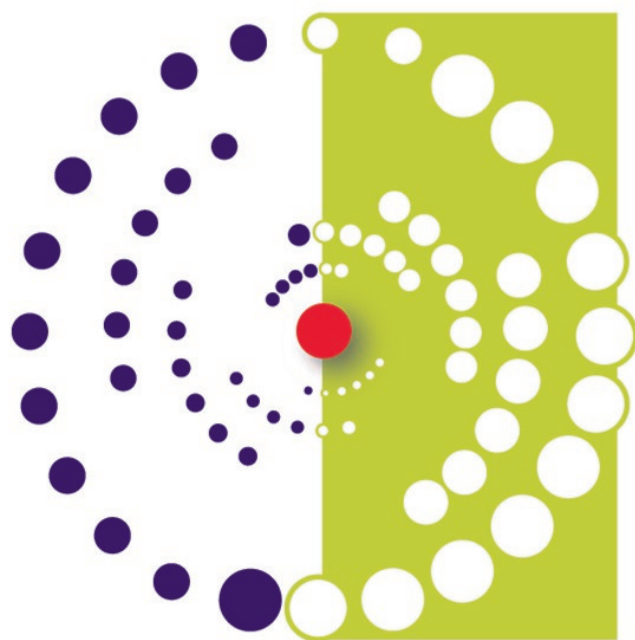


# NYS SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER SURVIVAL KIT




SOCIAL  
WORKERS  
CHANGE  
**FUTURES**

**A SELF-ADVOCACY RESOURCE GUIDE**  
BY THE NASW-NYS SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TASK FORCE  
IN COLLABORATION WITH NYSSSWA

 **N A S W** | NEW YORK STATE CHAPTER  
National Association of Social Workers




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National Association of Social Workers



School Social Work  
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## **Preface**

School social workers serve a critical role in our educational system tackling the social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of students that are proven barriers to student learning. Their services improve academic and behavioral outcomes, promote a positive school climate, and provide effective and vital student support services by maximizing school-based and community resources. Increasingly, the role of school social worker has come under the blade of budget cuts in school districts across New York State at a time when our students are experiencing unprecedented challenges. This advocacy toolkit was developed to assist school social workers in educating parents, teachers, school administrators, boards of education and the greater community about the essential and unique role they play in meeting educational goals and standards. Advocating for adequate school social work services in our schools is an investment in our children's future.

This toolkit highlights key services school social workers provide to individual students and the greater school community, including the provision of crisis and ongoing supportive counseling services to students, assisting teachers directly in the classroom, and engaging families.

School social workers' unique perspective and training supports compliance with Federal and New York State educational mandates through the development and implementation of school-wide responses to issues including school attendance, safety planning, bullying, social and emotional learning (SEL), response to intervention (RTI) and student discipline.

This innovative resource was developed by the New York State School Social Work Task Force, which was convened by Dr. Peter Chernack, President of the New York State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NYS). The Task Force was comprised of collaborative partners from the School Social Work Association of America, the National Association of Social Workers, the New York State School Social Workers Association, and School Social Workers as well as other social work leaders. We extend our appreciation for their respective contributions to this project. Our intent was to create a resource to better prepare school social workers to advocate for themselves by articulating the value of school social work services, increase the visibility and awareness of school social work practice, and strengthen and expand access to school social work services throughout New York State by disseminating this information along with their own personal experience and evidence about the efficacy of school social work services to school district administrators, boards of education, elected representatives and the media.

## WHO ARE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS?

It has been well documented that there are a multitude of factors—among them, poverty, substance abuse, community violence, emotional and physical health issues, early sexual activity and family conflicts that conspire to make it difficult for some young people to make it through school. Such issues are beyond the scope and purview of teachers, and that's where school social workers come in. They are the professionals best equipped to address the social and psychological issues that can block academic progress. Through counseling, crisis intervention and prevention programs, school social workers help young people overcome the difficulties in their lives, and as a result, give them a better chance at succeeding in school. School social workers are trained to think of innovative solutions to complex problems, and their interventions often make a strong difference for young people at risk for academic failure.

School Social Workers bring a unique professional knowledge base and skill set to the school system and the pupil personnel services team. They are instrumental in furthering the mission of schools to provide a conducive setting for teaching, learning, and the attainment of competence and confidence. School Social Workers enhance a district's ability to meet its academic mission, by maintaining and enhancing the mental, emotional, behavioral, cognitive and social functioning of student learners.

School social work services promote the development of a school environment that supports a sense of belonging and connectedness, the development of positive relationships, enhanced self-esteem and empowerment that benefits the student, the school and broader community.

School social workers are effective members of the interdisciplinary team of Pupil Personnel Service (PPS) professionals and bring their specialized skills, abilities and a systems perspective to act as a consultant to teachers, parents and others to facilitate the understanding of how factors in the home, school and community affect student learner outcome.

School social workers have master's degrees in social work. They have special expertise in understanding family and community systems and linking students and their families with community services essential to promote student success. School social workers' training includes specialized preparation in cultural diversity, systems theory, social justice, risk assessment and intervention, consultation and collaboration, and clinical intervention strategies to address the mental health needs of students. They work to remedy barriers to learning created as a result of poverty, inadequate health care, and neighborhood violence. School social workers often focus on providing supports to vulnerable populations of students at high risk for truancy and dropping out of school, such as homeless, foster, and migrant children, students transitioning between school and treatment programs or the juvenile justice system, or students experiencing domestic violence. They work with teachers, administrators, parents, and other educators to provide coordinated interventions and consultation designed to keep students in school and help families access the supports needed to promote student success.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to having a master's degree in social work, school social workers must also be a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in order to obtain Permanent Certification as a School Social Worker in New York State. School Social Workers are the only Pupil Personnel Services profession that requires licensing in addition to teaching certification.

## WHAT DO SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS DO?

School social workers engage in a wide range of services that include:

- Identifying biological, psychological, cultural, sociological, emotional, economic, and environmental factors that impact student learning.
- Implementing appropriate school intervention and prevention programs in response to demonstrated needs, which may include but not be limited to crisis intervention, conflict resolution, violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, child abuse prevention, positive self-image building, social skills and character education via consultation and/or individual, group and/or family counseling or classroom lessons.
- Offering classroom management strategies and professional development programs to teachers to enhance their knowledge of social/emotional and behavioral needs to generate positive results in academics.
- Forming collaborative relationships with community agencies and practitioners to address needs of student learners.
- Conducting assessments, educational planning and transition services.
- Understanding theories of normal and exceptional development in early childhood, latency, adolescence, and early adulthood and their application to all students.
- School social workers who are licensed as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) can diagnose mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities. Licensed Clinical Social Workers also administer and interpret tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, develop and implement appropriate assessment based treatment plans, provide behavior therapy and psychotherapy.
- Utilizing family strengths and structures to enable families to function in ways that support their children's education and well being.
- Incorporating diversity issues to plan for the unique educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Providing resources and information pertaining to community services/agencies and making referrals to appropriate agencies.<sup>2</sup>



## THE VALUE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

### Engagement

The concept that students need to be “engaged” in order to learn has been written about for decades but when we look into classrooms today, we are still likely to see the “banking model” (Paulo Freire) of teaching, where the student is seen as an empty vessel and the teacher’s role is to make deposits of information. Public education is struggling with how to incorporate the concept of engagement, making sure that the student’s mind is open to learning and participating in the process of learning as a social interaction, into the traditional models of instruction.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development launched the Whole Child Initiative in 2007 and one of the key tenets is that “each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.”<sup>3</sup> School social workers engage students, formally and informally, to help them feel connected with the school community. They do so by having lunch with students who may need help with peer relations or just need someone to confide in about his or her parents separating. They see regular education students and students with IEPs for individual and/or group counseling with the primary focus on concerns that impact their academic progress. School social workers have created mentoring programs, service learning clubs and other after school activities with the purpose of engaging otherwise isolated or disengaged students. School social workers also go into classrooms to engage students in learning social thinking skills and emotional regulation skills. They are trained to see each student as an individual with physical, social, emotional and possibly mental health needs and to also see them as part of a larger system.

