



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

**Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA)
Commission on Accreditation (COA)
Report to the Board of Directors**

March 2021

In 2020-21, the DOSWA and COA focused efforts on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by offering field and delivery method flexible options; conducting virtual trainings, workshops, and webinars; providing wide-reaching program-centered services; engaging in public education; and developing process efficiencies and innovations with the goal of empowering programs to engage in accreditation reviews as a developmental, reflective, and renewal process by which program stakeholders craft excellent educational experiences to prepare competent social work practitioners.

DOSWA and COA currently serve **886** baccalaureate and master's social work programs across the U.S., district, and territories programs that are either accredited or in Candidacy or Pre-Candidacy status, as well as **65** programs at earlier stages in the process. Pilots for accreditation of post-degree fellowship programs and practice doctoral programs are currently in various process stages.

At their February-October 2020 meetings, COA issued 389 decisions. Decision letters are distributed 30-45 days after each meeting and posted publicly on the CSWE website.

Based upon the February 2020-October 2020 meetings, commissioners conducted fifty-nine (59) candidacy commission visits last year. Certified site visitors conducted ninety (90) reaffirmation site visits last year.

Despite multiple changes to DOSWA personnel, and with support from the COA over the past year, the team has enjoyed many successes and maintain high-quality year-round services, including offering individual and group consultations, trainings, and transparently publishing a wide array of supportive materials on the CSWE website.

The DOSWA was relocated from the Division of Education and is now a stand-alone department. With this move, the DOSWA Executive Director reports directly to CSWE's President & CEO and is a member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service (ISWDRES) was moved from the DOSWA to the Division of Education. The DOSWA team also gained one new leadership position (Senior Team Leader). Two (2) new accreditation specialists were hired to fill vacancies left by internal promotions, joining the three (3) seasoned specialists, for a total of five (5) specialists.

Each specialist supports approximately 177 programs in achieving their accreditation goals during and in between review cycles.

Goal 1: Provide leadership for the future of social work education.

Strategies:

- a. Serve as an authoritative source of information on the preparation of social workers.
- b. Collaborate with strategic partners to advance social work education and social justice domestically and globally, including Indigenous peoples.
- c. Provide thought leadership on critical issues facing social work education and research.
- d. Advocate for social work education and research both within the profession and beyond.
- e. Support data informed decision-making on the future social work workforce.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- The Joint Committee (COA and COEP) continues to develop a draft of the 2022 EPAS. DOSWA staff involved in this committee include the DOSWA Executive Director and an Accreditation Specialist. In accordance with previous EPAS development processes, drafts of the 2022 EPAS will be made available for public comment and feedback to further inform EPAS content and the peer-review accreditation process. During this multi-year process, DOSWA has:
 - Hosted dozens of Joint Committee and writing group meetings throughout 2020-2021
 - Joint Committee presented the Direction of 2022 EPAS at CSWE's APM 2020
 - Consulted with Anti-Racism Task Force and Council for Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities
 - Draft 1 of the 2022 EPAS has been completed
 - Feedback will be requested from COA, COEP, COFE, NADD, BPD, and the public in coming months
- Fellowship Accreditation pilot is underway. Applications have been accepted and a Fellowship Review Committee (FRC) has been selected and trained to conduct document reviews and site visits. Two (2) site visits are scheduled to take place in early 2021.
- The Practice Doctoral Program Accreditation pilot and full accreditation was approved at the February 2021 COA meeting. CSWE has contracted with a former CSWE employee to develop the policies, forms, and resources to begin the pilot process. This person also proposed a draft timeline to the COA for the implementation of the pilot program. CSWE staff, along with the Practice Doctorate Implementation Committee, will determine if any modification to the schedule is needed.
- Given the steady increase in accredited and candidate baccalaureate and master's programs, online and location-based substantive change proposals, and new post-degree fellowship and practice doctoral program accreditation pilots, the DOSWA and COA continue to monitor and request fiscal, volunteer, staffing, and technological resources

needed to balance workloads and maintain the quality and integrity of our accreditation and evaluation services.

