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To: Committee Members **Date:** October 2, 2023
From: Steve Sodergren, Executive Officer
Subject: Review and Discussion of Voluntary Demographic Survey for Candidates Taking Board Developed Exams

Examinations are a critical component of the licensure pathway in California for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC), and Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEP). In its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan the Board established a goal to administer fair, valid, comprehensive, and relevant licensing examinations. To achieve this goal, strategic plan objective 2.2 tasked the Board with improving the examination process to ensure timely and equitable access to licensure. To fulfill this strategic plan objective, the staff find it necessary to collect the demographic data of examination candidates.

The release of the Association of Social Work Board's (ASWB) 2022 Exam Pass Rates Analysis report identified disparities in licensure examination pass rates between different racial and ethnic groups for the ASWB clinical examination. Board members and stakeholders have raised concerns regarding the possibility that pass rate disparities may exist within the Board's own examination program. In collaboration with the Department of Consumer Affairs' (DCA) Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) the Board develops five examinations:

- LMFT Law & Ethics Examination
- LCSW Law & Ethics Examination
- LPCC Law & Ethics Examination
- LMFT Clinical Examination
- LEP Standard Written Exam

The Board examinations must meet legal guidelines and technical standards. *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014, *Standards*) are universally accepted by experts who develop licensure and educational examinations (psychometricians) and by courts. To increase the fairness, OPES coordinates the activities of a diverse group of subject matter experts in developing and reviewing future exam questions and exams. Additionally, OPES conducts continuous reviews of exam candidate responses to ensure that individual questions are performing as expected as determined by the standards.

In response to concerns about the differential pass rates, OPES recommended that the Board ask for a differential item functioning (DIF) analysis of Board exams. A DIF, as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA), is “The circumstances in which two individuals of similar ability do not have the same probability of answering a question in a particular way. This is often used to assess whether men and women or individuals of different ethnicity are likely to provide disparate answers on a test.” To perform a DIF analysis, OPES will need to obtain demographic information of examination candidates. Currently, the Board does not collect any demographic data beyond a candidates address and birthdate.

Attached is the BBS demographic data form draft (Attachment A) developed by Board staff and OPES. The questions seek to gain information about an exam candidates race and ethnicity, language, and gender. Additionally, the survey will ask about the candidate’s educational background and whether they utilized test preparation materials or programs when preparing for the exam. Once collected, this data will be used by OPES to perform a DIF analysis of Board exams. This data will also contribute to the current discussions regarding the use of professional examinations and will support the creation of data-driven goals to reduce barriers to licensure that the Board may pursue.

Board staff are currently working on determining how this survey will be distributed to exam applicants and candidates. In general, exam candidates who are applying to take a Board exam will be offered the survey during their initial application process. Additionally, candidates currently in in the exam process will be offered the survey through other means. While the Board will encourage participation in the survey, it will be stressed that the survey is strictly voluntary. The hope is to implement the survey before the spring of 2024.

Recommendation

Conduct an open discussion of the BBS demographic data form draft shown in **Attachment A**. Direct staff to make any discussed changes and any non-substantive changes and work to implement the survey.

Attachments

Attachment A: BBS Applicant Demographic Data Form Draft

BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
EXAMINATION APPLICANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The information you provide here is **voluntary** and **confidential**. It will be treated as personal information subject to the Information Practices Act (Civil Code, Section 1798 et seq.) and will be used only to report group trends.

1. What type of master's or doctorate degree did you obtain?

Drop down list of Board's qualifying degrees + other

2. Name of the institution where your qualifying degree was obtained.

Drop down list – use Board's existing list

3. Was your degree gained from an online institution?

Yes No

4. Did you utilize test preparation materials or programs to prepare for the exam?

Yes No

5. Is English your native language?

Yes No

If no, what is your native language?

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Korean
- Armenian
- Persian
- Other

6. Which of the following categories do you identify with? (select all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- White
- Another race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify)
- Decline to state

7. How do you currently describe yourself?

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary/Non-Conforming
- Transgender Female
- Transgender Male
- Decline to state

8. What is your age?

9. What is your zip code?

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