



LCSW Exam Study Tips

With Sample Questions and Rationales

Authors

Bethany Vanderbilt, LCSW

Amanda Rowan, LCSW



Bethany is the Director of Social Work Programs at the Therapist Development Center. In addition to developing study materials, she provides LCSW exam coaching and support to people using Therapist Development Center Study Systems. She loves helping fellow social workers pass with confidence.

Amanda is the Founder of the Therapist Development Center. She used her background in the neuroscience of learning to develop the innovative and highly effective study systems. She believes that by “studying smart,” social workers can pass their exams and advance confidently in their careers.



To learn more about Bethany and Amanda,
visit www.therapistdevelopmentcenter.com/about-us

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10 Study Tips

For Success on the LCSW Exam

- ① The LCSW Exam is challenging but fair. There are NO TRICK QUESTIONS. With the right tools, you can pass with confidence.
- ② The LCSW Exam is a measure of your competence, not of your ability to memorize.
- ③ Competence is measured through reasoning-based questions.
- ④ 80% of the questions on the LCSW exam are reasoning-based, so you will need clear strategies to know how to figure out the answers.
- ⑤ The LCSW exam is predictable. There are certain clinical situations that the board will want to be sure you know how to address.
- ⑥ The best way to manage test anxiety is to have clear test taking strategies so you know how to read the questions.
- ⑦ An organized study plan is essential. Otherwise you can waste a lot of time “studying” but not actually “preparing to pass.”
- ⑧ Not all exam prep materials are created equally. In fact, most study products and workshops are created by people who have NEVER taken the exam. **Some aren't even social workers.** Be sure to find out whether the authors and instructors have taken the exam recently.
- ⑨ It's best to study in sessions of 2 hours or less. The average person stops learning after 90 minutes, so you won't learn most of what is taught in daylong workshops. If you plan to study “all day” take breaks every 2 hours to go have some fun.
- ⑩ Being able to talk through concepts and rationales you don't understand is essential to the learning process. Look for a study program that provides access to coaches who have taken the exam.

Practice Questions

Get a feel for the LCSW Exam

1. A social worker sees a couple who describe frequent conflict and arguments. During a session, the wife tells the social worker that her husband never wants to talk about his feelings. The husband confirms this but says that when he tries to express himself his wife gets upset and yells at him. The wife jumps in and says loudly, "That's not true! He's always making things up about me!" The husband then says, "See?" and crosses his arms, sitting in silence. The social worker should NEXT:

- A. Recommend that the husband and wife be seen individually.
- B. Point out the communication pattern that just occurred.
- C. Move the conversation to a topic that is less conflictual.
- D. Teach the couple more effective communication techniques.

2. A social worker facilitates an inpatient therapy group for adolescents. One member of the group, a 14-year-old female, has been prescribed medication for a mood disorder and shares that she does not want to take it. The other members of the group identify with the girl's feelings and become angry, yelling at the social worker and demanding that the social worker do something on the client's behalf. The social worker should FIRST:

- A. Explore group members feelings about medications.
- B. Bring the conversation back to the client's behaviors that prompted the medication.
- C. Acknowledge the group members' anger and explore underlying issues.
- D. Maintain confidentiality and refuse to discuss the case.

3. A 28-year-old man seeks treatment from a social worker. He reports being dissatisfied with his career but cannot identify why or what he would like to be different. He also states that he's unhappy about his current relationship, wishes he was in better shape, and can't seem to find a way to change. He says, "Every time I try to change something, I get overwhelmed and end up right back where I started . . . or worse." The social worker should FIRST:

- A. Assist the client in prioritizing his concerns.
- B. Identify behavioral objectives to help the client change his behavior.
- C. Apply a strengths-based perspective by focusing on his strengths.
- D. Use mindfulness-based skills to help decrease stress.

4. A 26-year-old woman is referred to a social worker in private practice by a close friend. During the initial session, the client describes a number of problems, including a recent breakup with her boyfriend, a history of trauma, and almost daily methamphetamine use. The social worker should FIRST:

- A. Explore the client's reasons for drug use.
- B. Assess the client's motivation for change.
- C. Explore the connection between the trauma and the client's current problems.
- D. Refer the client for a substance abuse evaluation.

Practice Questions

Get a feel for the LCSW Exam

5. A social worker at a community agency begins working with a family which reports frequent arguments centering around the teenage son's behavior. The mother reports that while he maintains good grades and participation on the school soccer team, he is "totally uninterested" in family life. The father then interrupts and states that his wife has "unrealistic expectations" for his son. They continue to bicker about discipline while their son sits silently, rolling his eyes. The social worker should FIRST:

- A. Refer the parents for couple's treatment.
- B. Suggest individual treatment for the son.
- C. Concentrate on interpersonal communication between family members.
- D. Obtain a release of information to contact the son's teacher.

