

Press Release: 2/28/19

**More School Social Workers Needed
As We Celebrate School Social Work Week**

Since the unimaginable tragedy at Parkland, Florida last year; the debate rages about several initiatives to address school violence including adding metal detectors and cameras to our schools, adding School Resource Officers, and arming faculty. However, according to the New York State Council of School Superintendents; 45% of Superintendents cited their most significant problem as the “capacity to help students in meeting non-academic needs, including, for example, health and mental health issues.” (17) According to Hennessy, schools are the first places where mental health concerns are recognized and addressed (591)

To that end, School Social Workers are licensed, certified mental health professionals who provide supports to the schools’ most at-risk students and their families as well as in-depth mental health services for students with more complex social, emotional and behavioral barriers to learning. Providing a unique niche in the school setting, they conduct psycho-social assessments of the “whole child” resulting in the provision of consultation and direct interventions concerning personal, home, school and community factors in order to improve students’ educational functioning.

Unfortunately, not every child in the 770 school districts in New York State has access to School Social Work services. Just two days prior to the horrific shooting in Parkland, a contingency from the New York State School Social Workers’ Association and the National Association of Social Workers-NY traveled to Albany to lobby for the passage of a school mental health bill (now **A5373**) which guarantees access to a certified, district employed, School Social Worker to every student in New York. As we celebrate School Social Work Week on March 3 to 9, 2019, we ask you to join us in supporting this timely piece of legislation in order to address the complex mental health needs of our students and to make our schools safe. Please contact your legislators to encourage their support and make our collective voices heard to get this bill passed in 2019.

Margaret Barrett, LCSW-R
President, New York State School Social Workers’ Association

Works Cited:

October, 2017, Losing Ground, New York State Council of Superintendents (p.17)

Hennessy, K., & Green-Hennessy, S. (2000). Estimates of children and adolescents with school-related behavioral problems. *Psychiatric Services*, 51, 591.

