SUMMIT
STUDY GUIDES

LCSW

Diagnostic Assessment

Week 1 Diagnostic

40 Questions • 80 Minutes

Scored across six study areas • Original practice questions

Find your weak areas, then study the chapters that matter most

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How to Use This Material

Take this assessment in one sitting with an 80-minute timer, choosing the single BEST answer for each question. It has 40 questions spread across six study areas in proportion to the ASWB Clinical exam. Then score it with the separate answer key and fill in the Weakness Map at the end of the key. The interactive version on the Diagnostic page of the LCSW bonus site scores your Weakness Map automatically.

LCSW Week 1 Diagnostic

40 questions • Answer key and Weakness Map in the separate Answer Key file
Choose the single BEST answer for each question. Allow 80 minutes.

1. Hana, an LCSW in private practice, agrees to provide licensure supervision to a newly graduated MSW who works at a middle school. At their first meeting, the supervisee wants to start presenting cases right away. What should Hana do FIRST?

- **A.** Create a written supervision agreement on goals, evaluation, and confidentiality limits
- **B.** Review the supervisee's most difficult case to gauge her current skill level
- **C.** Ask the supervisee to send recordings of several recent sessions before their next meeting
- **D.** Contact the school principal to learn about the supervisee's job duties

2. A social worker reviews a client's weekly mood ratings and says, "Your mood dropped on Tuesday. What happened with your partner that day?" They discuss the argument and then role-play how he could raise the issue differently. Which model do these techniques MOST clearly reflect?

- **A.** Interpersonal psychotherapy
- **B.** Bowen family systems therapy
- **C.** Cognitive behavioral therapy
- **D.** Brief psychodynamic therapy

3. A uniformed Army social worker at a small installation receives a referral for Specialist Monroe, who is seeking help for marital conflict. During scheduling, she learns that his wife works as the administrative officer who supervises the social worker's clinic. Another behavioral health provider on post has openings this week. What should the social worker do FIRST?

- **A.** Arrange for Specialist Monroe to see the other provider on post
- **B.** Begin services and inform the administrative officer of the overlap
- **C.** Begin services after the specialist agrees to the overlap in writing
- **D.** Delay services until the wife's supervisory role can be changed

4. Renata, 41, a transgender woman, has seen a social worker by telehealth for depression for six months. She asks for a referral letter to a chronic pain program for her back injury and signs a release. The program asks for her mental health history. Renata asks the social worker to leave out that she is transgender, saying it has caused problems with providers before. What should the social worker do?

- **A.** Include her gender history, explaining to Renata that the program will give better care with complete information
- **B.** Include her gender history but mark that section as confidential and not for redisclosure
- **C.** Ask Renata to request her records directly so the social worker is not choosing what to leave out
- **D.** Write a letter covering the depression history the program needs and omit her gender history

5. A school social worker learns that Thao, 12, often misses class to interpret for her parents at medical visits and with their landlord. Thao says she is proud to help but worries all the time about getting things wrong. Her parents speak Hmong and limited English. What should the social worker do FIRST?

- **A.** Meet with the parents, using a qualified Hmong interpreter, to discuss their language needs
- **B.** Report the family to child protective services for educational neglect based on her absences
- **C.** Teach Thao coping strategies for managing her worry about interpreting accurately

6. A housing program records the number of days each client was housed during the year after discharge. Which statement about this variable is accurate?

- **A.** It is ordinal, because more days ranks clients higher on stability
- **B.** It is ratio, because it has equal intervals and a true zero
- **C.** It is interval, because days are equally spaced but zero is arbitrary
- **D.** It is nominal, because each client falls into a housing category

7. A child welfare social worker is talking with Aria, 5, about her week at her grandmother's house. Which question is BEST for getting accurate information from a child her age?

- **A.** "Did Grandma yell at you when you spilled your juice?"
- **B.** "Was it fun or scary at Grandma's house?"
- **C.** "Tell me about the things you did at Grandma's house."
- **D.** "Why did you want to come home early?"

8. Rosalind, 31, has PTSD from childhood abuse and wants to begin trauma-focused therapy to "finally deal with it." Over the past month she has had daily dissociative episodes at work and cut herself three times, most recently four days ago. She has no current suicidal intent. What should the social worker recommend FIRST?

- **A.** Begin prolonged exposure now, since avoidance of trauma memories maintains PTSD symptoms
- **B.** Refer her for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization because of the recent self-harm
- **C.** Build grounding and emotion regulation skills before trauma processing
- **D.** Start EMDR processing of her earliest trauma memory at the next scheduled session

9. A social worker has identified the conflicting duties in an ethical dilemma, listed the people who will be affected, and drafted three possible courses of action with their likely benefits and risks. What should she do NEXT?

