

ASWB Clinical Examination

Content Outlines & Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)

Prepared for supervisees and candidates preparing for LICSW licensure in Washington State.

Source: Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Examination Program

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. Each exam's content outline is organized into content areas, competencies, and KSA statements.

Exam	Questions	Duration
Clinical	170 (150 scored + 20 pretest)	4 hours

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:

- Theories of human growth and development
- Personality theories
- The process of social development
- Indicators of normal physical growth and development
- Impact of physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities on human development
- Adult development
- Interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors
- Emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development
- Normal sexual development
- Gerontology
- 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
- Impact of aging parents on adult children
- 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
- Effects of social context on behavior
- Effects of family dynamics on individuals
- Dysfunctional family dynamics
- Impact of physical illness on family dynamics
- Dynamics of sexual, psychological, and physical abuse and neglect
- Characteristics of perpetrators of abuse
- Effects of abuse and neglect on victims
- Effects of life events and crises on individuals and families
- Effects of trauma on behavior and 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 and their influences on self-image
- Effects of discrimination based on culture, race, and/or ethnicity
- Differences in sexual orientation and/or gender and their influences on self-image
- Effects of discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender
- Differences in age and/or disability and their effects on self-image
- Effects of discrimination based on age and/or disability
- Impact of diversity on styles of communicating
- Effects of spirituality

I.D. Addictions

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

- Substance use disorders
- Effects of substance use disorders on relationships
- Effects of substance use, intoxication, withdrawal, and other addictive disorders
- Addiction theories
- Effects of drugs and alcohol on behavior
- Other addictions and their effects 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:

- Principles and techniques of interviewing
- Components of a biopsychosocial assessment
- Use of collaterals to obtain relevant information
- Use of standardized instruments in practice

II.B. Assessment and Diagnosis

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

- Factors and processes used in problem formulation
- Methods used to assess the client's communication skills
- Methods of involving a client in identifying the presenting problem
- Methods used to assess a client's strengths and weaknesses
- Indicators of motivation and resistance
- Factors used in determining the client's ability to use intervention/treatment
- Psychopathology
- Indicators of biopsychosocial stress
- Components and function of the mental status exam
- Medications
- Current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)
- Basic medical terminology
- Biopsychosocial factors related to mental health
- Co-occurring disorders and conditions
- Indicators of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and neglect
- Risk factors for dangerousness to self and others
- Risk factors related to suicide
- Methods used to assess needed level of care
- Methods used to assess trauma

II.C. Treatment Planning

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

- Criteria used in selecting intervention/treatment modalities
- Components of intervention, treatment, or service plans
- Methods used to match interventions to client problems
- Methods used to develop an intervention/treatment plan
- Discharge, aftercare, and follow-up planning
- Use of measurable objectives in intervention, treatment, or service plans
- Difference between objective and subjective data
- Application of research to practice
- 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:

- Concept of feedback
- Concept of congruence in communication
- Methods used in summarizing and facilitating communication
- Verbal and nonverbal communication techniques
- Concept of empathy
- Concept of acceptance
- Principles of relationship building
- Professional objectivity in the social worker-client relationship
- Methods to clarify the role of the social worker
- 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
- Problem-solving model
- Crisis intervention/treatment approaches
- Cognitive, psychodynamic, task-centered, and behavioral approaches
- Types of social work interventions/treatments
- Psychotherapies
- Solution-focused and brief interventions
- Approaches used in working with traumatized clients
- Methods of conflict resolution
- Empowerment and prevention strategies
- Phases of intervention/treatment
- Indicators of client readiness for termination
- Supportive, motivational, and partializing techniques
- Contracting with clients
- Use of goal-setting
- Techniques to teach coping and other skills
- Techniques for stress management, anger management, and harm reduction
- Models of family-centered social work practice
- Approaches to family and couples therapy
- Approaches to social group work and group psychotherapy

III.C. Service Delivery and Management of Cases

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

- The components of case management
- Community resources and how to connect clients
- The role of interdisciplinary teams
- Advocacy for clients
- Documentation requirements and principles
- Methods used to identify and prevent burnout
- Principles of supervision

III.D. Consultation and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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

- Consultation approaches, including referrals to specialists
- The principles and practices of interdisciplinary collaboration
- The role of the social worker in multidisciplinary settings
- Methods of professional collaboration

IV. Professional Values and Ethics — 18%

IV.A. Professional Values and Ethical Issues

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

- The NASW Code of Ethics and its principles
- Ethical decision-making frameworks
- Conflicts of interest and boundary issues
- The ethical use of self-disclosure
- Dual relationships
- Ethical obligations in supervision
- Social justice and advocacy as ethical responsibilities

IV.B. Confidentiality

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

- Legal and ethical standards of confidentiality
- Limits of confidentiality (duty to warn, mandatory reporting)
- Informed consent
- HIPAA and relevant privacy regulations
- Confidentiality in group, family, and couples work
- Record keeping and documentation principles

IV.C. Professional Development and Use of Self

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

- The importance of professional supervision and consultation
- Reflective practice and use of self in clinical work
- Cultural humility and anti-oppressive practice
- Continuing education and professional development
- Recognition and management of countertransference
- Self-care and prevention of professional burnout

This document was prepared by Jen Kantor, LICSW for use in clinical supervision and exam preparation. Content is adapted from the ASWB Clinical Examination Content Outlines and KSAs. For the most current version, visit [aswb.org/exam/readiness-to-practice/content-outlines](https://www.aswb.org/exam/readiness-to-practice/content-outlines)