- The COA’s Policy Committee is engaged in a collaborative process with CSWE to develop a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CSWE and COA as required by CHEA. CSWE’s President & CEO, CSWE’s Board Chair, the Director of Accreditation (and their forthcoming successor), COA members, and DOSWA staff are actively and equally involved in MOU drafting and decision-making. Both parties agreed that the current MOU (dated 2012) and Resolution (dated 2013) are “obsolete and inefficient,” even if CHEA accepted the MOU in its last review of CSWE COA in 2014. In practice, updates and strengthening are needed to ensure systematic authority and structure of the COA. These updates are necessary to diligently execute sustainable, fair, and equitable accreditation and evaluation services to nearly 900 social work programs, and growing, across the U.S., the district, and the territories. The parties convened on the following dates:
 - July 2, 2020
 - August 6, 2020
 - September 28, 2020
 - January 5, 2021
 - January 29, 2021

Goal 2: Promote quality teaching, learning, and scholarship to prepare graduates for the future of social work practice.

Strategies:

- a. Provide professional and faculty development opportunities to support social work educators in their roles.
- b. Provide curricular resources that exemplify quality and innovation in social work education.
- c. Support member institutions in developing and maintaining an accredited program.
- d. Promote and ensure educational quality and continuous improvement in accredited social work programs that facilitates the preparation of competent social workers.
- e. Promote research and scholarship that informs practice and builds the science and knowledge base for social work students and educators.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Continue to provide hundreds of customized consultations on the accreditation process, EPAS, and COA interpretations, via phone, e-mail, video, and/or in-person at CSWE’s Annual Program Meeting (APM) and the Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) conference annually
- Engage in ongoing recruitment and training of social work educators to serve as certified site visitors and commissioners; in August 2020, we trained eleven (11) new and nineteen (19) returning commissioners to conduct reaffirmation and candidacy reviews and

candidacy visits; on January 22, 2021, we trained 68 new site visitors to conduct reaffirmation site visits under the 2015 EPAS

- After each COA meeting, the DOSWA and COA co-author a newsletter distributing COA decisions, relevant policy and procedural updates, and clarified interpretations of the current 2015 EPAS to each program's primary contact. Newsletter e-blasts were sent:
 - April 9, 2020
 - July 31, 2020
 - December 2, 2020
 - We also created the Accreditation News Archive section of the CSWE website to preserve institutional knowledge and centralize access to important updates.
- The DOSWA offered the following trainings to support social work educators in their accreditation-related roles:
 - APM 2020 Presentation: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes on November 19, 2020; 447 views (to-date)
 - Reaffirmation Workshops on March 25, 2020; April 24, 2020; August 20-21, 2020; December 10-11, 2020; February 25-26, 2021
 - Candidacy Training on September 24-25, 2020
 - Monthly Interactive Pre-Candidacy Mini-Workshops offered every 3rd Thursday monthly since July 2020
 - Initial Accreditation Workshop on March 11-12, 2021
 - New Commissioner Orientation on August 4, 2020
 - Certified Site Visitor Training on January 22, 2021
 - Accreditation Lunch & Learn Webinars:
 - Writing an Accreditation Document on January 16, 2020
 - Exploring and Applying for Candidacy on May 7, 2020
 - Accreditation Services Orientation on September 14, 2020
- Our COVID-19 pandemic response began formally on March 11, 2020 and continues daily. Thus far, the DOSWA and COA:
 - Hosted a COVID-19 Accreditation Response webinar on March 19, 2020
 - Provided detailed guidance on field flexible options through May 31, 2022
 - Provided detailed guidance on virtual site visit and commission visit options through December 31, 2021; published the Virtual Visit Guidelines and Tips
 - Provided detailed guidance on temporary changes to delivery method flexible options; there is currently no specific expiration date on this guidance
 - Promoted increased awareness of options for temporarily delaying accreditation reviews (policies 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 in the EPAS Handbook)
 - Published a crowd-sourced document with ideas for competency-based virtual / remote field placement tasks
- The COA Policy Committee and DOSWA staff have worked to refine and clarify the following policies and procedures:
 - 1.1.5 Commission on Accreditation; updated temporary commission appointments
 - 1.1.7 Compliance, Concern, and Noncompliance Definitions & Citations
 - 1.1.15 Integrity Policy
 - 1.2.1 Complaints Regarding Program Compliance; updated the required Complaint Form

