



School Social Work Association of America Resolution Statement

ADVOCATING FOR THE USE OF THE TITLE: “SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER”

Summary

School social work is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) strongly supports the use of the title “school social worker” to identify social workers employed by school districts. Most school social workers are credentialed as required by the state department of education and state social work licensing authority. Use of the title “school social worker” accurately represents to school personnel, students and their families, community agencies, and the general public the school social worker's credentials and role within the school district.

Rationale

- According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) there are more than 37,000 school social workers.
- School social workers are hired by school districts to increase the district’s ability to meet its academic mission by removing barriers to learning (e.g., mental health, behavior), especially in supporting the home, school, and community collaboration as a critical component in academic achievement.
- School social workers are employed by school districts under titles other than "school social worker", which, while possibly reflecting funding sources for the positions, do not accurately communicate professionals' skills and academic credentials.
- School social workers are expected to possess advanced knowledge and technical skills to guide their practice; therefore, in most states they hold a masters in social work (MSW) degree from an accredited social work program and are credentialed as required by state departments of education and state social work licensing authorities (NASW, 2012).
- School social workers have unique knowledge and training , including the completion of specialized courses in school social work that address areas such as multi-tiered systems of support (data-based decision-making, progress monitoring, implementation of evidence-based curriculum and practices), special education (identification, assessment, service provision and evaluation), mental health, education funding and administration, school culture and climate, and a field practicum in a school setting.
- Ninety percent of states plus the District of Columbia explicitly credential school social workers by title (NASBE, 2012), and use of another title may prevent trained school social workers from obtaining a state department of education credential.
- School social workers provide evidence-based education, behavioral interventions and mental health services; promote a school climate and culture conducive to learning; and maximize access to school- and community-based resources through their unique training in connecting home, school, and community (SSWAA, 2013).

Action Needed

Historically, the social work profession sought title protection in state statute and was successful in prohibiting those who have not received social work education and credentials to be called social workers. School social workers are employed by school districts under a variety of titles that more often

reflect the source of funding for the position, rather than the educational level and credentials of the individuals. SSWAA believes that this diffusion of titles leads to the under- and inappropriate utilization of school social workers' skills and knowledge. We advocate for strengthening and preserving the specialized field of school social work through the sole use of the title "school social worker."

References

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2012). NASW standards for school social work services. Retrieved at <http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/naswschoolsocialworkstandards.pdf>

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) (n.d.). Requirements for school social workers. http://www.nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=2170&catExpand=acdnbtm_catB

School Social Work Association of America (2013). SSWAA national school social work practice model. Retrieved at <http://sswaa.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=459>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (May, 2012) retrieved at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211021.htm>

Approved by the SSWAA Board of Directors and Delegate Assembly on July 19, 2014
© 2014 School Social Work Association of America