



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Info Session: Practice Doctorate Social Work Program Accreditation

May 28 & 30, 2025



Core CSWE Ideology

Land Acknowledgement

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) acknowledges the ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples throughout the continental United States, Alaska, Hawai'i, and territories.

Vision

To ensure a well-educated social work profession equipped to advocate for and promote education, health, well-being, universal rights, and justice in a diverse world.

Mission

To advance excellence and innovation in social work education, by providing leadership and scholarship, to ensure quality in teaching and learning, supporting critical thinking and advocacy to strengthen the capacity of our membership.

Core Values

- Exhibiting and acting consistently with ADEIB in all we do.
- Stewardship of our profession, our organization, and our processes.
- Respect, access and justice for all planetary life.
- Innovation, foresight, transformation, collaboration, and the courage to advocate and lead.
- Educational excellence that is science-based, responsive and forward focused.

[Learn more here.](#)



Greet Your Facilitators



Kat Gibson-Ledl, BSW, LMSW-Macro
Director of Accreditation Services



Constance Adams, MSW, LCSW
Accreditation Training Manager



Agenda

- Introductions
- Accreditation Overview
- The Journey: Looking Back & Forward
- Accreditation Resources
- FAQs
- Questions, Comments, & Curiosities



Purpose of Accreditation



Purpose of Accreditation

The purposes of accreditation are:

