work license?

School social workers are able to provide classroom lessons in such topics as social and emotional learning, protective behaviors, suicide prevention, teen dating violence prevention, anti-human trafficking, and others.

A school social worker may also substitute teach in a short-term assignment for up to 45 days.

11. Should I apply for a teaching license, a pupil service license, an administrator license or a school social work license?

In Wisconsin, school social work licenses are a subcategory of pupil service licenses. Information on how to apply for a social work license can be found in [question number 15](#) in this bulletin.

12. How often does my license need to be renewed?

- A one-year license with stipulations must be renewed each year and will only be renewed if the individual is making progress towards a Tier II license as required in rule.
- A Tier II provisional license must be renewed every three years. After six semesters of successful experience on a provisional license an application for a lifetime license may be made.
- A Tier III lifetime license holder must submit a background check every five years and proof of regular employment in education. The deadline to submit is June 30 of the fifth year.
- A Tier IV master license holder must submit a background check at least once every five years along with proof of regular employment in education. The deadline to submit a request is June 30 of the fifth year.

13. Is there a requirement to complete a Professional Development Plan (PDP) or a certain number of continuing education hours (CEH) to keep my license?

No. Employers set policies related to any school or school district required training or professional development.

14. Is it possible to obtain a school social work license with proof of School Social Work Association (SSWAA) National Certification?

No, not at this time.

15. Where can I find more information?

- Serving as a social worker: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pupil-services/school-social-work>
- Aid for mental health programs: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/aid-school-mental-health-programs>
- Applying for a DPI license:
 - [Wisconsin approved in-state program completers](#)
 - [Out-of-state program completers](#)
 - [One-year license with stipulations \(applicants with incomplete WI or out-of-state program or district requested\)](#)
 - [One-year license with stipulations \(applicants with Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services' credential or license and master's degree\)](#)
- Submitting licensing questions
<https://dpi.wi.gov/support/contact-us>
- PI 34 Administrative Code on licensure
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/34.pdf