CONTENT OUTLINES AND KSAS

Masters Social Work Licensing Examination

What are KSAs?

A KSA is a "knowledge, skills, and abilities" statement. These statements describe the discrete knowledge components that may be tested in each part of the examination, and are the basis for individual test questions.

ASWB Examination program

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Masters Examination

I.   HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY, AND BEHAVIOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT   27%

IA. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
   This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Theories of human development throughout the lifespan (e.g., physical, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral)
- The indicators of normal and abnormal physical, cognitive, emotional, and sexual development throughout the lifespan
- Theories of sexual development throughout the lifespan
- Theories of spiritual development throughout the lifespan
- Theories of racial, ethnic, and cultural development throughout the lifespan
- The effects of physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities throughout the lifespan
- The interplay of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors
- Basic human needs
- The principles of attachment and bonding
- The effect of aging on biopsychosocial functioning
- The impact of aging parents on adult children
- Gerontology
- Personality theories
- Theories of conflict
- Factors influencing self-image (e.g., culture, race, religion/spirituality, age, disability, trauma)
- Body image and its impact (e.g., identity, self-esteem, relationships, habits)
- Parenting skills and capacities
- The effects of addiction and substance abuse on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Feminist theory
- The impact of out-of-home placement (e.g., hospitalization, foster care, residential care, criminal justice system) on clients/client systems
- Basic principles of human genetics
- The family life cycle
- Family dynamics and functioning and the effects on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Theories of couples development
- The impact of physical and mental illness on family dynamics
- Psychological defense mechanisms and their effects on behavior and relationships
- Addiction theories and concepts
- Systems and ecological perspectives and theories
- Role theories

IA. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)
- Theories of group development and functioning
- Theories of social change and community development
- The dynamics of interpersonal relationships
- Models of family life education in social work practice
- Strengths-based and resilience theories
- The impact of stress, trauma, and violence
- Crisis intervention theories
- Theories of trauma-informed care
- The impact of the environment (e.g., social, physical, cultural, political, economic) on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- The effects of life events, stressors, and crises on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Person-in-Environment (PIE) theory
- Communication theories and styles
- Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches
- The impact of care giving on families
- The dynamics and effects of loss, separation, and grief

IB. CONCEPTS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Indicators and dynamics of abuse and neglect throughout the lifespan
- The effects of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- The indicators, dynamics, and impact of exploitation across the lifespan (e.g., financial, immigration status, sexual trafficking)
- The characteristics of perpetrators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation

IC. DIVERSITY, SOCIAL/ECONOMIC JUSTICE, AND OPPRESSION
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- The effect of disability on biopsychosocial functioning throughout the lifespan
- The effect of culture, race, and ethnicity on behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The effects of discrimination and stereotypes on behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The influence of sexual orientation on behaviors, attitudes, and identity
- The impact of transgender and transitioning process on behaviors, attitudes, identity, and relationships
- Systemic (institutionalized) discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism)
- The principles of culturally competent social work practice
- Sexual orientation concepts
- Gender and gender identity concepts
- Social and economic justice
- The effect of poverty on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- The impact of social institutions on society
- Criminal justice systems
- The impact of globalization on clients/client systems (e.g., interrelatedness of systems, international integration, technology, environmental or financial crises, epidemics)

II. ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION PLANNING   **24%**

IIA. BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL HISTORY AND COLLATERAL DATA
      This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The components of a biopsychosocial assessment
- The components and function of the mental status examination
- Biopsychosocial responses to illness and disability
- Biopsychosocial factors related to mental health
- The indicators of psychosocial stress
- Basic medical terminology
- The indicators of mental and emotional illness throughout the lifespan
- The types of information available from other sources (e.g., agency, employment, medical, psychological, legal, or school records)
- Methods to obtain sensitive information (e.g., substance abuse, sexual abuse)
- The indicators of addiction and substance abuse
- The indicators of somatization
- Co-occurring disorders and conditions
- Symptoms of neurologic and organic disorders
- The indicators of sexual dysfunction
- Methods used to assess trauma
- The indicators of traumatic stress and violence
- Common psychotropic and non-psychotropic prescriptions and over-the-counter medications and their side effects