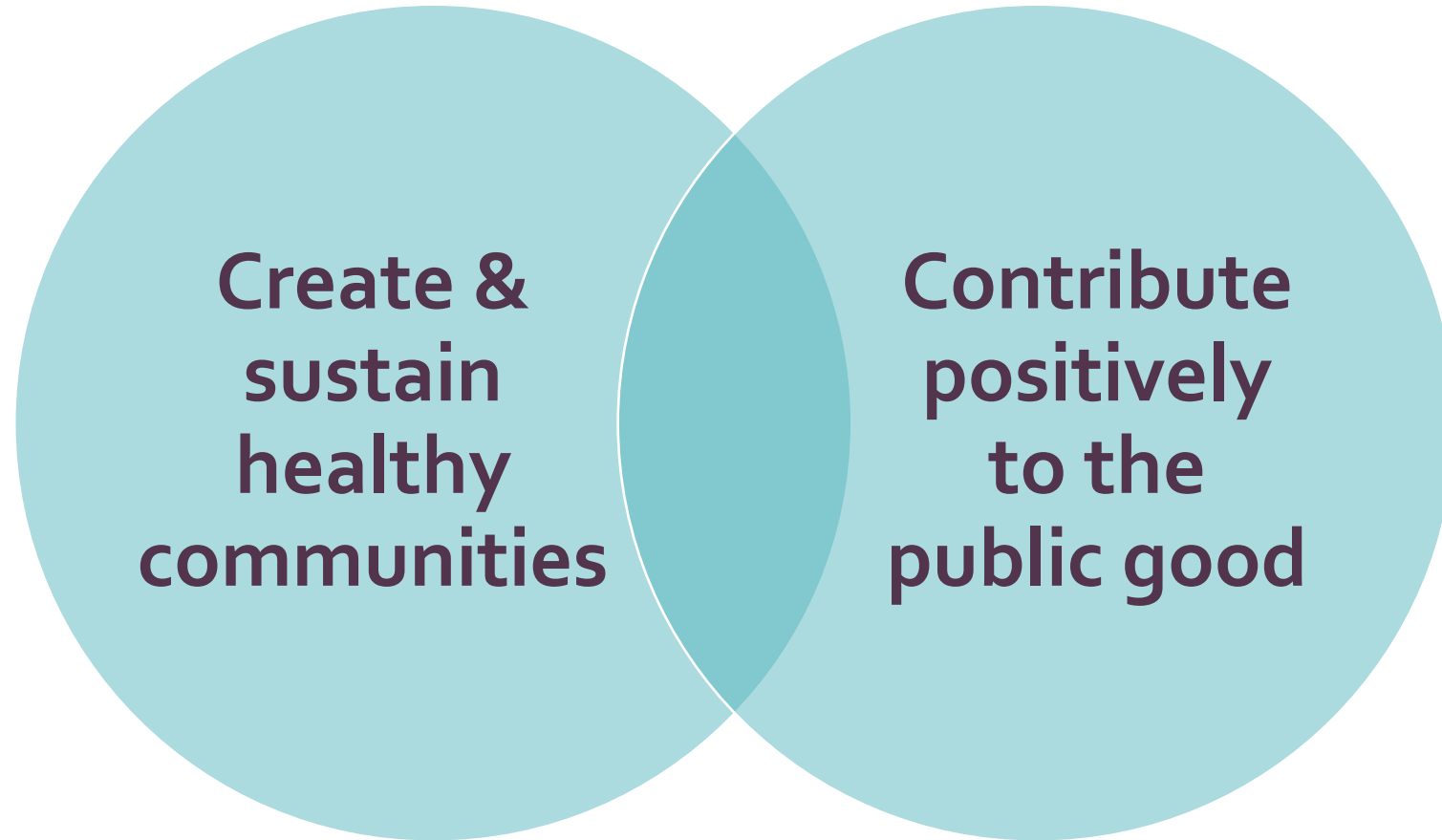
Quality assurance

Academic improvement

Professional preparation

Public accountability

Core of CSWE Accreditation



Social Work Education Continuum

Programs Accredited by the CSWE Board of Accreditation			Accredited by Institutional Accreditors*
Baccalaureate Social Work Degree Generalist Practice <i>Competency-based Education Model</i>	Master's Social Work Degree Specialized Practice <i>Competency-based Education Model</i>	Practice Doctorate Social Work Degree Doctoral Practice <i>Practitioner-Scholar Perspective</i>	Research Doctorate Degree PhD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. They engage in research informed practice and are proactive in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate an ability to engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate across client populations, problem areas, and methods of intervention. Extends and enhances the nine social work competencies that are demonstrated in observable behaviors indicative of competence in specialized areas of professional practice. Specialized practitioners synthesize and use the knowledge and skills necessary for interprofessional collaborations based on scientific inquiry and best practices, consistent with social work values. They engage in both research and advocacy in their commitment to changing structural inequities and to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, translate, and advance social work practice knowledge; use and evaluate research-informed practice critically to translate and innovate social work practice; engage in systematic inquiry; and apply and disseminate research-informed knowledge, values, ethics, and skills in social work through practice, professional leadership, and/or teaching. Core expertise and skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> advance practice through innovative approaches; use and critically evaluate research and knowledge; engage in scientific inquiry that reflects doctoral level scholarship; develop and disseminate practice-relevant research-informed knowledge through a variety of channels, such as teaching, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Aims to prepare students to be scientists, scholars, and stewards of the discipline." "Prepare graduates to develop substantive knowledge in an area of specialization, be able to conduct independent research, and have transferable skills and competencies for productive employability."



Meet the Accreditation Team



CSWE Accreditation Team



*Special thanks to Stephanie McNally and Marilyn Gentner for
leading the PDP pilot operations.*





The Journey: Looking Back & Forward



Summary of the Journey

2021-2025
Accreditation
Pilot

- 4 programs participated in the pilot

June 2024
BOA voted to:

- Offer a temporary alternative pathway to accreditation for existing practice doctorate programs to achieve expedited initial accreditation

February 2025
BOA voted to:

- Approve revised Practice Doctorate Standards
- Approve accompanying Benchmark Grid

May 2025
CSWE applied
for expansion of
scope with CHEA

- CHEA to review in July 2025
- We will be notified of outcome in October 2025

Historical Information

Interested in diving deeper into the accreditation pilot or standards revision process?

Visit:

cswe.org/PDpilotandstandardsrevision



Next Steps

the timeline below is subject to change

Spring 2025

Summer 2025

August 2025

October 2025



Next Steps

the timeline below is subject to change

Spring 2025

- Applied for CHEA expansion of scope
- Updated Accreditation Policy Handbook
- Hosting info sessions

Summer 2025

August 2025

October 2025



Next Steps

the timeline below is subject to change

Spring 2025

Summer 2025

- Phase 3 Accreditation Toolkit (final applications & templates)
- Interpretation Guide
- Waiver-eligible standards
- Training

August 2025

October 2025



Next Steps

the timeline below is subject to change

Spring 2025

Summer 2025

August 2025

- Launch accreditation services
- CSWE accepts applications

October 2025



Next Steps

the timeline below is subject to change

Spring 2025

Summer 2025

August 2025

October 2025

- CHEA decision on expansion of scope





Accreditation Toolkit Phases 1-3





Accreditation Toolkit Phase 1



Phase 1 Accreditation Toolkit |

Released September 2024

- Candidacy Eligibility Application
- Reaffirmation & Initial Accreditation Eligibility Application
- Temporary Alternative Pathway Application
- Current Practice Doctorate Candidacy Fees and Related Expenses



Applying for Accreditation: Two Pathways

1) Traditional Pathway:
3-year process for new
and developing practice
doctorate programs



Applying for Accreditation: Two Pathways

1) Traditional Pathway:
3-year process for new
and developing practice
doctorate programs

**2) Temporary Alternative
Pathway:** 1-year initial
accreditation process for
existing practice
doctorate programs



Traditional Pathway to Accreditation

Beginning August 2025

Steps:

1. Choose the program's target retroactive accreditation date and review the corresponding [Timetable for Candidate Programs](#).
2. Submit Candidacy Eligibility Application and fee.
3. Submit Benchmark 1 materials to Accreditation Services Manager for staff review.
4. Once approved, program is granted pre-candidacy by Accreditation Services Manager, assigned to an Accreditation Specialist, and assigned to BOA agendas for:
 - Benchmark 1 decision
 - Benchmark 2 decision
 - Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation decision
5. Assignment to BOA agenda subject to 10 new programs (baccalaureate, master's, or practice doctorate) per agenda.
6. Existing steps are followed regarding submission of program materials and visits.