The school social worker considers home and community environmental factors that can have an adverse impact on the student, such as bullying, neglect, abuse, partner abuse and domestic violence, substance abuse and dependency, poverty, homelessness, or mental health issues of family members. School social workers are typically the ones with the training to handle cases involving suspected child abuse and neglect. Calling in a report may initially appear to be a simple decision and act but in fact is a complicated process with many consequences that need to be considered and managed in the most mindful and skillful ways possible. School social workers are sensitive to the relationships between the student and staff as well as the ones between the guardian and their child and with the staff. The physical safety of the child is of course paramount but we know that there are consequences that come with making reports to the child abuse and neglect hotline that will need to be addressed in order for that child to survive the incident and to hopefully thrive despite the incident. We understand that reports inevitably harm the relationships the student and parent have with the school and conscious efforts need to be made to repair them.

School social workers are trained to engage in order to help and support. In the school setting, this often requires engaging the staff and not just the student. As schools struggle to move away from the “banking model” of teaching to one that is sensitive to the social and emotional learning (SEL) needs of students and student engagement, staff are feeling the pressures with this shift. The school culture has traditionally been punitive, often using the term “zero tolerance”, yet staff are asked to consider the SEL needs of the student. They are also being evaluated with the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) that uses the test scores of their students as one of the indicators of their teaching effectiveness. The school social worker is sometimes, if not often, caught in the middle. An example of this might be when a student who was dysregulated and has acted inappropriately in class is removed and sent to see the school social worker in order to help the student de-escalate and return to a rational and emotionally stable state. One goal of most districts is to reduce suspension rates and to maintain

their students in school and so the student is often brought back to the class. A teacher may see this as an opportunity to reprimand the student in front of their peers, or demand an immediate apology for their previous disruption of the class. This can sometimes trigger a repeat of what had happened earlier. Engaging the staff in this process is essential if we are to shift away from punitive models to positive intervention models and possibly towards what are called trauma sensitive schools.<sup>4</sup> We are beginning to hear trauma used to describe chronic adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and not just in reference to one traumatic experience.<sup>5</sup>

Teachers are asked to take into consideration what the student brings with them to class while simultaneously struggling to learn how to teach according to the new common core standards, sometimes without textbooks to rely on, with scripted lessons and on a schedule that they have little control over. School social workers are sensitive to the needs of staff when the goal is to create safe and supportive learning environments for students. They recognize that staff must also feel safe and supported in order to function at their highest level.

Educators acknowledge the critical need to engage parents and schools often instruct their staff to make “happy calls”, rather than only calling when a student needs to be disciplined. Beyond these calls, there is little time for teachers to engage parents, yet we know the importance of parental involvement and support in student achievement. It is a natural role for school social workers to facilitate parent engagement with family systems theory being an essential element of their education. We are trained not to blame but to understand and to work with the family as they are and motivate them to do better. In the earlier grades, it is the school social worker who is often tasked with reaching out to families when attendance and tardiness are becoming issues, when homework is not returned, when parents do not attend parent teacher conferences and other meetings requiring their participation and support. School social workers, in some districts, may be the one to make the home visit to establish a connection with the parent or guardian, engaging them in the process of their child’s education. Learning issues often have familial roots and families of students with special needs are sometimes more challenging to engage because of their own negative experiences with schools. The school social worker can be the district’s physical link to a parent or guardian who does not trust the school or simply does not have the resources to travel to the school. The school social worker may also be the one who discovers that the parent or guardian does not have the ability to support the student academically because of their own cognitive, educational, psychiatric or financial limitations and can help the family find other resources in the community and at school.

## **Combating Absenteeism**

According to a 2012 report on absenteeism by John Hopkins School of Education’s Center for Social Organization of Schools, “chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy or average daily attendance – the attendance rate schools use for state report cards and federal accountability. Chronic absenteeism means missing 10 percent of a school year for any reason. A school can have average daily attendance of 90 percent and still have 40 percent of its students chronically absent, because on different days, different students make up that 90 percent.”<sup>6</sup>

One of the key points inferred by this study was that chronic absenteeism starts early... in kindergarten. School social workers are often the ones asked to address absenteeism at this age by working with the parents. At this age, it is the parent who is responsible for getting the student to school and on time, even if the child does not want to attend. While a behavioral plan can be developed for the student, the issue is often with the parent. A child protective services report for educational neglect may produce a short period of improvement, until the case is closed. What typically happens after closing the case is that the family reverts back to their former pattern. Engaging parents is critical to changing



the pattern. The school social worker has the training to work with parents and the knowledge regarding schools and academic expectations to communicate with parents about the short term as well as about the long term benefits and consequences of absenteeism and tardiness. They also have the expertise to understand that these are symptoms of deeper issues while the school social worker's role is not to "treat" the family they are trained to work with families in identifying the issues and to develop solutions, which may involve linking them with the appropriate community resources.

Absenteeism and truancy in the upper grades requires different interventions. Some students may be so far behind academically that they are unlikely to graduate even if they attended school. Others may have a learning disability that was never acknowledged because their grades were blamed on their poor attitude and non-compliant behavior. Some students may be depressed or chemically dependent; there are myriad reasons. Whatever the potential cause, the student needs to be engaged with someone at the school who can properly assess the causal factor(s) be they biological (ie chemical dependency, lack of sleep due to work or excessive video games), social (i.e. bullying in school, homelessness), emotional (i.e. depressed,) and/or academic (the work may be too difficult or is taught in a way that does not match the student's learning style). The school social worker's role is to engage the student, have him or her identify the problem from their perspective, explore what motivates the student and to develop a plan with realistic goals. In cases when the student is not at all engaged, and the parents have no influence over the student's behavior, community resources may need to be brought in, such as PINS and PINS Diversion (Person In Need of Supervision). In this case, it is still important to engage the parents in the process.

## **Assessment and Administration of RTI**

"Response To Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom."<sup>7</sup> In regards to behavior, students may be universally screened when they enter kindergarten but beyond that point, assessments typically occur only when a problem has surfaced.

"There are several reasons why integrating academic and behavior supports (particularly in the area of reading) could lead to improved student outcomes. First, there is a documented connection between low academic skills and problem behavior, which may be evident as early as kindergarten but grows over time as students move from elementary to secondary school."<sup>8</sup> "Because of the importance of reading skills and social competence, students facing challenges in both areas are at an exponentially higher risk for negative school outcomes."<sup>7</sup>

Second, there is evidence that problems in one area (reading and behavior) can predict future problems in other areas. Poor academic skills early in school predict a wide range of behavior problems, because students who have difficulty with reading may find problem behavior as an effective means of escaping or avoiding reading activities.<sup>8</sup> Students may engage in problem behaviors because the academic activity may be too difficult, too easy, or not relevant to student needs or interests. McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, and Good (2006) found that kindergarteners with phonological awareness skills, as measured through the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Phoneme Segmentation Fluency subtest (Good & Kaminski, 2002), indicated low risk for reading problems (at least 35 sounds) had an 18% chance of receiving two or more Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>8</sup> Students scoring in the same risk range (between 10 and 35 sounds) had a 25% chance of having multiple ODRs. Students with scores in the at-risk range (below 10 points) had a 33% chance of multiple ODRs in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Moreover, a replication study indicated that students who entered school with phonological awareness deficits but responded to kindergarten reading instruction were at dramatically decreased

risk for future problem behavior.<sup>8</sup> Similar results have also been found for the effects of early reading challenges on depression in middle school, as students with reading challenges were at increased risk for depression in later grades.<sup>8</sup>

“RTT’s problem solving, tiered approach is a natural fit that allows the school social worker to extend more services to the general education student in an effort to prevent or resolve problems, strengthen student skills, and potentially avoid the consideration of special education need. With the shift to better behavioral and achievement outcomes for all students, school social workers may be able to reallocate their time in favor of stronger and more extensive prevention efforts, helping students to identify fully and clearly with the general education population. The intent of RTI is to prevent and resolve student problems at early stages to enhance their educational experiences. School Social Workers partnered with school administration help to bridge the school community partnership to ensure that every student receives the same quality foundation of support systems.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Building Community Connections**

School social workers are the “go to” people for community resources. Administrators, teachers, parents, students and other staff seek advice and suggestions from the school social worker. Referrals are not just sought for students but are sometimes sought by co-workers for themselves. Physical health, mental health and chemical dependency issues are ubiquitous. School social workers who have engaged staff become resources for the entire school community.