IIB. ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES
      This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:

- The factors and processes used in problem formulation
- Methods of involving clients/client systems in problem identification (e.g., gathering collateral information)
- Techniques and instruments used to assess clients/client systems
- Methods to incorporate the results of psychological and educational tests into assessment
- Risk assessment methods
- The indicators and risk factors of the client's/client system's danger to self and others
- Methods to assess the client's/client system's strengths, resources, and challenges (e.g., individual, family, group, organization, community)
- Methods to assess motivation, resistance, and readiness to change
- Methods to assess the client's/client system's communication skills
- Methods to assess the client's/client system's coping abilities
- The indicators of the client's/client system's strengths and challenges
- Methods to assess ego strengths
- Placement options based on assessed level of care
- The use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association
- The indicators of behavioral dysfunction

IIB. ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES (continued)
- Methods to develop, review, and implement crisis plans
- The principles and features of objective and subjective data
- Basic and applied research design and methods
- Data collection and analysis methods
- Methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research

IIC. INTERVENTION PLANNING
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Methods to involve clients/client systems in intervention planning
- The indicators of motivation, resistance, and readiness to change
- Cultural considerations in the creation of an intervention plan
- The criteria used in the selection of intervention/treatment modalities (e.g., client/client system abilities, culture, life stage)
- The components of intervention, treatment, and service plans
- Psychotherapies
- The impact of immigration, refugee, or undocumented status on service delivery
- Discharge, aftercare, and follow-up planning

III.   INTERVENTIONS WITH CLIENTS/CLIENT SYSTEMS   24%

IIIA. INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES FOR USE ACROSS SYSTEMS
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- The principles and techniques of interviewing (e.g., supporting, clarifying, focusing, confronting, validating, feedback, reflecting, language differences, use of interpreters, redirecting)
- The phases of intervention and treatment
- Problem-solving models and approaches (e.g., brief, solution-focused methods or techniques)
- Methods to engage and motivate clients/client systems
- Methods to engage and work with involuntary clients/client systems
- Methods to obtain and provide feedback
- The principles of active listening and observation
- Verbal and nonverbal communication techniques
- The concept of congruence in communication
- Limit setting techniques
- The technique of role play
- Role modeling techniques
- Techniques for harm reduction for self and others
- Methods to teach coping and other self-care skills to clients/client systems
- Client/client system self-monitoring techniques
- Methods of conflict resolution
- Crisis intervention and treatment approaches
- Methods and approaches to trauma-informed care
- Anger management techniques

IIIA. INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES FOR USE ACROSS SYSTEMS (continued)
- Stress management techniques
- Cognitive and behavioral interventions
- Strengths-based and empowerment strategies and interventions
- Client/client system contracting and goal-setting techniques
- Partializing techniques
- Assertiveness training
- Task-centered approaches
- Psychoeducation methods (e.g., acknowledging, supporting, normalizing)
- Group work techniques and approaches (e.g., developing and managing group processes and cohesion)
- Family therapy models, interventions, and approaches
- Couples interventions and treatment approaches
- The impact of out-of-home displacement (e.g., natural disaster, homelessness, immigration) on clients/client systems
- Permanency planning
- Mindfulness and complementary therapeutic approaches
- The components of case management
- Techniques used for follow-up
- The elements of a case presentation
- Methods to develop and evaluate measurable objectives for client/client system intervention, treatment, and/or service plans
- Techniques used to evaluate a client's/client system's progress
- Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies
- The indicators of client/client system readiness for termination
- Methods, techniques, and instruments used to evaluate social work practice
- Evidence-based practice
- Case recording for practice evaluation or supervision
- Consultation approaches (e.g., referrals to specialists)
- The process of interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary team collaboration
- The basic terminology of professions other than social work (e.g., legal, educational)
- The principles of case recording, documentation, and management of practice records

