



Commission on Accreditation (COA)

Report to the Board of Directors

February 2022

The Commission on Accreditation (COA), in collaboration with the CSWE Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA), is responsible for developing and implementing accreditation standards and processes for baccalaureate and master's degree social work programs, pilot accreditation of professional practice doctorate programs, and pilot accreditation of post-graduate degree fellowship programs. We offer accreditation for social work education programs throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, and United States territories.

There are 30 appointed commissioners on COA and meetings are held quarterly (February, June, and October). As of October 2021, COA and DOSWA served 906 programs in various stages of pre-candidacy, candidacy, accreditation, and reaffirmation of accreditation.

For the year 2021, COA issued 476 decisions. Commissioners conducted 59 candidacy visits, and certified site visitors conducted 98 reaffirmation site visits. DOSWA accreditation specialists supported approximately 182 programs each in 2021 and the Associate Director of Accreditation Operations and Technology supported 77 proposed programs.

Accomplishments in 2021 included implementing pilot accreditation processes for professional practice doctorate programs and post-graduate fellowship programs. Additionally, COA and DOSWA continued their focused efforts in supporting programs coping with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social work education. These efforts included accreditation standards adjustments in support of field education, flexible criteria for postponing reaffirmation, virtual site visits, virtual trainings, and stakeholder education.

Additionally, COA and DOSWA representatives were actively involved in developing the 2022 EPAS in collaboration with COEP and the 2022 EPAS Joint Committee. Two separate drafts of the 2022 EPAS have been developed over the past two years, each with dedicated time for public posting and presentations in solicitation of stakeholder feedback. The Joint Committee will resume its work in 2022 with a target date for final approval of 2022 EPAS in June 2022.

Goal 1: Provide leadership for the future of social work education.

Strategies

- a. Serve as an authoritative source of information on the preparation of social workers.
- b. Collaborate with strategic partners to advance social work education and social justice domestically and globally, including Indigenous peoples.

- c. Provide thought leadership on critical issues facing social work education and research.
- d. Advocate for social work education and research both within the profession and beyond.
- e. Support data informed decision-making on the future social work workforce.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- The Joint Committee, with membership from COA and COEP, developed draft two of the 2022 EPAS. The draft was posted on the CSWE website and public requests for review and feedback were made to the membership. Additionally, presentations were made to five national venues:

CSWE Annual Program Meeting, Orlando, FL (two sessions)

CSWE APM On Demand

National Association of Christian Social Workers

Social Work Black Administrators, Researchers, and Scholars group

Social Work Minority Serving Institutions group

- COA/DOSWA implemented pilot accreditation of professional practice doctorate programs. Four programs are currently participating in the pilot process.
- COA/DOSWA implemented pilot accreditation of post-master's social work fellowship programs.

Goal 2: Promote quality teaching, learning, and scholarship to prepare graduates for the future of social work practice.

Strategies:

- a. Provide professional and faculty development opportunities to support social work educators in their roles.
- b. Provide curricular resources that exemplify quality and innovation in social work education.
- c. Support member institutions in developing and maintaining an accredited program.
- d. Promote and ensure educational quality and continuous improvement in accredited social work programs that facilitates the preparation of competent social workers.
- e. Promote research and scholarship that informs practice and builds the science and knowledge base for social work students and educators.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- In collaboration with COA, DOSWA provided hundreds accreditation-related consultations and trainings to programs via a variety of venues including phone, email, virtual, and conference-based.

- In collaboration with COA, DOSWA provided recruitment and training for new accreditation site visitors and new commissioners.
- In collaboration with COA, DOSW published post-meeting newsletters detailing relevant news and information from quarterly COA meetings.
- In support of programs impacted by COVID-19 educational challenges, COA provided flexibility in interpretation of standards related to field education, flexibility for postponing reaffirmation, virtual site visits, and virtual trainings.

Goal 3: Support the career development of students, faculty members and administrators.

Strategies:

- a. Support student pursuit of social work as a career.
- b. Assist faculty in advancing through their academic career.
- c. Develop future leaders and administrators for social work education.
- d. Advance diversity and broaden the participation of historically underrepresented groups in social work and social work education.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Serving on COA supports faculty development through opportunities for commissioners to develop accreditation expertise, network with social work educators and leaders nationally, and engage with CSWE leadership and DOSWA staff.
- Service as a CSWE site visitor supports faculty development through opportunities for site visitors to develop accreditation expertise and to network with social work programs nationally.
- The 2022 EPAS (presently under development) will significantly advance anti-racism, anti-oppression, diversity, equity, and inclusion content in social work education.

Goal 4: Foster a diverse, interconnected, and inclusive community of social work educators.

Strategies:

- a. Provide opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning around topics of shared interest.
- b. Provide forums to promote and disseminate research and scholarship that advance social justice, social work and social work education.
- c. Create opportunities for member engagement, volunteer leadership and shared governance.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- COA meetings include peer-to-peer learning on topics pertaining to accreditation.
- Five new commissioners were appointed to COA membership in 2021, thus creating opportunities inclusive representation and volunteer leadership.
- COA provides representation on the 2022 EPAS Joint Committee, thus creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, volunteer leadership, and shared governance.

Goal 5: Ensure CSWE provides exceptional value to its members and member institutions.

Strategies:

- a. Increase understanding of and engagement in the full array of programs and services CSWE offers its members.
- b. Invest in the systems and infrastructure CSWE needs to support member engagement and data-driven decision making.
- c. Foster an inclusive workplace culture at CSWE that hires, manages, develops and retains talented and diverse employees.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- DOSWA consultations to member programs are provided at no extra cost to programs.
- Commissioners serve on a volunteer basis, thus providing an exceptional value to CSWE.
- Site visitors serve on a volunteer bases, along an exceptional value to CSWE.

Conclusion

The work of COA would not be possible without the outstanding leadership and expertise of DOSWA colleagues and CSWE. We thank Dr. Megan Fujita, DOSWA Executive Director, and the entire DOSWA team for their support and expertise that guide us. Additionally, we thank Dr. Darla Spence-Coffey and the entire CSWE leadership team for their steadfast commitment in support of accreditation services.

It is an honor to serve on COA during such an exceptional period in time as this. We on COA look forward to the coming year in service to our fellow programs and in collaboration with our social work education colleagues.

Respectfully submitted,



Deana F. Morrow, PhD, LICSW, ACSW
Chair, Commission on Accreditation