

### ***Introduction***

Clinical social work is a healthcare profession focused on helping people with bio-psychosocial problems and disorders. Advanced clinical social workers are especially adept at this work. Before entering the advanced level, clinical social workers pass through an entry-level practice phase (specialized graduate education and two years of post-graduate supervised training) and an intermediate phase (at least three more years of practice, which may be autonomous). All clinical social workers adhere to a professional code of ethics and respect the rights of their client consumers, especially those that relate to self-determination and to privacy and confidentiality.

### ***Clinical Social Work described***

Built on a base of social-work core values and professional ethics, clinical social work, at all levels, is distinguished from other forms of social work by the nature of its graduate education and training and by its recognition, in every state of the United States, as a licensed mental-health/healthcare profession with unique competencies. Clinical social workers' professional scope of practice ranges from assessment and diagnosis to interventions and collaborative case management; their knowledge base encompasses the following: normal and abnormal human development and behavior; disorders and addictions; consequences of trauma, illness, or injury; intrapersonal, interpersonal, and family dynamics; the impacts of the physical, social, and cultural environment; and other bio-psychosocial issues.

### ***Advanced Clinical Social Work described***

Advanced clinical social workers flexibly and effectively apply their knowledge and skills to many types of client consumers of all ages in a wide range of practice settings. They utilize individual, dyadic, family, and group approaches. In their assessments, diagnoses, treatment planning, interventions, outcome evaluations, and case management, advanced clinical social workers are both very knowledgeable and highly skilled. These advanced competencies may be measured by a board-certification process.

Advanced clinical social workers often specialize in specific practice areas, supervise and consult to other professionals, collaborate, receive difficult referrals, and teach and present in public. Their competence is recognized by a variety of service stakeholders including consumers, courts, the public, payor systems, regulators, and employers. While qualified to practice independently, advanced clinical social workers seek case consultation and make referrals to other specialists when appropriate.

Professional use of self, use of the "person in environment" perspective, continuing clinical education, a disciplined approach to the practice environment, and use of best practices in initiating change and ameliorating complex problems are expected of all advanced practitioners. In their interventions, they create a therapeutic alliance with client consumers and they place a high value on cultural, ethnic, and environmental factors.

In measuring the competence of the advanced clinical social worker, the American Board of Examiners' *Professional Development and Practice Competencies* position statement is the basis for examining candidates for advanced-practice certification as Board Certified Diplomates in Clinical Social Work/BCD.

Note: for a more detailed description of clinical social work, please refer to the Center's statement entitled *Clinical Social Work Described*.