Finding aid for the California Board of Behavioral Science Examiners records 0465

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Abstract: The California Board of Behavioral Science Examiners records consists of memorandums, correspondence, minutes, and reports, 1946-1987 (bulk 1975-1980) that describe the primary activities of this body—licensing, examinations for certification, and professional standards and ethics for registered social workers and licensed clinical social workers.
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Acquisition
Assembled by Professor Lola Selby of the USC School of Social Work.
Scope and Content
The California Board of Behavioral Science Examiners records consists of memorandums, correspondence, minutes, and reports, 1946-1987 (bulk 1975-1980) that describe the primary activities of this body—licensing, examinations for certification, and professional standards and ethics for registered social workers and licensed clinical social workers. Included are correspondence and memorandums regarding the structure of oral and written exams for social work licensure with especial reference to the state of the oral examination; information on California laws and legislation relating to registered social workers and licensed clinical social workers, California codes for licensed clinical social workers, and recommendations for changes in licensing laws; memorandums and documents regarding professional ethics and conduct, including information about conflict of interest; policy manuals for the Board; information on general licensing requirements; copies of licensing examinations; information on hypnosis as clinical practice; and information on educational accreditation.
Historical note
In 1968 the Board of Social Work Examiners was abolished and its funds and functions transferred to the short-lived Social Worker and Marriage Counselor Qualifications Board. In the same year Senate Bill 1224 provided for licensing of clinical social workers, with the designation LCSW required after June 21, 1969 for all clinical social workers in independent practice. Social workers who had earned the RSW administered by the Board of Social Work Examiners were "blanketed" into the LCSW program. Some 1,500 school social workers and others who did not consider their practice to be primarily clinical nevertheless chose to maintain their RSW standing. But the program declined over the next decade and in 1979, when no more than 50 applicants took the RSW examination, the legislature effectively killed social worker registration by denying further funding.
Meanwhile, in 1970, Assembly Bill 2393 created the Board of Behavioral Science Examiners (BBSE) to supersede the Social Worker and Marriage Counselor Qualifications Board. The new, eleven member Board was also responsible for the licensing of educational psychologists. In 1971 the BBSE ceased to operate under the old Board of Professional and Vocational Standards and became a part of the "Healing Arts" division of the State Dept. of Consumer Affairs. This Department oversaw some 38 regulatory bodies which in turn were responsible for over one million occupational licenses. Governor Brown, intent on reducing the size of state government, announced a plan to invoke Sunset laws to end all regulatory boards that could not demonstrate a clear contribution to public welfare and safety.
The papers reflect a period of active reform in the affairs of the BBSE, following events of 1975 when the Governor's office received strong complaints about the Board's administration of its examinations from many candidates, and also from the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the California Association of Marriage and
Family Counselors. Criticism centered on the relevance of the content of written examinations to actual practice, and on the inadequate preparation, unprofessional demeanor, and "consensus" grading practices of Commissioners of the oral examinations. There were also complaints that Commissioners discriminated against applicants on the bases of gender, race, and age, that the examination as a whole was biased in favor of the psychotherapeutic model in clinical social work, and that the Board was unreasonably slow in notifying applicants about their eligibility to take the examination. Dissatisfaction had become so pronounced by 1975 that the oral section of the examination that fall was canceled at the last minute, and delayed indefinitely.

The collection reflects the Board's attempts to rectify the situation, with a major re-organization of its administrative regulations occupying much of 1976, and with training seminars for oral examiners introduced, together with a rule that audiotapes be made of all their examination sessions. The Board had no funds with which to employ outside expertise in the reconfiguration of the LCSW examinations, having always relied on the barely-compensated efforts of experienced social workers and social work educators in the writing of exam questions. Volunteer spirit in these groups was clearly flagging, but the Board did make a concerted effort to improve the relevance of exam questions, holding workshops in their composition and particularly inviting the participation of experienced African-American and Latino social workers.

