1. INTRODUCTION

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) offers formal social work continuing education (CE) approval for programs that meet the requirements put forth in NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education. Social workers are ethically bound to lifelong learning as a means to ensure both practice competence and professional growth. Continuing education credits may be used for licensing renewal, toward professional credentials, or to remain current with the most current research, best practices, or the application of new theory in practice.

2. ELIGIBILITY

All providers who offer continuing education programs that are relevant to social workers may submit an application. These include, but are not limited to, providers of workshops, conferences, home study programs, and internet-based distance-learning education. The NASW CE Approval Program extends to national, regional, and multi-state continuing education providers.

State or local continuing education providers should contact our NASW state chapters except where no state approval programs are in place. Application for continuing education approval must be made by the sponsoring organization (provider), not by individual participants who attend the program.

3. SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE BOARD ENDORSEMENT

The NASW CE Approval Program is currently endorsed by 46 state licensure boards. Providers, however, are still responsible for following the states’ rules and regulations regarding licensure. For example, several states do not recognize distance-learning programs as valid continuing professional education. For a listing of state social work boards, and their contact information, visit www.aswb.org.

4. NASW STANDARDS

The standards for organizations applying to the NASW CE Approval Program are contained in the NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education. Applicants must review the standards and comply with the requirements. See the APPENDIX for the excerpt for Standards for Assessing Providers of Continuing Professional Education or for a copy of the complete Standards, visit www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/cont_professional_ed.asp.

5. DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS FOR YOUR PROGRAM

NASW awards contact hours for approved programs. One contact hour equals one hour of face-to-face instruction. Distance learning contact hours are determined based on content, time to review the content, and an appropriate number of test questions that reflect whether the learning objectives have been met. The number of contact hours is determined prior to the beginning of the program and is based on the objectives, content, format, methods of instruction, and program schedule. A workshop or program must be a minimum of one hour in length. Continuing education providers and licensees should be aware that some social work licensure boards require a minimum of three-hour programs.

Time devoted to announcements, welcoming speeches, scheduled coffee breaks, lunch, and other social events is not included in the number of hours considered. Credit is usually given at 50% of the allotted time for an educational program connected with a meal function. The continuing education provider is instructed to estimate the number of contact hours on their application. NASW determines the final number of contact hours for a program.
6. CONTINUING EDUCATION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives provide direction in the planning of a learning activity. They help to (1) focus on learners’ behavior that is to be changed; (2) serve as guidelines for content, instruction, and evaluation; (3) identify specifically what should be learned; and (4) convey to learners exactly what is to be accomplished.

In reviewing your application, NASW will be looking for learning objectives that have the following characteristics: (1) the specified action by the learners must be observable; (2) the specified action by the learners must be measurable; and (3) the specified action must be done by the learners. The ultimate test when writing a learning objective is whether or not the action taken by the participant can be assessed. If not, the outcome probably does not meet all three of these characteristics. If this is the case, we will ask you to re-submit this information.

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

When programs have been approved, only those individuals who satisfactorily complete the program will receive credit for attendance. NASW needs to be aware of the organization’s continuing education monitoring attendance system. It is the responsibility of the organizer of the program to document that the participant met this standard.

Examples of monitoring attendance include: distribution of participant sign-in/sign-out sheets, use of electronic name badge readers, and the issuing of unique session codes to participants at the conclusion of programs, or at each session.

8. EVALUATION DATA

Providers must have in place an evaluation form that participants can use to assess the value of the providers’ educational content. Some criteria for that evaluation form could be changes in the attitude and approach of the learner to the solution of problems, presentation of new knowledge or updating obsolete information in specific content areas, the introduction to and/or mastery of specific skills and techniques, and improvement in the selective responses of the learner. Also, consider additional feedback such as:

- The quality of instruction and teaching ability (did the instructor present materials in a clear or orderly fashion, gear materials to a level appropriate to the audience, respond to questions and needs of the audience?)
- The instructor’s level of knowledge and expertise.
- The usefulness of the program content for meeting each of the programs’ stated objectives.
- The adequacy of the physical facilities (comfort, accessibility, space, visual and auditory support).

Compile all of your participant information into a summary evaluation. The summary evaluation must be sent to NASW within 60 days after the program’s conclusion.