- **A.** Record the final decision in the client's file with her rationale
- **B.** Go back and clarify which professional values are in conflict
- **C.** Weigh each option against the NASW Code, relevant law, and agency policy
- **D.** Carry out the option with the fewest risks and then monitor the results closely

10. Priscilla, an MSW intern at a community agency, is asked by her field instructor to video-record her sessions for supervision. Her next client, Mr. Olsen, arrives in ten minutes. What should Priscilla do FIRST?

- **A.** Start recording and ask Mr. Olsen at the end of the session whether the recording can be kept for supervision
- **B.** Record the session and delete the file after supervision
- **C.** Record audio, which needs less formal permission than video
- **D.** Get his written consent after explaining who will view it, how it is stored, and his right to decline

11. An aide at a long-term care facility calls Mrs. Feld, 85, "sweetie," speaks to her in a loud, sing-song voice, and uses very short sentences. Mrs. Feld has no cognitive or hearing impairment. This MOST clearly illustrates:

- **A.** elderspeak, a form of ageism
- **B.** validation therapy
- **C.** reality orientation
- **D.** person-centered communication

12. A social worker who went through a painful divorce last year finds herself urging a client to leave his marriage, though he has said he wants to repair it. This BEST illustrates:

- **A.** Countertransference
- **B.** Projective identification
- **C.** Transference

13. A social worker notices an error in a handwritten progress note she wrote last week. What is the correct way to fix it?

- **A.** Draw one line through the error, write the correction, and date and initial it
- **B.** Cover the error with correction fluid and write the correct information over it
- **C.** Rewrite the full note on a new page and shred the original
- **D.** Add a sticky note beside the error with the correct information

14. A social worker is about to give a cognitive screen to Mrs. Ibsen, 81, at a senior center. What should she do FIRST?

- **A.** Ask Mrs. Ibsen's daughter to describe any changes she has noticed in her mother's memory
- **B.** Begin with the hardest items, while Mrs. Ibsen is most alert
- **C.** Make sure Mrs. Ibsen has her glasses and hearing aids and that the room is quiet

15. A client says, "I could probably bike to work instead of driving. I did it all last summer." Which type of change talk is this?

- **A.** Desire
- **B.** Ability
- **C.** Commitment
- **D.** Reasons

16. A social worker in a state prison runs a group for inmates with depression. At intake, inmates are told that state law and facility policy require staff to report information about planned escapes or threats to institutional security. In an individual session, an inmate describes his plan to escape during a hospital transport next week. What should the worker do?

- **A.** Tell the inmate to drop the plan and document the warning
- **B.** Report the plan to security staff as the policy requires
- **C.** Keep the plan confidential, since it was disclosed in therapy
- **D.** Help the inmate explore his reasons and report if he repeats the plan

17. In an outpatient recovery group, Corey mentions that his buprenorphine dose was adjusted this week. Another member says, "Then you're not really sober, man," and two others agree. Corey goes quiet. What is the leader's BEST response?

- **A.** Correct the misinformation about buprenorphine and open a discussion about support
- **B.** Ask Corey to describe how buprenorphine works so members can understand his choice
- **C.** Let the group work out the disagreement, since members' own norms carry more weight than the leader's
- **D.** Talk with Corey after group about finding a medication-friendly group that would suit him better

18. Over the past 14 months, Trevor, 38, has bet on sports apps nearly every night. He keeps raising his bets to feel the same excitement, has tried several times to cut back, becomes restless and irritable when he tries, bets more to win back losses, and has hidden $20,000 in debt from his wife. He has had no manic episodes and does not use drugs. What is the MOST likely diagnosis?

- **A.** Gambling disorder
- **B.** Bipolar I disorder
- **C.** Antisocial personality disorder
- **D.** Obsessive-compulsive disorder

19. Marisela, 33, who grew up in rural Mexico, says that since a stray dog attacked her two months ago she has had poor appetite, trouble sleeping, sadness and little energy. She says, 'The fright made my spirit leave me,' and her mother wants her to see a curandera for a cleansing. What is the BEST approach?

- **A.** Treat susto as her diagnosis and support the cleansing in place of clinical care
- **B.** Work with her understanding of susto while also screening for depression and PTSD
- **C.** Explain that her symptoms reflect depression and that susto is a traditional folk belief
- **D.** Refer her to a curandera, since her explanation calls for a traditional healer

20. Tomasz, 33, a high school teacher, pays in full out of pocket for each session at a private practice that bills most clients' insurance electronically. He asks the social worker not to send any information about his treatment to his health plan. How should the worker respond under HIPAA?

- **A.** Decline, because covered providers are not required to accept restriction requests
- **B.** Agree if his health plan gives written permission to omit the services
- **C.** Explain that the practice must report all services to a plan once the client is a plan member
- **D.** Agree, since clients who pay in full may block disclosure of those services to their plan

21. Darius tells his wife in session, "You're always on your phone. You don't care about this family." The social worker uses Satir's approach and wants to help him communicate congruently. Which statement would the social worker MOST likely coach Darius to say?

