

February 2026



Getting a Social Work License with Criminal Convictions Across 56 U.S. States and Territories

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Authors

This project is a collaborative effort led by Brianna Suslovic with co-conspirators Adrian Aira, Antara Anand, Halla Anderson, Jessica Brandon, Natalie Casal Alcaino, Nino Claveria, Nyla Conaway, Louis Levy, Teya Lovell, Cea Murtha-Paradis, Zoë Phillips, Tanishq Rajan, Hannon Welch, and Abbey Whigham.

This component of the project—the toolkit—is designed by Natalie Casal Alcaino with support from Abbey Whigham. An accompanying academic article coauthored by the other collaborators is forthcoming.

The project is supported by the Smart Decarceration Project at the University of Chicago, which is led by Dr. Matt Epperson.

Info

Individuals with criminal records are often excluded from many forms of social and political life. In the context of social work, each state and territory in the U.S. has different policies related to licensure for people with criminal records. Despite the social work profession's relatively new investment in individuals with lived experience, individuals with lived experience of criminalization are often unable to become licensed social workers due to this form of exclusion.

This toolkit was created as an attempt to compile information that is needed when applying for licensure with a criminal record. Based on the laws on the books in all 56 U.S. states and territories in 2025, this guide provides a quick overview of some of the specific criminal convictions that can cause license denial in each jurisdiction, as well as information about the licensure appeals process across jurisdictions.

Table of Contents

Research Process.....	4
Findings.....	5
A Word On Abolition.....	7
Definition & Clarifications.....	8
▶ <i>What is meant by convictions?</i>	
▶ <i>What is meant by good moral character?</i>	
▶ <i>What is meant by moral turpitude?</i>	
Map Overviews.....	10
Breakdown By State.....	14
Resources & Information.....	42

Research Process

BACKGROUND

Currently, many of the statutes governing licensure in the 56 states and territories are based on the Association of Social Work Boards' Model Social Work Practice Act. The act was first drafted in 1996-1997 with the intention of modeling social work regulatory best practices; it is reviewed annually by the ASWB Regulation and Standards Committee, and amendments were most recently adopted in 2018 (Model Social Work Practice Act, 2018). The ASWB states that this model act is intended to be a resource to legislatures, to "promote uniformity to regulation and terminology," and to address "protection of the public first and foremost" (Model Social Work Practice Act, 2018). While ASWB acknowledges that there are specific political, cultural, or legal considerations that might lead to modifications, the majority of the statutes reviewed in this project utilized the same language as the model act.

METHODS

The research team compiled a dataset of social work licensure statutes in effect in 2025. 50 U.S. states and 6 U.S. territories were included in the study. After locating relevant statutes to include in the dataset for all 56 states and territories, the sections of these statutes pertaining to licensure eligibility were uploaded into Monqle, an online software tool used for policy surveillance and legal mapping.

We analyzed the statutes based on the following questions:

Question 1: Are there specific criminal convictions that can cause license denial?

- ▶ Question 1.1: What are those convictions?
- ▶ Question 1.2: Are these convictions described as "crimes of moral turpitude"?
- ▶ Question 1.3: Is there a window of time where after that window, convictions are not considered reasons for license denial?
- ▶ Question 1.4: If there is a time window where after that window, convictions are not considered reasons for denial, how long (in years) is that window?

Question 2: Can a license be denied for convictions related to the practice of social work?

- ▶ Question 2.1: What are those convictions?

Question 3: Can applicants appeal a license denial that is based on a criminal conviction?

- ▶ Question 3.1: What are the appeal procedures for someone whose license has been denied based on a criminal conviction?

Question 4: Are background checks required for individuals pursuing licensure?

- ▶ Question 4.1: Are fingerprints required for individuals pursuing licensure?

Question 5: Is "good moral character" a requirement for licensure?

- ▶ Question 5.1: Does the state define what "good moral character" is?
- ▶ Question 5.2: How does the state define "good moral character"?

Findings

AS OF JULY 2025:

- ▶ 100 percent of jurisdictions included in the study regulated licensure for social workers via state law/statute/code.
- ▶ Among the 56 jurisdictions, 35 of the states and territories (62.5 percent) specified in their statutes that a criminal records background check was required for licensure.
- ▶ Fifty-three of the 56 jurisdictions (94.6 percent) specified that a criminal conviction—felony or misdemeanor—on an applicant's record could lead to license denial.
 - The three jurisdictions whose statutes did not specifically link a criminal conviction to license denial were New York, Vermont, and Puerto Rico, though it is possible that licensing boards in these jurisdictions still penalize criminal convictions in the licensure process through internal policies or practices not reflected in the statutory language. In some cases, jurisdictions offered specificity about the type of criminal conviction that could lead to license denial, but in others, criminal convictions were not specified further. Regarding the types of convictions considered problematic for licensure,
 - there was such wide variation across the jurisdictions in the dataset (reflected in Question 2.1) that the research team decided not to code or group different conviction-type restrictions.

- ▶ The statutes of 28 states/territories (50 percent) specified that there is an appeal process for applicants to utilize if their license has been denied due to their criminal conviction(s).
- ▶ Eleven of the 56 jurisdictions (19.6 percent) specified “good moral character” as a requirement for licensure in their licensing statutes.
 - Among these eleven jurisdictions, none of the licensing statutes defined “good moral character.”
- ▶ Fourteen of the 56 jurisdictions (25 percent) specified that applicants convicted of a “crime of moral turpitude” could be denied licensure due to these convictions, though none of these jurisdictions provided definitions or examples of “crimes of moral turpitude.”
- ▶ Twenty of the 56 jurisdictions (35.7 percent) included language about either “good moral character” or “crimes or moral turpitude,” but none of the 20 jurisdictions specified definitions for either of these terms.

A Word On Abolition

This is an abolitionist social work project. Abolitionist social work partners in the work of ending state and institutional violence, while supporting life-affirming relationships, practices and organizing.

Many team members on this project relate critically to the state and the criminal-legal system due to our own personal and professional experiences.

While we ultimately reject the idea that exclusionary licensing is a “necessary evil” to protect the public, we recognize that licensure is a pathway toward personal freedom for many individuals who have experienced criminalization.

