

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 809](#)

TITLE: School Social Workers

SPONSOR(S): Hunschofsky, Lopez, V.

COMPANION BILL: [CS/SB 1150](#) (Calatayud)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 109 Y's

0 N's

GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Approved

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill provides an exemption for individuals employed as school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill will have an indeterminate positive impact on private sector expenditures through savings on examination fees for school social workers and an indeterminate negative impact on state revenues due to the loss of such fees.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill provides an exemption for individuals employed as school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification. The bill is limited to those individuals employed by the school district as social workers. Currently, licensure as a social worker and the educator certification specialization for school social workers require an individual to have a master's degree or higher in social work as well as requisite field work. Therefore, the receipt of state licensure and the educator certification specialization could be deemed the demonstration of mastery currently required by the general knowledge and subject matter requirements. (Section [1](#)).

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 21, 2025, ch. 2025-62, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2025. (Section [2](#)).

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill has an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on state revenues due to the loss of examination fees from the general knowledge examination from school social workers seeking educator certification.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill has an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on private sector expenditures due to school social workers seeking their educator certification no longer being required to pay examination fees for the general knowledge exam and the subject area examination designated by the Department of Education (DOE).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Licensure of Social Workers in Florida

STORAGE NAME: h0809z1

DATE: 5/22/2025

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 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 intern,³ licensed clinical social worker by examination,⁴ and certified master social worker.⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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."⁹

The DOE issues three main types of educator certificates:

- Professional Certificate: The professional certificate is Florida's highest type of full-time educator certification.¹⁰ The professional certificate is valid for 5 years and is renewable.¹¹
- Temporary Certificate: The temporary certificate covers employment in full-time positions for which educator certification is required.¹² Generally, a temporary certificate is valid for 5 years and is nonrenewable.¹³

¹ Chapter [491.004, F.S.](#)

² Florida the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Welcome Page*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

³ Florida the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Registered Clinical Social Worker Intern*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/registered-clinical-social-worker-intern/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

⁴ Florida the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Licensed Clinical Social Worker by Examination*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/licensed-clinical-social-worker/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

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

⁶ See notes 2, 3, and 4, *supra*.

⁷ Sections [1012.55\(1\)](#) and [1002.33\(12\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

⁸ Sections [1002.33\(12\)\(f\)](#) (charter school teachers) and [1012.55\(1\), F.S.](#) District school boards and charter school governing boards are authorized to hire non-certified individuals who possess expertise in a given field to serve in an instructional capacity. Rule 6A-1.0502, F.A.C.; ss. [1002.33\(12\)\(f\)](#) and [1012.55\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#) Occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, and speech therapists are not required to be certified educators. Rule 6A-1.0502(10) and (11), F.A.C.

⁹ Section [1012.54, F.S.](#); see r. 6A-4.001(1), F.A.C.

¹⁰ Rule 6A-4.004(5), F.A.C.

¹¹ Section [1012.56\(7\)\(a\), F.S.](#); see r. 6A-4.0051(3)(d), F.A.C. (validity period is expressed as 5 years from July 1 of the school fiscal year). The DOE also issues a nonrenewable 5-year professional certificate that allows an applicant with a bachelor's degree in the area of speech-language impairment to complete a master's degree in speech-language impairment. Section [1012.56\(7\)\(c\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.004(6), F.A.C.

¹² Rule 6A-4.004(1)(a)2., F.A.C.

¹³ Section [1012.56\(7\)\(f\), F.S.](#) (validity period is expressed in school fiscal years); r. 6A-4.004(1)(a), F.A.C. The veteran's pathway to educator certification authorizes a 5-year nonrenewable temporary certificate. Section [1012.56\(7\)\(b\)2., F.S.](#) The DOE also issues a nonrenewable temporary certificate, which is valid for 2 years in the area of speech-language impairment. Section [1012.56\(7\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

- Athletic Coaching Certificate: The athletic coaching certificate covers full-time and part-time employment as a public school's athletic coach.¹⁴ The DOE issues two types of athletic coaching certificates – one is valid for 5 years and may be issued for subsequent 5-year periods while the other is valid for 3 years and may be issued only once.¹⁵ The 5-year certificate requires satisfaction of certain specialization requirements established in rule.¹⁶

Professional Certificate Requirements

To be eligible for a professional certificate, a person must:¹⁷

- 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 learning¹⁸ or from a nonaccredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree;¹⁹
- 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;²⁰
- demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge;²¹ and
- demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, if the person serves as a classroom teacher or school administrator.²²

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;²³
- achieving passing scores established in State Board of Education (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);²⁴

¹⁴ Section [1012.55\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵ Rule 6A-4.004(7), F.A.C. (validity periods expressed in school fiscal years).

¹⁶ See r. 6A-4.0282, F.A.C.

¹⁷ Section [1012.56\(2\)\(a\)-\(i\), F.S.](#)

¹⁸ Section [1012.56\(2\)\(c\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.003(1), F.A.C. (approved accrediting agencies); *see also* 34 C.F.R. ss. 602.1-602.50; U.S. Department of Education, *Institutional Accrediting Agencies*, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-602> (last visited May 5, 2025).

¹⁹ Section [1012.56\(2\)\(c\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.003(2), F.A.C. (criteria for approval of nonaccredited institutions of higher learning). For initial certification, an applicant must attain at least a 2.5 overall grade point average on a 4.0 scale in the applicant's major field of study. Section [1012.56\(2\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

²⁰ Section [1012.56\(2\)\(g\) and \(3\), F.S.](#); DOE, *General Knowledge*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.shtml> (last visited May 5, 2025).