- **A.** "I'm sure you're busy with work, and it's fine if you need to answer messages at dinner."
- **B.** "Studies show phones at the table lower family satisfaction."
- **C.** "Let's talk about the vacation instead of this."
- **D.** "When you're on your phone at dinner, I feel lonely, and I want time with you."

22. Mr. Abernathy, 71, is in cardiac rehabilitation after bypass surgery. He tells the group, "My cardiologist says my heart has the personality of a cranky old Buick, so I'm doing my tune-ups three times a week." He attends his sessions, asks practical questions, and speaks openly about having been scared before surgery. Which defense is he MOST likely using?

- **A.** Denial
- **B.** Intellectualization
- **C.** Humor
- **D.** Reaction formation

23. Ingrid, 41, asks her sister to choose her clothes, her restaurant meals, and whether she should accept a promotion. She agrees with her husband even when she privately disagrees, for fear he will withdraw his support, and after her last relationship ended she began dating someone new within two weeks because she "can't be alone." She has felt this way since adolescence. What is the MOST likely diagnosis?

- **A.** Borderline personality disorder
- **B.** Avoidant personality disorder
- **C.** Dependent personality disorder

24. Javier, an LCSW at a substance use program with 10 years of sobriety, drank heavily over a weekend after a breakup. He has not drunk since, shows no impairment at work, and has called his sponsor. He is unsure whether he should keep seeing clients this week. State licensing rules do not require self-reporting of a single lapse. What is the BEST next step?

- **A.** Continue working as usual, since he shows no impairment on the job
- **B.** Seek consultation and resume recovery supports while monitoring his work functioning
- **C.** Take medical leave and transfer his caseload until he has completed 90 days of sobriety
- **D.** Disclose the lapse to his clients as an example of honest recovery

25. Aisha, 34, uses a wheelchair and is enrolled in a county job-readiness program. The program's computer training is held in a second-floor room with no elevator, and staff told her she can watch the training videos at home instead. Aisha tells her case manager she feels shut out. Which response BEST reflects the social model of disability?

- **A.** Help Aisha process her frustration about the limits her disability places on her
- **B.** Encourage Aisha to accept the video option, since it covers the same material
- **C.** Work with Aisha to request that the training be moved to an accessible room
- **D.** Refer Aisha to vocational rehabilitation for training designed for people with disabilities

26. Destiny, 16, left home after repeated conflicts with her parents and is staying with a friend's family because she has nowhere else to go. She tells a community social worker that the new school near her friend's house will not enroll her without a parent's signature. She does not want to contact her parents. What should the social worker do FIRST?

- **A.** Help her friend's parents begin the process of obtaining legal guardianship
- **B.** Advise Destiny to stay home until the signature issue is settled
- **C.** Call Destiny's parents to obtain the signature the school requires
- **D.** Contact the district's McKinney-Vento liaison for immediate enrollment

27. Sasha, 19, has seen a social worker in a college counseling center for a year for anxiety. She now discloses restrictive eating, and the campus physician reports low heart rate and dizziness and recommends specialized eating disorder treatment. The social worker has no eating disorder training. Sasha says she trusts no one else and will not start over with a stranger. What should the social worker do?

- **A.** Continue treating Sasha while reading current literature on eating disorder treatment
- **B.** End services and give Sasha referrals to eating disorder programs in the area
- **C.** Arrange specialized eating disorder and medical care, staying involved during the transition
- **D.** Continue weekly sessions, since her trust in this relationship is Sasha's strongest asset in treatment

28. Jae, a supervisee, describes a client who asks him what to do at each session and says she cannot make decisions alone. Jae has started opening his supervision meetings by asking his supervisor to tell him exactly what to say to this client. Which concept BEST explains this pattern?

- **A.** Projective identification
- **B.** Supervisor countertransference
- **C.** Parallel process
- **D.** Resistance to supervision

29. Mrs. Bahrami, 72, who completed four years of schooling in Iran, scores 21 on the MoCA, given in English by a staff member while her grandson translated. She manages her own medications and finances, and her family reports no change in her daily functioning. What is the MOST appropriate interpretation?

- **A.** The score indicates mild cognitive impairment that warrants a neurology referral
- **B.** The score indicates dementia, since 21 is well below the normal cutoff
- **C.** The score should be adjusted by one point for education and then read as usual
- **D.** The score is of limited validity given language, translation, and education factors

30. Ines, 16, was suspended twice last year for fighting. She joined the school wrestling team in the fall and tells the school social worker, "When someone gets in my face now, I hold it and take it out on the mat at practice." Her coach says she is one of the most disciplined athletes on the team. Which defense mechanism is Ines MOST clearly using?