We want to make the process slightly easier to navigate without reinforcing the legitimacy of the law in excluding people with lived experience of criminalization. We can do this while also advocating for non-reformist interventions to shrink the size and scope of punitive and exclusionary licensing policies.

Definition & Clarifications

What is Meant by Convictions:

Convictions are a judgment of guilt formally entered by a court of law. This typically includes guilty pleas, no contest pleas, post-trial decisions from a judge or jury (even those that have deferred or suspended sentences), bail forfeitures, nolo contendere pleas, and Alford pleas. Convictions typically refer to felony and misdemeanor convictions, not violations.

What is Meant by Good Moral Character:

“Good moral character” is often challenging to define! Definitions of good moral character rarely appear in the legislation that uses this language. The effect of these requirements is often most immediately felt by individuals with criminal convictions on their records. When a state licensing board relies on applicants’ criminal records as a proxy for moral character, this determination via proxy can adversely impact the employment and career prospects of a sizable number of individuals with criminal-legal system contact.

What is Meant By Moral Turpitude:

Many policies use the language of “crimes of moral turpitude” to classify certain types of convictions. This language might suggest that social work boards are restricting only the most heinous offenders, yet the category “crimes of moral turpitude” is often interpreted to include criminalized actions often taken for material survival, including property offenses.

The Association of Social Work Boards even acknowledges that the term is vague! An explanatory note in the ASWB model licensing statute states that “moral turpitude or gross immorality’ are terms providing the [licensing] Board with flexibility in the disciplinary process. That is, to effectively protect the public in regulating a profession, certain catch-all phrases may be needed which encompass situations not contemplated when drafting the statutes and rules.” Our take? This unclear morality-focused language reflects an investment in flexibility for the sake of professional exclusion, rather than inclusion.

Appeal Processes:

Appeal processes vary from one jurisdiction to another, in terms of:

- ▶ Which decisions can be appealed
- ▶ Which governmental agencies are involved in the appeal process
- ▶ How long the process will take
- ▶ Who can support the person making the appeal (in some cases, attorneys are allowed and in others, they are not)

While some state laws specify what the appeal process looks like when a license is revoked or denied, many laws do not. When this information is unavailable in the statute, the best course of action is to directly contact the social work/professional licensing board for the jurisdiction.

Background Checks and Fingerprints:

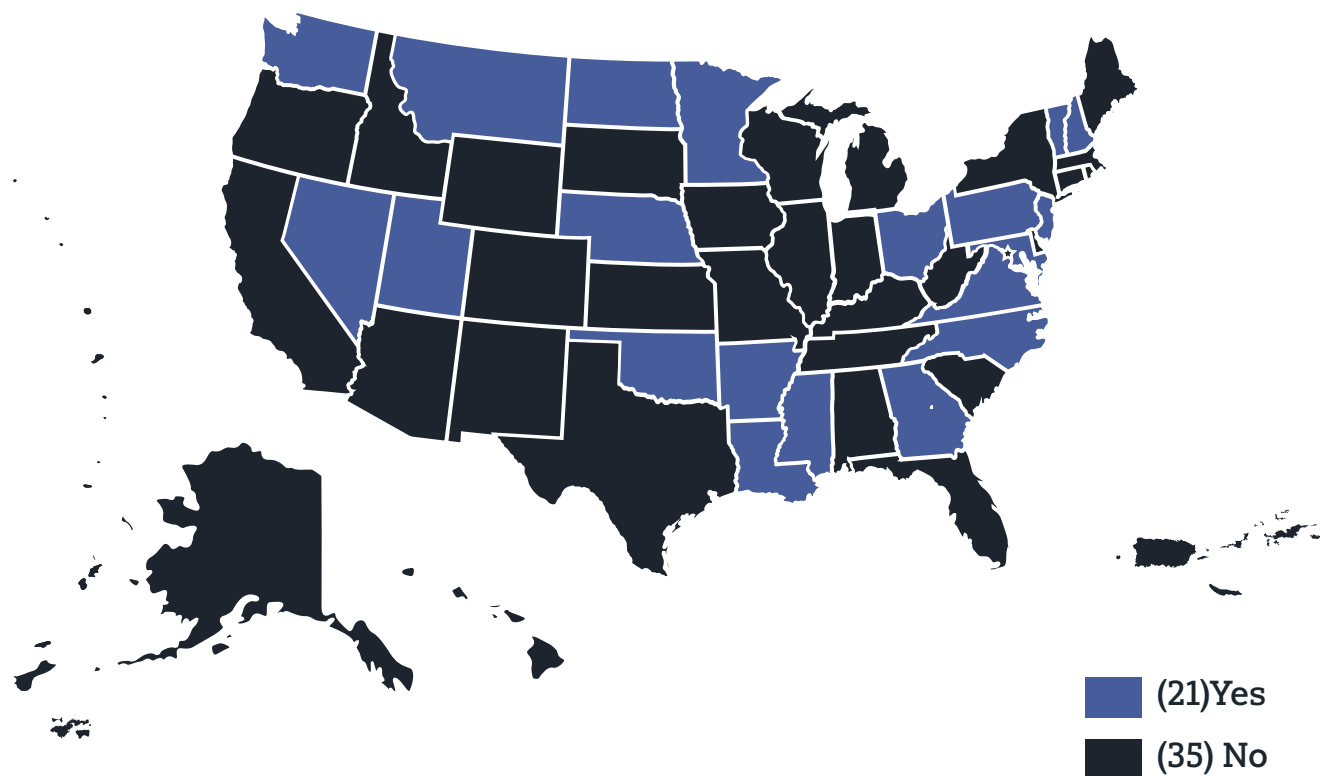
Some statutes specifically noted that licensing boards would run a background check (which can sometimes involve fingerprinting) for each licensure applicant. Other statutes did not, but this doesn’t mean that background checks won’t be done. When in doubt, directly contact the social work/professional licensing board for the jurisdiction. Generally, it is wise to not omit information about convictions unless you are certain a background check will not be run.