This role involves:

1. Maintaining current information of available community resources, ranging from mental health services and which insurance plans are accepted, dental and vision providers who accept Medicaid, food banks, parent education and support groups for those dealing with cancer, death, autism etc.
2. Maintaining contact information and relationships with the staff at various community resources helps to facilitate referrals. Agencies are sometimes more responsive to the school social worker calling than to a parent calling.
3. Staying current on admissions criteria and procedures for mental health crisis assessments and hospitalization when needed. School social workers can facilitate the process when they have engaged the parent and student, trust has been established that what is being recommended is in the best interest of the student and family, and they know what to expect at the hospital or clinic. They are better able to predict when a referral for possible hospitalization is warranted and when it might only lead to a lengthy emergency room visit with a referral to an outpatient clinic as the discharge plan.

The list of community services and resources is not static. In many communities there has been an increase of food pantries and a decrease in mental health services, especially child psychiatric services, and other programs serving children such as Big Brothers Big Sisters. Making community connections starts with the challenge of engaging the family and student so that they are open to discussing their needs, motivated to address their concerns, become receptive to services and then linking them to the services that are currently available to address their needs. Removing barriers to accessing community services helps to insure that families are able to follow through with referrals. The intake process however can be lengthy, and sometimes involves a series of contact people, and families often needed continued support from the school social worker until their connection with the community service provider is more secure.

## **Provision of Mental Health Counseling**

All NYS Permanent Certified School Social Workers are licensed as a LMSW or LCSW, which legally qualifies them to provide mental health counseling services. When counseling services are included in a student's IEP, school districts can bill for Medicaid reimbursement for such services when delivered by a NYS Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and a NYS Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) "under the supervision of" a NYS Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a NYS licensed and currently registered psychologist, or a NYS licensed and currently registered psychiatrist.<sup>10</sup>

Psychological counseling services may only be billed to Medicaid if provided by a professional whose credentials are comparable to those of providers who are able to furnish psychological counseling services in the community. Consequently school districts that bill Medicaid for such services typically assign IEP mandated counseling cases to the school social worker because master's level school psychologists and school counselors are not considered a qualified (reimbursable) provider by Medicaid.

## **School Social Workers Promote Safe Schools**

The Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act [New York State Educational Law], requires every school district to develop a district-wide safety plan as well as a plan specific to each building addressing crisis intervention and emergency response, each of which must be approved by the New York Board of Education and filed with the New York State Education Department annually. Within these plans, districts are required to describe appropriate prevention and intervention strategies implemented within their schools.

The NASW Standards for School Social Work Services states the role of a School Social Worker is to "seek to ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom; and to promote respect and dignity for all students."<sup>11</sup> A charge that is in sync with the planning, promotion and implementation of safe school initiatives. School Social Workers extensive training in mental health, collaboration, multi-level assessment and intervention, policy development, crisis management, complex problem solving methods, community outreach and the ability to work within tight budgets and time constraints make them a reliable and versatile asset to school districts where they are often at the forefront of creating and implementing district safety plans. In some counties the leadership of school social workers in developing safe and efficient protocols for emergencies has led to their inclusion not only in building and district level safety plans, but also a member on their county's emergency response crisis team.

School Social Workers typically hold an in-depth knowledge of the shifting dynamics among students. This understanding lends to a comprehensive and relevant approach to developing safety plans. School social workers hold expertise in providing mental health support and services that are critical in successful prevention of crises as well as during and after crisis incidents. Using a multi-tiered approach that is evidence based, school social workers are able to assess, intervene and follow up with students in need of support. The early detection of potentially violent behaviors addressed in both the district and school safety plans is a primary focus for school social workers. Successful school safety plans are contingent on improving communication among students, families, school staff and the community as well as increasing a feeling of school connectedness and belonging. These concepts are the backbone of the school social workers' principles and expertise.

Aside from large scale incidents such as school shootings, which garner public attention and prompt legislation such as SAVE to be written, crises of varying degrees occur daily in our schools. A crisis can be a 5 year old who has tried to run away from school along with other defiant behaviors; flooding that

has caused families to become suddenly homeless; a student who has threatened to blow up the school; a threat of suicide; the death of a student; the sexual assault of a student by another student. Schools are experiencing crises on a daily basis. School social workers are the licensed and qualified mental health professionals in a school district who can expertly respond to potential and actual crisis situations through the provision of a range of services such as:

- Interviewing parents for a social history in order to gain insight regarding the student's behavior;
- Development of a behavior plan to keep the student safely in school and to engage the student in academic activities;
- When the cause of the behavior warrants it a referral may be made for parenting services, outside therapy for the parent and the child, or to a mediation program for the parents if there is conflict between them that is contributing to the child's behavior, etc.;
- Conducting a risk assessment for suicidality vs. self-injurious behavior without suicidality, etc. and determining the appropriate intervention, whether it be a psychiatric evaluation at the nearest facility that provides emergency mental health evaluations or working with the family to establish an outpatient treatment plan;
- Re-entry services for when a student returns from a hospitalization, residential program or suspension for having made a threat to others;
- Deliver counseling when there has been a death, especially by suicide.

**B**ULLYING is an issue school social workers are often called upon to respond to in part because of the significant impact bullying has on students' mental health. Involvement in bullying as a target, aggressor, or witness impacts students' thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about themselves, and also affects their social competence, behaviors, and peer status.<sup>12</sup> Students who are involved in bullying have been found to have higher rates of suicidal ideation and behavior<sup>13</sup> and may be more prone to psychiatric disorders than children not involved in bullying.<sup>14</sup>

Bullying is often understood as an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse that includes physical or verbal aggression that takes place over time with the intent to exert power and domination over another individual.<sup>15</sup> Using this definition, about 23% of children are impacted by bullying.<sup>16</sup> When violence and harassment are considered without the requirement of an ongoing pattern, prevalence rates have been noted as high as 55%.<sup>17</sup>

The concern about bullying and other forms of harassment and discrimination has led to New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA),<sup>18</sup> enacted in 2012 and updated in 2013. DASA is intended to ensure that all students have a safe and supportive learning environment. DASA protects students against harassment and discrimination on school property or at a school function based on race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex. A 2013 update of DASA specifies that cyberbullying that takes place outside of school is included as the schools' responsibility when it could create a risk of significant disruption at school.

A school environment that is free from harassment and discrimination must now be reflected in the Code of Conduct, curriculum, and employee training. In addition, each school must identify a staff person who functions as the Dignity Act Coordinator. School administration must investigate and respond to incidents in a timely manner, and all incidents of bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination

must be reported to the New York State Education Department each year. Because of their training in cultural sensitivity, ability to engage students and elicit information in a safe and supportive environment, school social workers serve as DASA Coordinators in many districts.

School social workers are fundamental in all aspects of implementing DASA requirements in schools. Key activities include:

- Leading employee education/professional development workshops on bullying prevention;
- Providing bullying prevention curriculum to students;
- Acting as the DASA Coordinator for the school;
- Developing processes to monitor reports of bullying and harassment;
- Providing mental health services to students involved in bullying; and
- Facilitating restorative justice processes in the school community to maintain safe school environments.