IIIB. INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES FOR USE WITH LARGER SYSTEMS
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Methods to establish program objectives and outcomes
- Methods to assess the availability of community resources
- Methods of service delivery
- Theories and methods of advocacy for policies, services, and resources to meet clients'/client systems' needs
- Methods to create, implement, and evaluate policies and procedures that minimize risk for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Concepts of social policy development and analysis
- Techniques to inform and influence organizational and social policy

IIIB. INTERVENTION PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES FOR USE WITH LARGER SYSTEMS
(continued)
- The principles and processes for developing formal documents (e.g., proposals, letters, brochures, pamphlets, reports, evaluations)
- Methods to establish service networks or community resources
- Community organizing and social planning methods
- Methods of networking
- Techniques for mobilizing community participation
- Governance structures
- Theories of organizational development and structure
- The effects of policies, procedures, regulations, and legislation on social work practice and service delivery
- Quality assurance, including program reviews and audits by external sources
- The impact of the political environment on policy-making
- Leadership and management techniques
- Fiscal management techniques
- Educational components, techniques, and methods of supervision
- Methods to identify learning needs and develop learning objectives for supervisees
- The effects of program evaluation findings on services
- Methods to evaluate agency programs (e.g., needs assessment, formative/summative assessment, cost effectiveness, cost-benefit analysis, outcomes assessment)

IV. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, VALUES, AND ETHICS   25%

IVA. PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ETHICAL ISSUES
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- Legal and/or ethical issues related to the practice of social work, including responsibility to clients/client systems, colleagues, the profession, and society
- Professional values and principles (e.g., competence, social justice, integrity, and dignity and worth of the person)
- Techniques to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas
- Client/client system competence and self-determination (e.g., financial decisions, treatment decisions, emancipation, age of consent, permanency planning)
- Techniques for protecting and enhancing client/client system self-determination
- The client's/client system's right to refuse services (e.g., medication, medical treatment, counseling, placement, etc.)
- Professional boundaries in the social worker-client/client system relationship (e.g., power differences, conflicts of interest, etc.)
- Self-disclosure principles and applications
- Legal and/or ethical issues regarding documentation
- Legal and/or ethical issues regarding termination
- Legal and/or ethical issues related to death and dying
- Research ethics (e.g., institutional review boards, use of human subjects, informed consent)
- Models of supervision and consultation (e.g., individual, peer, group)

IVA. PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ETHICAL ISSUES (continued)
- Ethical issues in supervision and management
- Methods to create, implement, and evaluate policies and procedures for social worker safety
- The supervisee's role in supervision (e.g., identifying learning needs, self-assessment, prioritizing, etc.)
- Accreditation and/or licensing requirements
- Professional development activities to improve practice and maintain current professional knowledge (e.g., in-service training, licensing requirements, reviews of literature, workshops)

IVB. CONFIDENTIALITY
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- The elements of client/client system reports
- The principles and processes of obtaining informed consent
- The use of client/client system records
- Legal and/or ethical issues regarding confidentiality, including electronic information security
- Legal and/or ethical issues regarding mandatory reporting (e.g., abuse, threat of harm, impaired professionals, etc.)

IVC. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SELF
This section of the exam may include questions on the following topics:
- The components of the social worker-client/client system relationship
- The client's/client system's role in the problem-solving process
- The social worker's role in the problem-solving process
- Methods to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the social worker and client/client system in the intervention process
- The principles and techniques for building and maintaining a helping relationship
- The concept of acceptance and empathy in the social worker-client/client system relationship
- The dynamics of power and transparency in the social worker-client/client system relationship
- Ethical issues related to dual relationships
- The impact of transference and countertransference in the social worker-client/client system relationship
- The impact of domestic, intimate partner, and other violence on the helping relationship
- The dynamics of diversity in the social worker-client/client system relationship
- The effect of the client's developmental level on the social worker-client relationship
- Social worker self-care principles and techniques
- Burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue
- The components of a safe and positive work environment
- Professional objectivity in the social worker-client/client system relationship

IVC. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SELF (continued)

- The influence of the social worker's own values and beliefs on the social worker-client/client system relationship
- Time management approaches
- The impact of transference and countertransference within supervisory relationships
- The influence of the social worker's own values and beliefs on interdisciplinary collaboration