State Code vs. Licensing Board Policies:

It’s important to note that our project focuses on state and territory laws, which are easier to access and analyze than internal policies for each professional licensing board. While state and territory statutes tell us a lot about how states relate to criminalized individuals pursuing licensure, the licensing boards in each jurisdiction have a lot of discretion about how to engage with and apply the statutes. Policies and discretionary practices are something that this project does not account for. When in doubt, directly contact the social work/professional licensing board for the jurisdiction.

Map Overview

MAP 1: Are criminal records background checks required for individuals pursuing licensure?



Example of State Code: Washington State (Chapter 18 RCW 18.225.005)

Definitions. (Effective June 30, 2027.)

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Advanced social work" means the application of social work theory and methods, including:

(a) Emotional and biopsychosocial assessment;

(b) Psychotherapy under the supervision of a licensed independent clinical social worker, psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric advanced practice registered nurse, psychiatric nurse, or other mental health professionals as may be defined by rules adopted by the secretary;

(c) Case management;

(d) Consultation;

(e) Advocacy;

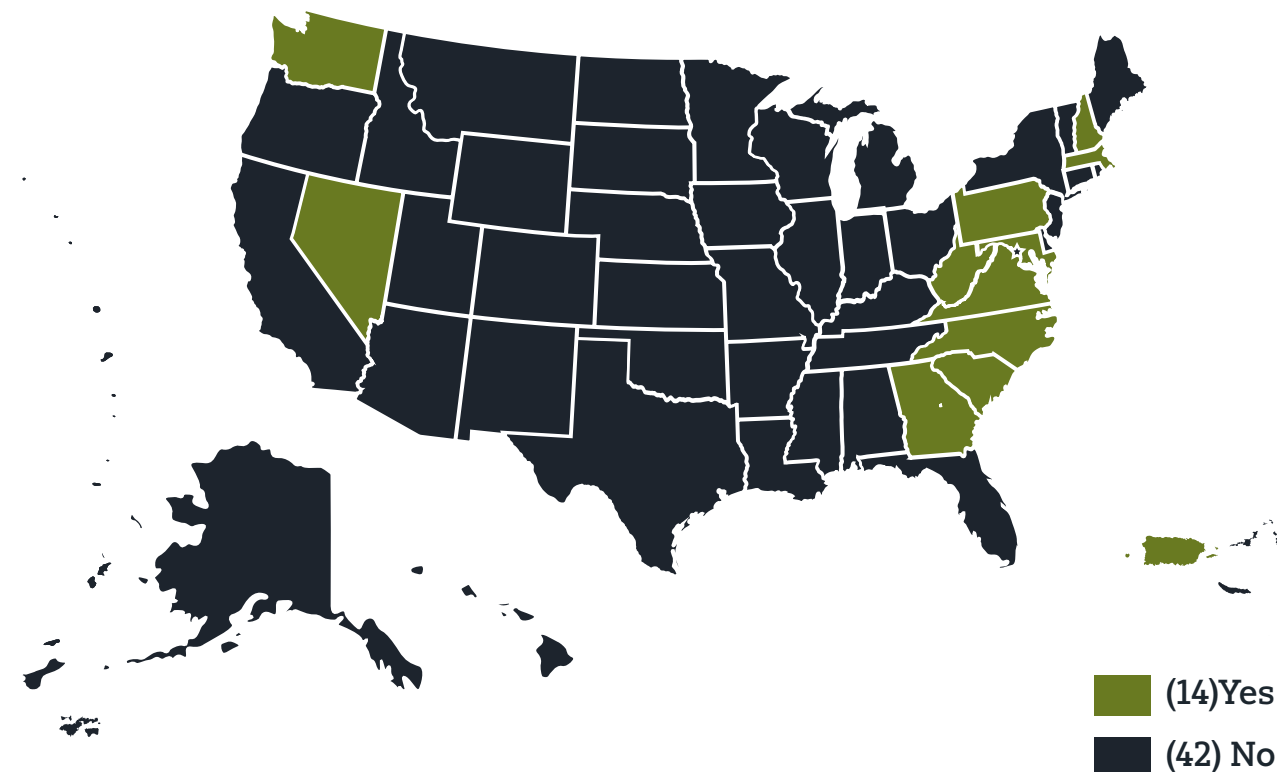
(f) Counseling; or

(g) Community organization.

(2) "Applicant" means a person who completes the required application, pays the required fee, is at least eighteen years of age, and meets any background check requirements and uniform disciplinary act requirements.

[2013 c 73 s 1.]

Map 2: Of the specific criminal convictions that can cause license denial, and are these convictions described as "crimes of moral turpitude?"



Example of State Code: Georgia (Title 43, Chapter 10A, Article 1, Section 43-10A-17 - Denial or revocation of license; other discipline; fitness of licensee; voluntary surrender of license)

(2) Knowingly made misleading, deceptive, untrue, or fraudulent representations in the practice of a specialty or on any document connected therewith; or practiced fraud or deceit or intentionally made any false statement in obtaining a license to practice the specialty; or made a false statement or deceptive registration with the board;

(3) Been convicted of any felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude in the courts of this state or any other state, territory, or country or in the courts of the United States; as used in this paragraph and paragraph (4) of this subsection, the term "felony" shall include any offense which, if committed in this state, would be deemed a felony, without regard to its designation elsewhere; and, as used in this paragraph, the term "conviction" shall include a finding or verdict of guilty or a plea of guilty, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought;

