

College of Education, Humanities and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Social Work
Social Work Licensure Report
July 2026

Introduction

In Alabama a social work license is required to practice under the designation of *social worker*. Persons who have earned the degree of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or Master of Social Work (MSW) from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited program are deemed to have been academically prepared to enter into the profession of social work, and can apply for social work licensure. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is the non-profit organization composed of and owned by the social regulatory boards and colleges of all 50 U.S states and many other U.S. territories. It is the only non-profit organization dedicated to social work regulation. Its mission is to “provide support and services to the regulatory community to advance safe, competent and ethical practices to strengthen public protections” <https://www.aswb.org/about-aswb/mission/>

Current Social Work Licensure Landscape

In August, 2022 ASWB released the *2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis* –a first-time report of ASWB licensure exam pass rate analysis <https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/> which reflected wide-racial disparities in exam pass rate results, particularly for African-American test-takers, who were significantly less likely to pass the exam on first and eventual tries than whites. In September 2022, in response to concerns over the disparities in licensure pass rates, the CSWE’s Commission on Accreditation made the decision to remove licensure exam pass rates from the 2022 EPAS accreditation standards. The Council on Social Work Education, considered the descriptive data from the report as alarming, while pointing out that more rigorous data analysis was needed to more fully understand the disparities among test takers. <https://www.cswe.org/news/newsroom/coa-removes-licensing-exam-pass-rates-from-the-2022-epas/>

In 2024, ASWB published a three-part series of research reports analyzing the social work licensing examination pass rate disparities.

An overview of the reports by ASWB is as follows, and located at: <https://www.aswb.org/new-research-on-disparities-in-pass-rates-for-social-work-licensing-exams/>

“The three-part series of research reports includes:

*Report 1 – **The Profile of Social Work License Examinees: A Racially Patterned Educational and Training Journey Before the Exams** – evaluates demographic, educational, and employment characteristics impacting social work candidates’ experiences leading up to the social work licensing exam. For example, compared to white examinees, higher percentages of Black examinees took longer to earn their social work degree and had more years of*

employment in non-direct service jobs prior to taking the exam. The report concludes that the demographic, educational, and employment characteristics indicate that some social work candidates' journeys to the profession might have been far more disrupted and delayed than others even before they attempted the licensing exams for the first time.

Report 2 – The Determinants of Licensing Exam Outcomes: The Compounding Effects of Individual, Institutional, and Community Factors – provides an overview of research findings from the literature of other professions to understand the factors that may contribute to the disparate pass rates in social work. The analysis shows that significant racial and ethnic disparities exist across many professions, including medicine, nursing, and psychology, suggesting that outcomes reflect broader societal challenges. This research also indicates a link between an increased percentage of certified or licensed faculty and improved performance by a program's examinees. The report emphasizes the need for more research to better understand and begin to reduce pass rate disparities.

Report 3 – The Effects of Race/Ethnicity on Clinical Exam Outcomes: Diminished (yet Persistent) Effects When Other Determinants Are Controlled – outlines the significant impact of key factors on Clinical exam pass rates, including age, gender, primary language, educational background, and employment experiences. The findings suggest that if historically marginalized groups had access and opportunities similar to those of white examinees and experienced equitable institutional and community environments, the pass rate gap would narrow significantly.

“The goal of the exam report series, based on additional analyses of data on ASWB exam pass rates and those of other professions, is to inform ASWB’s and the social work profession’s approach to addressing the complex individual, institutional, and community factors influencing the testing experience and exam results.” <https://www.aswb.org/new-research-on-disparities-in-pass-rates-for-social-work-licensing-exams/>

On August 3rd, 2026, ASWB is launching updated licensure exams, which will use a different format from the 2018 exam format <https://www.aswb.org/upcoming-changes-to-the-social-work-licensing-exams/>. The 2026 exams new structure centers on candidates' experiences and a focus on applied knowledge rather than simple recall of information. Exam changes include:

- Testing three content areas rather than four, reflecting the consolidation of knowledge statements as determined through the practice analysis
- Featuring fewer questions overall, reducing the number of both scored and pretest questions
- Increasing the proportion of three-option multiple-choice questions
- Including a higher proportion of questions that rely on the application of professional knowledge through the use of problem-solving and reasoning.

Test-takers will continue to have a 4-hour time limit to complete the exam.

AAMU Social Work Department and Licensure Preparation

The AAMU Department of Social Work continues to remain up-to date on national and local efforts and supports to address disparities in social work licensure examination outcomes, while maintaining its commitment to preparing its graduates for current licensure requirements. In advancing student licensure preparation, the Department continues to implement systematic strategies to improve student performance on the licensure examinations.

The MSW program has adopted a systematic and collaborative approach to supporting student success on the social work licensure examination, which includes structured licensure preparation courses, ongoing review and analysis of comprehensive examination items, and revision of examination questions to strengthen alignment with MSW competencies and licensure expectations. Findings from comprehensive examination analyses, including areas of student strength and opportunities for improvement, are reviewed by faculty and the curriculum committee to inform curricular enhancements, instructional strategies, and targeted student supports.