In addition to serving in the role of DASA Coordinator, school social workers are often play a key role in compliance with Federal and State laws regarding the reporting/ tracking of violent incidents in schools. Federal law requires each state to monitor public schools to determine which are considered persistently dangerous, to that end New York State requires that all districts annually submit a record of each reportable violent or disruptive incident through the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting System (VADIR). Schools must report on VADIR incidents of severe conduct infractions, assaults, reckless endangerment, minor altercations, intimidations, harassment, menacing or bullying and various criminal acts.

School social workers are typically aware of issues among their student body which may or may not be reportable on VADIR and often hold additional pertinent information about relationships and psychological history about those involved that can enhance the investigation and reporting process, are well equipped to handle serious situations and conduct issues, including crisis situations and can implement recommendations such as counseling for both victim(s) and perpetrator(s).

School social workers are highly skilled in identifying needs, strengths and gaps in present functioning of school safety and the education and training needed to implement school-wide evidence-based programs and strategies that have proven effective in preventing violent and disruptive behaviors. School social workers have the collaborative skills necessary to ensure students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members are aware of warning signs of violence and can implement effective strategies in addressing the mental health needs of the students. In a school's efforts to promote safe schools, school social workers are a critical asset in creating a positive, successful learning environment. This vital role of the school social worker has been underscored by the **NYS Education Department's Safe Schools Task Force** in September 2014 when it submitted to the Regents P-12 Education Committee its final recommendations which had been culled from a multi-phased review process which took place from 2013-2014. The resulting 36 recommendations put forth by the task force in order of importance determined that **the number one priority was to "advocate for the investment in and expansion of support staff in schools, including school social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses and school attendance staff."**



## THE DELIVERY OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN NEW YORK STATE: POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In recent years, school districts across New York State have proposed an array of budgetary and programmatic changes that impact the availability and delivery of school social work services, including the creation of contractual agreements for the delivery of “related services” by community mental health providers, the reduction of the number of school social workers employed by a district resulting in staffing ratios far above recommended practice standards or the total elimination of all school social work services and transference of those work tasks to other new or existing pupil personnel service providers whose education, training and scope of practice are not interchangeable with that of a certified school social worker. The NYS School Social Work Task force has identified and highlighted in this section a few key factors to consider when undertaking decision-making that will impact school social work services.

### Distinguishing School Social Workers from other Pupil Personnel Service Providers

In order to become a permanently certified school social worker through the NYSED Office of Teaching Initiatives, one must also be a LMSW or LCSW under the New York State Education Department Office of the Professions. Licensure which establishes a scope of practice legally protected under Article 154 of the New York State Education Law. Other pupil personnel services employees such as guidance counselors or school counselors cannot legally perform all of the scope protected functions of a NYS licensed social worker, most notably mental health counseling (See Appendix A: School Social Worker/School Counselor Quick Comparison).

The scope of practice of an **LMSW** includes:

- utilizing methods to prevent, assess, evaluate, formulate and implement a plan of action based on client needs and strengths,
- intervening to address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities, and of the psychosocial aspects of illness and injury experienced by individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society, and
- engaging in administration of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, social work advocacy, case management, counseling, consultation, research, administration and management, and teaching.

The scope of practice of an **LCSW** encompasses the scope of practice of the LMSW and is also qualified for:

- diagnosis of mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities and of the psychosocial aspects of illness, injury, disability and impairment undertaken within a psychosocial framework;
- administration and interpretation of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning; development and implementation of appropriate assessment-based treatment plans; and
- the provision of crisis oriented psychotherapy and brief, short-term and long-term psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic treatment to individuals, couples, families and groups, habilitation, psychoanalysis and behavior therapy.



In New York State, each board of education must provide “related services” (which may include school social work) as part of the continuum of special services and programs available to students with disabilities to enable such students to benefit from instruction.

Education Law §4401 [k] defines “related services” as:

*k. Related services which shall in appropriate cases be furnished to students with disabilities shall include audiology, counseling including rehabilitation counseling services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech pathology, medical services as defined by regulations of the commissioner, psychological services, school health services, school social work, assistive technology services as defined under federal law, orientation and mobility services, parent counseling and training and other appropriate developmental, corrective or other support services and appropriate access to recreation.*

In addition to the definition of “related services,” the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education Section 200.6(b)(3) states:

Related services [including school social work] shall be provided by individuals with appropriate certification or license in each area of related service.

The NYSED Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) issues separate certifications for School Psychologists, School Attendance Teachers, School Counseling and School Social Workers in recognition that each have distinct and unique training requirements, skill sets and respective responsibilities which are not interchangeable especially given that the School Social Work Certification is the only of these OTI certifications that also requires licensure and as noted in the above referenced regulation, related services shall be provided by appropriately qualified providers within that service area. Consequently, only a NYS Certified School Social Worker may provide school social work services.

## **School & Community Mental Health Agency Partnerships**

There are initiatives that involve partnerships between schools and community providers such as in the Preschool/School Supportive Health Services Program (SSHSP) or other such collaborative initiatives. Psychological counseling services may be a component of such agreements to promote greater access when warranted to more intensive psychotherapy services that address issues beyond those directly related to improving student academic performance. However guidance issued by the NYS Office of Mental Health (Social Workers in Schools and Article 31 Mental Health Clinics) and the NYS Education Department clearly stipulate that such actions are not intended to supplant the availability of school social work services. In regards to contracting with community providers for the provision of ‘related services,’ this may only be done under certain circumstances.

### **Social Workers in Schools and Article 31 Mental Health Clinics**

Excerpted from: “*A Primer on the NYS Children’s Mental Health System for Local Education Leaders*”

“In order to acquire permanent certification, School Social Workers must be LMSWs or LCSWs. The majority of clinicians in Article 31 clinics are LMSWs and LCSWs. Because of this similarity in licensure credentials, it might appear that school districts could look to Article 31 clinicians to perform the work of School Social Workers, but that is not the case. **Under certain circumstances (discussed in more detail below), school districts may contract with**

**Article 31 clinics for clinical social work services, but, under no circumstances can schools supplant the services of a School Social Worker by contracting with an Article 31 clinic or any other entity or person. This is a critical issue and care should be taken to assure all staff that the intent of the partnership is to increase access to school and community supports, not to replace one staff with the other.**

The primary reason for this lies in the training and certification of the School Social Worker position in New York State as part of the teaching and supervisory staff of public school districts by virtue of the definition of the function of the School Social Worker as wholly or principally supporting the function of teaching. This distinction means that individuals who perform the responsibilities of a School Social Worker must be employed by a school district or by a BOCES.

People sometimes have trouble distinguishing between what a School Social Worker does and what a clinician in a school-based mental health clinic does. Both may provide counseling services to children individually and in groups; both may conduct outreach to and work extensively with parents, and the work of both often includes interacting with teachers and other school staff. **The crux of the difference between the two is that the work of the SSW is undertaken with the specific and primary intent of helping children to learn. The work of Article 31 clinicians may also help children succeed in school, but the focus is generally broader than that. The narrower focus of the School Social Worker requires a specialization which must be acquired through an experience requirement (for permanent certification), namely, at least two years Pupil Personnel Services experience.** This experience provides knowledge and skills which are critical to the function of helping teachers address the special needs of children in relation to learning.