Traditional Pathway to Accreditation

Timetable Example

Earliest Timetable: February 2027-2029

Selected Steps

February 2027-2029 Timeline

Candidacy Visit 1

September 1 – November 15, 2026

BOA Meeting Agenda for
Candidacy Decision

February 2027

Retroactive accreditation

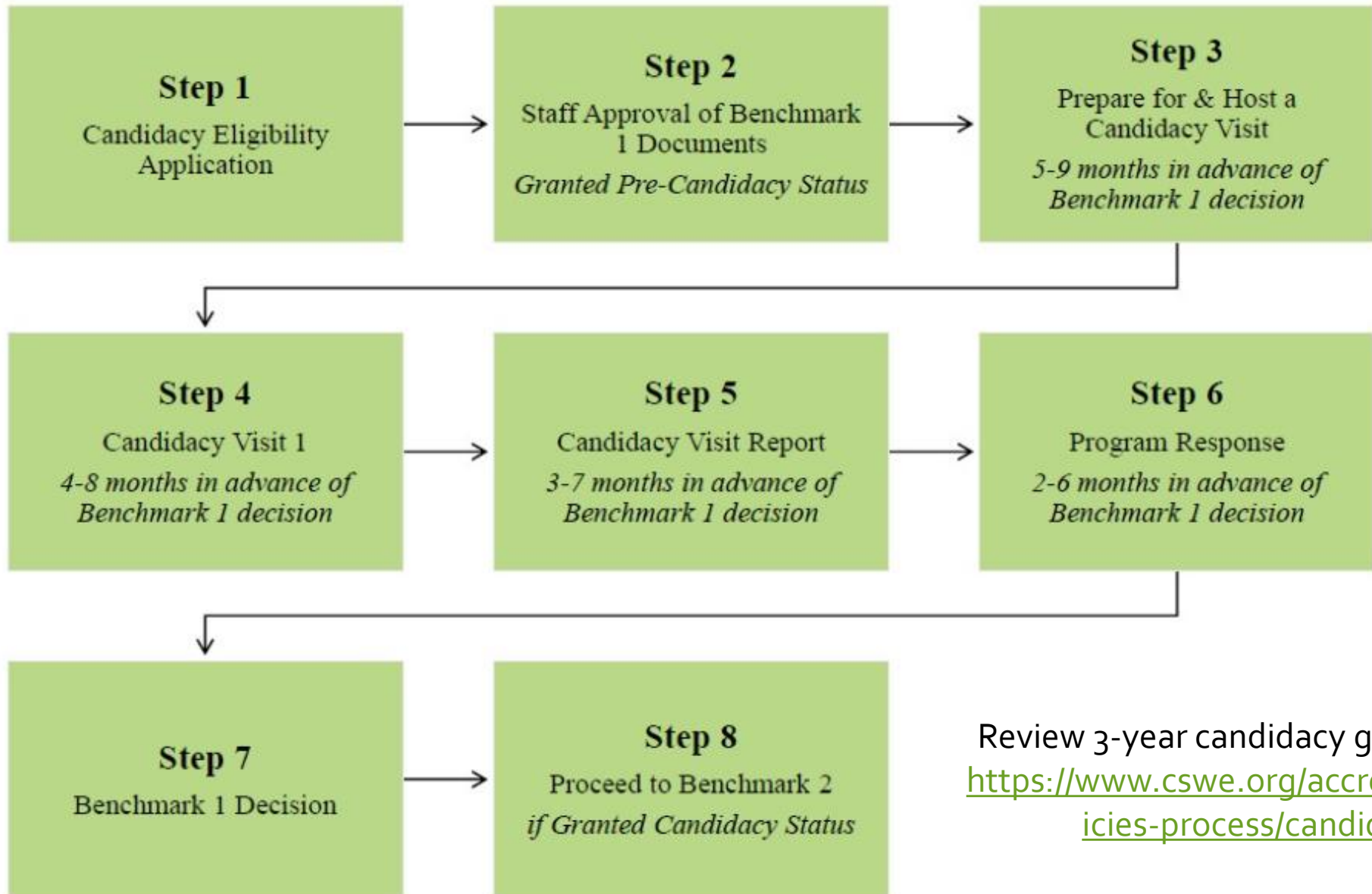
Fall 2026

Review additional timetables: <https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/policies-process/candidacy/>



Traditional Pathway Process

Candidacy | Benchmark 1 - Process Overview



Review 3-year candidacy graphic here:
<https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/policies-process/candidacy/>

