



**School Social Work Association of America
Resolution Statement**

DEFINITION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 P.L. 107-110 (NCLB) places great emphasis on placing a “highly qualified teacher” in every classroom as one of the foundational requirements for helping schools to achieve academic success. The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) recommends a “highly qualified school social worker,” whose function is to assist children to overcome barriers to academic success, be defined as follows.

To ground the proposed definition in that provided by NCLB the following information is provided. The federal definition of a Highly Qualified Teacher is comprised of three elements:

1. Education;
2. Competence; and
3. State Certification/License

Using this model, it is proposed by SSWAA that the definition of a Highly Qualified School Social Worker is:

Education: Holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from a CSWE accredited social work program.

Commentary: Specialized Instructional Support Personnel, such as school psychologists and school counselors traditionally hold a master's degree, and school social workers need to have degree parity on the multidisciplinary team.

Competence: Demonstrates competence by passing the ETS Praxis II school social work exam, or the state approved examination for testing school social work competence level, and/or the state Master's level social work licensing exam.

Commentary: The ETS Praxis exam is normed, valid, reliable, and legally defensible across states, agencies, and universities. It is updated yearly to include new items that test current issues, such as Response to Intervention. Some states utilize a different normed and reliable test. In the absence of a school social work specific tests, school social workers will have taken and passed a Masters level licensing exam.

State Endorsement: Endorsed as a school social worker by the State Department of Education (or in the absence of the option for a state endorsement) using one or a combination of the following pathways:

- 1) the Educational Testing Services Praxis II school social work exam,
- 2) the state professional social work license exam,
- 3) the NASW school social work certification process known as C-SSWS, and/or
- 4) the State Department of Education regulations for the school social work position.

Commentary: "endorsement" has been substituted for the federal language of "certification/license" because of the confusion in language. State departments of education certify/license workers to verify that they have the requisite degree and course work for the employment position. The federal language "crosses the streams" and this definition strives to make the distinctions clearer by using the term "endorsement" which is what the aim is for the federal language.

By using the four pathways, 'endorsement' includes the functional definition for professional licensure and employment certification, allowing the state departments of education the flexibility to select the plans that works for each one, hopefully with input and advocacy on the part of each state's school social work group.

Approved by the SSWAA Board of Directors on April 1, 2012
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