

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORK BOARDS (ASWB) CLINICAL PRACTICE EXAM (SAMPLE) STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 – 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. A client confides in her sister-in-law about marital problems, creating tension. This situation exemplifies what concept?**
 - A. Joining
 - B. Differentiation
 - C. Familial regression
 - D. Triangulation
- 2. How should a social worker handle a referral to a family needing services but who only has a child that speaks English?**
 - A. Consider it ethical because the daughter can translate
 - B. Determine if the daughter is willing to translate before proceeding
 - C. Accept the referral as services are time-limited and nonclinical
 - D. Decline due to inability to communicate with all family members
- 3. Which of the following is NOT a change to the Neurodevelopmental Disorders listed in the DSM-5?**
 - A. A. Mental Retardation was renamed Intellectual Disability.
 - B. B. Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder was added as a new diagnosis for children up to age 18.
 - C. C. Stuttering was renamed Childhood-Onset Fluency Disorder.
 - D. D. Autism Spectrum Disorder now encompasses several prior diagnoses.
- 4. According to the Tarasoff decision, what must social workers do when there is imminent danger?**
 - A. Notify both the authorities and intended victims of imminent danger
 - B. Seek inpatient hospitalization if dangerousness exists
 - C. Notify only the intended victims of imminent danger
 - D. Identify the risk factors that are linked to dangerousness to others
- 5. Which of the following is TRUE about a client who is transgender?**
 - A. The client is likely to undergo sexual reassignment surgery in the future.
 - B. The client is likely to be gay or lesbian.
 - C. The client is likely to be a cross dresser.
 - D. The client is likely to experience stigma, bias, and/or discrimination as a result of his or her gender identity.

- 6. Which of the following are stages of group development in sequential order?**
- A. Preaffiliation, differentiation, intimacy, power and control, and separation/termination.
 - B. Differentiation, power and control, preaffiliation, intimacy, and separation/termination.
 - C. Preaffiliation, power and control, intimacy, differentiation, and separation/termination.
 - D. Differentiation, preaffiliation, power and control, intimacy, and separation/termination.
- 7. What is a common challenge faced by social workers when dealing with clients' emotional responses?**
- A. Encouraging emotional expression
 - B. Identifying cognitive distortions
 - C. Resolving ethical dilemmas
 - D. Restraining disruptive behavior
- 8. Rapprochement is a subphase of which child development phase?**
- A. A. Normal autistic
 - B. B. Object constancy
 - C. C. Separation-individuation
 - D. D. Normal symbiotic
- 9. A social worker agrees to a client's request to seek another professional, citing a break in contact period. How should her actions be regarded?**
- A. Ethical since contact is delayed
 - B. Unethical due to insufficient time post-termination
 - C. Ethical as it respects client self-determination
 - D. Unethical for terminating services for this reason
- 10. Which of the following is NOT a limitation of using existing case records as the basis for practice evaluations?**
- A. A. Records may not contain consistent and/or complete information.
 - B. B. There is no additional time or cost associated with their use.
 - C. C. Evaluations have to be limited to only topics contained in the case records.
 - D. D. The client's opinions about service quality are not considered.

Answers

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1. D
2. D
3. B
4. A
5. D
6. C
7. A
8. C
9. D
10. B

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Explanations

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1. A client confides in her sister-in-law about marital problems, creating tension. This situation exemplifies what concept?

- A. Joining
- B. Differentiation
- C. Familial regression

D. Triangulation

The situation described exemplifies the concept of triangulation. Triangulation occurs when a third party is drawn into a conflict between two individuals, often to relieve tension or stabilize the relationship dynamics. In this case, the client of marital issues confiding in her sister-in-law introduces a third individual into the marital conflict, potentially complicating the interactions between the couple and the sister-in-law. This action can create tension as it may influence how each person involved views the relationship and their role in it, leading to potential misunderstandings or miscommunications. By seeking support from her sister-in-law, the client is navigating her discomfort within her marriage and creating a dynamic that can disrupt direct communication between her and her spouse. Understanding triangulation is crucial in therapeutic settings as it helps clinicians recognize unhealthy patterns of communication and dynamics among family members. Addressing these patterns effectively can lead to healthier interactions and resolution of conflicts.

2. How should a social worker handle a referral to a family needing services but who only has a child that speaks English?

- A. Consider it ethical because the daughter can translate
- B. Determine if the daughter is willing to translate before proceeding
- C. Accept the referral as services are time-limited and nonclinical

D. Decline due to inability to communicate with all family members

Declining the referral due to the inability to communicate with all family members reflects a commitment to ethical practice and ensuring effective service delivery. It is crucial for a social worker to communicate clearly and ensure that all family members understand the services being provided to them. Effective communication is foundational to building trust, addressing needs appropriately, and achieving desired outcomes in social work practice. In situations where one member of the family speaks English while others do not, relying on that member to translate can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and may place undue responsibility on the child. Additionally, it may not guarantee that the services meet the cultural and emotional needs of the entire family. Therefore, refusing the referral acknowledges the importance of inclusive and comprehensive communication among all family members, which is vital for effective intervention.