There are times, however, when the work of a School Social Worker may need to be supplemented by a mental health clinician. Because of supervisory and other requirements, School Social Workers may not be qualified to provide clinical social work services. In the event that a Committee on Special Education determines that a child with a disability requires clinical social work services to meet the goals of his or her IEP, the school district may contract with an Article 31 clinic, to provide such services as a related service in the event that school district personnel, including the School Social Worker, are unable to provide the needed service. Clinics with whom a school district contracts for such services should be aware of Medicaid billing requirements for students with IEPs under the School Supportive Health Services Program (SSHSP). Clinics should discuss these requirements with the school district and/or with staff at the Division of Child and Family Services in the NYS Office of Mental Health to avoid double billing.”<sup>19</sup>

In their *Frequently Asked Questions Related to Contracts for Instruction* the NYS Education Department’s Office of Counsel indicates that **school districts may, in limited circumstances and with qualified individuals over whom the district has supervisory control, contract for the provision of special education “related services” for which a certification area exists and to which tenure rights apply pursuant to Education Law and/or Commissioner’s regulations.**

“Pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”), school districts are required to provide students with disabilities with a free appropriate public education (“FAPE”). A board of education must provide related services as part of the continuum of special services and programs available to students with disabilities to enable such students to benefit from instruction (see Education Law §4401[2][k]; 8 NYCRR §200.1[qq]). Related services include: audiology, counseling including reha-

bilitation counseling services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech pathology, certain medical services, psychological services, school health services, school nurse services, **school social work**, assistive technology services, interpreting services, orientation and mobility services, parent counseling and training and other appropriate developmental, corrective or other support services and appropriate access to recreation (20 USC §1401[26]; Education Law §4401[2][k]).

In Appeal of Barker and Pitcher, the Commissioner held that school districts do not have general authority to contract with non-profit entities to provide related services (Appeal of Barker and Pitcher, 45 Ed Dept Rep 430, Decision No. 15,375). However, that case involved a school district that abolished a tenured school social worker position and then contracted with a for-profit corporation to provide similar services (Appeal of Barker and Pitcher, 45 Ed Dept Rep 430, Decision No. 15,375). Thus, the Barker decision was based in part on consideration of the board of education's need to exercise supervisory control over instructional staff and in part on the negative impact that contracting with a private entity to deliver related services would have on the tenure rights of certified school district employees. **Contracting out cannot be used as a vehicle for evading the tenure laws or the requirements that teachers be duly certified.**

However, school districts also have obligations under the IDEA and Article 89 of the Education Law to deliver the services necessary to ensure that students with disabilities receive FAPE. The Department recognizes that there will be situations in which school districts will not be able to deliver FAPE to students with disabilities without contracting with independent contractors. **Where a school district is unable to provide the related services on a student's individualized education program ("IEP") in a timely manner through its employees because of shortages of qualified staff or the need to deliver a related service that requires specialized expertise not available from school district employees, the board of education has authority under Education Law §§1604(30), 1709(33), 2503(3), 2554(15)(a) and 4402(2)(b) to enter into contracts with qualified individuals as employees or independent contractors to provide those related services** (see also §§1804[1], 1805, 1903[1], 2503[1], 2554[1]). Section 200.6(b)(3) of the Commissioner's regulations requires that related services be provided by individuals with appropriate certification or license in each area of related service. Consistent with the holding in Appeal of Barker and Pitcher, in order to ensure that such arrangements are not used to circumvent New York State's teacher tenure laws, **a school district must document that it would retain supervisory control over the individual and that, despite reasonable efforts, it has been unable to provide such services** by hiring new employees or utilizing existing employees, or through any of the contractual arrangements authorized by Education Law §4401(2), including contracts with other school districts, BOCES, approved state or state-supported schools, and approved private residential and nonresidential schools both inside and outside New York State.

Finally, **school districts that, after exhausting the steps outlined above, find it necessary to contract with individuals should do so only for a period of one school year at a time.** Before any such contract can be extended, or a new contract entered, school districts must again take reasonable efforts to provide such services as described above."<sup>20</sup>

## Reimbursement for Certified School Social Worker Counseling Services

School districts can only bill Medicaid for IEP mandated counseling services delivered by the following qualified providers: NYS licensed and currently registered psychiatrist; NYS licensed and currently registered psychologist; NYS licensed clinical social worker (LCSW); or NYS licensed master social worker (LMSW), “under the supervision of” a NYS licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), a NYS licensed and currently registered psychologist, or a NYS licensed and currently registered psychiatrist. Psychological counseling services may only be billed to Medicaid if provided by a professional whose credentials are comparable to those of providers who are able to furnish psychological counseling services in the community. Master’s level school psychologists are not considered a qualified (reimbursable) provider by Medicaid.<sup>21</sup>

## Staffing Ratios

All too often School Social Workers spend the majority of their time exclusively in the delivery of mental health counseling to students whose IEP stipulates those services, leaving little if any time to deliver a more comprehensive array of school social work interventions to create a safe and positive social and emotional learning environment that supports the NYS Education Department’s expectations for student academic achievement. It is recommended by the NASW Standards for School Social Work Services that “the local education agency should establish and implement a school social worker-to-student population ratio to ensure reasonable workload expectations. The local education agency should provide school social work services at a level that is sufficient to address the nature and extent of student needs. Appropriate ratios for school social work staff to students depend on the characteristics and needs of the student population to be served, as well as other resources in the local education agency and community available to address these needs.

Each local or state education agency should establish adequate levels and types of school social work services on the basis of comprehensive needs assessment data. School social work services should be provided at a ratio of one school social worker to each school building serving up to 250 general education students, or a ratio of 1:250 students. When a school social worker is providing services to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio, such as 1:50, is suggested.”<sup>22</sup>

## SUMMARY

Nearly one million children in New York State live at or below the poverty level. The academic disparity in high school graduation rates between students from low need districts (over 94%) and those from high need urban-suburban districts (65.9%) is nearly 30%. Students who experience housing instability or homelessness, food insecurity or other factors associated with childhood poverty or such issues as family discord, social pressures and bullying, physical or mental illness, developmental disability, abuse or neglect that affect children of all socio-economic statuses are at-risk for academic difficulties.

School social workers contribute to the academic mission of schools by fostering educational environments that are safe; have supportive, fair, and responsive policies; mitigate barriers to learning; and emphasize early intervention and positive behavioral interventions. School social workers provide a critical link between school, home, and the community; helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence. The long term ramifications of allowing the needs of academically vulnerable students to go unaddressed in terms of dollars and cents is exponentially more costly to us as a society than committing to retain adequate ratios of social workers to meet the student needs present in our schools today. The time to invest in our children’s future is now.

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## Appendix A: School Social Worker/School Counselor Quick Comparison

