

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

BILL: CS/SB 1150

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: School Social Workers

DATE: April 15, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Palazes	Bouck	ED	Fav/CS
2.	Gray	Elwell	AED	Favorable
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1150 provides an exemption to a person who is employed as a school social worker from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification.

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues and expenditures. **See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Licensure of Social Workers in Florida

In Florida, the social work profession is under the oversight of the Florida Department of Health, specifically the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling (CSW Board).¹ The CSW Board was legislatively established to ensure that every clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist, and mental health counselor practicing in this state meet minimum requirements for safe practice. The CSW Board is responsible for

¹ Section 491.004, F.S.

licensing, monitoring, disciplining and educating clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors to assure competency and safety to practice in Florida.²

The CSW Board offers three licenses for social workers: registered clinical social worker intern³, licensed clinical social worker by examination⁴, and certified master social worker⁵. All three licenses require, among other requirements, a master's degree in social work from a Council on Social Work Education accredited school of social work showing graduate level coursework.

Educator Certification

In order for a person to serve as an educator in a traditional public school, charter school, virtual school, or other publicly operated school, the person must hold a certificate issued by the DOE. Persons seeking employment at a public school as a school supervisor, principal, teacher, library media specialist, counselor, athletic coach, or in other instructional capacity must be certified.⁶ The purpose of certification is to require school-based personnel to “possess the credentials, knowledge, and skills necessary to allow the opportunity for a high-quality education in the public schools.”⁷

The DOE issues three main types of educator certificates:

- Professional Certificate: The professional certificate is Florida's highest type of full-time educator certification.⁸ The professional certificate is valid for five years and is renewable.⁹
- Temporary Certificate: The temporary certificate covers employment in full-time positions for which educator certification is required.¹⁰ Generally, a temporary certificate is valid for five years and is nonrenewable.¹¹
- Athletic Coaching Certificate: The athletic coaching certificate covers full-time and part-time employment as a public school's athletic coach.¹² The DOE issues two types of athletic coaching certificates – one is valid for five years and may be issued for subsequent five-year periods while the other is valid for three years and may be issued only once. The five-year certificate requires satisfaction of certain specialization requirements established in rule.¹³

² Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Home Page*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/>, (last visited April 7, 2025).

³ Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Registered Clinical social worker intern*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/registered-clinical-social-worker-intern/>, (last visited April 7, 2025).

⁴ Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Licensed Clinical Social Worker*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/licensed-clinical-social-worker/>, (last visited April 7, 2025).

⁵ Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Certified Master Social Worker*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/certified-master-social-worker/>, (last visited April 7, 2025).

⁶ Sections 1012.55(1) and 1002.33(12), F.S.

⁷ Section 1012.54, F.S.

⁸ Rule 6A-4.004(5), F.A.C.

⁹ Section 1012.56(7), F.S.

¹⁰ Rule 6A-4.004(1), F.A.C.

¹¹ Section 1012.56(7), F.S.

¹² Section 1012.55(2), F.S.

¹³ Rule 6A-4.004(7), F.A.C.

Professional Certificate Requirements

To be eligible for a professional certificate, a person must:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Sign an affidavit attesting that the applicant will uphold the U.S. and State Constitutions;
- Earn a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning or from a nonaccredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree;
- Submit to fingerprinting and background screening and not have a criminal history that requires the applicant's disqualification from certification or employment;
- Be of good moral character;
- Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher;
- Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge;
- Demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge; and
- Demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, if the person serves as a classroom teacher or school administrator.¹⁴

Demonstrating Mastery of General Knowledge

Mastery of general knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Achieving a passing score on the General Knowledge Test;
- Achieving passing scores established in SBE rule on national or international examinations that test comparable content and relevant standards in verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning skills (*e.g.*, the verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning portions of the Graduate Record Examination);
- Providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory, by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), or by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE);
- Completing two semesters of successful, part-time or full-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program; and
- Documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher.¹⁵

Demonstrating Mastery of Subject Area Knowledge

Mastery of subject area knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Bachelor's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a bachelor's or higher degree):
 - If a Florida subject area examination has been developed, achieving a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination specified in SBE rule or documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that

¹⁴ Section 1012.56(2), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1012.56(3), F.S.

