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# Overview of School Social Work Services

School social workers play a vital role connecting home, school and community in a unified effort to support students in the educational setting. Working collaboratively with other specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), school social workers provide a skilled spectrum of services ranging from engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of outcomes related to the students, families, schools, and communities they serve. Research on school social work has confirmed that school social work interventions improve students' emotional and behavioral problems (Allen-Meares et al., 2013; Franklin et al., 2013) and have a positive effect on academic outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2009; Franklin et al., 2013). As licensed mental health professionals and practitioners, school social workers in Minnesota are dually licensed by the Board of Social Work (BOSW) and the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to provide evidence-informed knowledge, skills, and abilities mapped to the national school social worker practice model (Frey et al., 2013).

## Evidence-Informed Knowledge, Skills and Abilities of School Social Workers Serving General and Special Education Settings in Minnesota

Provide evidence-based education, behavior & mental health services	Promote a school climate & culture conducive to student learning & teaching excellence	Maximize access to school-based & community-based resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement multi-tiered programs &amp; practices</li> <li>● Monitor progress</li> <li>● Evaluate service effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote effective school policies and administrative procedures</li> <li>● Enhance professional capacity of school personnel</li> <li>● Facilitate engagement between student, family, school, &amp; community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote a continuum of services</li> <li>● Mobilize resources &amp; promote assets</li> <li>● Provide innovative leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, systems coordination, &amp; professional consultation</li> </ul>
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 504 case management coordinating evaluation, eligibility, plan development, interventionist, &amp; managing timelines</li> <li>● Evaluation and assessment</li> <li>● Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect</li> <li>● Individual &amp; group counseling</li> <li>● Mental health supports</li> <li>● Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS)</li> <li>● Problem-solving &amp; conflict resolution</li> <li>● Social &amp; emotional learning (SEL)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-awareness</li> <li>○ Social awareness</li> <li>○ Relationship skills</li> <li>○ Responsible decision-making</li> <li>○ Self-management</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Risk management prevention &amp; response</li> <li>● Trauma-informed interventions</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocacy</li> <li>● Consultation</li> <li>● Classroom observations &amp; feedback</li> <li>● Case consultation</li> <li>● Cultural competency</li> <li>● Designing academic, social/emotional &amp; behavioral interventions to enhance student success</li> <li>● Identifying &amp; eliminating barriers to educational success</li> <li>● Restorative practices</li> <li>● Providing professional development on equity, violence prevention, mental health, trauma, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicating student's developmental and educational needs</li> <li>● Developing culturally responsive partnerships to expand supports for students</li> <li>● Education and training</li> <li>● Linking to community resources and supports</li> <li>● Site management and coordination of external partners for social services (county &amp; contracted agencies) and mental health supports</li> </ul>

# Determination of Need: Workload versus Caseload Approach

As the landscape of school-based mental health services continues to evolve, so too must the process by which schools and districts both understand and respond to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of their students and school community. Stagnate claims that specific ratios for specialized instructional support personnel from various professional groups simply do not have the research evidence to support their claims (Hyson, Knick, Leifgren, McCoy & Ochocki, 2013). When considering the collective student support service programming needs, a school or district would be better positioned to prevent and respond to student needs by conducting a mental health needs assessment (American Institute of Research [AIR], 2017). Utilizing data-driven decision-making that incorporates multiple stakeholders and considers students needs as described below, schools and districts can transition to more flexible and responsive student support services programming driven by a workload approach (AIR, 2017; Whitmore, 2017). Workload approaches to student support staffing ensure that the continuum of activities provided within the student services program is staffed appropriately to meet the needs identified in the school or district's mental health assessment while also ensuring compliance with applicable local, state, and federal mandates (Whitemore, 2017).

MSSWA has found the following factors are helpful considerations for schools and districts to consider when constructing their needs assessment and considering workload responsibilities for school social workers.

## Percentage of students qualified/identified/experiencing:

- Special education/IEPs
- English language learner (EL)
- McKinney-Vento (homelessness or high mobility)
- Foster care
- Free & reduced lunch (F&R)
- Mental health diagnoses
- Significant social/emotional/behavioral needs

## School or district factors such as:

- Academic achievement/achievement gaps
- Attendance data
- Behavioral data (office discipline referrals, suspensions, etc.)
- Bullying/harassment incidents
- Risk management data (threats of harm to self or others)
- Parental involvement

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