

# The CLINICIAN

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY FOR CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK, INC.

## Undoing Our Psychotherapy License

By Marsha Wineburgh, DSW, Society Legislative Committee Chair

Way back in 2001, all of the major social work professional associations, city and state agencies were in support of social work licensing and licensing the field of psychotherapy. The final legislation, which included scopes of practice for the LMSW as well as the LCSW, was the result of a very long process which required determining which of the various disciplines and specialties outside of social work were qualified to deliver mental health services to the public. New York State was among the last states to regulate psychotherapy and when all was finished, there were six licensed mental health professionals including the Licensed Clinical Social Worker, the Licensed Psychologist, the Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist,

the Licensed Mental Health Counselor, the Licensed Creative Arts Therapists and the Licensed Psychoanalyst. Keep in mind that there was a ground swell of support for this legislation, essential for passage.

The LCSW emerged with an autonomous, comprehensive scope of practice which made clinical social workers very competitive with the other mental health professions and essentially equivalent to the scope of practice for clinical psychologists. Recently, we have been made aware of efforts to weaken the LCSW behind the scenes, to dilute the strength of the license by reducing the required hours of supervised psychotherapy experience (currently about 3,000 hours) and adding non-clinical experiences (i.e. case management,



Photo: Sandra Indig

At the 40th Annual Education Conference in May (Left to Right) Keynote Speakers Carol Tosone, Ph.D. and Jerome C. Wakefield, Ph.D., DSW, with Education Committee Chair Susan A. Klett, LCSW-R. Story Begins Page 8.

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counseling and discharge planning) which are currently LMSW functions, as relevant areas of clinical experience. As it stands now, the LCSW is specifically for the practice of diagnosis, treatment planning and treatment of mental illness. The current experience standards have been in existence since 1978 when the "P" legislation was enacted.

What rationales are offered for lowering standards?

**Claim:** Shortage of clinical social workers

**Response:** The mental health field has been increased by five additional licensed professions who are competing for LCSW jobs. Their licenses require more hours of clinical education and supervised experience than the LCSW. Why would we lower our standards now? A shortage in the field? ...if there were a shortage, managed behavioral health care would be increasing our fees to attract LCSWs to panels. We have not seen an increase in two decades. If agencies can't locate LCSWs, perhaps they should look to their salary scales and work loads.

**Claim:** Budget crunch – there is no money for LMSW salaries so agencies wish to offer experience credit toward the LCSW in trade for salary increments. If the

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# Strategic Planning Committee

by Judith Crosley, LCSW, Chair

**T**he members of the Strategic Planning Committee are pleased to announce that all of the Society Policy and Procedure manuals we set out to produce have been completed. This has been a huge job and would not have been possible without the help of our consultant, Marian Sroge.

The manuals fall into three categories: policy and procedure manuals which delineate the role of the Society, the State Board and the chapters; manuals for specific jobs, such as for the treasurer and for nominations and elections; and "how-to" manuals that provide guidance and helpful hints for running a committee or organizing an event. We also have written policies that are required by the IRS and the government, such as a whistle blower's policy, nondiscrimination policy, and a conflict of interest disclosure form. At the end of this article is a list of the manuals.

These manuals document the administrative and management infrastructure of the Society and, in particular, the relationship between the State Board and the chapters. They will enhance that relationship and provide for more open communication. They will be invaluable in recruiting new leadership, as members will have at their fingertips the information they need to do their jobs.

It is important to note that except for the policies, all of which have been voted on by the State Board, the manuals are guidelines to assist members who have taken on specific roles in the Society. As such, they provide helpful information to get you started on a project and allow and encourage you to use your initiative in developing the project. Therefore, if a member has taken on the job of putting

on a conference in a chapter, he/she can go to the Event Management Manual and find sample contracts for speakers, how to get appropriate insurance, and check lists to be sure that all contingencies have been met. In other words, it will not be necessary to reinvent the wheel every time a chapter has an event or a new person takes over a role in a chapter or on the State Board. It is important to note that the manuals can be amended at any time. Issues may be raised at a State Board meeting and modifications can be made and will be incorporated into the manuals.

In addition, the Strategic Planning Committee has been working on developing a strategic plan for the 2009-2010 year, as well as a five year plan. A primary goal for this year is to review the Society by-laws and make revisions that will reflect the new licensing law as well as other changes that will increase the clarity of the by-laws. The President of the Society, Jonathan Morgenstern, is currently appointing this committee.

Other aspects of the strategic plan will encompass leadership development and succession and most importantly, the retention of members and recruitment of new members.

You may contact the president of your chapter if you wish to use any of the manuals.

**The manuals available are:** State Society Policy Manual, State Nominating and Election Manual, State Society Operating Procedures, State Treasurer's Manual, Board Policies and Procedures, Event Management Manual, State Board Orientation Manual, State Society Committee Manual, Chapter Policies and Procedures, Transitioning Manual and Chapter Leadership Orientation Manual. ■

## Undoing Our Psychotherapy License Message

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definition of clinical services is generalized to ANY direct service to a client, they claim that LMSWs might be attracted to low paying, unpopular kinds of agency work because it counts as LCSW supervised experience.

**Response:** The legislature, when it enacted the LCSW and other five mental health licenses, meant to regulate medically necessary psychotherapy services, not the general field of human services.

**Claim:** New York's LCSW license is limited to only psychotherapy. This is too narrow. Other states have a broader definitions for clinical social work.

**Response:** Other states have not regulated psychotherapy, nor have they licensed six new professional groups to provide mental health services. ■

**What you can do:** Protect our consumers from inadequately trained LCSWs. Call/e-mail the executive directors of other social work associations you are a member of and ask if they are advocating diluting the LCSW law by requiring fewer hours of supervised experience or the types of experience required for the license. Let them know how you feel about it.

Why haven't the issues appeared in their newsletters or on-line so you are informed about their positions? Let your NYSSCSW chapter legislative person know what response you receive or e-mail mwineburgh@aol.com – "Protect our LCSW."