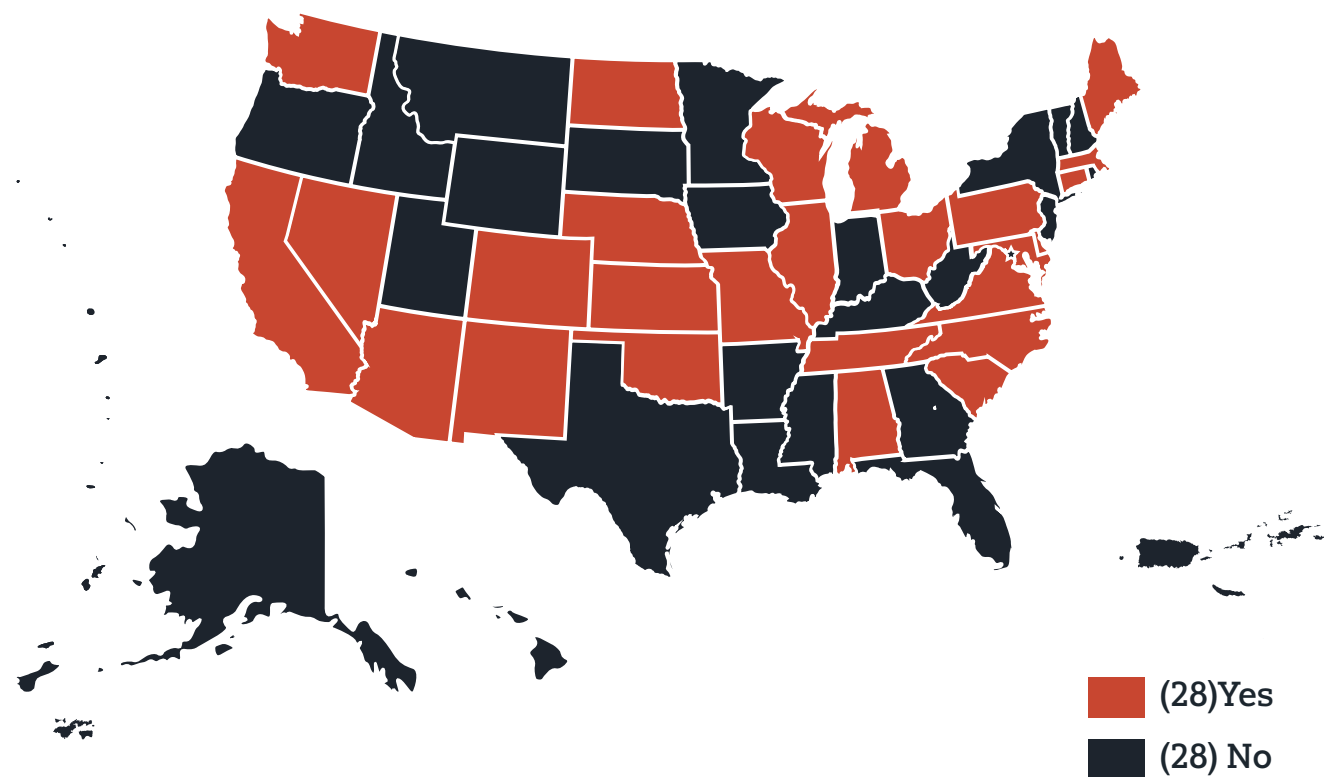
(4) Been arrested, charged, and sentenced for the commission of any felony, or any crime involving moral turpitude, where:

(A) First offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; or

(B) An adjudication or sentence was otherwise withheld or not entered on the charge except with respect to a plea of nolo contendere.

[GA Code § 43-10A-17 \(2024\)](#)

Map 3: Can applicants appeal a license denial that is based on a criminal conviction?



Example of State Code: California (CHAPTER 2. Denial of Licenses 480 - 489)

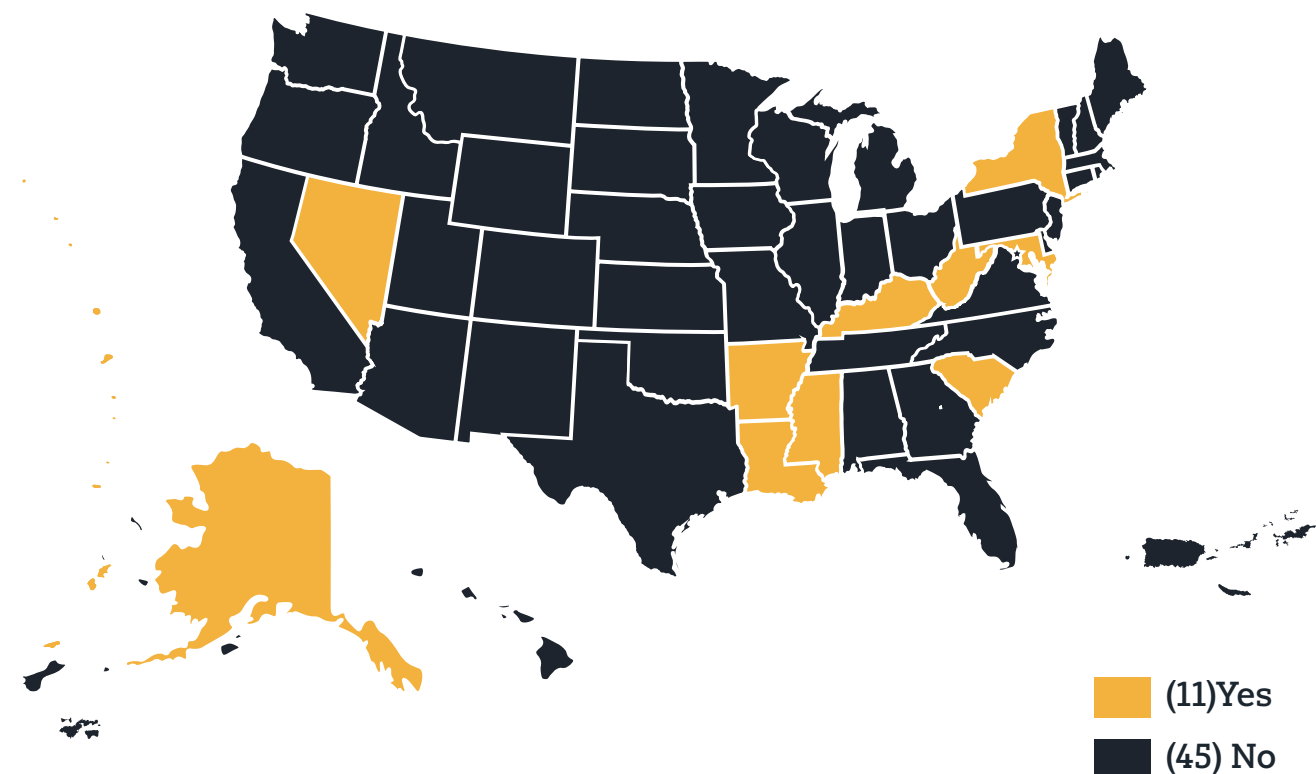
(2) Except as provided in paragraph (1), a board shall not require an applicant for licensure to disclose any information or documentation regarding the applicant's criminal history. However, a board may request mitigating information from an applicant regarding the applicant's criminal history for purposes of determining substantial relation or demonstrating evidence of rehabilitation, provided that the applicant is informed that disclosure is voluntary and that the applicant's decision not to disclose any information shall not be a factor in a board's decision to grant or deny an application for licensure.

