

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: CS/SB 1150

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: School Social Workers

DATE: April 1, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Palazesi	Bouck	ED	<b>Fav/CS</b>
2. _____	_____	CF	_____
3. _____	_____	RC	_____

**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 1150 provides an exemption to a person who is employed as a school social worker from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification..

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Licensure of Social Workers in Florida**

In Florida, the social work profession is under the oversight of the Florida Department of Health, specifically the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling (CSW Board).<sup>1</sup> The CSW Board was legislatively established to ensure that every clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist, and mental health counselor practicing in this state meet minimum requirements for safe practice. The CSW Board is responsible for licensing, monitoring, disciplining and educating clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors to assure competency and safety to practice in Florida.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 491.004, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Home Page*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/>, (last visited March 26, 2025).

The CSW Board offers three licenses for social workers: registered clinical social worker intern<sup>3</sup>, licensed clinical social worker by examination<sup>4</sup>, and certified master social worker<sup>5</sup>. All three licenses require, among other requirements, a master's degree in social work from a Council on Social Work Education accredited school of social work showing graduate level coursework.

### **Educator Certification**

In order for a person to serve as an educator in a traditional public school, charter school, virtual school, or other publicly operated school, the person must hold a certificate issued by the DOE.<sup>6</sup> Persons seeking employment at a public school as a school supervisor, principal, teacher, library media specialist, counselor, athletic coach, or in other instructional capacity must be certified.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of certification is to require school-based personnel to “possess the credentials, knowledge, and skills necessary to allow the opportunity for a high-quality education in the public schools.”<sup>8</sup>

The DOE issues three main types of educator certificates:

- Professional Certificate: The professional certificate is Florida's highest type of full-time educator certification.<sup>9</sup> The professional certificate is valid for five years and is renewable.<sup>10</sup>
- Temporary Certificate: The temporary certificate covers employment in full-time positions for which educator certification is required.<sup>11</sup> Generally, a temporary certificate is valid for five years and is nonrenewable.<sup>12</sup>
- Athletic Coaching Certificate: The athletic coaching certificate covers full-time and part-time employment as a public school's athletic coach.<sup>13</sup> The DOE issues two types of athletic coaching certificates – one is valid for 5 years and may be issued for subsequent 5-year

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<sup>3</sup> Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Registered Clinical social worker intern*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/registered-clinical-social-worker-intern/>, (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Licensed Clinical Social Worker*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/licensed-clinical-social-worker/>, (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, *Certified Master Social Worker*, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing/certified-master-social-worker/>, (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Sections 1012.55(1) and 1002.33(12)(f), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Sections 1002.33(12)(f) (charter school teachers) and 1012.55(1), F.S. District school boards and charter school governing boards are authorized to hire non-certified individuals who possess expertise in a given field to serve in an instructional capacity. Rule 6A-1.0502, F.A.C.; ss. 1002.33(12)(f) and 1012.55(1)(c), F.S. Occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, and speech therapists are not required to be certified educators. Rule 6A-1.0502(10) and (11), F.A.C.

<sup>8</sup> Section 1012.54, F.S.; see Rule 6A-4.001(1), F.A.C.

<sup>9</sup> Rule 6A-4.004(5), F.A.C.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1012.56(7)(a), F.S.; see Rule 6A-4.0051(3)(d), F.A.C. (validity period is expressed as 5 years from July 1 of the school fiscal year). The DOE also issues a nonrenewable 5-year professional certificate that allows an applicant with a bachelor's degree in the area of speech-language impairment to complete a master's degree in speech-language impairment. Section 1012.56(7)(c), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.004(6), F.A.C.

<sup>11</sup> Rule 6A-4.004(1)(a)2., F.A.C.