6. An emergency room social worker is asked to evaluate a 43-year-old woman who was brought in complaining of heart palpitations and an inability to sleep. The social worker notes that the woman's pupils are dilated and that she is wrapped in a large blanket despite the reasonable temperature in the ER. The client has most likely been using:

- A. Cocaine
- B. Oxycontin
- C. Alcohol
- D. Heroin

7. A social worker has been working with a 9-year-old boy and his parents to address emotional and behavioral issues. A psychological evaluation has revealed that the boy has a learning disorder; the parents have requested an IEP from the boy's school but have had difficulty making contact with the special education coordinator. The social worker's calls to the school administration are not returned. The social worker should FIRST:

- A. Recommend that the family obtain legal representation.
- B. Request that the psychologist attempt to contact the special education coordinator directly.
- C. Send a registered letter to the special education coordinator and administration with the psychologist's recommendations.
- D. Contact the school board about the need for action.

8. A client seeks services at a community mental health center. He reports that his chief complaint is that he can't get a job so he is "stuck living in his parents' basement." He is dressed in pajamas with a neck tie. He reports that his only friends are people he knows online in an alien tracking club. He asks if the social worker believes in ghosts. What diagnosis should be considered for this client?

- A. Schizoid Personality Disorder
- B. Schizophrenia
- C. Schizotypal Personality Disorder
- D. Schizopreniform

Answers & Rationales

Get a feel for the LCSW Exam

1. **B** - Rationale: **B** is the best answer because the therapist should first help the couple become more aware of their existing communication patterns. **A** does not make sense because the problem is in the relationship. **C** avoids the problem for which they are being seen, which is counterproductive. **D** may be a useful intervention but not until the clients are more aware of their current communication style.
2. **C** - Rationale: **C** is the best answer because the social worker needs to start where the group members are and help identify any underlying issues that may be contributing to their responses. **B** and **D** both disregard the group members' feelings of anger. **A** might be useful but not until the social worker has recognized the feelings that are being expressed and allowed group members' to process them.
3. **A** - Rationale: When a client reports having multiple concerns and feels overwhelmed, the most helpful intervention is to help them separate and prioritize their concerns (**A**). **B**, **C**, and **D** might all be useful interventions but not until the client feels more in control.
4. **D** - Rationale: **D** is the best answer because substance abuse should be addressed first. **A**, **B**, and **C** are all useful interventions but only after the therapist refers the client for a substance abuse evaluation.
5. **C** - Rationale: The family is demonstrating the communication patterns that are causing their distress, so the social worker should start where they are (**C**). **A** and **B** might be useful later if it becomes apparent that either the son or the parents are in need of focused treatment. **D** does not really make sense at this time since the son is described as doing well in school.
6. **A** - Rationale: This is a recall question. The symptoms described in the stem are all indicative of cocaine abuse. **B**, **C**, and **D** would all be described differently. You can expect 3-5 exam questions related to substance abuse and different drug effects.
7. **C** - Rationale: **C** is the best answer because it creates a paper trail that can be referenced in later interactions and ensures that someone in the school will receive the communication. **A** may be necessary, but attempts to contact the school in writing should be done FIRST. **B** and **D** may not do anything to accomplish the family's goal if these telephone calls are also not returned.
8. **C** - Rationale: This is a good example of a diagnosis question. Schizotypal Personality Disorder is characterized by social isolation, odd behavior, unusual dress and thinking, and unconventional beliefs.

Study With Us

Learn How Our Program Works

- ✓ Our LCSW Study System is an online program that you can access immediately once you sign up. Just log in and start studying.
- ✓ We provide an organized, 10-step study plan with handouts, lectures, Quick Study sheets, quizzes, and practice exams.
- ✓ Our program includes 600+ on-line practice questions like the ones in this guide.
- ✓ In addition to reviewing content, we emphasize the test taking strategies and reasoning skills you need to pass.
- ✓ We provide FREE access to LCSW EXAM COACHES (who have passed with a score of at least 90%) to answer any questions you have while studying, including whether you are ready to take the exam.
- ✓ We are with you until you pass. Extend or repeat the program for FREE. You only pay ONE time.
- ✓ 95% of social workers pass using our system in one try. For people who have failed using other prep material, scores increase an average of **18 points** with our program.

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