Applying for Accreditation: Two Pathways

1) Traditional Pathway:
3-year process for new
and developing practice
doctorate programs

**2) Temporary Alternative
Pathway:** 1-year initial
accreditation process for
existing practice
doctorate programs



Temporary Alternative Pathway to Accreditation

Applications Accepted: *August 2025 – July 2028*

2-Part Process:

- 1. Timetable to Candidacy*
- 2. Timetable to Initial Accreditation*



Timetable to Candidacy

Steps:

1. Choose the program's target retroactive accreditation date and review the corresponding [Timetables to Candidacy](#).
 - **Timetable to Candidacy Status: Fall 2025 Retroactive Accreditation**
 - 3 Submission Options
 - **Timetable to Candidacy Status: Fall 2026 Retroactive Accreditation**
 - 3 Submission Options
 - **Timetable to Candidacy Status: Fall 2027 Retroactive Accreditation**
 - 3 Submission Options
 - **Timetable to Candidacy Status: Fall 2028 Retroactive Accreditation**
 - 1 Submission Option
2. Submit Temporary Alternative Pathway Application, complete/finalized self-study for staff review, and fee in per program's planned timetable to candidacy.
3. Once approved, the program is granted candidacy and based on the approval date per the timetable, **retroactive accreditation is secured (if/when the program is eventually granted initial accreditation)**



Earliest Candidacy Timetable

Timetable Example

Retroactive Accreditation to Fall 2025

Selected Steps

Timeline

Candidacy Eligibility Application and
Self-Study Submitted

By August 1, 2025

Approval of Self-Study

By December 1, 2025

Retroactive Accreditation

Fall 2025 and beyond



Timetables to Initial Accreditation

Steps:

1. Once the program's self-study is approved and candidacy is granted, the program is assigned to a Timetable to Initial Accreditation subject to BOA visitor availability.
 - Examples:
 - Timetable to Initial Accreditation: October 2026
 - Timetable to Initial Accreditation: February 2027
 - Timetable to Initial Accreditation: June 2027
2. Initial Accreditation Visit Occurs
3. BOA Decision

Remember: obtaining candidacy status establishes the program's retroactive accreditation date and protects students, regardless of when the candidacy visit and BOA decision for initial accreditation occur.



Initial Accreditation Timetable

Timetable Example

October 2027

Selected Steps

Timeline

Candidacy Visit 3

March 1 – May 15, 2027

BOA Meeting Agenda for
Initial Accreditation Decision

October 2027

Retroactive accreditation

Based upon when the program was
granted candidacy status



Rationale

The Temporary Alternative Pathway was developed in recognition that practice doctorate programs have **longstanding operational history** and pilot participation was limited by design. Therefore, this pathway allows existing practice doctorate programs an expedited candidacy and initial accreditation option.

Eligibility

Temporary: pathway will only be open through July 2028

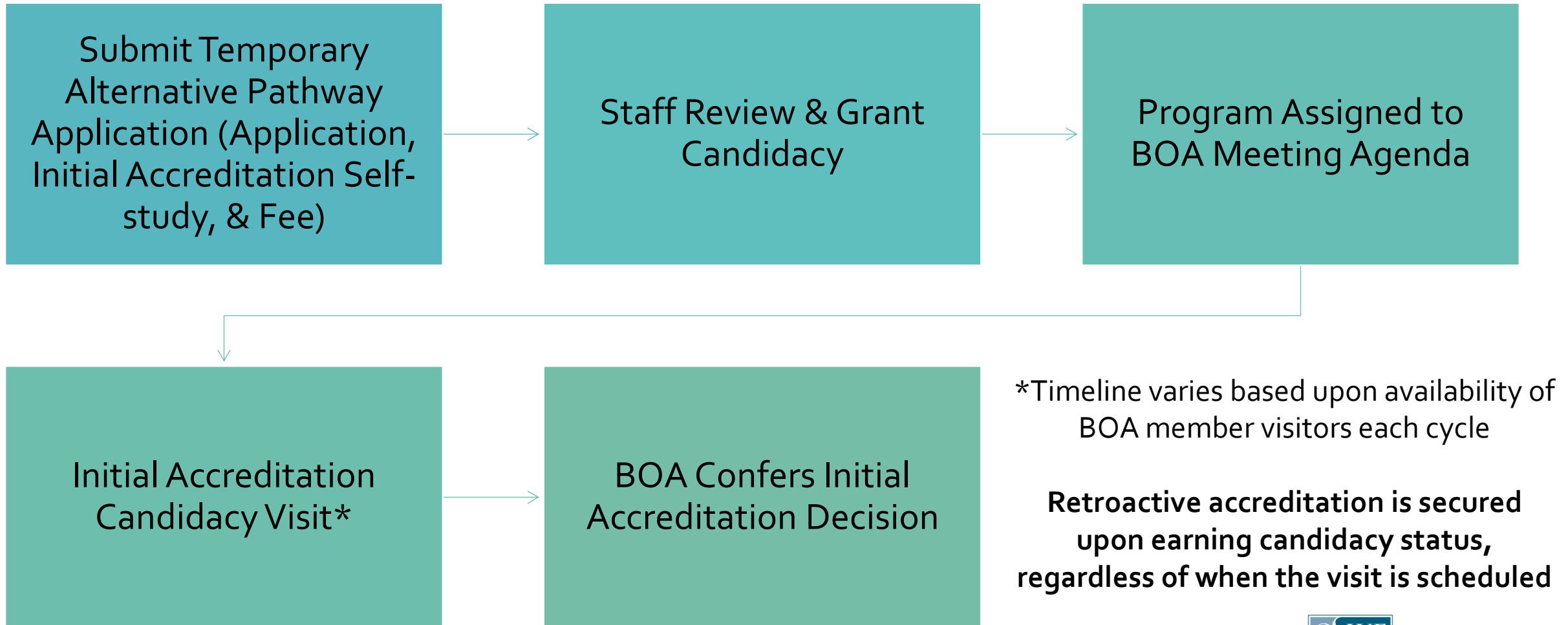
Eligibility:

- have secured all appropriate levels of approval and permissions to operate;
- are fully operational; and
- have issued at least one (1) practice doctorate social work degree by August 1, 2025.

This is **not** a developmental process. Programs pursuing this pathway must be ready to **evidence full compliance with all standards.**



Temporary Alternative Pathway Process



Pathway Caps

Traditional Pathway

- **Cap of 10** baccalaureate, master's, or practice doctorate programs per agenda (no change in #)
- Visits conducted by current or recent trained BOA members
- Documents reviewed by current BOA members

Temporary Alternative Pathway

- **No set cap** – based on visitor availability each cycle
- Visits conducted by current and recent trained BOA members
- Documents reviewed by Practice Doctorate Review Committee
- Goal: Move as many programs through the process as mindfully as possible according to visitor availability

Retroactive Accreditation & Student Protection

Traditional Pathway

- Obtaining candidacy status establishes the program's retroactive accreditation date and protects students.

Temporary Alternative Pathway

- Obtaining candidacy status establishes the program's retroactive accreditation date and protects students, regardless of when the CV3 occurs.



Practice Doctorate Review Committee

Applicable to temporary alternative pathway
Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation decisions only.

- A Practice Doctorate Review Committee will be established between 2026-2029 to serve as readers and provide decision recommendations for BOA's consideration.
- Similar model: [CSWE Fellowship Review Committee](#)
- The BOA may accept recommendations made by the Practice Doctorate Review Committee or it may choose to take alternative actions. ***The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance.***