<sup>12</sup> Section 1012.56(7)(f), F.S. (validity period is expressed in school fiscal years); Rule 6A-4.004(1)(a), F.A.C. The veteran's pathway to educator certification authorizes a 5-year nonrenewable temporary certificate. Section 1012.56(7)(b)2., F.S. The DOE also issues a nonrenewable temporary certificate, which is valid for 2 years in the area of speech-language impairment. Section 1012.56(7)(c), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 1012.55(2)(a), F.S.

periods while the other is valid for 3 years and may be issued only once.<sup>14</sup> The 5-year certificate requires satisfaction of certain specialization requirements established in rule.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Professional Certificate Requirements***

To be eligible for a professional certificate, a person must:<sup>16</sup>

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Sign an affidavit attesting that the applicant will uphold the U.S. and State Constitutions;
- Earn a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning<sup>17</sup> or from a nonaccredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree;<sup>18</sup>
- Submit to fingerprinting and background screening and not have a criminal history that requires the applicant's disqualification from certification or employment;
- Be of good moral character;
- Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher;
- Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge;<sup>19</sup>
- Demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge;<sup>20</sup> and
- Demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, if the person serves as a classroom teacher or school administrator.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Demonstrating Mastery of General Knowledge***

Mastery of general knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Achieving a passing score on the General Knowledge Test;<sup>22</sup>
- Achieving passing scores established in SBE rule on national or international examinations that test comparable content and relevant standards in verbal, analytical writing, and

<sup>14</sup> Rule 6A-4.004(7), F.A.C. (validity periods expressed in school fiscal years).

<sup>15</sup> See Rule 6A-4.0282, F.A.C.

<sup>16</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(a)-(i), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.003(1), F.A.C. (approved accrediting agencies); *see also* 34 C.F.R. ss. 602.1-602.50; U.S. Department of Education, *Institutional Accrediting Agencies*, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-602> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>18</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.003(2), F.A.C. (criteria for approval of nonaccredited institutions of higher learning). For initial certification, an applicant must attain at least a 2.5 overall grade point average on a 4.0 scale in the applicant's major field of study. Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(g) and (3), F.S.; DOE, *General Knowledge*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.stml> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>20</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(h) and (5), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(i) and (6), F.S.; DOE, *Professional Preparation and Education Competence*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/professional-preparation-edu-competenc.stml> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(a), F.S. The General Knowledge Test is part of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations and is administered as four subtests: Reading, English Language Skills, Essay, and Mathematics. Rule 6A-4.0021(7), F.A.C.; *see also* DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida*, s. 82 (27<sup>th</sup> ed., 2022), <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf> (competencies and skills measured by General Knowledge Test).

quantitative reasoning skills (*e.g.*, the verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning portions of the Graduate Record Examination);<sup>23</sup>

- providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory,<sup>24</sup> by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS),<sup>25</sup> or by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE);<sup>26</sup>
- completing two semesters of successful, part-time or full-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program;<sup>27</sup> and
- documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Demonstrating Mastery of Subject Area Knowledge***

Mastery of subject area knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Bachelor's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a bachelor's or higher degree):
  - If a Florida subject area examination has been developed, achieving a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination specified in SBE rule<sup>29</sup> or documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher in the certificate subject area as identified in SBE rule.<sup>30</sup>
  - If a Florida subject area examination has not been developed, achieving a passing score on a standardized examination specified in SBE rule, including passing scores on both the oral proficiency and written proficiency examinations administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages<sup>31</sup> or successful completion of a United

<sup>23</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(e), F.S. The passing scores to be identified in state board rule must be at approximately the same level of rigor as is required to pass the General Knowledge Test. Rule 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(b), F.S.; *see* Rules 6A-4.002(1)(i) and 6A-4.003, F.A.C. (flush-left provisions following Rule 6A-4.003(2)(e), F.A.C.). Section 1012.56(3)(b), F.S. specifies that a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by *another state* is an acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge. The DOE also recognizes certificates issued by U.S. territories. *See* DOE, *General Knowledge*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.shtml> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>25</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(c), F.S.; *see* Rule 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.; *see also* National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <https://www.nbpts.org/> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(c), F.S.; *see* Rule 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.

<sup>27</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(d), F.S.; *see also* Rule 6A-4.003(1)-(2), F.A.C. (approval of accredited and nonaccredited institutions of higher learning).