- 1.2.2 Postponements
- 1.2.3 Agenda Adjustments
- 1.2.4 Program Changes; streamlined substantive change process, created a template, and crafted program option definitions
- 1.2.7. Information Sharing and Release of COA Decision Letter; clarified the role and responsibilities of primary contacts, explained designees, and described document archiving expectations
- 1.2.10 Dissolution of a Collaborative
- 1.2.11 Document Submission Policy; clarified the formatting and submission requirements to support 100% paperless processes
- Implemented an internal Event Cancellation Policy
- DOSWA staff implemented many process efficiencies and innovations including:
 - Published the CSWE Accreditation Scope, Services, & Resources document to orient new primary and contacts to how best to collaborate with the DOSWA staff
 - Updated the Reaffirmation and Candidacy Timetables to provide greater details and hyperlinks to resources that support each step of an accreditation review process
 - Streamlined and synchronized the Reaffirmation/Initial and Candidacy Eligibility Applications
 - Following the release of the widely celebrated Reaffirmation/Initial Accreditation Self-study Template in January 2020, the DOSWA team created Benchmark 1 and Benchmark 2 Templates to support candidate programs in May 2020
 - Updated the required Assessment Reporting Forms (Form AS 4B/M) to clearly communicate program assessment plans and outcomes to students, stakeholders, and the public
 - Revised the Reaffirmation Review Brief
 - Updated the Compliance Statements to address all program options
 - Site & Commission Visits
 - Created the Site Visit Planning e-Form to quickly collect site visit planning information from programs
 - Created the Site Visitor Data e-Sheet to collect site visitor availability annually
 - Revamped site visitor directory to better capture site visit information and avoid duplication of work
 - Created a Sample Commission Visit Agenda to support commissioners on candidacy visits
 - Reporting Program Changes
 - Created a new and streamlined Substantive Change Proposal Template
 - Created the Program Changes e-Form for programs to easily submit popular record changes, including new key personnel; form is linked in each specialist's e-mail signature
 - Restructured the pre-candidacy process to ensure programs pass a draft Benchmark 1 review prior to being granted pre-candidacy status, assigned to a COA agenda, and assigned a commissioner visitor
 - Created the Letter Language Databank to assist staff in crafting COA decision letters

- Created an evergreen depository for COA business meeting materials to enhance institutional memory and assist with transitions/onboarding
- Continue the ongoing work of providing detailed and clarified interpretations and tips for responding to the accreditation standards by updating the Interpretation Guide triannually after each COA meeting
- Continue publishing and providing open access to a variety of educational PowerPoints to orient programs to accreditation and prepare for a review

Goal 3: Support the career development of students, faculty members and administrators.

Strategies:

- a. Support student pursuit of social work as a career.
- b. Assist faculty in advancing through their academic career.
- c. Develop future leaders and administrators for social work education.
- d. Advance diversity and broaden the participation of historically underrepresented groups in social work and social work education.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- All twenty-one (21) trainings listed under the previous goal support faculty members and administrators in gaining accreditation knowledge and practice, which is a highly regarded expertise when social work programs are hiring
 - Field hundreds of inquiries from prospective students and members of the public annually
 - DOSWA staff serve as commission and council liaisons, assisting with appointment of new members, rosters, and coordinating Annual Program Meeting (APM) events.
- DOSWA staff support the following CSWE governance groups and taskforces:
- Commission on Accreditation staffed by all DOSWA team members
 - Council on Practice Methods and Specialization (CPMS) staffed by an Accreditation Specialist
 - Council on Field Education (COFE) staffed by an Accreditation Specialist
 - Anti-racism Taskforce is supported by two (2) Accreditation Specialist participants
 - Student Initiatives Taskforce is supported by one (1) Accreditation Specialist leader and one (1) Accreditation Specialist participant

Goal 4: Foster a diverse, interconnected, and inclusive community of social work educators.