(3) If a board decides to deny an application for licensure based solely or in part on the applicant's conviction history, the board shall notify the applicant in writing of all of the following:

- (A) The denial or disqualification of licensure.
- (B) Any existing procedure the board has for the applicant to challenge the decision or to request reconsideration.
- (C) That the applicant has the right to appeal the board's decision.
- (D) The processes for the applicant to request a copy of the applicant's complete conviction history and question the accuracy or completeness of the record pursuant to Sections 11122 to 11127 of the Penal Code.

[§ 4982.](#)

Map 4: Is "good moral character" a requirement for licensure?



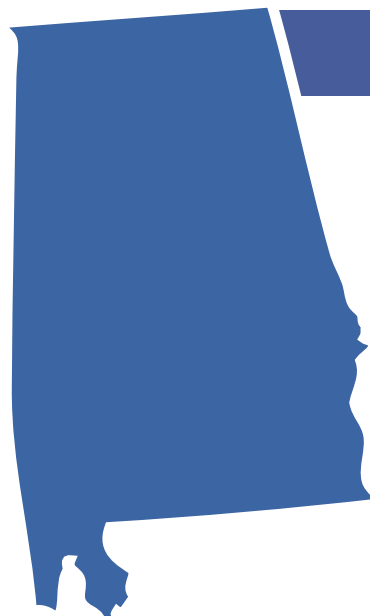
Example of State Code: Nevada (CHAPTER 641B - SOCIAL WORKERS)

NRS 641B.260 Investigations and hearings related to applications for licensure; grounds for denial of license.

1. The Board may hold hearings and conduct investigations into any matter related to an application for licensure. The Board may require the presentation of evidence.
2. The Board may refuse to issue a license to an applicant if the applicant:
 - (a) Is not of good moral character as it relates to the practice of social work;
 - (b) Has submitted any false credential to the Board;
 - (c) Has been disciplined in another state in connection with the practice of social work or a related profession or has committed any act in another state which is a violation of this chapter;
 - (d) Has committed an act that constitutes grounds for initiating disciplinary action pursuant to [NRS 641B.400](#);
 - (e) Has entered a plea of guilty, guilty but mentally ill or nolo contendere to, been found guilty or guilty but mentally ill of, or been convicted, in this State or any other jurisdiction, of a crime arising out of, in connection with or related to the activities of such a person in such a manner as to demonstrate his or her unfitness to engage in social work, and the time for appeal has elapsed or the judgment of conviction has been affirmed on appeal; or
 - (f) Fails to comply with any other requirements for licensure.

[NRS 641B.260](#)

ALABAMA



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction involving "fraud or deceit" related to the provision of social work services, and felonies within 5 years of conviction.

APPEAL PROCESS

After a denial, an applicant can file a petition within 30 days of denial in the circuit court where they reside or in Montgomery County. The court will then schedule a hearing within 10 days. The district attorney or Attorney General represents the licensing board in this hearing. The court determines whether the denial should be overturned.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.socialwork.alabama.gov/>

ALASKA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

A license will be denied for applicants with convictions described as "felony crime against a person" described in AS 11.41 who apply within 10 years of their convictions.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/ProfessionalLicensing/>



AMERICAN SAMOA



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies or misdemeanors involving "moral turpitude," which is not defined.

APPEAL PROCESS

If an applicant chooses to appeal, the licensing board holds a hearing within 72 hours of the request, and the board issues a decision within 72 hours after the hearing.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.ncsbn.org/bon-member-details/AmericanSamoa>

ARIZONA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Being convicted of "a crime" is grounds for denial.

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal process exists but is not outlined in the state code.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.azbbhe.us/>



ARKANSAS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

There is a long list of convictions that bar individuals from getting a license, available [here](#). Convictions do not impact licensure after 5 years of conviction.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.arkansas.gov/swlb/>

CALIFORNIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

A serious felony, as defined in Section 1192.7 of the Penal Code or a crime for which registration is required pursuant to paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (d) of Section 290 of the Penal Code. A financial crime currently classified as a felony that is directly and adversely related to the fiduciary qualifications, functions, or duties of the business or profession for which the application is made.

APPEAL PROCESS

A licensing board denial can come with a statement of issues, or a denial can come with a notice of the right to a hearing, but that hearing must be requested in writing within 60 days after the denial. A hearing is then coordinated with the Office of Administrative Hearings within 90-135 days of the hearing request.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.bbs.ca.gov/>

COLORADO

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

The state does not list specific convictions that might negatively impact chances at licensure but does acknowledge that some criminal convictions will contribute to the decision to deny a license, especially if the convictions are "directly related to" the practice of social work.

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal process exists but is not outlined in the state code.

License Board Website

<https://dpo.colorado.gov/SocialWork>

CONNECTICUT

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

Prior to applying for licensure, applicants in Connecticut can ask the commissioner whether their conviction(s) would prevent them from obtaining licensure. This query can come with a fee of up to \$15. Within 30 days, the commissioner will contact the applicant to inform them of whether the conviction is disqualifying. This is not a binding decision "if, upon further investigation, the commissioner determines that an individual's criminal conviction differs from the information presented in the determination request."

Licensing Board Website

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Practitioner-Licensing--Investigations/Socialworker/Social-Work-Licensure>

DELAWARE

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felony sexual offenses and other convictions “substantially related to social work.”

APPEAL PROCESS

If an applicant believes the Board has denied an applicant without justification, imposed higher or different standards for the applicant than for other applicants or licensees, or in some other manner contributed to or caused the failure of the application, the applicant may, within 30 days of such denial, appeal the Board’s decision to the Superior Court.