DO NOT send NASW the individual participation evaluations.

9. POST-TEST REQUIREMENT FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

All providers must supply NASW with a copy of the post-test used in a distance learning program. No
more than 10% of the post-test questions can be true/false questions. Be aware that the minimum passing requirement is an 80% passing score.

10. PERMANENT RECORDS

It is the responsibility of the provider to maintain program, attendance and financial transaction records for all participants. Such records should be kept for a minimum of six years and must be made available to participants.

11. PROGRAM QUALITY

Representatives of the target audience, social workers, must provide input during the program planning to ensure the suitability of the subject matter to the level of application. Planning, administration, presentation, and evaluation functions must be a constant concern of the providers.

12. APPLICATION FEES

Refer to the Payment Form for specific rates and information.

- When using a package option, the expiration date of the first approved program title applies to all programs within the package.

- In addition to the per title program, conference, or package fee, there is a one-time organizational review fee of $125.00 for all new providers applying for the NASW Continuing Education Approval Program.

- Fees for each continuing education program are required for new and renewal titles.

- Once the program is approved, it may be hosted as many times as you like within the twelve-month approval period. NASW also offers Symposium/Certificate Program (all single subject program more than 30 clock hours) and Large Catalog Providers (first 40 titles) and two conferences.

If a new program is denied CE Approval, or it is withdrawn when the application process has begun, NASW will retain the non-refundable $125.00 one-time application fee, as well as 50% of the program fee* charged. Notification to withdraw an application must be submitted in writing to ceu@naswdc.org within 48 hours of the application submission date. Withdrawn or denied renewal application fees are non-refundable.

If additional information is requested to approve the program, you will be notified. Missing or revised material must be received within 10 business days of notification. If the requested information is not received within this period, NASW will retain the non-refundable $125 one-time application fee, as well as 50% of the program fee(s).* After 10 business days, the application with missing or revised materials requested will need to be resubmitted at a later date with the applicable fees for reprocessing the application. Late and expedited processing fees are non-refundable for applications where additional information has not been received within the allotted time unless otherwise designated by NASW.

*Program fees include but are not limited to: one or more program titles for new programs, conferences, program packages, and symposium/certificate programs.

Applications for CE Approval must be submitted no less than six (6) weeks prior to your program. If you request NASW to approve a program that is scheduled to occur within six weeks of the application, the payment submitted must include an additional late fee and expedited processing fee.
We do not process applications after a continuing educational program has occurred.

Once the program is approved, it will be listed on the NASW CE Search Portal available on our website under the exact name shown on the application and approval letter.

13. SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS TO NASW

A. Ensure you are using the most current CE Approval Application, available at [www.socialworkers.org/ce/approval.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/ce/approval.asp).
B. Complete the CE Approval Program Payment Form.
C. Prepare check payable to NASW or provide credit card information based on total figure on Payment Form.
D. Complete Application for CE Approval, and email materials to ceu@naswdc.org or mail to:

   National Association of Social Workers
   ATTN: ACCOUNTING OFFICE
   (CE Approval Program)
   750 First Street, NE, Suite 700
   Washington, DC 20002-4241

   If you have questions, please call (202) 336-8295
   E-mail: ceu@naswdc.org

   For additional information on NASW, please visit us online at [www.socialworkers.org/ce/approval.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/ce/approval.asp)
EXCERPT FROM NASW STANDARDS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION:
STANDARDS FOR ASSESSING PROVIDERS OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

For a copy of the complete Standards, visit www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/cont_professional_ed.asp.

The standards and guidelines in this section are directed to the social worker who wants to be an informed continuing education consumer and to the provider who wants to meet professional expectations for continuing education. The social worker can use this section as a guide in assessing the provider’s qualifications before enrollment in any given offering. The provider can use this section as a tool for self-evaluation, leading to continuing education of higher quality for social workers.

STANDARD 4: Providers of continuing professional education shall have a written statement of mission and philosophy that reflects the values and ethics of the social work profession.

Interpretation

By examining the provider’s statement of mission and philosophy, the social work consumer can determine the direction and leadership afforded by the provider. A clearly articulated statement serves as the basis for the provider’s educational goals and objectives. In addition to the values and ethics of the social work profession, the statement should reflect the broad tasks of social work education: promoting quality instruction, knowledge, and skills building and improving service provision.