Members of minority racial groups, by 1976, had begun to complain that they were culturally disadvantaged by the character of the LCSW examinations, and some attempts were made by Board members to investigate this charge of unfairness. But no demographic studies had yet been made of applicants for the examination, so no meaningful analysis could be made of outcomes for differing groups--even if the Board had considered making such analyses, which it evidently did not. Meanwhile the State of California had begun to interest itself in affirmative action programs for its own employees, which included state regulatory boards and their staffs, and in the needs of linguistic minorities in their communications with state government. The Board was evidently startled in 1977 by a question from the Department of Consumer Affairs about its readiness to allow candidates for the LCSW examination to take the test in a language other than English.

While it moved ahead with improvements in its licensing function, and dealt with ongoing concerns in the areas of credentialing, accreditation, discipline and ethics, the Board had also to respond to issues raised in the legislature. For the period represented, major topics included the use of medical hypnosis by clinical social workers, the use of the terms "psychotherapy" and "marriage counseling" in professional advertising, and a new and contested requirement that all licensed social workers take a graduate level course in Human Sexuality. (In searching for an acceptable model, the Board found that many medical schools offered no such instruction to their students.)

The collection reflects fully the activities of the Board in relation to its professional constituency and to the Department of Consumer Affairs, but is revealingly uninformative about the Board's dealing with actual "consumers" in the state of California.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
California. Board of Behavioral Science Examiners. -- Archives
Correspondence
Examinations (documents)
Memorandums
Minutes
Reports
Social work education--California--Archival resources
Social workers--Certification--California--Archival resources
Social workers--Examinations--Archival resources
Social workers--Legal status, laws, etc.--California--Archival resources

Box 1, Folder 1 Memorandums and correspondence of Board 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 2 Memorandums and correspondence of Board 1978
Box 1, Folder 3 Memorandums and correspondence of Board 1979
Box 1, Folder 4 Minutes 1977-1978
Box 1, Folder 5 Minutes, memorandums, etc. 1978
Box 1, Folder 6 Article 1978
Box 1, Folder 7 Minutes, legislative materials, reports, etc. 1978
Box 1, Folder 8 Minutes, memorandums 1979
Box 1, Folder 9 Minutes, memorandums, etc. 1980
Box 2, Folder 1 Memorandums and correspondence of Board 1975-1976

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Box 2, Folder 2  Administrative materials 1976-1977
Scope and Content
Filings of administrative regulations; appointments to the Board; budget information; policy manual; student guides to training modules; licensing laws in other states.

Box 2, Folder 3  Examinations 1976
Box 2, Folder 4-5  Letters to the Board re 1976 LCSW exam 1977
Box 2, Folder 6  Examinations 1978
Box 2, Folder 7  Oral examinations 1980
Box 2, Folder 8  Examination characteristics undated
Box 3, Folder 1  Oral exam commissioner instructions 1982
Box 3, Folder 2  Hypnosis regulation I (hearings transcript) 1964
Box 3, Folder 3  Hypnosis regulation II (memorandums and reports) 1976-1977
Box 3, Folder 4  Hypnosis 1977
Box 3, Folder 5  Accreditation issues 1976-1977
Box 3, Folder 6  Continuing education 1977
Box 3, Folder 7  Instruction in human sexuality 1977
Box 3, Folder 8  Credentials/qualifications 1977
Box 3, Folder 9  Policy 1975, 1978
Box 3, Folder 10  Licensing 1977-1978
Box 3, Folder 11  Professional ethics and standards 1978
Box 3, Folder 12  Lola Selby--collected licensing papers 1976-1980
Box 3, Folder 13  Statement of economic interests 1977
Box 3, Folder 14  License revocation for felony--litigation 1978-1979
Box 3, Folder 15  Complaints/appeals 1978
Box 3, Folder 16  Discipline 1979
Box 4, Folder 1  Marriage, family and child counseling 1978
Box 4, Folder 2  Linguistic minorities 1977
Box 4, Folder 3  Use of term "Psychotherapy", issues in advertising 1977-1979
Box 4, Folder 4  Psychotherapy issue 1978
Box 4, Folder 5  Legislation 1977-1978
Box 4, Folder 6  Legislation 1977
Scope and Content
Legislation, directories, biennial reports.