Licensing Board Website

<http://dpr.delaware.gov/boards/socialworkers/>

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction “that is related to the occupation for which the license, registration, or certification is sought.”

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/161602>

FLORIDA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any felony conviction under chapter 409, chapter 817, or chapter 893 of state statutes; any misdemeanors or felonies related to the Medicaid program or healthcare fraud; a felony related to reproductive battery; a felony related to homicide (section 782); violent and sexual crimes against children and vulnerable people specified in sections 393, 394, 787, 794, 796, 800, 810, 825, 827, 847, 856, 895, 916, or 985.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/>

GEORGIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any felony or any crime involving “moral turpitude” in Georgia or any other state, territory, or country.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://sos.ga.gov/board-professional-counselors-social-workers-and-marriage-family-therapists>

GUAM

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction that reflects a failure to “comply, observe, or adhere to any law in a manner such that the Board deems the applicant or holder to be an unfit or improper person to hold a social work license.”

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://dphss.guam.gov/guam-board-of-social-work/>



IDAHO

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction “currently relevant to the person’s fitness to engage in such profession or occupation as determined by the licensing authority.”

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://apps.dopl.idaho.gov/DOPLPortal/BoardPage.aspx?Bureau=SWO>



HAWAII

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction “directly related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of the social work profession.”

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/programs/socialworker/>



ILLINOIS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any felony or misdemeanor, “an essential element of which is dishonesty, or that is directly related to the practice of the clinical social work or social work professions.”

APPEAL PROCESS

“A person licensed under this Act and affected under this Section shall be afforded an opportunity to demonstrate to the Department or Board that he or she can resume practice in compliance with acceptable and prevailing standards under the provisions of his or her license.”

Licensing Board Website

<https://idfpr.illinois.gov/profs/socialworker.html>



INDIANA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction of "a crime that has a direct bearing on the individual's ability to practice competently."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.in.gov/pla/professions/behavioral-health-and-human-services/>



IOWA

CONVICTIONS

Sexual abuse in the fourth degree, fraud in assisted reproduction, and "other acts or offenses as specified by board rule."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://dial.iowa.gov/licenses/other-professional-licensure/social-work-licensure#promo-title--1046721395>



KANSAS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies, and misdemeanors against persons. These convictions are of concern when the applicant "has not demonstrated to the board's satisfaction that such person has been sufficiently rehabilitated to merit the public trust."

APPEAL PROCESS

After an appeal, the licensing board can issue or reinstate a license by a 2/3 majority vote.

Licensing Board Website

<http://ksbsrb.ks.gov/>



KENTUCKY

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Sexual offense convictions: "a misdemeanor offense under KRS Chapter 510 involving a client"; "a felony offense under KRS Chapter 510, 530.064(1)(a), or 531.310,"; "sexual contact as defined in KRS 510.010(7) with a client while the client was under the care of the social worker."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://bsw.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>



LOUISIANA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.labswe.org/>

MAINE

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

"Convictions for which incarceration for less than one year may be imposed and which involve dishonesty or false statements." "Convictions for which incarceration for one year or more may be imposed," especially/including those involving "sexual misconduct."

APPEAL PROCESS

"The office, board or commission shall hold a hearing conforming to the requirements of Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 4 at the written request of any person who is denied an initial or renewal license without an earring for any reason other than failure to pay a fee, provided that the request for hearing is received by the office, board or commission within 30 days of the applicant's receipt of written notice of the denial of the application, the reasons for the denial and the applicant's right to request a hearing."

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/state-board-social-worker-licensure>

MARYLAND

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies, and crimes of "moral turpitude."

APPEAL PROCESS

"Any person aggrieved by a final decision of the Board in a contested case, as defined in the Administrative Procedure Act, may petition for judicial review as allowed by the Administrative Procedure Act."

Licensing Board Website

<https://health.maryland.gov/bswe/Pages/default.aspx>

MASSACHUSETTS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

"A felony involving moral turpitude in connection with the practice of social work."

APPEAL PROCESS

"The social worker against whom a charge has been filed shall have a right to appear before the board in person or by counsel, or both, may produce witnesses and evidence in his behalf, and may question witnesses. No license shall be revoked or suspended without such hearing, but the non-appearance of the licensee, after notice, shall not prevent such hearing."

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/board-of-registration-of-social-workers>

MICHIGAN

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Not specified.

APPEAL PROCESS

A hearing involves a disciplinary committee meeting within 60 days after findings of fact and conclusions from a hearings examiner after appeal.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bpl/health/hp-lic-health-prof/social>



MISSISSIPPI

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

A felony "related to the practice of social work."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.swmft.ms.gov/>



MINNESOTA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

A felony or misdemeanor that reflects violation of "a federal or state law or rule related to the practice of social work."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://mn.gov/boards/social-work/>



MISSOURI

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction "directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the occupation." A full list of convictions is available [here](#).

APPEAL PROCESS

Outside of the application process, applicants can petition the licensing board to determine whether their conviction records are disqualifying for licensure. The petition can cost up to \$25. Within 30 days after the licensing board has met—and within four months from the date of the original petition—the licensing board will offer a binding decision. If the decision is that the applicant is not qualified to receive a license, this will be communicated in writing with reasons for disqualification.

Licensing Board Website

<http://pr.mo.gov/socialworkers.asp>



MONTANA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction related to "public health, welfare, and safety as it applies to the occupation for which the license is sought." After submitting an application for licensure, "the licensing agency may, after investigation, find that the applicant so convicted has not been sufficiently rehabilitated as to warrant the public trust and deny the issuance of a license."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial, other than the investigation/determination process described above.

Licensing Board Website

<http://boards.bsd.dli.mt.gov/bbh#1>

NEBRASKA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any misdemeanor or felony conviction "which has a rational connection with the fitness or capacity of the applicant or credential holder to practice the profession."

APPEAL PROCESS

The appeal process for license denials is the same as the process for disciplinary actions: "Both parties to disciplinary proceedings under the Uniform Credentialing Act shall have the right of appeal, and the appeal shall be in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. The case shall be heard at a time fixed by the district court. It shall be advanced and take precedence over all other cases upon the court calendar except worker's compensation and criminal cases."

