

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES



SSWAA

WHY do today's schools need School Social Workers?

Children today are increasingly victims of many social forces that negatively affect their role as students. The family is in a state of change and until it becomes stabilized, in whatever form, children's unmet physical and emotional needs will continue to interfere with their ability to learn and adjust in school.

WHO are School Social Workers?

School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals with a degree in social work who provide services related to a person's social, emotional and life adjustment to school and/or society. School Social Workers are the link between the home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students' academic and social success.

WHAT are some of the specific services that School Social Workers provide?

RELATED SERVICES:

- Participating in special education assessment meetings as well as Individual Educational Planning meetings.
- Working with those problems in a child's living situation that affect the child's adjustment in school. (home, school, and community)
- Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability.
- Counseling (group, individual and/or family)
- Mobilizing family, school, and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program
- Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.



SERVICES TO STUDENTS:

- Providing crisis intervention.
- Developing intervention strategies to increase academic success.
- Assisting with conflict resolution and anger management.
- Helping the child develop appropriate social interaction skills.
- Assisting the child in understanding and accepting self and others.



SERVICES TO PARENTS/FAMILIES:

- Interviewing the family to assess problems affecting the child's educational adjustment.
- Working with parents to facilitate their support in their children's school adjustment.
- Alleviating family stress to enable the child to function more effectively in school & community.
- Assisting parents to access programs available to students with special needs.
- Assisting parents in accessing and utilizing school and community resources



SERVICES TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL:

- Providing staff with essential information to better understand factors (cultural, societal, economic, familial, health, etc.) affecting a student's performance and behavior.
- Assessing students with mental health concerns.
- Developing staff in-service training programs.
- Assisting teachers with behavior management.
- Providing direct support to staff.



SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON:

- Obtaining and coordinating community resources to meet students' needs.
- Helping school districts receive adequate support from social and mental health agencies.
- Advocating for new and improved community/school service to meet the needs of students and families.
- Helping the system respond effectively to each child's needs.

SERVICES TO DISTRICTS:

- Assist in developing and implementing educational programs for children for exceptional children
- Developing alternative programs for drop-outs, truants, delinquents, etc.
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.
- Providing consultation regarding school law and school policy including IDEA and Section 504.
- Providing case management for students and families requiring multiple resources.



(Lists are exemplary and not exhaustive)

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Michigan Association of School Social Workers
Testimony Before the House Appropriations Committee
April 25, 2018

The Michigan Association of School Social Worker (MASSW) is comprised of licensed Social Workers who generally hold a masters degree in social work and who have unique training and experience specific to working in schools and/or with children. This training includes special education law, school law, and systems theory. They understand the interrelatedness of various systems such as: education, juvenile justice, family/children's health, mental health, and child protective services. Attached is a document covering the types of services that a School Social Worker provides.

MASSW is part of a coalition that includes law enforcement, school management, and school-based mental health professionals. As you all know, the coalition has recommended an aggressive grant program to put school mental health professionals and school resource officers into schools right away. We do not see this goal as mutually exclusive from what the six bills before us today are trying to accomplish; in fact, we see the efforts as mutually beneficial and cooperative. The commission established in HB 5828 is very helpful in creating a clearinghouse for best practices and public policy recommendations, established by real professionals with experience and training in school safety.

MASSW is interested in working with all of the bill sponsors on assuring each piece of legislation – from reporting requirements to appropriate liaisons to the school safety commission to training for School Resource Officers – fits the local needs of each school and the unique needs of each student. In fact, school mental health professionals already have peer-reviewed, evidence-based school safety, violence prevention, and threat assessment practices that have been used effectively in a number of Michigan school districts and can be replicated in schools across the state. Additionally, because of their specific training to work within the school setting and collaborate with school administrators, teachers, parents and community resources, school-based mental health professionals like School Social Workers are best equipped to develop and use strategies to assist at-risk students, including individual counseling and other behavioral health interventions for students who display at-risk behavior. This includes a team approach to behavioral interventions, coordinated by school-based mental health professionals, that may be implemented in school and/or in outside agencies but are carefully monitored by the school staff. None of this is precluded in the legislation before us today, and is in fact encouraged by it. We stand ready to assist the legislature in helping assure the legislation is written with these and other critical components in mind.

The failed strategies of the past focused on suspension and expulsion of students who made threats. We have learned that these strategies actually increase risk and contribute to school failure, dropouts and other problem behaviors. The legislature, last session, took a bold stand in modifying Zero-Tolerance laws, and earlier this session, the legislature tackled how the state thinks about and deals with truancy. Students should be in school where they can be supervised and supported. We have an opportunity, with these bills before us today and with the school safety plan recommended by the coalition of which we are a part, to implement comprehensive school safety plans that include school

mental health professionals who are trained in prevention, intervention and risk assessment and who can also link the home, school and community supports, including much needed collaboration with law enforcement. This will improve school safety and create the positive school culture that is associated with academic achievement and the social and emotional well-being of students.

Thank you for your time today, for the opportunity to speak, and for allowing us to help create legislation that will enhance school safety while still focusing on educating all of our students.