Strategies:

- a. Provide opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning around topics of shared interest.
- b. Provide forums to promote and disseminate research and scholarship that advance social justice, social work and social work education.

- c. Create opportunities for member engagement, volunteer leadership and shared governance.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- The COA secured five (5) new commission seats this year, for a total of thirty (30) commissioners
 - The COA welcomed eleven (11) new commissioners and celebrated the ongoing service of nineteen (19) commissioners continuing their dedicated and thoughtful service to the quality assurance of social work education in the U.S., district, and territories
- At the Certified Site Visitor Training on January 22, 2021, 68 new site visitors trained to conduct visits under the authority of the COA based on the 2015 EPAS

Goal 5: Ensure CSWE provides exceptional value to its members and member institutions.

Strategies:

- a. Increase understanding of and engagement in the full array of programs and services CSWE offers its members.
- b. Invest in the systems and infrastructure CSWE needs to support member engagement and data-driven decision making.
- c. Foster an inclusive workplace culture at CSWE that hires, manages, develops and retains talented and diverse employees.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- DOSWA staff and COA collaborated on a CHEA Report submitted September 1, 2020, which was subsequently accepted by CHEA on December 14, 2020
 - CSWE's COA was recognized by CHEA in January 2014 for a period of 10 years, with recognition expiring in December 2024
 - CHEA recognition ensures a level of performance, integrity, and quality that entitles confidence of educational community and public they serve
 - DOSWA staff also submitted the CHEA Almanac, which is updated every four (4) years
- Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA)
 - The Executive Director and DOSWA staff remain connected to ASPA via ongoing e-mail listserv communications and attendance at their biannual conferences
 - ASPA is an association of organizations that evaluate the quality of programs in colleges and universities for more than 100 different professions and specialized disciplines
 - Involvement with ASPA allows our department to remain grounded in best-practices and hot topics in the field of programmatic accreditation
 - DOSWA staff also submitted CSWE-COA's profile for Health Professions Accreditors Collaborative (HPAC) website

- CRM Database & Directory Update
 - A new high-performance Microsoft CRM database was created in partnership with ProTech in April 2020
 - Worked with American Eagle to update and auto-sync the database with the Directory of Accredited Programs; streamlining years of manual double data entry
 - The updated Directory includes a listing of all program options and will be sortable by many new and existing attributes
 - Between August-December 2020 a comprehensive program database audit was completed to baseline accuracy of program records in the new database
- The department has employed a part-time temporary worker to assist with archiving all program physical files located at CSWE headquarters; this archive will allow staff to fluidly refer to previous COA decision letters to address program and public inquiries

The DOSWA and COA engage programs and establish professional working relationships as they progress towards their accreditation goals. For social work programs, accreditation is a process, rather than an event, that requires continuing attention. In this spirit, we continually assess and enhance our offerings to support transparent, accessible, reflective, and developmental accreditation review processes. We are committed to publishing resources and communicating frequently with programs. Web-based resources, in addition to the accreditation services provided by staff, fill program toolkits with the essentials needed to achieve their accreditation goals. Volunteers (em)power this peer-review accreditation process, and we express our deepest gratitude for their time, expertise, and leadership. We look forward to another year of providing excellent accreditation services and advancing social work education!

Respectfully submitted,

Deana F. Morrow, PhD, LICSW, ACSW
Chair, Commission on Accreditation

Anna R. Holster, MSW, MPhil
Interim Director, Department of Social Work Accreditation

Compiled by: Katie Gibson-Ledl, LLMSW-Macro
Accreditation Specialist, Department of Social Work Accreditation