Licensing Board Website

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Pages/Mental-Health-and-Social-Work-Practice.aspx>

NEVADA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction of "a crime arising out of, in connection with or related to the activities of such a person in such a manner as to demonstrate his or her unfitness to engage in social work." Any conviction involving "moral turpitude."

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal process exists but is not outlined in the state code.

Licensing Board Website

<http://socwork.nv.gov/>

NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONVICTIONS

Felonies and any conviction involving "moral turpitude."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.oplc.nh.gov/board-mental-health-practice>

NEW JERSEY

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any conviction with "a direct or substantial relationship to the activity regulated by the board or is of a nature such that certification, registration or licensure of the person would be inconsistent with the public's health, safety, or welfare."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/sw>



NEW YORK

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

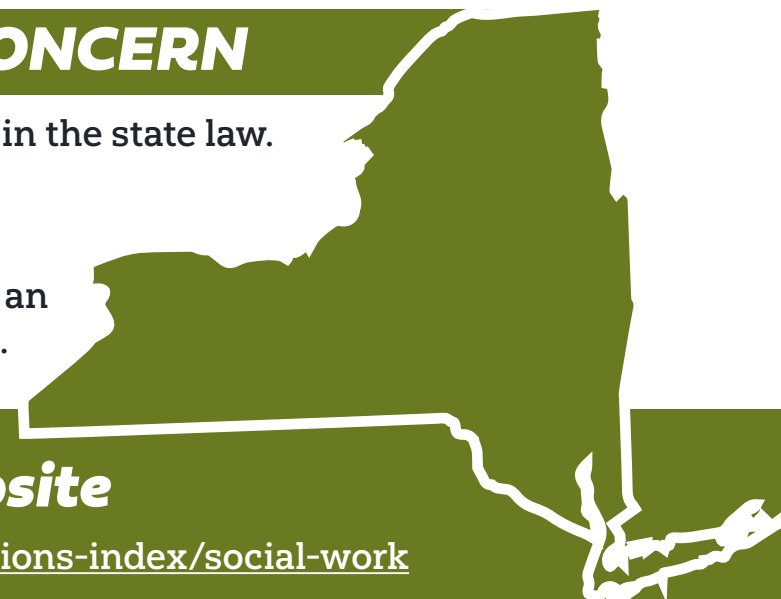
No specific convictions are named in the state law.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.op.nysed.gov/professions-index/social-work>



NEW MEXICO

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies

APPEAL PROCESS

To appeal a decision on the basis of discrimination, an applicant must obtain a trial de novo by filing a notice of appeal in the district court of the county "where the discriminatory practice occurred or where the respondent does business." The appeal must be filed within 90 days from the decision, sent to the commission as well as the division in Santa Fe. The district court will hold a hearing and make a decision on the original order from the commission.

Licensing Board Website

[http://www.rld.state.nm.us/boards/Social Work.aspx](http://www.rld.state.nm.us/boards/Social_Work.aspx)



NORTH CAROLINA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

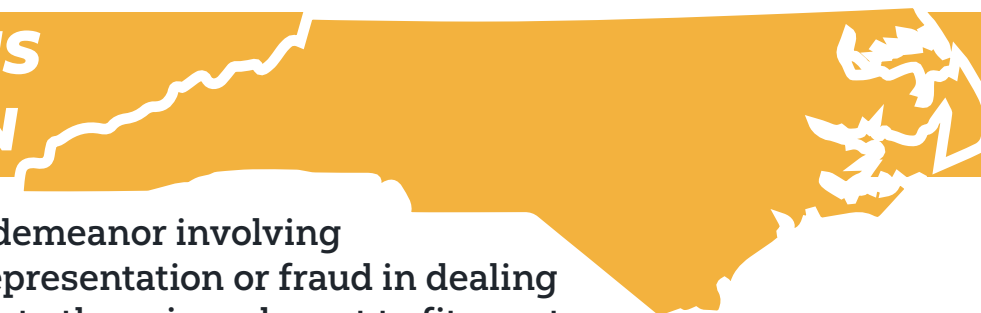
Felonies and "any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, misrepresentation or fraud in dealing with the public, conduct otherwise relevant to fitness to practice social work, or any misdemeanor reflecting inability to practice social work with due regard to the health and safety of clients or patients."

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal process exists but is not outlined in the state code.

Licensing Board Website

<https://ncswboard.gov/>



NORTH DAKOTA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Convictions "determined by the board to have a direct bearing upon that individual's ability to practice social work or is not sufficiently rehabilitated as determined by the board in accordance with section 12.1-33-02.1." grounds for denial.

APPEAL PROCESS

If a denial is issued by the licensing board, an applicant can appeal the order within 30 days after the decision, taking the appeal to the district court of Burleigh County. Appeals must include "the notice of appeal and specifications of error together with proof of service of the notice of appeal, and the undertaking required by this section." Appellants are responsible for costs associated with the appeal.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.ndbswe.com/>

NORTHERN MARINA ISLANDS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies, crimes of "moral turpitude," and convictions related to the profession of social work.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

BACKGROUND CHECK

<https://www.cnmilicensing.gov.mp/>

OHIO

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies, misdemeanors committed "in the course of practice," and convictions related to the profession of social work.

APPEAL PROCESS

Appeals occur via administrative hearing, and "the licensing authority has the burden of proof on the question of whether the individual's conviction of, judicial finding of guilt of, or plea of guilty to an offense directly relates to the licensed occupation."

Licensing Board Website

<http://cswmft.ohio.gov/>

OKLAHOMA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felony conviction that "substantially relates to the occupation of a social worker and poses a reasonable threat to public safety," as well as convictions "pertaining to any aspect of the practice of social work."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.ok.gov/socialworkers/>

OREGON

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies and "sex crimes" (see [ORS 163A.005](#)).

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.oregon.gov/BLSW/Pages/index.aspx>

PENNSYLVANIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Offenses published in the Pennsylvania Code bulletin by the licensing commissioner. These convictions include: "Sexual offenses," "crimes of violence," and "drug trafficking."

