



Talking Points: School Social Work Bill

New York State School Social Workers' Association

Statistics Supporting the Need for School Employed School Social Workers:

- The 2017 report from the New York State Council of School Superintendents indicates that 45% of the superintendents cited the most widely significant problem as “Capacity to help students in meeting non-academic needs including, for example, health and mental health issues” October, 2017. *Losing Ground*. New York State Council of School Superintendents (p. 17)
- Furthermore, the Council’s Financial Survey reported that “52% of superintendents chose mental health and related services as one of their leading funding priorities.” (p. 20)
- “Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experience a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%.” National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.) *Mental Health by the Numbers*. Retrieved January 22, 2018, from <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>
- The rate of hospitalizations for suicide/self inflicted injuries in NYS 2012-2014 was 111.6 per 100,000 residents ages 15-19, 36.6 per 100,00 residents ages 10-14. Retrieved January 22, 2018 from https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/prevention/injury_prevention/docs/selfinflicted_all_plus.pdf
- Based on diagnostic interview data of lifetime prevalence of mental disorders, an estimated 49.5% of adolescents had a mental disorder and an estimated 22.2 of those had a severe impairment based on DSM-IV criteria. *Percent Lifetime Prevalence of Any Mental Disorder Among Adolescents (2001-2004)* Data from the National Comorbidity Survey Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A) 49.549.522.222.251.051.048.148.145.345.349.349.356.756.7
- **Schools** are often the first place where mental health concerns are recognized and **first** addressed. Hennessy, K., & Green-Hennessy, S. (2000). Estimates of children and adolescents with school-related behavioral problems. *Psychiatric Services, 51*, 591.
- In 2015-16, there were 140,150 students living in temporary housing in New York State Retrieved January 21, 2018, from <http://www.nysteachs.org/info-topic/statistics.html#data>
- See Appendix A & B for additional Statistics.

Role of the School Social Worker

District Employed School Social Workers are Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) who:

- Work with students, parents and educators providing consultation and interventions concerning home, school and community factors in order to improve students’ educational functioning.
- Provide a systems’ view of student’s needs, coordinating support and facilitating access to needed services in the school and the community.
- Are critical members of educational problem solving teams e.g., Student Support Teams, RTI teams who provide Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.

- Fill a unique niche in the school setting as they conduct psycho-social assessments of the “whole child”.
- Provide in-depth mental health services for a targeted number of student with more complex social, emotional and behavioral barriers to learning, typically Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.
- Provide social, emotional, and behavioral support to the schools’ most vulnerable and at risk students and their families through a variety of modalities from P - 12 that are **preventive** for the general population as well as **targeted** for those at high risk for dropping out.
- Complete lethality assessments when students are suicidal and/or homicidal.
- Provide services to support successful re-entry following psychiatric hospitalization or out of school suspension.
- Provide essential first response services as part of every School District’s Safety Plan, during a crisis as well as following an incident.
- Promote positive school culture and climate designed to improve student learning outcomes e.g., Homework Helpers Support, Good Citizens Club, various character building initiatives.
- Implement bullying prevention and intervention programs.
- Serve as DASA coordinators.
- Address attendance issues by counseling students as well as making home visits to engage families.
- Offer educational consistency & support to children in foster care.
- Provide services to children who are in temporary housing: coordinate services, gather documents to identify educational needs, and facilitate the provision of appropriate academic services.

Ratios:

According to the National School Social Work Practice Model, the **School Social Work Association of America** (SSWAA) “Recommends a general [ratio of 1:250 students](#) depending on the characteristics and needs of the student population served. Students with intensive needs would require a lower ratio.” Retrieved January 21, 2018, from <http://sswaa.site-ym.com/?page=459>.

(2013). *School Social Workers Helping Students Succeed: Recommended School Social Worker to Student Ratios*. School Social Work Association of America. Retrieved January 21, 2018, from <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.sswaa.org/resource/resmgr/imported/Ratio%20Resolution%20StatementRev.pdf>

The **National Association of Social Workers** (NASW) recommends “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.” (2012) NASW Standards for School Social Work Services (p.18) Retrieved January 21, 2018, from <https://nyssswa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/naswschoolsocialworkstandards-2012.pdf>

The **New York State School Social Workers' Association** recognizes that the recommendation of ratios in the proposed bill is a minimum standard. In practice, the workload must be assessed at the **local level** and needs to be adjusted to address the range and severity of factors that influence the practice of the school social worker.

Some of the factors to be considered include:

- *Students with significant social, emotional or mental health issues, and or physical limitations*
- *Students requiring related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*
- *Students who may be abused/neglected*
- *Students with families in the military who are deployed*
- *Students with family members who have substance abuse/mental health/domestic violence issues*
- *Students with parents who are separating*
- *Students with incarcerated family members*
- *Students who are dealing with violence in their neighborhoods*
- *Students who are refugees*
- *Students who are undocumented or have family members who are undocumented*
- *Students with 504 plans*
- *Students who are eligible for services under the McKinney Vento Act i.e., who are homeless or do not have stable housing*
- *School safety bullying incidents and behavioral data*
- *Teen parents who are also students*
- *Students who are English language learners*
- *Students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch*
- *Students with chronic health related issues*
- *Student attendance data*
- *Academic achievement rates/gap*