



2019 Legislative Agenda

MSSWA LEGISLATIVE GOALS:

- *To promote the social emotional and educational well-being of children and families*
- *To strengthen the profession of School Social Work.*

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) has been serving children in their schools, homes and communities for 50 years. We are an association of licensed school social workers throughout Minnesota who provide mental health related services and support within the school system to students and their families. Although the roles and responsibilities of school social workers vary between districts statewide, we are united in our common goal of working with the “whole child,” meaning working with the child in his/her environment with consideration to family, community, values, culture and language. School social workers help teachers teach by reducing social and emotional barriers to learning and collaborating in the development of academic intervention plans to promote and ensure academic success. School social workers incorporate a systems approach to address the mental health needs of children and youth.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER:

Social workers receive two different sets of credentials: degrees and licenses. Social work degrees are earned from accredited academic institutions. The bachelor level social worker is prepared for practice in mental health case management. The master level social worker has the training and skills to provide services beyond mental health case management through advanced clinical mental health practice. (SSWAA, 2013) School social workers at the master level receiving clinical supervision or holding clinical licensure are prepared through their education, practicum, clinical supervision and licensure to provide clinical mental health services in a school setting. Licensed clinical school social workers use their skills to address the mental health needs of students through evidence-informed assessment, diagnosis, intervention and evaluation of individuals, small groups, families and school-wide programming. (SSWAA, 2013). Minnesota school social workers are dual licensed by the Minnesota Board of Social Work (BOSW) and the Minnesota Professional Educators Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB).

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER:

- School social workers not only provide services to individuals, groups of students and families but also collaborate and coordinate with community agencies or other culturally responsive mental health resources to provide the necessary supports to meet student needs
- *Interventions provided through school social work services have shown improved student attendance, reduction of child abuse and neglect, improved graduation rates and early identification of a disability; thus, increasing academic achievement.*
- School social workers address the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of **ALL STUDENTS** including students whose needs require special education support and services as well as students with in the general education setting.
- School social workers often focus on providing supports to vulnerable populations of students at high risk for truancy and dropping out of school, such as homelessness, students in foster care, migrant children, students transitioning between school and treatment programs or the juvenile justice system, or students experiencing domestic violence. (SSWAA, 2013)
- *School social workers serve as a resource to administrators and other educators providing consultation and training on identifying students with mental health needs and a referral process when services are sought.*



MSSWA 2019 Legislative Priorities

- 1. Support the incorporation of social emotional learning standards into required academic standards and curriculum throughout the school setting.** A substantial body of research provides evidence that when social emotional learning standards are incorporated into the curriculum, students show higher levels of pro-social behavior, more favorable attitudes towards school and others, increased academic achievement and are more prepared for college and career success. (Durlak et al., 2011)
- 2. Support Medical Assistance (MA) reimbursement for mental health services provided by School Social Workers on Individual Education Plans (IEP's). In order to maximize federal reimbursement, Minnesota requires school districts to seek medical assistance reimbursement for health-related services that are provided as part of an IEP.** Services – including speech-language pathology, occupational and physical therapy, mental and behavioral health services, school nurse services, vision and hearing screenings, diabetes and asthma management, and durable medical equipment – are reimbursable through Medicaid for eligible students. While school social work services are included under Minnesota statutes as health related services that can be billed to MA, our current practice in Minnesota *does not allow for districts to bill for these services*. Currently, \$4-5 billion flow to school districts every year, so they can make sure students with disabilities receive the supports they need to learn. A number of surrounding states including Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa do allow reimbursement for social work services. Wisconsin generates \$8 million annually in federal reimbursement and Illinois estimates that they receive between \$15 to \$20 million annually. *MSSWA supports including reimbursement for school social work services that are part of an Individual Education Program (IEP).*
- 3. Support amending Minnesota Educational Statute section 125A.02 defining the criteria for an evaluation of an educational disability in the category of Other Health Impairment related to the ADHD section.** In 2008, the Minnesota Legislature added the following sentence to Minnesota Statutes to include advanced practice nurse and licensed psychologists along with physicians to the list of diagnosticians in section 125A.02. The current law does not align with Minnesota Statute 245.462 Subdivision 18 which defines who are Mental Health Professionals qualified to assess, diagnosis and treat mental health disorders and the current language in educational law excludes LICSW's. *MSSWA and The Coalition of Licensed Social Workers are advocating to include a community based LICSW to the list of qualified diagnosticians and update the language to include criteria for ADHD as outlined within the DSM V.*
- 4. Support bipartisan legislation to protect DREAMERS and preserve DACA.** DACA was first implemented in 2012 by the Department of Homeland Security after Obama's presidential executive order. DACA allows youth who were brought to the United States as children and who meet certain criteria, to request consideration for deferred action, or the DHS's decision to not pursue their removal from the United States for a period of two years, with the possibility for renewal. Specifically, the bill gives eligible young people who were brought to the U.S. as children the opportunity to resolve their immigration status and work towards citizenship. DACA recipients can live in the U.S. and go to school, and may be eligible for work authorization. DACA recipients are contributing every day to the strength of America. As of September 5, 2017, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is no longer accepting new applications for DACA. Anyone who had not applied or who became newly eligible can no longer apply. Anyone with current DACA status continues to be protected under the law. *MSSWA stands up for DREAMERS and supports legislation that would establish a path to permanent legal residence for more than a million young people including those now protected by DACA. Please ensure these young men and women can remain in the only home they have ever known, and can continue their studies and give back to our nation.*