- the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher in the certificate subject area as identified in SBE rule.
- If a Florida subject area examination has not been developed, achieving a passing score on a standardized examination specified in SBE rule, including passing scores on both the oral proficiency and written proficiency examinations administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages or successful completion of a United States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program or a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.
 - For certification in any other subject area for which there is no Florida subject area test or standardized examination specified in state board rule (e.g., Dance), completing the required bachelor's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and verification of subject area competence by the district school superintendent or, for a state-supported or private school, the school's chief administrative officer.
 - Master's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a master's or higher degree): Completing the required master's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and achieving a passing score on the corresponding Florida-developed subject area test or standardized examination specified in SBE rule.
 - Out-of-State Certification: Providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued for a subject area by another U.S. state or territory or by NBPTS or ABCTE, if the certificate is comparable to the Florida professional certificate issued for the same subject area.¹⁶

Demonstrating Mastery of Professional Preparation and Education Competence

Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of professional preparation and education competence are any one of the following:

- Successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a Florida postsecondary educational institution and a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Successful completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state.
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the SBE.
- Documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or accredited private college or university and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Successful completion of professional preparation courses as specified in SBE rule, successful completion of a professional education competence program, and documentation of three years of being rated effective or highly effective while holding a temporary certificate.
- Successful completion of a professional learning certification program.

¹⁶ Section 1012.56(5), F.S

- Successful completion of a competency-based certification program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.¹⁷

Educator Certification Examination Fees

The DOE sets registration fees for the various exams required for educator certification, including initial registration and retakes. For the general knowledge exam, the initial registration fee is \$130.00 for the full battery of four subjects. An individual is able to retake the general knowledge exam by subtest with the retake registration fees being the following:

- One subtest - \$32.50;
- Two subtests - \$65.00;
- Three subtests - \$97.50;
- Full battery retake - \$130.00.

For subject area examinations and the professional educational test, the initial and retake registration fee is \$150.00. For subject area exams with subparts, the \$150.00 fee is divided evenly among the subparts for retakes.¹⁸

Current law and rule provide for several fee waivers including the Military Testing Fee Waiver, Retired First Responder Fee Waiver,¹⁹ and Exceptional Student Education K–12/Elementary Education K–6 Waivers.²⁰

Restricted Professional Certificate

In addition to the professional certification described above, the DOE issues restricted professional certificates, a renewable type of certificate valid for five school years. To receive a restricted professional certificate an applicant must:

- Complete the application adopted in SBE rule;
- Satisfy all of the statutory eligibility criteria for a professional educator certification except for the mastery of general knowledge component; and
- Serve as instructional personnel, who is not a classroom teacher, in one of the following fields:
 - Educational Media Specialist;
 - School Counseling;
 - School Psychologist;
 - School Social Work; or
 - Speech-Language Impaired.

An applicant who meets these requirements must only be assigned to non-classroom instructional positions for which they are certified.²¹

¹⁷ Section 1012.56(6), F.S.

¹⁸ Rule 6A-4.0021(4), F.A.C.

¹⁹ Section 1012.59(3), F.S.

²⁰ Section 1012.59(4), F.S.

²¹ Rule 6A-4.004(9), F.S.

Educator Certification Specializations

An individual holding an educator certification from the DOE may apply for an additional coverage or endorsement indicating advanced education or experience in a particular subject, area, or field.²² The DOE offers a specialization for certification in school social worker that can be earned in under two plans:

- Plan One. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in social work that includes 300 hours or more of field placement in a K-12 school setting from a program accredited by the National Council on Social Work Education or accredited by and entity approved by DOE in rule; or
- Plan Two. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in social work that includes 300 hours or more of field placement with diverse individuals in a community setting other than a prekindergarten, an elementary or a secondary school.²³

Background Screening Requirements

Individuals who work in or provide services to school districts, charter schools, alternative schools, and private schools participating in state school choice scholarship programs must undergo a fingerprint based background screening before being permitted access to school grounds.²⁴ The individuals who must undergo background screening fall under three personnel classifications: instructional and noninstructional personnel;²⁵ noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel;²⁶ and noninstructional contractors.²⁷ Candidates for educator certification must also undergo background screening.²⁸

The background screening requirements for each personnel classification vary depending upon the individual's duties, whether or not the individual is a school district employee, and the degree of contact the individual has with students.²⁹ Because they are more likely to have direct contact with students, candidates for educator certification, instructional and noninstructional personnel, and noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel must be screened against a distinct list of 52 disqualifying offenses applicable to employment with public schools and school districts.³⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill amends section 1012.55, F.S., to exempt school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification.

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

²² Rule 6A-4.002(1), F.A.C.

²³ Rule 6A-4.035, F.A.C.

²⁴ Sections 1002.421, 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2), F.S.

²⁵ Section 1012.32(2), F.S.

²⁶ Section 1012.465(1), F.S.

²⁷ Section 1012.467(1), F.S.

²⁸ Sections 1012.315, 1012.32(2), and 1012.56, F.S.

²⁹ See ss. 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2), F.S.

³⁰ Sections 1012.315, 1012.32, and 1012.465, F.S.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 1012.55 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Education Pre-K-12 on March 31, 2025:

The committee substitute exempts school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification, rather than exempting such individuals from nearly all educator certification requirements.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.