Minimum Requirements	CERTIFIED SCHOOL COUNSELOR	CERTIFIED SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER (LMSW)	CERTIFIED SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER (LCSW)
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of a NYS Registered Program for School Counselor institution of higher education or from an institution authorized by SED;</li> <li>60 semester hours of approved graduate study in the field of school counseling. K-12 setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Masters Degree - 60 semester hours of graduate study, or no more than half the total semester hours granted to advanced standing BSWs, from a social work program that is authorized by SED or by a regional accrediting agency</li> <li>900 clock hours of supervised internship integrated with the prescribed curricular content</li> </ul>	Encompasses educational requirements of LMSW with the additional requirement of no less than 12 semester hours of clinical coursework
<b>Curriculum*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>counseling theory and practice</li> <li>diagnostic tools for measurement</li> <li>vocational guidance</li> <li>community resources and relationships</li> <li>strategies for preventing conflict and violence</li> <li>mainstreaming</li> <li>educational psychology</li> <li>psychology of learning</li> <li>marriage and family</li> </ul> <p>For a full list of acceptable courses go to : <a href="http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/sc.html">http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/sc.html</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social work values and ethics;</li> <li>Diversity, social justice, and at-risk populations;</li> <li>Human behavior in the social environment;</li> <li>Social welfare policy and service delivery systems;</li> <li>Foundation and advanced social work practice;</li> <li>Social work practice evaluation and research</li> </ul>	<p>Clinical coursework must include content that emphasizes the person-in-environment perspective and knowledge and skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnosis and assessment in clinical social work practice;</li> <li>Clinical social work treatment; and</li> <li>Clinical social work practice with general and special populations</li> </ul>
<b>Post-Graduate Experience</b>	2 years of paid, full-time pupil personnel experience (Requirement for permanent certification).	2 years of paid, full-time pupil personnel experience (Requirement for permanent certification).	Includes LMSW post-graduate experience requirements for certification <u>AND</u> requires 2,000 hours of supervised experience in diagnosis, psychotherapy, and assessment based treatment planning over a minimum of 3 yrs or a maximum of 6 yrs in an SED approved setting
<b>Post Graduate Exam</b>	Not applicable	Pass the Social Work Licensure "Masters" Examination administered by the ASWB	Pass the Social Work Licensure "Clinical" Examination administered by the ASWB
<b>Additional Post-Graduate Requirements</b>	<p>Completion of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Abuse Identification workshop</li> <li>School violence prevention and intervention workshop</li> <li>Dignity for All Students Act workshop</li> </ul> <p>Fingerprint clearance Must be an INS Permanent Residence or retain US Citizenship</p>	<p>Completion of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Abuse Identification workshop</li> <li>School violence prevention and intervention workshop</li> <li>Dignity for All Students Act workshop</li> </ul> <p>Fingerprint clearance Must be an INS Permanent Residence or retain US Citizenship</p>	Includes the LMSW post-graduate requirements
<b>Certification</b>	Required, through NYSED OTI	Required, through NYSED OTI	Required, through NYSED OTI
<b>License</b>	Not Applicable	Required, (LMSW)	Required, (LCSW)
<b>Scope of Practice</b>	No scope of practice carved out in law. Charge of guidance programs included in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education Section 100.2	Delineated in Article 154 of NYS Education Law, reiterated in Commissioner's regulations Section 80-2.3(f)(3)	Delineated in Article 154 of NYS Education Law, reiterated in Commissioner's regulations Section 80-2.3(f)(3)
<b>Insurance Reimbursement</b>	School counselors are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement, CMS restricts services provided to Medicaid-eligible students to professionals whose credentials allow them to provide the same services outside of the school environment.	An LMSW may receive Medicaid reimbursement for psychological counseling services provided to each Medicaid beneficiary (student) under the appropriate clinical supervision.	An LCSW may receive Medicaid reimbursement for psychological counseling services provided to each Medicaid beneficiary (student).

\* The curriculum content of a social workers and a school counselor are so distinctly separate that social work courses are not accepted towards graduation for school counseling and school counseling courses are not accepted toward graduation for school social work.



## Appendix B: Sample Personal Letter to the Board of Education

Name  
Address  
Address

Dear Members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education;

As an educator in the \_\_\_\_\_ School District, I would like to respectfully request that you reconsider the elimination of School Social Workers from next year's budget. School Social Workers serve a unique and vital role in our schools that cannot be eliminated or replaced. Their extensive knowledge of education, school dynamics, the communities and cultures they serve are inherent to their unique training.

Within our schools, they support teachers by performing social, emotional and environmental assessments on students in need; consulting with teachers on the most effective strategies and participate in the creation of data driven interventions that directly impact student's academic performance and the classroom as a whole. They develop and implement school wide curriculum and programs that align with our NASW Standards and support student's emotional development. Thus ensuring we proactively build a healthy school climate for ALL children. In addition, when the district is faced with a crisis, the School Social Worker's unique training, expertise and licensure as a mental health provider and community practitioner allows them to provide counseling, crisis intervention, classroom strategies, and teacher support ensuring timely and successful outcomes.

School Social Workers have their greatest impact on those we have the most difficulty reaching. More of our children than we would like to admit come to school each day hungry, tired, unmotivated, angry, scared, and even abused-this is before they even set foot in our doors. There are many, who, as a result of these environmental stressors don't come to school at all. Our teachers work hard every day to educate children to their greatest potential, but many students in \_\_\_\_\_ District cannot achieve that potential because of these barriers, ultimately, affecting the entire student body and school community. It is our School Social Workers who are uniquely prepared to identify the needs of at risk youth, provide services to address such needs and act as the connective tissue to community supports. Based upon their relationships with the students, parents and community providers, they have a great deal of insight into effective interventions. They advocate through red tape to put supports in place outside of school and follow through. They create trust in a parent who may be fearful of the system due to prior negative experiences. They meet parents where they are emotionally and engage them in the process. They get consent forms signed, parents to come to conferences, a child a pair of glasses, an overwhelmed community caseworker to focus on a child, a parent to take the difficult step of hospitalizing a child for mental illness, a gang-recruited child into an after school or summer program, a disenfranchised teenager to come back to school. They follow-up and follow through, so that community resources work effectively and school resources are not wasted.

School Social Workers perform, inside and outside of the school day, all of the "small steps" that build student strengths and help them to meet the Standards. These small steps result in big impacts on the health of our schools. This is a unique service that cannot be lost or compensated for by other means, especially in a district of our need and current level of crisis. Please support the reinstatement of School Social Workers to our budget.

Respectfully,  
Name, Credentials, Title

## **Appendix C: Sample Testimony/ Statement to the Board of Education**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am here to testify about the proposed school social work cuts. School Social Workers are highly skilled educational professionals that are the only Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) professionals licensed by NYS in the area of mental health *and* hold a NYS teaching certificate. It is often thought that SSW's maintain a role that is unilateral with community based mental health services; however SSW is a specialized field in the area of education whose function is to assist students in meeting the NYS learning standards. The curriculum that SSW's provide aligns directly with the NYS learning standards, and is designed to build social emotional and coping skills that allow students to perform academically to their highest level. What makes SSW's unique from their peers is that they are the only PPS professionals that are also required to develop a knowledge base and skills in the broader areas of mental health and community services. This is an important distinction that has multiple positive outcomes in school districts; particularly in those which serve high-risk populations such as \_\_\_\_\_ District.

### **Research Based interventions**

As you are aware, NYS is requiring its school districts to implement research-based intervention programs such as RTI as a means of developing more efficient and effective means of targeting and supporting students at risk. RTI encompasses both academic and social behaviors; as both significantly impact a student's ability to perform their best in school. As licensed mental health professionals, SSW's currently serve a vital function on the RTI team as they are able to provide a comprehensive and systems-based assessment of student need and develop specific interventions that target those needs. Their professional knowledge of community and family systems allows them to determine quickly what needs can best be met through outside resources, and they have the established community connections to swiftly implement these resources and establish family commitment. This ensures that district resources are not wasted on interventions that can best be met elsewhere, or interventions based on inaccurate assumptions regarding a student's mental health or behavioral needs.

### **Reimbursement for services**

As licensed practitioners, SSW's are one of the few school professionals who can return funding to the school districts they serve because their counseling services are reimbursable by Medicaid.

### **School Violence**

Due to their experience and expertise in the provision of mental health services and their extensive reach into the communities, SSW's are highly equipped to create interventions that address school violence. They are trained in culturally competent practice and are sensitive to the degree to which culture impacts beliefs and behavior. SSW's understand the link between family, community, and schools and are active in the communities in which they serve. They serve on youth boards, participate in local events and have formed connections with local agencies, churches, community centers and law enforcement; working with them on ways to come together to address violence. Many have specific training in gang violence, and have built trusted relationships with students that allow them to avert violent acts on a regular basis.