3. Which of the following is NOT a change to the Neurodevelopmental Disorders listed in the DSM-5?

- A. A. Mental Retardation was renamed Intellectual Disability.
- B. B. Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder was added as a new diagnosis for children up to age 18.**
- C. C. Stuttering was renamed Childhood-Onset Fluency Disorder.
- D. D. Autism Spectrum Disorder now encompasses several prior diagnoses.

The correct answer is based on the understanding of the changes made in the DSM-5 regarding Neurodevelopmental Disorders. The change that "Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder was added as a new diagnosis for children up to age 18" is indeed correct, but this diagnosis actually falls under the category of mood disorders rather than neurodevelopmental disorders. The addition of Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder reflects an effort to address severe temper outbursts in children and delineate it from other diagnoses like Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Bipolar Disorder. The other options correctly outline changes made within the category of Neurodevelopmental Disorders. For example, "Mental Retardation was renamed Intellectual Disability" reflects the DSM-5's updated terminology intended to provide a more accurate representation of individuals with cognitive impairments. Similarly, "Stuttering was renamed Childhood-Onset Fluency Disorder," which better describes the communication aspect of the disorder, and "Autism Spectrum Disorder now encompasses several prior diagnoses" demonstrates the consolidation of previous autism-related diagnoses (such as Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder) into a single spectrum, reflecting a more contemporary understanding of these conditions. Therefore, the selection accurately

4. According to the Tarasoff decision, what must social workers do when there is imminent danger?

- A. Notify both the authorities and intended victims of imminent danger**
- B. Seek inpatient hospitalization if dangerousness exists
- C. Notify only the intended victims of imminent danger
- D. Identify the risk factors that are linked to dangerousness to others

The Tarasoff decision fundamentally shifted the responsibility of mental health professionals, including social workers, when it comes to potential threats of harm to an individual. This landmark ruling established the legal precedent that if a therapist becomes aware of a credible threat to a specific person, they have an obligation to take action to protect that individual. Therefore, when there is imminent danger, the appropriate response is to notify both the authorities and the intended victims. This proactive approach ensures that not only are protective measures being considered by law enforcement or mental health facilities, but also that the potential victim is informed of the threat against them. The combination of these actions reflects the duty to warn and protect—key components in maintaining ethical and legal standards in social work practice. While other options contain elements of risk assessment or hospitalization, they do not fulfill the immediacy and dual responsibility highlighted in the Tarasoff decision. Identifying risk factors and seeking hospitalization may be part of a broader assessment and intervention strategy, but without immediate notification of both the potential victim and authorities, the social worker would be failing to fulfill their ethical duty to protect as mandated by this case law.

5. Which of the following is TRUE about a client who is transgender?

- A. The client is likely to undergo sexual reassignment surgery in the future.
- B. The client is likely to be gay or lesbian.
- C. The client is likely to be a cross dresser.
- D. The client is likely to experience stigma, bias, and/or discrimination as a result of his or her gender identity.**

The statement indicating that a client who is transgender is likely to experience stigma, bias, and/or discrimination as a result of their gender identity is accurate and reflects an important aspect of the social context surrounding transgender individuals. Research and clinical evidence consistently demonstrate that transgender individuals often face significant societal challenges, including prejudice, harassment, and exclusion, which can adversely affect their mental health and well-being. This discrimination can be rooted in widespread cultural misunderstandings and lack of acceptance regarding gender identity, leading to obstacles in various aspects of life such as healthcare, employment, and social relationships. The other statements pose assumptions about transgender individuals that do not apply to all. Not all transgender individuals choose to undergo sexual reassignment surgery, nor does being transgender dictate one's sexual orientation or preferences, so the generalizations regarding being gay, lesbian, or a cross-dresser do not hold true for every individual within this community. Recognizing the unique experiences of transgender clients and the societal factors they face is vital for social workers to provide effective and empathetic support.

6. Which of the following are stages of group development in sequential order?

- A. Preaffiliation, differentiation, intimacy, power and control, and separation/termination.
- B. Differentiation, power and control, preaffiliation, intimacy, and separation/termination.
- C. Preaffiliation, power and control, intimacy, differentiation, and separation/termination.**
- D. Differentiation, preaffiliation, power and control, intimacy, and separation/termination.

The correct response details the stages of group development in a specific sequential order that aligns with established theories in social work and group dynamics. The stages identified—preaffiliation, power and control, intimacy, differentiation, and separation/termination—represent a journey a group typically undergoes as it forms and matures. Initially, in the preaffiliation stage, group members are often focused on getting to know each other and establishing trust. This is followed by the power and control phase, where conflicts may arise as individuals assert their needs and desires, leading to power dynamics within the group. The intimacy stage is characterized by deepening relationships and a sense of closeness among members, fostering collaboration and support. After the intimacy phase, groups move toward differentiation, in which members start to recognize and honor individual differences while still functioning cohesively as a group. Finally, the separation or termination stage marks the dissolution of the group or the end of its purpose, where members reflect on their experiences and gather closure. By adhering to this sequence, the answer exemplifies a comprehensive understanding of how these stages interconnect and contribute to the overall dynamics and development of a group in a clinical or social work context.