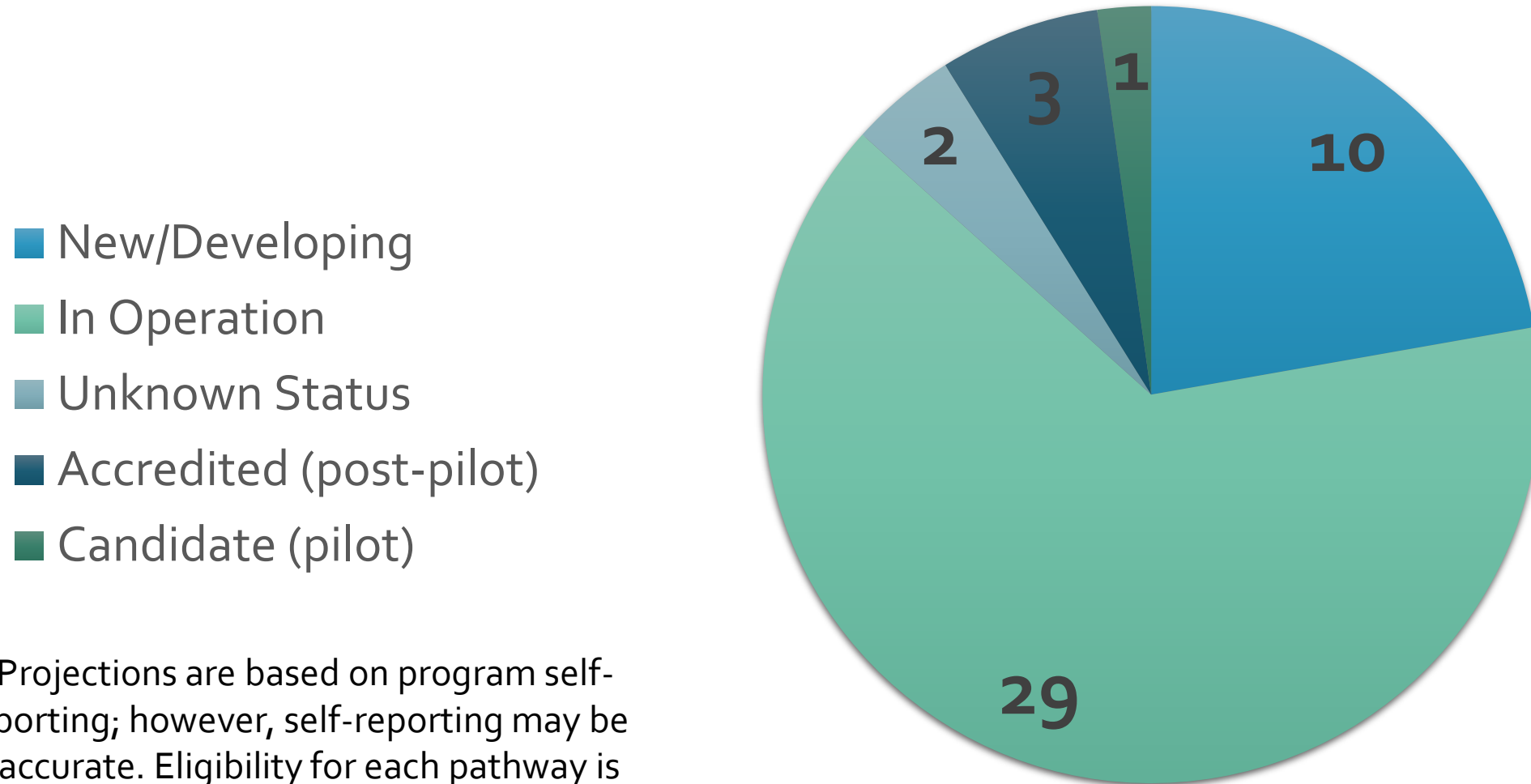


Practice Doctorate Review Committee

- Members will be comprised of:
 - 6 former/recent BOA members, with specialized training and extensive experience conducting compliance reviews.
 - 1-2 current BOA members to serve as liaisons to committee and serve as a committee chair.
- **Rationale for this model:** To temporarily increase BOA's review capacity during the initial influx of practice doctorate program accreditation applications, allowing more programs an expedited review.



Projected Numbers* by Expected Pathway



*Projections are based on program self-reporting; however, self-reporting may be inaccurate. Eligibility for each pathway is determined by CSWE accreditation staff.



Timetables

Traditional Candidacy
Timetables

Temporary Alternative
Pathway Timetables



Accreditation Toolkit Phase 2



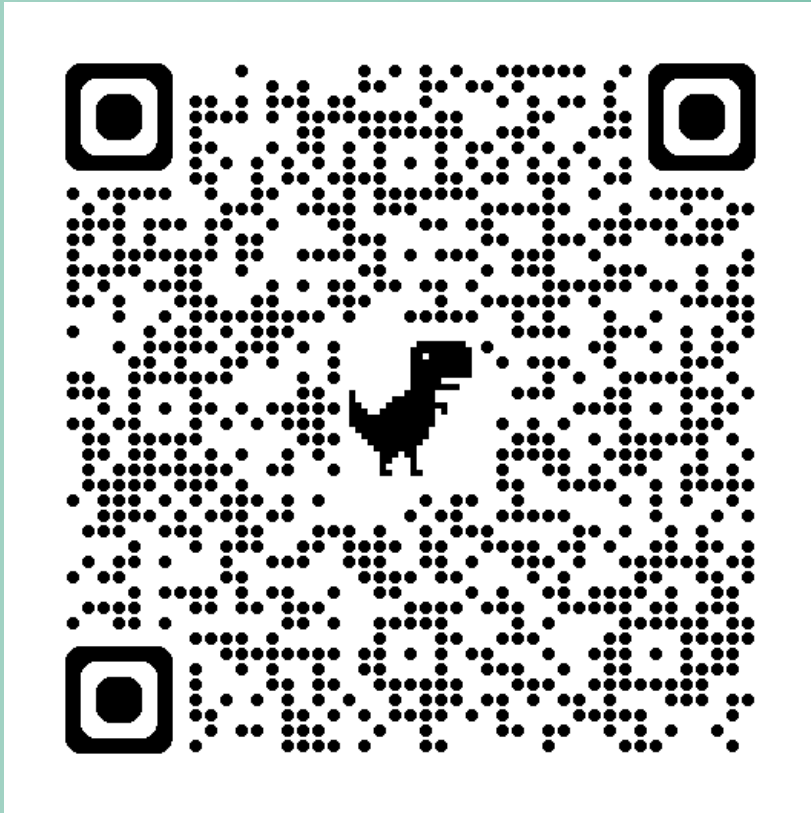
Phase 2 Accreditation Toolkit |

Released March 2025

- Accreditation Standards (advance copy)
- Candidacy Benchmark Grid
- Memo to the Social Work Profession
- ADEI Resources Webpage