### **Versatility**

Our district is a diverse district, and each school has varied and specific needs. What makes SSW's distinct and cost-effective is that their broad knowledge base and practice allows them to tailor their curriculum and interventions to meet the populations in which they serve. They perform school

needs assessments and can target their interventions and coordinate their responsibilities to make the biggest impact on that school's needs, whether it be school violence, attendance concerns, Special Education compliance, family involvement, or cultural understanding. They are frequently involved in high-impact programs that address mandates for Special Education or for at-risk populations and also encompass the needs of all students. They have the versatility to address prevention and intervention simultaneously, which results in fewer high-level (and high cost) interventions and referrals to Special Education. Many at-risk students are given a higher level of intervention based upon a lack of resources, understanding of environmental factors or appropriate creative plans to meet to their needs, and many also become entrenched in a disciplinary system. With their combined clinical skills, knowledge of culture and community, and connection to resources, SSW's are uniquely able to create programs and services in school that address the whole child and envelop high risk students in a school culture of positive behaviors that impacts everyone. This strengthens at-risk students, connects them to their peers and identifies students in need earlier, so that high level interventions can be prevented or lessened.

### **Attendance**

Children who do not attend school regularly not only suffer academically, but are proven to be at a significantly higher risk of delinquency and violence. SSW's are regularly tasked with attendance monitoring and engagement with truant students. It is a vital job function of many of our SSW's and rightly so as research shows a high correlation between absenteeism and dropout rates.

### **IEP Counseling**

Only SSW's and School Psychologists are able to provide mandated counseling services. Many SSW's provide this service in conjunction with the School Psychologists so that evaluations for special education can be completed in a timely manner and the district can work towards compliance. School Psychologists and SSW's have a vital partnership in the schools because they combine the SP's educational evaluative skills with the SSW's expertise in systems and community supports to address the needs of the whole child. SSW's are unique because, as licensed professionals, they are able to bill Medicaid for mandated IEP counseling services, returning revenue to the district.

As you can see, I have iterated for you, the broad breadth of vital tasks performed by school social workers and as such I respectfully request you recognize their vital importance in the districts and therefore, reevaluate the district's budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

## Appendix D: Sample Letter to the Editor

The \_\_\_\_\_ District Board of Education's proposed elimination of school social workers in the district as a cost saving measure would remove a vital safety net for its students. School social workers contribute to the academic mission of schools by fostering educational environments that are safe; have supportive, fair, and responsive policies; mitigate barriers to learning; and emphasize early intervention and positive behavioral interventions. School social workers provide a critical link between school, home, and the community; helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence.

A common misconception is that the services performed by school social workers can be assumed by guidance counselors, school psychologists or other pupil personnel services (PPS) providers. However the role of school social workers is distinctly separate, school social workers are the only PPS provider that is licensed by NYS in addition to possessing a school certification, with a scope of practice defined and protected under law. Other PPS providers cannot legally perform all of the scope protected functions of a licensed social worker. In addition, mental health counseling services provided by school social workers are in certain circumstances reimbursable by Medicaid, thus offering the opportunity to bring in revenue to the district.

While I recognize the tough fiscal decisions the district is currently facing, the long term ramifications of allowing the needs of academically vulnerable students to go unaddressed in terms of dollars and cents is exponentially more costly to us as a society than committing to retain adequate ratios of social workers to meet the student needs present in our schools today. The time to invest in our children's future is now. I strongly urge these decisions to be made with consideration of the laws related to the delivery of education related services and with the well being of students as the highest priority.

Respectfully submitted by,

Name, Credentials

Address & Contact information

### Visit the NASW Media Toolkit for Tips on:

- How to be Effective with Op-eds
- How to write a letter to the editor
- How to use Web 2.0 in your outreach efforts
- How to be a better spokesperson for yourself and for the profession

<https://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/mediaToolkit/default.asp>

## Appendix E: Memo of Opposition to Proposed Cuts to School Social Work Positions



National Association of Social Workers

SAMPLE DRAFT

### MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

The National Association of Social Workers New York State Chapter (NASW-NYS) strongly opposes the \_\_\_\_\_ School District's proposal to exact cuts in the area of mental health services provided within the school district and the accompanying elimination of school social work positions. Further, we strongly oppose the District's assertion that services performed by school social workers can be assumed by other pupil personnel service professionals.

The \_\_\_\_\_ School District currently employs \_\_\_\_ school social workers who provide services to approximately \_\_\_\_\_ students. Recently, it was proposed to eliminate \_\_\_\_ social worker position (s). The proposal is viewed as a cost saving measure, with the misconception that other pupil personnel services employees will compensate for the increased student to school social worker ratio by assuming many of the responsibilities and functions previously performed by school social workers.

The role of school social workers and other pupil personnel employees are distinctly separate. School social workers, in addition to possessing certification through the Office of Teaching Initiatives, are licensed by the New York State Board of Regents with a scope of practice legally protected under Article 154 of the New York State Education Law. Other pupil personnel services employees such as guidance counselors cannot legally perform all of the scope protected functions of a licensed social worker.

#### **The scope of practice of an LMSW includes:**

- utilizing methods to prevent, assess, evaluate, formulate and implement a plan of action based on client needs and strengths,
- intervening to address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities, and of the psychosocial aspects of illness and injury experienced by individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society, and
- engaging in administration of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, social work advocacy, case management, counseling, consultation, research, administration and management, and teaching.

#### **The scope of practice of a LCSW encompasses the scope of practice of the LMSW and is also qualified for:**

- diagnosis of mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities and of the psychosocial aspects of illness, injury, disability and impairment undertaken within a psychosocial framework;
- administration and interpretation of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning; development and implementation of appropriate assessment-based treatment plans; and

- the provision of crisis oriented psychotherapy and brief, short-term and long-term psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic treatment to individuals, couples, families and groups, habilitation, psychoanalysis and behavior therapy.

NASW-NYS recognizes the tough fiscal decisions with which the District's superintendent and board is currently challenged. However, we would contend that cutting supportive services to students (particularly our most vulnerable) will yield only negative results. School social workers are one of the few resources in schools for addressing personal and social problems known to interfere with students' ability to learn. They serve as a liaison between the school, home, and community and work with students, families, faculty, and administration to improve students' academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competencies while working to ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom, and promote respect and dignity for all students. This is achieved, in part, by providing:

- Counseling and crisis intervention,
- Case management to coordinate delivery of and access to appropriate school social work services,
- Addressing social, emotional, and mental health needs to ensure better school outcomes,
- Providing assistance to teachers in designing behavioral interventions,
- Home visits to meet the family of students in need of social work services in the home environment, and
- Working with students, families, schools, and communities to promote attendance and address causes of poor attendance. (Many of the problem issues present in schools today are intrinsically linked to school truancy, including poor academic performance and delinquent behaviors. School Social Workers unique person-in-environment approach is well suited to address truancy and identify the root cause of the problem issues; simultaneously addressing other socio-emotional issues and enabling the school to complete their primary mission of effectively educating students.)

We believe that school social work cuts will deprive your District's students, their families and school staff of these valuable resources, which are proven to support high standards in an academic environment, while potentially increasing risk and liability associated with the lack of adequate professional resources vital and necessary to the development and safety of the students, faculty, and community. NASW-NYS strongly urges the District to refrain from making cuts to valuable school social work positions.



If you are a NYS School Social Worker in a district proposing cuts to school social work positions, you may contact the NASW-NYS Chapter office to request a memo for your district's board of education. Send your request to: [Info@naswnys.org](mailto:Info@naswnys.org)



# NASW-NYS SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TASK FORCE

## Michael T. Cappiello, MSW, LCSW-R, Certified School Social Worker

*Task Force Chair*



Academic Credentials: MSW: CUNY-Hunter College, 2000. BA-Psychology, Hobart College, 1995, AAS-Social Sciences, SUNY Cobleskill, 1993. Training: New York Presbyterian, Weill Cornell Medical Center, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. NASW Member, 1998. Elected Board Representative: NASW-NYS Westchester Division. Board Appointment: Chair, NASW-NYS Chapter Advocacy and Government Relations Committee, Subcommittee Chair: School Social Work Task Force. A clinical social worker in private practice, Michael also practices school social work for the NYC Department of Education. Michael is also an active lay person in The Episcopal Church, and serves as a trustee of The Church Club of New York. He is interested in expanding the influence of social work in public and private sectors.