<sup>28</sup> Section 1012.56(3)(f), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(a), F.S. The Florida Teacher Certification Examinations include 39 subject area tests. DOE, *Test Information Guides*, [http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL\\_TIGS.asp](http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_TIGS.asp) (last visited March 26, 2025); *see also* DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida*, ss. 1-63 (27<sup>th</sup> ed., 2022), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf>; *see also* Rule 6A-4.0021(9), F.A.C. (scoring of subject area tests).

<sup>30</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(i), F.S.

<sup>31</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(b), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.0243(1)(e), F.A.C.; *see* American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), *Assessments*, <https://www.actfl.org/assessments> (last visited March 26, 2025); Language Testing International (ACTFL Language Testing Office), *ACTFL*, <https://tms.languagetesting.com> (last visited March 26, 2025).

- States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program or a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.<sup>32</sup>
- For certification in any other subject area for which there is no Florida subject area test or standardized examination specified in state board rule (e.g., Dance), completing the required bachelor's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule<sup>33</sup> and verification of subject area competence by the district school superintendent or, for a state-supported or private school, the school's chief administrative officer.<sup>34</sup>
- Master's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a master's or higher degree): Completing the required master's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and achieving a passing score on the corresponding Florida-developed subject area test or standardized examination specified in SBE rule.<sup>35</sup>
- Out-of-State Certification: Providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued for a subject area by another U.S. state or territory or by NBPTS or ABCTE, if the certificate is comparable to the Florida professional certificate issued for the same subject area.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Demonstrating Mastery of Professional Preparation and Education Competence***

Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of professional preparation and education competence are any one of the following:<sup>37</sup>

- Successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a Florida postsecondary educational institution and a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Successful completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state.
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the SBE.
- Documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or accredited private college or university and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Successful completion of professional preparation courses as specified in SBE rule, successful completion of a professional education competence program, and documentation of three years of being rated effective or highly effective while holding a temporary certificate.
- Successful completion of a professional learning certification program.

<sup>32</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(g)-(h), F.S.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Rule 6A-4.0123, F.A.C. (specialization requirements for certification in dance); see also DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/> (March 26, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(c), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

<sup>35</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(d), F.S.; see DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>36</sup> Section 1012.56(5)(e), F.S., and (f), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.002(1)(i)-(j), F.A.C.; DOE, *NBPTS Certificate Subjects and Corresponding Subjects in Florida*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/pathways-routes/nbpts-certificate-subjects-correspondi.stml> (last visited March 26, 2025).

<sup>37</sup> Section 1012.56(6)(a)-(h), F.S.

- Successful completion of a competency-based certification program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.

### ***Educator Certification Examination Fees***

The DOE sets registration fees for the various exams required for educator certification, including initial registration and retakes.<sup>38</sup> For the general knowledge exam, the initial registration fee is \$130.00 for the full battery of 4 subjects. An individual is able to retake the general knowledge exam by subtest with the retake registration fees being the following:<sup>39</sup>

- One subtest - \$32.50;
- Two subtests - \$60.00;
- Three subtests - \$97.50;
- Full battery retake - \$130.00.

For subject area examinations and the professional educational test, the initial and retake registration fee is \$150.00. For subject area exams with subparts, the \$150.00 fee is divided evenly among the subparts for retakes.<sup>40</sup>

Current law and rule provide for several fee waivers including the Military Testing Fee Waiver,<sup>41</sup> Retired First Responder Fee Waiver,<sup>42</sup> and Exceptional Student Education K–12/Elementary Education K–6 Waivers.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Restricted Professional Certificate***

In addition to the professional certification described above, the DOE issues restricted professional certificates, a renewable type of certificate valid for 5 school years. To receive a restricted professional certificate an applicant must:

- Complete the application adopted in SBE rule;
- Satisfy all of the statutory eligibility criteria for a professional educator certification except for the mastery of general knowledge component; and
- Serve as instructional personnel, who is not a classroom teacher, in one of the following fields:
  - Educational Media Specialist;
  - School Counseling;
  - School Psychologist;
  - School Social Work; or
  - Speech-Language Impaired.<sup>44</sup>

An applicant who meets these requirements must only be assigned to non-classroom instructional positions for which they are certified.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Rule 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.