*Advance copy of standards available on the
[CSWE website](#) (March 31, 2025)*



2025 Accreditation Standards

for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs



Practice Doctorate Accreditation Standards



Home / Accreditation / Standards, Policies, Processes / Practice Doctorate Program Accreditation / Practice Doctorate Accreditation Standards

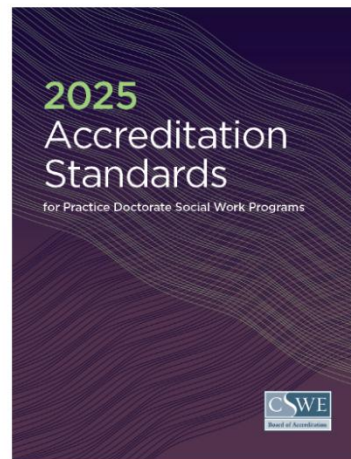
Practice Doctorate Accreditation Standards

Practice Doctorate Accreditation Toolkit

FAQs

Accreditation Pilot

2025 Accreditation Standards for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs



The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is pleased to announce the approval and release of the 2025 Accreditation Standards for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs. The accreditation standards were developed and approved by the Board of Accreditation (BOA) on February 6, 2025.

[2025 Practice Doctorate Accreditation Standards*](#)

[2025 Practice Doctorate Accreditation Toolkit](#)

***Advance copy - version of document with graphic design forthcoming.**

Social Work Education Continuum



Candidacy Benchmark Grid

Applicable to traditional pathway programs only.

- The Candidacy Benchmark Grid identifies which standards due for each Benchmark:
 - In development
 - For approval
 - In compliance

Candidacy Process: 3-year Benchmark Grid

2025 Accreditation Standards for Practice Doctorate Social Work Programs	Candidacy Visit 1 for Benchmark 1		Candidacy Visit 2 for Benchmark 2		Candidacy Visit 3 for Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation
	Approved to Proceed to Benchmark 2	Developmental	Approved to Proceed to Benchmark 3	Developmental	All Standards Evaluated for Compliance
1 – Program Mission	AS D1.0.1 AS D1.0.2		AS D1.0.1 AS D1.0.2		AS D1.0.1 AS D1.0.2
2 – Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI)		AS D2.0.1 AS D2.0.2	AS D2.0.1 AS D2.0.2		AS D2.0.1 AS D2.0.2

Memo to the Social Work Profession



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK
Leadership in Research, Career Advancement, and Education

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Memo to the Social Work Profession Regarding Practice Doctorate Program Accreditation

March 31, 2025

Dear social work colleagues, clients, constituents, and public interests,

In social work education, the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Board of Accreditation (BOA) is [recognized](#) by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit baccalaureate and master's social work degree programs in the United States and its territories. Since its inception in July 1952 (and its predecessor since 1919), CSWE has accredited master's programs. In 1974, CSWE began accrediting baccalaureate programs.

In recent years, the number of practice doctorate programs has grown from 5 in [2014](#) to 38 in 2024, and continues to grow according to a recent audit of social work programs conducted by CSWE. In response to questions regarding how practice doctorate degrees align within the [social work education continuum](#), CSWE partnered with social work programs, social work educators and leaders, doctoral students, health accreditors, and other constituents to conduct an environmental scan, gather data and feedback, and create [pilot accreditation standards](#) prior to launching the accreditation pilot. prior to launching the accreditation pilot.

- Announces Practice Doctorate Program Accreditation to the Social Work Profession, Public, and Interested Stakeholders
- Pilot & Expansion of Scope Request
- Social Work Education Continuum
- Retroactive Accreditation Status & Career Implications for Graduates
- Call to Action



