



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

## **Position of the New York State School Social Worker's Association On Certification Standards for School Social Workers**

The New York State School Social Worker's Association (NYSSWA) is the statewide association representing school social workers. Together with our national affiliate, School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), we are the only New York State and national associations dedicated solely to the profession of school social work.

School Social Workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the pupil services team. School Social Workers are instrumental in furthering the purpose of schools to provide a setting for teaching, learning, and the attainment of competence and confidence. School Social Workers play a vital role in promoting school improvement. School Social Workers enhance the district's ability to meet its academic mission, especially where a priority on home, school and community collaboration is key to achieving that mission.

The New York State School Social Worker's Association is grateful for the opportunity to share our position on Certification Standards for School Social Workers. Included are our positions on School Social Worker's Scope of Practice and Essential Competencies.

### **Scope of Practice**

School social work services maintain and enhance the mental, emotional, behavioral, cognitive and social functioning of student learners. School social work services strengthen a student's sense of confidence and well being. Social work practice in schools facilitates and supports an environment that promotes life long, motivated learners, problem solvers and healthy decision makers. 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 unique in the pupil personnel arena in that school social workers are licensed as well as certified. The School Social Work scope of practice is defined by New York State Education Law Article 154, subsection 7701. The definitions as outlined by Education Law and applied to both Licensed Masters Social Workers and Licensed Clinical Social Workers in the school setting include but are not limited to the following:

- A school social worker applies social work theory, principles, and methods to assess, evaluate, formulate and implement a plan of action based on a student learner's needs and strengths.
- A school social worker intervenes to prevent and address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities and the psychosocial aspects of illness and injury experienced by individuals, groups, families, the school and the school community.
- A school social worker forms collaborative relationships with community agencies and practitioners to address needs of schools, student learners and their families.



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- A school social worker engages in the administration of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, social work advocacy, case management, counseling, consultation, research, administration, management and teaching.
- A school social worker provides supervision and/or consultation to individuals, groups, institutions and agencies.

In addition to the above, the school social worker who is licensed as a Clinical Social Worker can:

- Diagnose mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities and the psychosocial aspects of illness, injury, disability and impairment undertaken within a psychosocial framework.
- The Licensed Clinical Social Worker administers and interprets tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, develops and implements appropriate assessment based treatment plans, provides behavior therapy and psychotherapy.

### Competencies

- I. The school social worker is knowledgeable about the history and foundations of school social work, national professional standards for legal and ethical practice, proven-effective evidence-based models and methods, and public policy and
  - A. Remains current regarding effective evidence based practice.
  - B. Establishes priorities and models for the delivery of school social work services that include individual and group counseling, advocacy, case management, consultation, and crisis intervention to meet the needs of all learners in the school environment.
- II. The school social worker is knowledgeable about systems change and acts as a change agent
  - A. Identifying areas of need, documenting problems, collaborating with the community to develop interventions that lead to successful student outcomes
  - B. Advocating for effective change within the school environment and providing leadership on committees at all levels to assure that learner needs are met.
  - C. Designs, coordinates, integrates implements, oversees and acts as school/family/community coordinator in full service schools.
- III. The school social worker is knowledgeable about communication, consultation and collaboration and is able to
  - A. Use mediation and conflict resolution, modeling, and coaching strategies to resolve barriers to student learning and to teach learners to be effective group members.



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- B. Effectively advocate for student learners and their families, in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to health and safety, discrimination, immigration, homelessness, substance abuse and other at risk situations.
  - C. Be an effective leader and/or member of an interdisciplinary team bringing unique skills, abilities and a systems perspective as well as acting as a consultant to teachers, parents and others in facilitating understanding of how factors in the home, school and community effect learner outcome.
- IV. The school social worker is knowledgeable and able to incorporate diversity issues in planning for the unique educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations. School social workers are sensitive to the multicultural needs of learners and their families and seek to support the learning experience by utilizing culturally sensitive assessments, interventions and strategies intended to enhance student achievement. Within the school environment the school social worker identifies racial, gender and ethnic barriers to create opportunities for learners and the school community to recognize diversity, to promote understanding and acceptance.
- V. The school social worker is knowledgeable about assessment, educational planning and transition services.
- A. The school social worker performs needs assessments as the foundation for the development of effective intervention strategies.
  - B. The school social worker ensures that strategies are designed to enhance learner's strengths and that planning includes the family, other team members and school community resources as appropriate.
  - C. The school social worker utilizes the comprehensive bio-psychosocial assessment, which incorporates formal and informal objective measures.
  - D. The school social worker identifies biological, medical, psychological, cultural, sociological, emotional, legal, economic, and environmental factors that impact student learning.
  - E. The school social worker understands the theories of normal and exceptional development in early childhood, latency, adolescence, and early adulthood and their application to all students.
  - F. School social workers identify policies of the school and community that impact student learning and behavior.
- VI. The school social worker is knowledgeable about prevention and intervention and is able to:
- A. Use professional skills, including but not limited to, interviewing and counseling to assist learners and their families in addressing problems they are experiencing with