²¹ Section [1012.56\(2\)\(h\) and \(5\), F.S.](#)

²² Section [1012.56\(2\)\(i\) and \(6\), F.S.](#); DOE, *Professional Preparation and Education Competence*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/professional-preparation-edu-competenc.shtml> (last visited May 5, 2025).

²³ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#) The General Knowledge Test is part of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations and is administered as four subtests: Reading, English Language Skills, Essay, and Mathematics. Rule 6A-4.0021(7), F.A.C.; *see also* DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida*, s. 82 (27th ed., 2022), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf> (competencies and skills measured by General Knowledge Test).

²⁴ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(e\), F.S.](#) The passing scores to be identified in state board rule must be at approximately the same level of rigor as is required to pass the General Knowledge Test. Rule 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

- providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory;²⁵ by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS),²⁶ or by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE);²⁷
- 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;²⁸ 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.²⁹

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 rule³⁰ or 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 in the certificate subject area as identified in SBE rule.³¹
 - 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 Languages³² or successful completion of a United States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program or a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.³³
 - 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 rule³⁴ 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.³⁵

²⁵ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#); see rr. 6A-4.002(1)(i) and 6A-4.003, F.A.C. (flush-left provisions following r. 6A-4.003(2)(e), F.A.C.). Section [1012.56\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#) specifies that a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by *another state* is an acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge. The DOE also recognizes certificates issued by U.S. territories. See DOE, *General Knowledge*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.stml> (last visited May 5, 2025).

²⁶ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(c\), F.S.](#); see r. 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.; see also National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <https://www.nbpts.org/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

²⁷ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(c\), F.S.](#); see r. 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.

²⁸ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(d\), F.S.](#); see also r. 6A-4.003(1)-(2), F.A.C. (approval of accredited and nonaccredited institutions of higher learning).

²⁹ Section [1012.56\(3\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

³⁰ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#) The Florida Teacher Certification Examinations include 39 subject area tests. DOE, *Test Information Guides*, http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_TIGS.asp (last visited May 5, 2025); see also DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida*, ss. 1-63 (27th ed., 2022), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf>; see also r. 6A-4.0021(9), F.A.C. (scoring of subject area tests).

³¹ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(i\), F.S.](#)

³² Section [1012.56\(5\)\(b\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.0243(1)(e), F.A.C.; see American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), *Assessments*, <https://www.actfl.org/assessments> (last visited May 5, 2025); Language Testing International (ACTFL Language Testing Office), *ACTFL*, <https://tms.languagetesting.com> (last visited May 5, 2025).

³³ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(g\)-\(h\), F.S.](#)

³⁴ See, e.g., r. 6A-4.0123, F.A.C. (specialization requirements for certification in dance); see also DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

³⁵ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(c\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

- **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.³⁶
- **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.³⁷

Educator Certification Examination Fees

The DOE sets registration fees for the various exams required for educator certification, including initial registration and retakes.³⁸ For the general knowledge exam, the initial registration fee is \$130.00 for the full battery of 4 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 - \$60.00;
- Three subtests - \$97.50;
- Full battery retake - \$130.00.³⁹

For subject area examinations, the initial registration fee is \$150.00. For subject area exams with subparts, the \$150.00 fee is divided evenly among the subparts for retakes. If the subject area exam does not have subparts then the retake fee is \$150.00.⁴⁰

Current law and rule provide for several fee waivers including the Military Testing Fee Waiver,⁴¹ Retired First Responder Fee Waiver,⁴² and Exceptional Student Education K–12/Elementary Education K–6 Waivers.⁴³

Restricted Professional Certificate

In addition to the professional certification described above, the DOE issues restricted professional certificates, a renewable type of certificate valid for 5 school years. In order 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.⁴⁴

An applicant who meets these requirements must only be assigned to non-classroom instructional positions for which they are certified.⁴⁵

³⁶ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(d\), F.S.](#); see DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/> (last visited May 5, 2025).

³⁷ Section [1012.56\(5\)\(e\), F.S.](#), and (f), F.S.; r. 6A-4.002(1)(i)-(j), F.A.C.; DOE, *NBPTS Certificate Subjects and Corresponding Subjects in Florida*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/pathways-routes/nbpts-certificate-subjects-correspondi.stml> (last visited May 5, 2025).

³⁸ See r. 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.

³⁹ Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b), F.A.C.

⁴⁰ Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b)-(e), F.A.C.

⁴¹ Section [1012.59\(3\)\(a\)-\(c\), F.S.](#) and r. 6A-4.0021(13), F.A.C.

⁴² Section [1012.59\(3\)\(d\), F.S.](#) and r. 6A-4.0021(14), F.A.C.

⁴³ Section [1012.59\(4\), F.S.](#) and r. 6A-4.0021(15), F.A.C.

⁴⁴ Rule 6A-4.004(9)(a), F.S.

⁴⁵ Rule 6A-4.004(9)(b), F.S.

Educator Certification Specializations

An individual holding an educator certification from the DOE may apply for an additional coverage⁴⁶ or endorsement⁴⁷ indicating advanced education or experience in a particular subject, area, or field.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The term "coverage" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as the designation on a Florida educator's certificate which indicates the area in which an individual has a content knowledge base. The term "coverage" shall be used synonymously with the terms "subject," "area," or "field."

⁴⁷ The term "endorsement" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as a rider on a Florida educator's certificate with a designated coverage. An endorsement shown on a certificate with a coverage signifies a pedagogical knowledge base which targets particular levels, stages of development, or circumstances.

⁴⁸ Rule 6A-4.002(1)(e)-(f), F.A.C.

⁴⁹ Rule 6A-4.035, F.A.C.