STANDARD 5: Providers of continuing professional education shall plan an organized educational experience.

When planning a continuing education activity (face-to-face or distance education) for social workers, the provider needs to consider six essential program elements. The guidelines that follow delineate those elements and establish respective professional expectations of providers. The social work consumer, in turn, can use these guidelines as the basis for inquiry about a provider’s qualifications, leading to better decisions about which offerings to pursue.

- **Program Development**—Adequate and responsive continuing education program development requires interaction among sponsoring administrators, the instructor or educational leader, and potential social work consumers. The provider needs to involve social workers in the identification of learning needs, in the selection and development of educational events to meet those needs, and in the establishment of appropriate evaluation mechanisms. Involvement of social workers with content expertise and an understanding of the educational objectives are recommended as well.

- **Program Content**—Continuing education events for social workers should clearly relate to social work practice, theory, and methodology; to the level of social work education; to social policy; or to administration, planning, and research related to human services. As a guide for participation, learning objectives and content designed to meet those objectives should be specified for each event. The way in which the content will meet the learning needs of social workers also should be made clear. Such information should be provided on promotional materials or upon request.
Participants—Selection of participants for continuing education events must not discriminate by reason of gender, age, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, physical abilities, or other characteristics. Promotional materials should state clearly the educational level of the social worker for whom the event is geared but not limited to, as well as any prerequisites.

Program Format and Instructional Methodology—The provider should be able to demonstrate that the format and methods selected for continuing education were influenced by contemporary adult learning theory; the identified learning needs of the participants; and the learning objectives, the educational content, and the size and composition of the participant group. Methodologies need to be diverse and encourage the active participation of the learner in the educational process. A variety of teaching techniques should be considered; any assignments, such as readings or structured exercises, should be related to the conceptual content, and any audio-visual resources should be used in a planned manner.

Qualified Instruction—The sponsor of a continuing education event must make sure that the instructor, speaker, or educational leader is qualified. Individual providers have responsibility for offering only those events for which they are qualified. Specific qualifications include competence in the subject matter ability to transmit the educational content to the participants’ understanding of continuing education objectives knowledge and skill in instructional methodology, learning processes, and the use of emotionally laden material capacity for self-evaluation and modification of future offerings in response to evaluations conducted by self, sponsor, and participants maintenance of an appropriate certification, credential, or license for subject matter.

Program Evaluation—Formal evaluation of each continuing education event is essential for maintaining or improving the quality and effectiveness of future events. Measures of evaluation need to be established during the planning phase and linked directly with the event’s learning objectives. Two distinct but related measures of evaluation may be appropriate. The first is the instructor’s, sponsor’s, and participants’ assessment of the event with respect to content, format, methodology, instruction, and facilities. The second is assessment of the knowledge acquired by participants and is based on

- demonstration of a taught skill
- an oral or written test
- a project or report
- a self-assessment checklist
- another instrument designed to collect data on changes in participant knowledge or performance attributed to the educational experience.

The instructor and sponsor together should review the evaluation outcome and revise subsequent events accordingly.

STANDARD 6: Providers of continuing professional education shall conform to responsible administrative practices.

Interpretation

A quality continuing education activity (face-to-face or distance education) must be built on administrative practices that facilitate the learning experience and assure recognition for continuing education participation. The guidelines that follow illustrate ways this standard can be met by the continuing education provider and assessed by the social work consumer. Administrative practices include

- designation of a director for the continuing education program and a contact person for each offering
• provision of accessible and adequate space, physical facilities, and support services conducive to learning
• a system, established by the continuing education sponsor, for responsible recruitment, selection, supervision, and evaluation of instructors and/or educational leaders
• a system for maintaining and verifying records on each continuing education event, including financial accounting, registration and cumulative attendance records, course outlines, objectives, bibliographies, and completed evaluation forms
• establishment in advance of the event of performance requirements for the awarding of relevant continuing education recognition or certificates of recognition to participants including, at a minimum, requirements for attendance (at least 80 percent of the instructional hours for conferences) and evaluation
• a system for making records of attendance available to the participants of continuing education events
• accreditation of the continuing education event by NASW or its chapters in the states that have established a provider approval program.

