



# NASW-VI CHAPTER ISLAND BREEZE

WINTER 2009/2010

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## *IMPORTANT MEMBER UPDATE*

### **CHANGES IN DUES STRUCTURE IMPACTS VIRGIN ISLANDS**

For a number of years, NASW members in the Virgin Islands have benefitted from a program called “geographically-based reduced dues” which have allowed us to pay \$59 for our annual membership dues to NASW based on the fact that we live in the Virgin Islands. Other locations, such as the Puerto Rico Chapter and the Guam Chapter, have also been part of the geographically-based reduced dues program.

A recent task force examining NASW membership categories recommended streamlining the membership categories, including the elimination of geographically-based reduced dues. Since it was a Board decision that had enacted the program, the Board of Directors was within guidelines to have an immediate vote on that recommendation, which they did. We subsequently received notification that this program would be eliminated effective January 1, 2010. We appealed the decision to the Board, and while the decision was considered at their most recent Board meeting, the outcome remained the same.

Therefore, if you have a renewal date later than December 31, 2009, you will be subject to the standard dues rates. These are as follows:

BSW member	\$125
MSW member	\$190
Student member	\$48

If you have maintained continuous membership, you may be eligible for additional membership categories such as Gold Card (25+ years continuous membership), Retired, Unemployed, or Hardship dues. To request those categories, you may call membership services at 1-800-742-4089.

If you have the option to renew prior to the December 31st deadline, we recommend that you do so to take advantage of this final opportunity for reduced dues. If you have recently let your membership lapse, now would be an excellent time to renew.

All of the Board of Directors and staff of the NASW-VI Chapter sincerely appreciate your continued membership—and we look forward to working with you on behalf of professional social work and your clients in the Virgin Islands!

***CHECK INSIDE:  
 NOMINATE SOMEONE SPECIAL FOR THE  
 2010 SOCIAL WORK AWARDS!***

# GETTING INVOLVED WITH NASW-VI

From: Shana Brathwaite, MSW, LSW



At our last Board meeting in October, the Board of Directors of the NASW-VI Chapter conducted a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the NASW-VI Chapter. Although we certainly face challenges in our work, the part of the exercise that stood out the most was the incredible amount of opportunity that we have at NASW-VI—if we can get involved and use our strengths to make a difference.

Some of the opportunities we identified that we will be working toward over the coming year include:

- Providing a variety of training, networking opportunities, and social events for the members of NASW-VI;
- Establishing a study group and assisting NASW-VI members who are interested in pursuing licensure;
- Celebrating social work month and honoring the great work that social workers do in the U.S. Virgin Islands;
- Facilitating communication between NASW-VI members by utilizing e-mail groups, phone trees, social networking, regular newsletters, and website updates;
- Working with schools of social work to identify an online MSW program in which USVI social workers could enroll and receive their MSW

without needing to attend class off island;

- Exploring the possibility of passing legislation establishing title protection for social workers.

Sound like an ambitious agenda? You bet!

However, it is all possible if we have the help and support of our members. We have great people working right now on our Board and staff, but we still need your help. Come join our team!

A few ways to get involved are:

- **First and foremost, renew your membership.** We can't accomplish any of our goals if we don't have our members. And, while you're at it, make certain that your social work colleagues are members, too!
- **Volunteer!** We always have upcoming trainings and membership events that could use your planning and support. We also participate in community events—do you have a great project in mind?
- **Run for Office:** The best way to make a difference in your professional association is to be a part of the leadership team. Candidates are currently needed for Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer.

I look forward to working with you!

## ***WE NEED YOU!***

*Gain valuable leadership experience and help your professional association at the same time!*

*Positions will be open soon serving on the NASW-VI Chapter Board of Directors.*

*Candidates needed for Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer.*

*Call the Chapter office at 1-800-352-6279 or e-mail [naswvi@naswvi.org](mailto:naswvi@naswvi.org) for more information.*

# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...

From: Anna Clarke, MA, LSW



Each year, the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center and the Roy L. Schneider Hospital and Medical Center coordinate transfer services for patients to Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland. Such services include neurology, pediatric intensive care, pulmonology, neurosurgery, and hyperbaric chamber to name a few.

While most patients have health insurance coverage, there are a great number of individuals who lack air ambulance insurance. In an emergency medical transfer, this could pose a huge problem.