7. What is a common challenge faced by social workers when dealing with clients' emotional responses?

- A. Encouraging emotional expression**
- B. Identifying cognitive distortions
- C. Resolving ethical dilemmas
- D. Restraining disruptive behavior

The choice highlighting the challenge of encouraging emotional expression is significant because individuals often struggle to articulate their feelings due to various reasons such as fear of vulnerability, stigma around expressing emotions, or not having the language to describe what they are experiencing. Social workers frequently encounter clients who may have been socialized to suppress their emotions or who might be facing mental health challenges that inhibit emotional expression. Encouraging emotional expression is crucial for therapeutic progress, as it allows clients to process their feelings, gain insight, and ultimately, work towards healing. This process can involve creating a safe and supportive environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their emotions without judgment. When social workers succeed in facilitating this expression, they often see improved engagement and outcomes in therapy. The other options present important aspects of social work practice but do not align as closely with the specific emotional challenge. Identifying cognitive distortions involves cognitive-behavioral techniques that help clients understand flawed thinking patterns. Resolving ethical dilemmas is a necessary skill for social workers but relates more to ethical decision-making than emotional responses. Restraining disruptive behavior might occasionally be necessary in acute situations but is not a common challenge when it comes to the broader emotional expressions of clients.

8. Rapprochement is a subphase of which child development phase?

- A. A. Normal autistic
- B. B. Object constancy
- C. C. Separation-individuation**
- D. D. Normal symbiotic

Rapprochement is indeed a subphase of the separation-individuation phase in child development, as defined by psychoanalyst Margaret Mahler. In this developmental stage, typically occurring between 15 and 24 months of age, children begin to explore their environment more independently while maintaining a close emotional connection with their caregiver. Rapprochement specifically refers to the process where the child oscillates between seeking independence and returning to the caregiver for reassurance and comfort. This dynamic interaction is essential for the child to formulate a sense of self and establish a secure attachment. While other phases such as the normal autistic phase, object constancy, and normal symbiotic relate to different aspects of early development, they do not capture the essence of the rapprochement process, which emphasizes the balance between autonomy and attachment during the critical period of separation-individuation. Understanding these stages helps professionals recognize the developmental needs and emotional processes of children as they grow.

9. A social worker agrees to a client's request to seek another professional, citing a break in contact period. How should her actions be regarded?

- A. Ethical since contact is delayed
- B. Unethical due to insufficient time post-termination
- C. Ethical as it respects client self-determination

D. Unethical for terminating services for this reason

The option indicating that the social worker's actions are unethical for terminating services due to a delay in contact highlights an important principle in social work practice: the obligation to provide continuity of care and to act in the best interests of the client. When a social worker agrees to help a client seek another professional, it raises concerns about continuity and the potential implications of any break in contact. If a professional ends services prematurely or without sufficient rationale, it can lead to disruptions in care, particularly in cases where the client may still be in need of support. In social work, every effort should be made to ensure that clients are adequately supported until a safe and appropriate transfer of care can take place. If the social worker discontinues services merely due to a temporary communication gap, it can be seen as neglecting the client's ongoing needs and may leave the client vulnerable. Therefore, this option emphasizes the ethical responsibility of social workers to maintain a standard of care that prioritizes the welfare of their clients, regardless of external circumstances like scheduling conflicts.

10. Which of the following is NOT a limitation of using existing case records as the basis for practice evaluations?

- A. A. Records may not contain consistent and/or complete information.
- B. B. There is no additional time or cost associated with their use.**
- C. C. Evaluations have to be limited to only topics contained in the case records.
- D. D. The client's opinions about service quality are not considered.

The chosen answer highlights a crucial point about the limitations of using existing case records for practice evaluations. Utilizing these records typically does involve certain time or costs, either for accessing and reviewing the records or for training necessary to interpret them effectively. None of these costs or time considerations are eliminated simply due to the use of existing documents. In contrast, the other options illustrate genuine limitations of relying on existing case records. Inconsistencies and gaps in information (first option) can significantly impede the evaluation process, leading to incomplete analyses. The necessity to focus on only the topics available in the records (third option) can restrict the scope of evaluation, making it difficult to assess broader or emerging issues. Additionally, the absence of client perspectives on service quality (fourth option) limits the insights that can be gathered from evaluations, as clients' subjective experiences are critical for understanding the effectiveness of services rendered. Overall, while existing records can be valuable resources, they do carry limitations that practitioners must navigate carefully.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://aswb-clinical.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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