During the 2025-2026 academic year, through Title IV-E funding, the Department of Social Work provided three free full-day licensure preparation trainings with Dr. Dawn Apgar, a nationally recognized social work licensure preparation trainer. The training content areas included: An Overview of Test Construction, Standardized Test-Taking Strategy, Professional Ethics & Values, Human Development, Diversity and Behavior, Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment Planning, Models & Methods of Social Work Practice, Supervision, and a Comprehensive workbook with sample test questions.

The trainings were offered to BSW graduates, MSW graduating students, AAMU MSW Program graduates and persons with social work degrees who are working within the Department of Family & Children Services. The licensure trainings support Masters, Clinical and Bachelor's level testers. We recognize that graduates of AAMU social programs may opt to take the exam at any time after graduation-which can include several years post-graduation. The trainings provide accessible license preparation opportunities for a broad range of learners.

The MSW Program has a 200-item Comprehensive Examination, offered each semester for eligible students. Although the MSW Comprehensive Examination is not intended to replicate the social work licensure examination and is designed to assess knowledge and competencies specific to the MSW curriculum, it also serves as a valuable component of students' licensure preparation by providing students with the experience of completing a timed, cumulative assessment that requires sustained concentration, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge across multiple content areas.

The MSW Program engages in ongoing review of the MSW Comprehensive Examination to ensure it provides meaningful information about students' ability to demonstrate the knowledge and application of social work competencies necessary for ethical and responsible professional practice. Faculty from the Social Work Department's Evaluation and Curriculum committees collaboratively review and revise examination questions, based upon the results of question analysis. Recent revisions have focused upon the application of knowledge, through practice-

based scenarios, case analyses, and other question formats that assess higher-order thinking and professional decision-making.

As we move forward, the Department of Social Work plans to expand collaborative efforts with the College of Education, Humanities, and Behavioral Sciences, to enhance student support related to standardized test-taking skills and licensure preparation. This initiative will include exploring opportunities to partner with campus resources and expertise in testing strategies to support students in examination readiness. We plan to introduce test-taking skill development earlier in the MSW curriculum, beginning in the first year of the program, to assist students with opportunities to build confidence, strengthen examination strategies, and develop skills needed for successful performance on high-stakes assessments. By integrating test preparation strategies throughout the curriculum, the program seeks to provide a more intentional and equitable approach to supporting student success on the social work licensure examination.

The Department of Social Work will also be collaborating with our licensure preparation training partners to establish data collection and participant follow-up protocols aimed at better understanding our students' testing needs, outcomes and challenges through the licensure preparation process.

AAMU Licensure Results

Results for AAMU Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work and the Clinical Social Worker licensure examinations are provided in Table 1.0 (2025 results), Table 2.0 (2024 results). Table 3.0 contains the 2025 aggregate licensure results for the state of Alabama. The tables contain the licensure examination passage rates, tabulated by ASWB for both undergraduate and graduate alumni of Alabama A & M University.

ASWB

School: Alabama A&M University

Report Date: May 2026

The table presents the numbers of examinations administered to candidates who indicated that they attended the college or university listed above. Figures indicate the percentage of first-time, repeat, and total test-takers who passed the indicated exam categories during the year 2025, along with corresponding pass rates at the jurisdiction and United States/Canada levels for comparison purposes. The jurisdiction-level pass rate shown here refers to the pass rate for the jurisdiction in which the listed school or university is located, calculated across all test-takers who attended a school in that jurisdiction. Note that the jurisdiction pass rate listed elsewhere may differ because it may reflect the jurisdiction that approved the candidate to sit for the exam rather than the jurisdiction where the school is located. Also note that test-takers who are unsuccessful may repeat the examination more than once.

Table 1.0 Alabama A & M University 2025 Licensure pass rates



2025 school pass rate summary report

School: Alabama A&M University

Date: May 2026

The table presents the numbers of examinations administered to candidates who indicated that they attended the college or university listed above. Figures indicate the percentage of first-time, repeat, and total test-takers who passed the indicated exam categories during the year 2025, along with corresponding pass rates at the jurisdiction and United States/Canada levels for comparison purposes. The jurisdiction-level pass rate shown here refers to the pass rate for the jurisdiction in which the listed school or university is located, calculated across all test-takers who attended a school in that jurisdiction. Note that the jurisdiction pass rate listed elsewhere may differ because it may reflect the jurisdiction that approved the candidate to sit for the exam rather than the jurisdiction where the school is located. Also note that test-takers who are unsuccessful may repeat the examination more than once.