<sup>39</sup> Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b), F.A.C.

<sup>40</sup> Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b)-(e), F.A.C.

<sup>41</sup> Section 1012.59(3)(a)-(c), F.S. and Rule 6A-4.0021(13), F.A.C.

<sup>42</sup> Section 1012.59(3)(d), F.S. and Rule 6A-4.0021(14), F.A.C.

<sup>43</sup> Section 1012.59(4), F.S. and Rule 6A-4.0021(15), F.A.C.

<sup>44</sup> Rule 6A-4.004(9)(a), F.S.

<sup>45</sup> Rule 6A-4.004(9)(b), F.S.

### ***Educator Certification Specializations***

An individual holding an educator certification from the DOE may apply for an additional coverage<sup>46</sup> or endorsement<sup>47</sup> indicating advanced education or experience in a particular subject, area, or field.<sup>48</sup> The DOE offers a specialization for certification in school social worker that can be earned in under two plans:

- Plan One. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in social work that includes 300 hours or more of field placement in a K-12 school setting from a program accredited by the National Council on Social Work Education or accredited by and entity approved by DOE in rule; or
- Plan Two. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in social work that includes 300 hours or more of field placement with diverse individuals in a community setting other than a prekindergarten, an elementary or a secondary school.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Background Screening Requirements***

Individuals who work in or provide services to school districts, charter schools, alternative schools, and private schools participating in state school choice scholarship programs<sup>50</sup> must undergo a fingerprint based background screening before being permitted access to school grounds.<sup>51</sup> The individuals who must undergo background screening fall under three personnel classifications: instructional and noninstructional personnel;<sup>52</sup> noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel;<sup>53</sup> and noninstructional contractors.<sup>54</sup> Candidates for educator certification must also undergo background screening.<sup>55</sup>

The background screening requirements for each personnel classification vary depending upon the individual's duties, whether or not the individual is a school district employee, and the degree of contact the individual has with students.<sup>56</sup> Because they are more likely to have direct contact with students, candidates for educator certification, instructional and noninstructional personnel, and noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel must be screened

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<sup>46</sup> The term "coverage" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as the designation on a Florida educator's certificate which indicates the area in which an individual has a content knowledge base. The term "coverage" shall be used synonymously with the terms "subject," "area," or "field."

<sup>47</sup> The term "endorsement" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as a rider on a Florida educator's certificate with a designated coverage. An endorsement shown on a certificate with a coverage signifies a pedagogical knowledge base which targets particular levels, stages of development, or circumstances.

<sup>48</sup> Rule 6A-4.002(1)(e)-(f), F.A.C.

<sup>49</sup> Rule 6A-4.035, F.A.C.

<sup>50</sup> The background screenings conducted by such private schools are conducted through the VECHS.

<sup>51</sup> Sections 1002.421, 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2)(a), F.S.

<sup>52</sup> Instructional and noninstructional personnel are individuals who are hired or contracted to fill positions that require direct contact with students in any public school. Section 1012.32(2), F.S.

<sup>53</sup> Noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel are individuals who are permitted access to school grounds when students are present; who have direct contact with students; or who have access to, or control of, school funds. Section 1012.465(1), F.S.

<sup>54</sup> Noninstructional contractors are vendors or contractors who are not school district employees, are permitted access to school grounds when students are present, and have little or no direct contact with students. Section 1012.467(1), F.S.

<sup>55</sup> Sections 1012.315, 1012.32(2), and 1012.56, F.S.

<sup>56</sup> See ss. 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2), F.S.

against a distinct list of 52 disqualifying offenses applicable to employment with public schools and school districts.<sup>57</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

CS/SB 1150 amends section 1012.55, F.S., to exempt school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification.

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

#### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

#### **D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

#### **E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

#### **A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

#### **B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

#### **C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures.

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<sup>57</sup> Sections 1012.315, 1012.32, and 1012.465, F.S.



**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 1012.55 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Education Pre-K-12 on March 31, 2025:**

The committee substitute exempts school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification, rather than exempting such individuals from nearly all educator certification requirements.

**B. Amendments:**

None.