In addition to those who are insured but lack air ambulance insurance, there are also those who lack health insurance completely, which makes the problem more complex. All receiving hospitals require a guarantee of payment for services rendered. Therefore, if a patient has health insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare, most hospitals would accept an insured patient. However, if a patient is uninsured, the receiving hospital would request a down payment which is determined based on the specialty service required and estimated length of stay. At times, hospitals have requested from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 as a down payment from the patient who lacks health insurance.

The air ambulance company, on the other hand, requires full payment for air ambulance transportation prior to picking up the patient. Payment is usually accepted in the form of a

cashier's check, credit card, or cash (no personal checks). Health insurance covers air ambulance at 80%, and the patient has to finance the 20% that the insurance does not pay. For the uninsured, the patient has to finance the entire cost of the air ambulance transport. A trip to Puerto Rico usually costs about \$5,850. A trip to South Florida could cost upwards of \$16,000. New York or Washington D.C. could cost upwards of 25,000.

It is not incumbent upon the hospital to finance the cost of hospitalization or air ambulance transport for any patient. Rather, it is the sole responsibility of the patient/family to finance their hospitalization and air ambulance transport. If a patient requires emergency off island medical treatment and does not have their own health/air ambulance insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare, then that patient will have to remain in the hospital where they would receive the best possible care. However, there have been cases where a patient has expired as a result.

Therefore, I would like to impress upon everyone reading this article the importance of obtaining health insurance and air ambulance insurance. Please keep in mind that if you have MASA or Skymed in addition to your health insurance, either one would finance the 20% for the air ambulance transport that your health insurance does not cover. Always remember and never forget—"don't wait until it's too late—to get insurance"!



**RENEW ONLINE** *Fast. Easy. Convenient.*

Now NASW members can renew their memberships online. If your membership expires within the next three months, you are eligible for online renewal.

1. Go to [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)
2. Click on "Member Log In."
3. Enter your NASW username and password.
4. Click on "Member Center."
5. Click on "Renew Your NASW Membership Online."

**e-Renew today.**

## *LICENSURE STUDY GROUP*

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Following the successful licensure exam preparation course we held in October, the NASW-VI will be assisting in the formation of informal study groups—connecting those who are working toward the same exam. If you are interested in participating, please call NASW-VI at 1-800-352-6279 or send a quick e-mail to [naswvi@naswvi.org](mailto:naswvi@naswvi.org)

Please indicate your location and which licensure you are seeking: LSW, LMSW, or LCSW. When we get at least a few people in your licensure category that live in your area, we will e-mail you with the contact information for your group members.

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## *E-MAIL GROUP & PHONE TREES*

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The NASW-VI Chapter is establishing e-mail groups and phone trees to enhance communication and make certain that our members are aware of important news and upcoming events.

You will receive the information if you have a current e-mail address and/or phone number listed in your NASW membership record. Is yours accurate?

Here's a few ways to check:

- Visit [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) and visit the Member Center (a yellow oval at the top of the page). You will be asked to log in, and then you will be directed to your membership profile. There, you can renew your membership online, change your e-mail address or other information, print a membership certificate, and more.
- For those who don't like to go online, you can verify or change your information by calling the Chapter office at 1-800-352-6279, or by calling national's Membership Records at 1-800-742-4089. The Chapter office can take care of most requests, but the national office can also take care of renewing your membership on the phone, as well.
- If you do not wish to participate in the e-mail group or the phone tree, we can take care of that for you, as well. Please call or e-mail the Chapter office at 1-800-352-6279 or [naswvi@naswvi.org](mailto:naswvi@naswvi.org) and we will take you off the list.

Thank you for helping us spread the word about the latest news in professional social work!

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## *FIND US ON FACEBOOK*

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The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

Social networking applications have made it possible to stay connected with friends, colleagues, family, organizations, causes, businesses, and more in unexpected ways. NASW-VI would like to be a part of your online world.

If you have a profile on Facebook, please find us by running a search for NASW VirginIslands (with no space in VirginIslands), and add us!