Exam category and group type	Total number of examinations	Pass rate		Jurisdiction Pass rate	United States/ Canada Pass rate
		Number	Percent		
Bachelors					
First-time	2	0	0.0	45.5	70.4
Repeat	1	1	100.0	42.3	41.0
Total	3	1	33.3	44.4	62.0
Masters					
First-time	36	11	30.6	60.3	73.9
Repeat	56	13	23.2	23.6	30.2
Total	92	24	26.1	43.1	57.9
Clinical					
First-time	23	13	56.5	73.1	75.7
Repeat	31	10	32.3	37.4	34.8
Total	54	23	42.6	59.9	61.1
Advanced Generalist					
First-time	0	0	-	50.0	65.0
Repeat	0	0	-	0.0	26.2
Total	0	0	-	33.3	51.7

Table 2.0 Alabama A & M University 2024 Licensure pass rates



2024 school pass rate summary report

School: Alabama A&M University

Date: August 2025

The table presents the numbers of examinations administered to candidates who indicated that they attended the college or university listed above. Figures indicate the percentage of first-time, repeat, and total test-takers who passed the indicated exam categories during the year 2024. Note that test-takers who are unsuccessful may repeat the examination more than once.

Exam category and group type	Total number of examinations	Pass rate	
		Number	Percent
Bachelors			
First-time	1	0	0.0
Repeat	3	1	33.3
Total	4	1	25.0
Masters			
First-time	37	12	32.4
Repeat	85	20	23.5
Total	122	32	26.2
Clinical			
First-time	26	14	53.8
Repeat	40	5	12.5
Total	66	19	28.8
Advanced Generalist			
First-time	0	0	-
Repeat	0	0	-
Total	0	0	-

Table 1.0 (2025 results) indicates a first-time Master of Social Work licensure exam pass rate of 30.6% (11 of 36 examinations had a passing score), and for repeat testers, a pass rate of 23.2% (13 of 56 examinations had a passing score). The Bachelor of Social Work first-time licensure exam had a 0% (N=2) pass rate, and a 100% (N=1) pass rate for repeat testers.

Pass rate results were compared across examination categories/group types between 2024 (Table 2.0) and 2025 (Table 1.0) to identify changes in examination outcomes over time. Data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize pass rates by examination category/group type. Pearson's chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine associations between examination year and pass/fail outcomes. For statistically significant findings, effect sizes were calculated using Phi (ϕ) for 2×2 contingency tables. Analyses were conducted using aggregated frequency counts, with each count representing the number of examinations within the corresponding examination category/group type group.

No statistically significant differences in pass/fail outcomes were observed across groups, with the exception of Clinical repeat examinations. Among Clinical repeat examinations, a Pearson's chi-square test of independence indicated a significant association between examination year and pass/fail outcome, $\chi^2(1, N = 71) = 4.10, p = .043, \phi = .24$, indicating a small-to-moderate association between examination year and examination outcome. The pass rate among Clinical repeat examinations increased from 12.5% in 2024 to 32.3% in 2025. These findings indicate a statistically significant difference in Clinical repeat examination pass outcomes, with a higher proportion of examinations resulting in a passing outcome in 2025 compared with 2024.

ASWB

Jurisdiction: Alabama

Date: May 2026

The table presents the numbers of 2025 examinations administered to candidates who were authorized by the state or jurisdiction listed above. Figures indicate the percentage of first-time, repeat, and total test-takers who passed the indicated exam categories during the year 2025, along with the corresponding United States/Canada pass rates for comparison purposes.

Table 3.0: State of Alabama Social Work Licensure Pass Rates for 2025



2025 pass rate summary report

Jurisdiction: Alabama**Date:** May 2026

The table presents the numbers of examinations administered to candidates who were authorized by the state or jurisdiction listed above. Figures indicate the percentage of first-time, repeat, and total test-takers who passed the indicated exam categories during the year 2025, along with the corresponding United States/Canada pass rates for comparison purposes. Note that test-takers who are unsuccessful may repeat the examination more than once.

Exam category and group type	Total number of examinations	Pass rate		United States/Canada pass rate
		Number	Percent	
Bachelors				
First-time	67	31	46.3	70.4
Repeat	25	11	44.0	41.0
Total	92	42	45.7	62.0
Masters				
First-time	376	219	58.2	73.9
Repeat	333	75	22.5	30.2
Total	709	294	41.5	57.9
Clinical				
First-time	262	191	72.9	75.7
Repeat	152	60	39.5	34.8
Total	414	251	60.6	61.1
Advanced Generalist				
First-time	0	0	-	65.0
Repeat	0	0	-	26.2
Total	0	0	-	51.7
Associate				
First-time	0	0	-	71.5
Repeat	0	0	-	44.6
Total	0	0	-	63.7

In 2025, Alabama social work licensure pass rates were lower than United States/Canada pass rates for most examination categories. Exceptions were observed for Bachelor's repeat

examinations and Clinical repeat examinations, where Alabama pass rates exceeded national rates (Bachelor's repeat: Alabama 44.0% vs. United States/Canada 41.0%; Clinical repeat: Alabama 39.5% vs. United States/Canada 34.8%). We note that the 2025 Clinical repeat examination pass rate for our university increased compared with the previous year, with a higher proportion of examinations resulting in a passing outcome.