



College of Health and Human Services



MDE Certification vs. LARA Licensure

	MDE – School Social Worker Certification	LARA – Social Work Licensure
Regulatory Agency	MDE Michigan Department of Education; credentials specific to K–12 school settings.	LARA Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; licenses all social workers statewide.
Primary Purpose	Allows an individual to work as a School Social Worker in public schools, including special education and IEP responsibilities.	Authorizes social work practice in Michigan across clinical, macro, and community settings.
Types of Credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Social Worker Permit • Preliminary School Social Worker Certificate • Professional School Social Worker Certificate 	LLMSW – Limited Licensed Master’s Social Worker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMSW – Licensed Master’s Social Worker • (LBSW also exists but not for SSW roles)
Minimum Education	Master of Social Work (MSW) from a CSWE-accredited program.	Master of Social Work (MSW) from a CSWE-accredited program.
Required Training / Preparation	Completion of an <i>MDE-approved School Social Work preparation program</i> including school law, assessments, intervention, SEL, and field experience.	Completion of a CSWE-accredited MSW program; no school-specific coursework required.
Required Supervised Hours	Minimum 500 hours working with children/youth in schools or related settings during SSW preparation.	Minimum 4,000 hours post-MSW supervised experience + 100 hours of supervision to progress from LLMSW to LMSW.
Prerequisite Credential	Requires holding a valid LLMSW or LMSW when applying for school social work permit or certification.	No MDE credential required; licensure stands independently.
Exam Requirement	No separate MDE exam; relies on LARA/ASWB exam requirements.	LMSW requires passing the ASWB Clinical or Advanced Generalist exam.
Renewal Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Certificate: 3 years, renewable once • Professional Certificate: 5 years • Must maintain valid LARA license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-year renewal cycle • 45 hours of continuing education, including ethics, pain management, human trafficking, and implicit bias
Where the Credential Is Required	Required to legally practice as a School Social Worker in Michigan public schools and participate in special education processes.	Required to practice social work in any setting statewide and to hold the title “Social Worker