ADEI Webpage

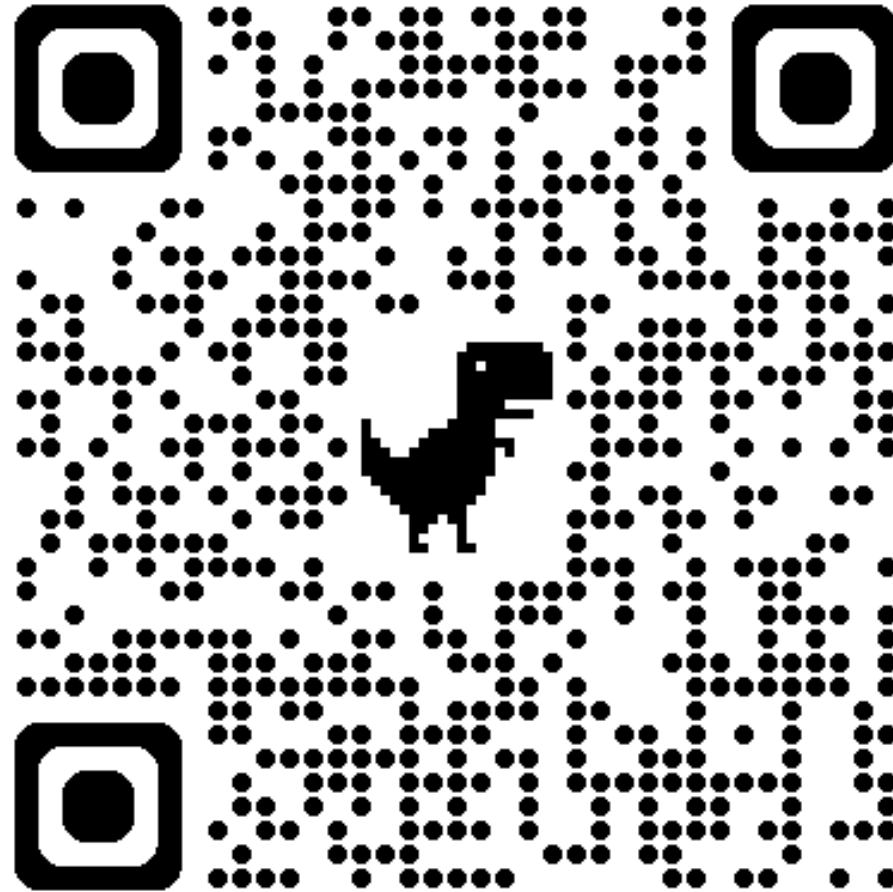
CSWE ADEI webpage with centralized information!

- [Membership login](#) credentials will be required to access the webpage
- Only accessible to program primary contacts and members
 - [Simply Join CSWE/Link to a Program](#)
- Webpage inclusive of accredited, candidate, applicant, and practice doctorate programs



Membership Login Page

<https://membership.cswe.org/ADEI-Resources>



Members-only View

membership.cswe.org/Membership/userId/6410



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Katie Gibson-Ledl | Logout



Site Visitor Resources

ADEI Resources

Membership

↓ Join

Link to Program / Join CSWE



Accreditation Toolkit Phase 3



Phase 3 Accreditation Toolkit |

Anticipated June or July 2025

- Candidacy Eligibility Application
- Reaffirmation/Initial Accreditation Eligibility Application
- Temporary Pathway Application
- Benchmark 1 Volume 1 Template
- Benchmark 2 Volume 2 Template
- Initial/Reaffirmation Self-Study Volume 1 Template
- Required Forms (included in Volume 1 Templates)
- Interpretation Guide





Training



Live/Interactive Training

Anticipated June & July 2025

- Required for programs pursuing the Temporary Alternative Pathway
- Eight (8) hours divided into two parts over two (2), back-to-back days
- **Session Options:**
 - Session 1: Monday, June 30 and Tuesday, July 1 from 12-4 pm ET
 - Session 2: Tuesday, July 22 and Wednesday, July 23 from 12-4 pm ET
- Additional training opportunities will be offered and distributed later





Accreditation Services



Accreditation Services

Anticipated August 2025

Traditional Pathway

- *Applicant programs:* Optional training and access to drop-in group consultations
- *Pre-candidate & candidate programs:* Optional training and access to 1-on-1 consultations with accreditation specialist

Temporary Alternative Pathway

- *Applicant programs:* Required training
- *Candidate programs:* Optional training and access to 1-on-1 consultations with accreditation staff member





FAQs



FAQs (so far...)

1. When can our program apply for accreditation?
 - August 1, 2025 or thereafter
2. Can I call our BSW/MSW accreditation specialist to discuss DSW accreditation?
 - No, please email Kat at kgibson@cswe.org with any questions.
 - At this time, consultation services are not available while the team works diligently on designing and launching critical application materials.
 - Additional templates, training, and services are forthcoming!



FAQs (so far...)

3. Is the program director credentials standard waiver-eligible?

- Waiver-eligible standards are currently under discussion.
- The BOA will make decisions/update the waiver policy after its June 4-7, 2025 meeting.
- This standard is under compassionate consideration since accreditation is "meeting the market" and all recognize program directors are currently employed at DSW programs with a range of doctoral degrees.

4. For the Temporary Alternative Pathway, is a full self-study due with the application?

- Yes, because programs seeking this pathway move from candidacy to initial accreditation within 1-year by demonstrating compliance with all standards.



FAQs (so far...)

5. Are sample DSW self-studies available?

- No, per policy and question #36 in our [general accreditation FAQs](#) accreditation staff do not share program-specific information with other programs for any purpose.
- Providing samples is not a common nor advisable practice amongst accreditors as programs are encouraged to implement and document compliance with the EPAS creatively according to their program's unique context. This allows for innovation, experimentation, and continuous quality improvement to thrive.





COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Thank You!

Questions,
Comments, &
Curiosities?