**Lisa V. Blitz, PhD, LCSW-R**, is a social worker, researcher, and educator with 25 years of experience in mental health and social justice centering on culturally responsive trauma-informed practice and organizational development. She is the co-editor of the book, *Racism and Racial Identity: Reflections on Urban Practice in Mental Health and Social Services*, and engages in participatory action research with urban and rural schools to address concerns that contribute to disproportionately negative outcomes for students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Social Work at Binghamton University, and associate director of the BU Institute for Intergenerational Studies Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships. Yull, D., Blitz, L. V., Thompson, T., & Murray, C. (in press). *Can we talk? Using community based participatory action research to build family and school partnerships with families of color*. *School Community Journal*.



**Karin Carreau, MSW**, is the Director of Policy for the New York State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. As such, she is responsible for the Chapter's highly successful legislative and political strategies, increasing and maintaining the Chapter's visibility on vital policy issues impacting the profession of social work and advancing legislative initiatives focused on social work career protection, workforce development and social justice issues of concern to the field. Some of her most notable achievements in this role have been the expansion of state's social work loan forgiveness program, protecting the professions scope of practice and licensing, initiating legislation expanding the arena's for social work practice and creating the Chapter's Veterans Mental Health Training Initiative, a replicable model that has now trained over 1600 mental health professionals in veterans specific issues. Carreau has taught social work policy at the State University of New York, Albany, provided legislative strategic consultation to other social work and non for profit organizations and been a guest lecturer at several colleges and universities. Carreau graduated from the State University of New York, Albany in 2000 with a B.S. in social welfare and in 2001, with a Masters of Social Work with a concentration in policy and administration.

**Sharon Issurdatt Dietsche, LICSW, LCSW-C** is a Senior Practice Associate with the National Association of Social Workers. Ms. Dietsche develops written products and represents the profession of social work on a national level focusing on issues related to behavioral health and school social work. Prior to joining NASW, she provided direct clinical services to children and families for over 15 years. As a recognized subject matter expert, Ms. Dietsche has worked with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences and currently works with the Association of Social Work Boards to develop licensure examinations. She currently holds clinical licensure in California, Florida, District of Columbia and Maryland and has



obtained ACSW, QCSW and DCSW certifications. Ms. Dietsche holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Central Florida.



**Rebecca Kunkel, MSW** is currently the Executive Director of the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA). Ms. Kunkel is a past Board Member of SSWAA and has over 20 years experience providing social work services in the school setting. Rebecca earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin, where she has been adjunct faculty and a field supervisor. Ms. Kunkel has particular interest in provision of services and program planning for at-risk youth, developing strong social, emotional, and behavioral supports for students, PBIS, SEL, service-learning, peer mediation, tolerance education, student leadership development, and enhancing parental involvement in schools.

**Katharine Milcarek-Burke, LMSW** is employed by the New York State Office for Children and Family Services where she primarily provides technical assistance to domestic violence shelters throughout the Hudson Valley and Long Island. Prior to working at OCFS, Katharine worked as a hospital social worker at SUNY Upstate, and served as a New York State Senate Fellow. She received her MSW from SUNY Albany in 2008. Katharine currently Chair's the NASW-NYS Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE) Committee.



**Frederick Streeck, MSW, ACSW, C-SSWS** is the recently retired Executive Director, School Social Work Association of America. After receiving his MSW from Washington University in St. Louis Missouri in 1973, Frederick worked in mental health day treatment programs for 6 years, as a School Social Worker for 18 years and as an Executive Director of Student Support Services for 10 years. In 2007 he began doing consultation work and University teaching part time. From 2009-2014, Frederick served as the Executive Director of the School Social Work Association of America.

Frederick was treasurer of SSWAA at its inception in 1994 and served 8 years in that role. Before 1994 he was president and treasurer of the Washington Association of School Social Workers and was president and a founder of the Western Alliance of School Social Work Organizations.

In addition to teaching at community colleges and universities in the Tacoma area, Frederick has participated with NASW in the development the school social work specialist credential and also worked with NASW to update the standards for School Social Work. He has a lifetime school social work specialist credential and is ACSW certified. Over the years, Frederick has been involved in several state, regional and national projects on behalf of School Social Work.

**Celisia Street, LMSW**, is the Communications and Professional Development Associate for the National Association of Social Workers-New York State Chapter. Since 2002 she has worked through NASW-NYS to advance social work practice in NYS, advocated for policies that promote social and economic justice, protect social work practice and enhance the visibility of the profession. She engages in the planning and implementation of statewide professional development projects such as the Annual Power of Social Work Conference, Crime Victims Train the Trainer Initiative, Town Hall Series, Mental Health Training Institutes on Anxiety Disorders in the Elderly, legislative action events, and the nationally recognized Veterans Mental Health Training Initiative.

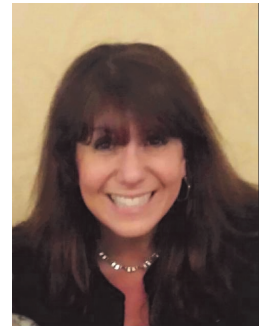


Celisia's previous work experience includes roles in both community and inpatient mental health settings and a graduate field placement in the Albany City School District. She earned her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University at Albany in 2001 with a concentration in Policy and Administration; and BA in Psychology and Human Services with a minor in sociology and concentration in Drug and Alcohol Dependence Counseling from Russell Sage College in 1994.



**Hai-Ping Yeh, LCSW-R, CAS**, has over 35 years of experience as a social worker, the last fifteen as a school social worker. Prior to being hired as a school social worker by Kingston City Schools, she worked as a Student Assistance Counselor contracted from a community agency, as a Senior Clinical Supervisor at a Community Mental Health Clinic, as a Detox Coordinator, as the Medical Social Worker in a community hospital and as a Foster Care Caseworker. In addition to a Masters in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin- Madison, she has a Certificate in Advanced Studies in School Administration from the State University at New Paltz. She has served on her School District's Safety Committee, RtI Committee, and Diversity Committee as well as on the Building Level Safety Committee, as the PBIS Co-Coach, on the Olweus Team, RtI Team, and as the DASA Coordinator. She is the current President of the New York State School Social Workers' Association (NYSSSWA), a member of the School Social Work Association of America and the American Council for School Social Work. She served on New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Dignity for All Students Committee, the NYSED Safe Schools Task Force and currently serves on the Pupil Personnel Services Advisory Committee.

**Mara Zukaitis, LMSW**, worked as a school social worker in the Brentwood School District for 21 years, serving both special education preschool as well as the school age population. She received her MSW from Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare and is a matriculating student in Stony Brook University's Post Graduate School Leadership Program. In addition to being an NASW member, she also maintains membership in the School Social Worker Association of America, New York State School Social Workers Association, and National Association of Puerto Rican and Hispanic Social Workers. She has had extensive training in crisis intervention and prevention and DASA law implementation and policies and is an advocate for special needs children. Mara is currently working as a school social worker in Wyandanch district and works with special needs children for Little Flower Children and Family Services of New York.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### NASW

Advocacy Brief– School Social Work: <https://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/school/default.asp>

Practice Resources: <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/school/default.asp>

Social Workers in Schools, Occupational Profile: <http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/profiles/School%20Social%20Work.pdf>

### SSWAA

Resolution Statement Summaries: <http://www.sswaa.org/?52>

Promoting School Social Work Resources: <http://www.sswaa.org/?page=264>

Effective School Staffing Model: Teaming School Counselors, School Psychologists, and School Social Workers : [https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/sswaa.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Articles/JOINT\\_teaming\\_statement\\_FINA.pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/sswaa.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Articles/JOINT_teaming_statement_FINA.pdf)

### NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

[www.nyssswa.org](http://www.nyssswa.org)



... the power of social work

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**New York State School Social Workers' Association**

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