- **A.** Sublimation
- **B.** Displacement
- **C.** Suppression
- **D.** Acting out

31. A social worker providing standard DBT notices she feels drained and resentful after calls from one client, who phones several times a week, and she has started letting the calls go to voicemail. What should the social worker do NEXT?

- **A.** Transfer the client to another DBT therapist
- **B.** Bring the pattern to her DBT consultation team
- **C.** Stop phone coaching for this client until the calls decrease
- **D.** Tell the client that the calls are wearing her out

32. Mila, 3, was adopted four months ago from an institution where she lived from birth with many rotating caregivers. Her adoptive parents say she rarely seeks comfort when hurt, barely responds when they comfort her, shows little positive emotion, and has unexplained episodes of fearfulness during calm play. She uses words appropriate for her age, makes eye contact, and shows no repetitive movements or restricted interests. What is the MOST likely diagnosis?

- **A.** Disinhibited social engagement disorder
- **B.** Autism spectrum disorder
- **C.** Reactive attachment disorder

33. At a pediatric clinic, a social worker meets with Keisha, 15, and her father about Keisha's falling grades and irritability. Her father does most of the talking, and Keisha rolls her eyes and says little. What should the social worker do NEXT?

- **A.** Ask her father for specific examples of the irritability at home
- **B.** Explain that teens spend part of each visit alone, then meet with Keisha
- **C.** Point out to Keisha that her eye-rolling seems to say a lot

34. At 11 p.m., a social worker sees a text on her work phone from her client Grant, 47: "I can't do this anymore." At intake, Grant was told that texts are for scheduling and that the worker is not available after hours. What should the social worker do FIRST?

- **A.** Reply in the morning, as the after-hours policy states
- **B.** Call Grant now to find out whether he is safe
- **C.** Text back the crisis line number and remind him of the policy

35. The mother of Tobias, 15, asks the school social worker for help because he cannot fall asleep before 1 a.m. and is hard to wake for his 7 a.m. bus. On weekends he sleeps until noon and wakes refreshed. His grades are steady, he enjoys soccer and friends, and he denies sadness or loss of interest. Which recommendation is BEST?

- **A.** Suggest letting him sleep as late as he wants on weekends so he can make up for lost weekday sleep
- **B.** Recommend that he ask his doctor about nightly melatonin to reset his sleep timing before trying anything else
- **C.** Refer him for depression treatment, since sleep changes in adolescents are an early sign of a mood disorder
- **D.** Explain the normal teen shift toward later sleep and help him set a steady schedule with fewer evening screens

36. Wendell, 58, a retired machinist with no psychiatric history, tells a rural clinic social worker that for two months he has had brief episodes of smelling burning rubber that no one else notices. His wife says that during some episodes he stares blankly and smacks his lips for about a minute and does not remember it afterward. What is the MOST appropriate next step?

- **A.** Assess for a psychotic disorder, since he reports a hallucination
- **B.** Arrange a prompt medical and neurological evaluation
- **C.** Ask about recent stressors and screen for anxiety with the GAD-7
- **D.** Begin relaxation training to reduce stress-related sensory symptoms

37. A community agency's billing coordinator tells a social work intern to list her supervisor, an LCSW, as the provider on claims for sessions the intern conducts alone. The insurer's contract states that claims must name the clinician who delivered the service and does not cover services by unlicensed trainees. What is the BEST response?

- **A.** Follow the instruction, since her supervisor is legally responsible for her cases
- **B.** Decline, explain the claim must name who provided it, and tell her supervisor
- **C.** Follow the instruction, but record her own name in the session notes

38. A family service agency has more referrals for its new caregiver support group than it can serve this year, so a waitlist will form either way. The director wants the strongest evidence of whether the group reduces caregiver depression. Which plan is BEST?

- **A.** Compare caregivers who choose to join with those who prefer to wait for a later group
- **B.** Measure depression before and after the group for all caregivers who attend
- **C.** Compare this year's group members with caregivers served by a nearby agency
- **D.** Randomly assign consenting caregivers to the group or the waitlist, then compare

39. In Vygotsky's theory, what is the term for the range between what a child can do alone and what the child can do with guidance from a more skilled person?

- **A.** Private speech
- **B.** Zone of proximal development
- **C.** Internalization
- **D.** Scaffolding

40. Ty, 20, a college sophomore, has received two campus alcohol citations this semester. At a required counseling visit he says, "Everyone drinks like this. I don't have a problem, I just got caught." Which approach is MOST appropriate at this stage?

- **A.** Help him set a quit date and identify people who can support his abstinence
- **B.** Teach him relapse prevention skills for parties and other high-risk weekends
- **C.** Offer feedback on how his drinking compares with campus norms and ask his view
- **D.** Tell him the citations point to an alcohol use disorder and recommend treatment