STANDARD 7: Providers of continuing professional education shall collaborate with major stakeholders in the community. Major stakeholders include, but are not limited to, NASW chapters, local accredited programs of social work education, social work state licensure boards, social work employers, consumer groups, and allied professionals.

Interpretation

To facilitate implementation of this standard, it is expected that NASW chapters and local accredited programs of social work education will take a lead role in establishing mechanisms for collaboration between each other and among other stakeholders and providers. By working together providers are able to refine their individual offerings and also contribute to the development of a comprehensive program of continuing social work education. Suggested mechanisms for collaboration include

• joint committees on continuing education
• advisory panels with cross-cutting expertise on specialized subject matters
• co-sponsorship of assessment studies to determine the learning needs of social workers
• exchanges of faculty and staff for the purposes of training, consultation, and instruction
• cooperative efforts in publicizing continuing education events.
APPENDIX B - NASW CE APPROVAL PROGRAM GLOSSARY

**Annual Fee:** Administrative charge for the annual review of each continuing education program.

**Approval Period:** The one year period of time in which an approved program may be hosted, starting from the date listed on the approval notice.

**Approved Program:** A continuing education program that has met the approval guidelines established by the National Association of Social Workers.

**BSW:** Acronym for Bachelor of Social Work, a professional degree.

**Certificate Program:** A learning program in which attendees participate in a series of sessions based on core sets of knowledge. A key component of a certificate program includes an element of evaluation in which learners must demonstrate the acquisition of new knowledge (testing) or skills (demonstration) prior to the award of a certificate.

**Conference:** A meeting held by an organization consisting one or more days comprised of concurrent sessions.

**Contact Hour:** Time equal to one clock hour of participation in a continuing education program.

**Continuing Education:** Training provided for professionals to remain current with industry trends.

**Continuing Education Certificate:** An official document given to participants upon completion of a continuing education program.

**Cosponsoring Organization:** A group or organization that has assumed joint responsibility with other organization(s) to provide a continuing education program.

**Course:** A series of lectures or lessons on a particular topic.

**Distance Education and Learning:** The acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated technologies at a distance characterized by:

- physical separation of place and/or time between instructor and learner
- interaction between learners and learning resources conducted by media
- processes employing a multiple set of delivery methods in the learning experience such as correspondence study, interactive audio, video, computer, or other electronic technologies.

**DSW:** Acronym for Doctor of Social Work or Doctor of Social Welfare, a professional degree.

**Evaluation Process:** The measurement of overall program outcomes such as learner satisfaction and attainment of learning objectives.

**Forum:** A meeting of experts for panel discussions or lectures that can also include dialogue with the audience.

**Learning Objective:** Learning objectives provide direction in the planning of a learning activity. They help to (1) focus on learners’ behavior that is to be changed; (2) serve as guidelines for content, instruction, and evaluation; (3) identify specifically what should be learned; and (4) convey to learners exactly what is to be accomplished.

**MSW:** Acronym for Master of Social Work, a professional degree.
**NASW Chapters:** The state and jurisdictional entities of NASW that provide member services on a state and local level.

**National Association of Social Workers (NASW):** The largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world.

**Needs Assessment:** The process of gathering information that provides the basis for program planning and development.

**Onetime Application Fee:** Initial organizational review fee applied to all new providers applying for the NASW Continuing Education Approval Program. If your organization does not have a reference number beginning with 88, then you will be considered a new provider. Please include your provider reference number on the CE Application when applying or you will be charged the initial organizational review fee.

**Program:** An umbrella term covering a series of activities, continuing education courses, distance learning, or conferences.

**Provider:** The organization responsible for the design and delivery of a continuing education program.

**Sign In/Sign Out Sheets:** A document used to track participant attendance and completion of programs.

**Social Work Licensure Board:** The regulatory body within the U.S. states and jurisdictions responsible for enacting laws governing the practice of social work.

**Sponsor:** The term used synonymously with provider and continuing education organization.

**Symposium:** An intensive program that brings together diverse speakers and related knowledge around a single topic. For the purposes of the NASW CE Approval Program, intensive or advanced training comprised of 30 or more hours will be considered a symposium.

**Workshop:** The acquisition of knowledge and skills through face-to-face continuing education training.