# *SOCIAL WORK CE REQUIREMENTS & THE LAW*

**From: NASW National Legal Defense Fund**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social workers are obligated by state licensing laws and professional standards to maintain professional skills and knowledge through participation in periodic continuing education (CE) activities. Continuing professional education serves multiple purposes including establishing professional credibility for the profession and individual social workers, developing skills in new and emerging areas of practice, maintaining high levels of practice expertise, providing remedial training for social workers who have violated professional standards, establishing legally-recognized expertise, and providing a forum for informing social workers of advances in social science research, theories, practice modalities, laws, regulations, and ethical challenges. This Legal Issue of the Month article reviews continuing education requirements for social workers in the United States, providing examples from court decisions and state laws and regulations, and highlights continuing education resources related to law and ethics that are provided by the NASW national office.

## **NASW'S STANDARDS**

The NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education (NASW, 2003) specify that social workers should "complete 48 hours of continuing professional education every two years" and that social workers should "contribute to the development and improvement of continuing professional education." The NASW standards detail further requirements for those who provide continuing professional social work education programs and activities.

NASW's standards describe three broad categories of continuing professional education activities:

1. Formally organized learning events, such as "[c]ourses, workshops, practice-oriented seminars, staff development, and training activities offered by accredited programs of social work education, NASW chapters, and other providers of continuing education."
2. Professional meetings and other forms of

organized learning experiences, such as conferences, symposia, and panel presentations.

3. Self-directed professional study and growth experiences, such as "writing papers and books for presentation or publication; making presentations on major professional issues or programs; reading professional journals and books; preparing for initial consultation, teaching, or training assignments; and engaging in independent study, research, or tutorial projects."

NASW chapters and the NASW CE Approval Program also serve as entities that approve continuing education activities for social workers. Forty-one state social work boards accept the NASW CE Approval Program for use by social workers to meet their mandatory CE requirements. Social workers may check whether their state has accepted the NASW CE Approval Program at: <http://www.socialworkers.org/ce/response.asp>

## **STATE LICENSING BOARD REQUIREMENTS**

Licensed social workers are expected to be knowledgeable about their state social work licensing board's continuing education requirements. These are usually available online via the social work licensing board's website for each state. The details of each state's legal requirements may be somewhat complex, especially for the new social worker or as new requirements are added. The responsibility is always on the individual social worker to assure compliance with the state's requirements, not on the program sponsor or state licensing board.

State social work laws and regulations define and describe acceptable continuing education activities and the minimum required hours of CE credit for license renewal. State CE definitions and requirements may be significantly different from the NASW standards and from those of other states. It is particularly important to note the differences in state requirements when seeking to relocate from one jurisdiction to another, or if one is licensed in multiple states. For example, Texas specifically does not accept CE credit for college courses that are

audited or not taken for credit, unlike Alaska, which provides CE credit for audited graduate-level academic courses based on actual hours of attendance.

Most states now have some CE requirements, typically ranging from 20 – 48 contact hours per renewal cycle (generally every one or two years), and it is important for social workers to carefully document participation in CE activities. State boards retain the authority to conduct random audits of CE compliance by licensees and many states specify how long licensees are required to maintain their documentation of CE participation.

Trends in CE laws and regulations include:

- states adding or increasing minimum continuing education requirements
- states requiring completion of education on specific topic areas
- states amending how they view “distance education” or electronic CE programs, such as teleconferences, online courses, and webinars.

An example of specific continuing education course requirements is Louisiana which requires completion of three hours of CE on ethics every two years and for clinical social work licensees, ten hours of CE focused on “clinical content including diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.”

### **COURT DECISIONS INVOLVING SOCIAL WORKERS’ CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Reported court decisions provide many examples of licensed professionals, notably lawyers and physicians, who have been suspended from practice due in whole or part to failure to meet continuing education requirements, as well as social workers who are involved in legal matters where continuing education is a factor. Some examples of court cases include:

- A social worker’s qualifications as a child sexual abuse treatment expert witness included continuing education in the field of sexual abuse (See *In re A.J.* (2007), a case that involved termination of parental rights; *Carpenter v. State* (2006), where a social worker acted as an expert witness in a sexual assault prosecution; and *Mooneyham v. State* (2005), where a Mississippi

social worker’s testimony as an expert witness in forensic interviews of child sexual abuse victims was upheld by an appeals court).