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- social, emotional and/or behavioral functioning in order to develop alternative strategies based on clearly-defined, evidence based, treatment modalities.
- B. Conduct small groups, classroom programs, and parent groups, which teach daily living and communication skills, intended to enhance social and academic functioning, or the facilitation of problem resolution.
  - C. Implement appropriate school intervention and prevention programs in response to demonstrated need, to ensure a safe learning environment for all students, which may include but not be limited to crisis intervention, conflict resolution, substance abuse prevention, positive self-image, social skills and character education.
  - D. Utilize family strengths and structures, to enable families to function as advocates for themselves and for their children's education and well being, always working with respect, empathy and dignity.
- VII. The school social worker is knowledgeable about and able to critically analyze current effective research and program evaluation, and conduct ongoing assessments of evidence-based, educationally related, social programs. The school social worker engages in evaluation of practice to assess efficacy, and to improve skills and service delivery in order to ensure positive learner outcomes.

In order to attain the competencies necessary to become a school social worker, substantive preparation in human growth, development and behavior in the social environment, systematic assessment, social practice which addresses the work intervention with individual families, communities, organizations, and systems, and the reciprocal influences of home, school, and community are required. Through its accreditation standards, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) ensures that Schools of Social Work prepare professional social workers with a minimum of 60 credit hours of graduate level coursework including a minimum of 900 hours of supervised field practica leading to a master's degree in social work. These requirements prepare social workers to define, identify, and meet the needs of school children and their families. All accredited social work programs must provide foundation content in the areas specified below:

- **Human Behavior and the Social Environment** – Foundation social work curriculum includes biological, sociological, psychological, cultural and spiritual development as well as the range of social systems in which people live and the ways social systems influence health and well being. Social work curriculum provides content on the reciprocal relationships between human behavior and social environments. Content and theories that focus on the interactions between and among individuals, groups, societies, and economic systems are included.
- **Social Work Practice** - Students learn practice content that encompasses knowledge and skills to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. This content includes engaging clients, identifying problems, needs, community and personal resources, and assets, collecting and assessing information, diagnosing and treating and



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planning for service delivery. Practice content also focuses on identifying, analyzing, and implementing empirically based interventions and evaluating practice effectiveness.

- **Research** – Students acquire research knowledge that is used to provide quality services, initiate change, and to improve and evaluate practice. This content prepares students to develop, use, and effectively communicate empirically based knowledge, including evidence-based interventions.
- **Populations-at-Risk and Social and Economic Justice** - Social work education programs educates students to evaluate the factors that contribute to being at risk and to identify how group membership affects access to resources. Content integrating theories of social and economic justice is included in the curriculum. Programs prepare students to advocate for nondiscriminatory social and economic systems.
- **Diversity** – Social work programs integrate content that promotes understanding, affirmation, and respect for people from diverse backgrounds. Programs educate students to recognize how diversity influences assessment, planning, intervention, and research. Students learn to ensure that services are culturally relevant and meet the needs of the groups served.
- **Field Education** – Through this critical educational component, students apply theories and strategies to clients in agencies, schools and other community settings. This experience promotes the development of professional competence and prepares students to become social work practitioners. This field education occurs in social work settings that reinforce students' identification with the purposes, values, and ethics of the profession and foster the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge.
- **Social Welfare Policy and Services** – Content focuses on the current structures of social welfare services, and the role of policy in practice and attainment of individual and social well being. Course content provides students with the knowledge and skills to understand major policies, access services, analyze and apply the results of policy research, and use policy practice skills to influence, formulate, and advocate for policy consistent to address unmet needs.
- **Values and Ethics** – Content about values and principles of ethical decision making is integrated into the social work student's educational experience. Students are provided the opportunity to gain awareness of their personal values, as well as to develop, demonstrate, and promote the values of the profession. Course work addresses the ways in which values affect practice, services, and clients.



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