APPEAL PROCESS

Outside of the application process, applicants can petition the licensing board to determine whether their conviction records are disqualifying for licensure. The petition can cost up to \$45. A preliminary decision is issued by the licensing board within 45 days, and if a conviction is deemed "directly related" to social work, applicants have the opportunity to present evidence of personal rehabilitation as outlined in [Title 63 Section 3113 subsection c](#).

Licensing Board Website

http://www.dos.pa.gov/ProfessionalLicensing/BoardsCommissions/SocialWorkersMarriageandFamilyTherapistsandProfessionalCounselors/Pages/default.aspx#.Vxo2g_krKU1

PUERTO RICO

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

No specific convictions are named in the state law.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.statedepartment.pr.gov/juntas-examinadoras/social-work-professionals>

RHODE ISLAND

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://health.ri.gov/licenses/detail.php?id=245>

SOUTH CAROLINA



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

A felony or crime involving moral turpitude is grounds for licensure denial.

APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants who wish to appeal their decision can request a hearing conducted by an administrative law judge; see Sections [1-23-111](#) and [1-23-370](#) of the State Code.

Licensing Board Website

<https://lir.sc.gov/sw/>

SOUTH DAKOTA



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://dss.sd.gov/licensingboards/socialwork/social.aspx>

TENNESSEE



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

Outside of the application process, applicants can petition the licensing board to determine whether their conviction records are disqualifying for licensure. The licensing authority will issue a written decision before an applicant applies. The administrative hearings process for appeals are outlined in [Title 4, Chapter 5, Part 3 of the Tennessee Code](#).

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/health-professional-boards/sw-board.html>

TEXAS



CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Registrable sex offenses and felonies involving the use of threat or force.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.bhec.texas.gov/>

US VIRGIN ISLANDS

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Misdemeanors and felonies.

APPEAL PROCESS

Appeal hearings are conducted by the licensing board at least 20 days after a decision. The board will make a final decision based on a majority vote. "Judicial review of the refusal to allow an examination, refusal to grant a license, and review of disciplinary hearings shall be in accordance with Virgin Islands statutes regulating judicial review of administrative action."

Licensing Board Website

<http://dlca.vi.gov/boardcertifications/steps/swrequirements/swlist.htm>

UTAH

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

"Unlawful conduct."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://sos.vermont.gov/social-workers/>

VERMONT

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

No specific convictions are named in the state law.

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<https://sos.vermont.gov/social-workers/>

VIRGINIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies and misdemeanors "involving moral turpitude."

APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants who appeal a decision are entitled to a hearing at the next regular meeting of the licensing board. An appeal is decided through a vote of the members of the board in attendance at the hearing.

Licensing Board Website

<https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/social>

WASHINGTON

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Any felony or misdemeanor that "directly relates" to social work.

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal process exists but is not outlined in the state code.



Licensing Board Website

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/SocialWorker>

WEST VIRGINIA

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

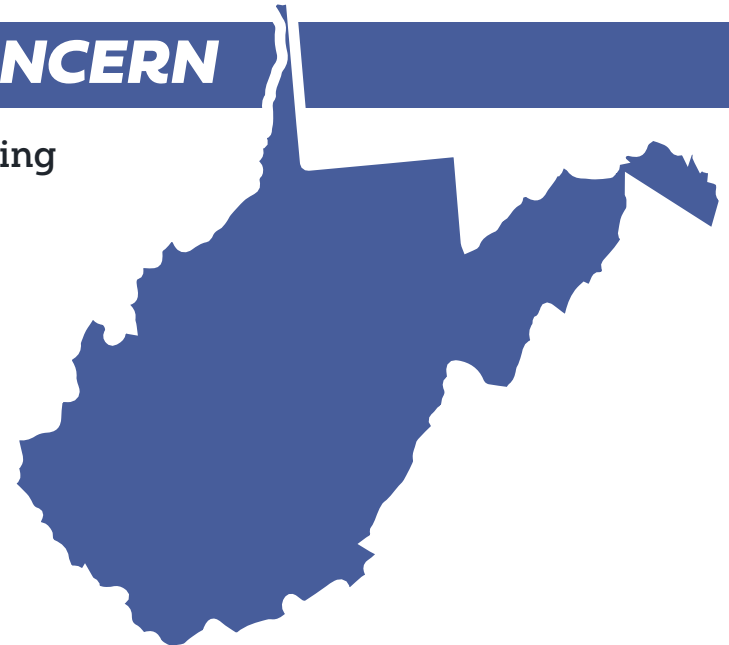
Felonies and "any other crime involving moral turpitude."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://www.wvsocialworkboard.org/>



WISCONSIN

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Convictions "the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice of social work, advanced practice social work, independent social work, clinical social work, marriage and family therapy, or professional counseling." Any of the "exempt offenses" mentioned in state law ch. 940 or s. 948.02, 948.025, 948.03, 948.05, 948.051, 948.055, 948.06, 948.07, 948.075, 948.08, 948.085, or 948.095.

APPEAL PROCESS

It is not possible to appeal with a conviction for an "exempt offense" mentioned above. In other instances, the licensing board allows appeals where applicants can show "evidence of rehabilitation and fitness to engage in the licensed activity."



Licensing Board Website

<https://dsps.wi.gov/pages/Professions/SocialWorker/Default.aspx>

WYOMING

CONVICTIONS OF CONCERN

Felonies and misdemeanors "that relate adversely to the practice of clinical social work or the ability to practice clinical social work, although exceptions to this requirement may be granted by the board if consistent with the public interest."

APPEAL PROCESS

The law does not specify if there is an appeal process for licensure denial.

Licensing Board Website

<http://mentalhealth.wyo.gov/>



Resources & Information

Thank you for engaging with our toolkit. We hope that it has been helpful for you! For more resources and information on collateral consequences related to prior convictions, please check out these links:

- ▶ [Collateral Consequences Resource Center](#)
- ▶ [Barriers to Work: Increasing Access to Licensed Occupations for Individuals With Criminal Records](#)
- ▶ [National Reentry Resource Center](#)
- ▶ [National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction](#)