- The continuing education requirements of social workers and psychologists were closely reviewed by the court in a payment dispute that involved the validity of neurobiofeedback treatment rendered by a mental health group in *Psychosocial Service Associates, P.C. v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.* (2008).
- In a major case involving reform of the state’s child welfare system for emotionally disturbed or abused children, continuing education for the state agency’s licensed social worker employees was specifically noted by the court as partial evidence of the agency’s compliance with required actions demonstrating commitment to improving the previously troubled system of care.
- Participating in regular continuing education was cited as evidence in a spousal alimony dispute involving a social worker, wherein the court determined that the ex-wife (who had maintained her social work credentials) was capable of supporting herself independently.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION AS A SANCTION OR CORRECTIVE ACTION**

Specific continuing education requirements are commonly imposed by professional disciplinary or review entities, such as state licensing boards or through the NASW professional review process. In *Robertson v. Tennessee Bd. of Social Worker Certification and Licensure* (2005), a social worker was sanctioned for engaging in a four-month dual relationship with a client. In addition to being subject to a two-year suspension of her professional license the social worker was mandated to complete her basic CE requirements and “complete twelve hours of ethics training.”

An ethics complaint that is submitted to NASW may result in an adjudicated finding of an ethics violation or a mediation agreement, either of which may include recommendations for corrective actions by the social worker. According to the NASW Procedures for Professional Review the purpose of corrective actions is to “educate, remediate, and/or prevent repeat ethics violations” and may include training. It is not uncommon for such training to be

in the form of continuing education in specific areas of practice or in social work ethics.

### **NASW'S CE RESOURCES RELATED TO LAW AND ETHICS**

NASW offers numerous continuing education opportunities for social workers, some without charge and many available online. Social workers are always advised that they must confirm whether their state licensing board approves specific continuing education activities to meet licensure renewal requirements.

#### **NASW Lunchtime Teleconference Series:**

- Social Workers and the Legal Rights of Students
- Social Workers and Subpoenas
- Exploring Common Ethics Dilemmas in Today's Workplace
- Making Ethical Decisions
- Social Workers and the Legal Rights of Children

#### **NASW WebEd Courses:**

- Understanding the NASW Code of Ethics

- Understanding Malpractice Risk: What Social Workers Can Do

**NASW Continuing Education Portal** (search for approved courses and check your state's acceptance of the NASW CE Approval Program)

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Continuing education is one of the hallmarks of a profession, wherein members of the professional class engage in a responsible course of study to further their skills, knowledge and abilities. Continuing professional education serves many purposes, as recognized by courts, decision makers, social work leaders, and the public. NASW provides relevant standards, acts as a provider and sponsor of CE, and as an advocate for state law reforms that will enhance the profession and the reputation of social workers. NASW continues to provide professional information and training to social workers that addresses legal and ethical requirements, as the practice of social work in a diverse society has increased in complexity.

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## ***HOLIDAY CHAPTER OFFICE CLOSINGS***

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## **SEASON'S GREETINGS**

The Board and Staff of the National Association of Social Workers, Virgin Islands Chapter wish all of our members a joyous holiday season filled with peace and love, and we join with you in celebrating the coming of the New Year.

**The NASW-VI Chapter Office will be closed for the holidays from December 24<sup>th</sup> until January 4<sup>th</sup>.**

We thank each of you for your support during the last year and we look forward to a wonderful future!

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**Aracelis Francis, MSW—Vice President**  
**Angela Jerome, MSW—Secretary/Treasurer**  
**Anna Clarke, MSW—St. Croix District Chair**  
**Denise Torres-Hodge, MSW—St. Thomas District Chair**

**HAS YOUR ADDRESS  
CHANGED?**

**Please contact the  
NASW-VI Chapter office  
to inform us of your new  
contact information. We  
want to keep in touch  
with YOU!**

## FREE ONLINE COURSES

NASW WebEd courses are geared specifically for social workers, offer FREE CEUs, educate on today's practice topics, can be used for licensure and NASW credential renewal, and are perfect as extra credit for students.

- Achieving Cultural Competence to Reduce Health Disparities in End of Life Care • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding the NASW Code of Ethics • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Cancer Caregiving: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Genetics: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Adolescent Health: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding HIV/AIDS: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Malpractice Risk: What Social Workers Can Do • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Aging: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding End of Life Care: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs
- Understanding Cancer: The Social Worker's Role • 2.0 FREE CEUs