



School Social Work
Association of America



Unite to Ignite

28TH ANNUAL NATIONAL SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE



April 9-12, 2025
Atlanta, GA

2025



Sparks Will Fly at the 2025 National School Social Work Conference!

Dear School Social Work Professionals,

Get ready to **Unite to Ignite** at the SSWAA 2025 National School Social Work Conference where sparks will fly and fires of inspiration will be kindled! Why sparks? Because sparks signify transformation! They occur when energies collide, when innovation is born, and when connections are forged. At this conference, sparks will fly as school social workers from across the country come together to ignite their passion for supporting students, fueling professional growth, and illuminating the vital role of our profession. This year's conference is shaping up to be a transformative experience you won't want to miss!

What to Expect:

- Inspiring Keynotes: Four dynamic keynote presentations will challenge and inspire you, addressing themes that resonate deeply with practitioners and leaders alike.
- Cutting-Edge Professional Development: Choose from a diverse range of sessions tailored to our unique lens as school social workers, offering innovative strategies and evidence-based practices to elevate your work.
- Exciting Unveilings: Be among the first to dive into the newly updated SSWAA National School Social Work Practice Model 2.0 and learn about the launch of a 2025 National Awareness Campaign to amplify the understanding and impact of our profession.
- CE Opportunities: Earn up to 15.5 Continuing Education (CE) hours during the full conference (Thursday-Saturday) with even more available through an optional Pre-Conference Day of Learning.

Why Attend? This conference is more than just a professional gathering—it's a movement to **Kindle Knowledge** (Strengthen your expertise through interactive sessions and actionable takeaways), **Ignite Collaboration** (Build lasting connections with 900+ colleagues who share your passion and commitment to making a difference in students' lives), and **Spark Action** (Leave with tools, resources, and inspiration to implement impactful practices in your schools and communities).

Together, we will fuel the flame of progress for our profession and our students. The SSWAA 2025 National Conference is your opportunity to be at the heart of this exciting transformation. Let's **Unite to Ignite** our passion, our purpose, and our power as school social workers!

We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta, GA and making sparks fly together!

With anticipation and gratitude,

Rebecca Oliver

Executive Director,

School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)





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Unite to Ignite

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WELCOME!

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) warmly invites you to join us at the 28th Annual National School Social Work Conference! Get ready for an enriching experience filled with diverse breakout workshops, fantastic networking opportunities with fellow school social work professionals, and an inspiring lineup of keynote speakers. Don't miss out on this exciting event designed to empower and elevate our profession—see you there!

Pre-Conference

April
9

Kick off your conference experience with SSWAA's Pre-Conference sessions on Wednesday, April 9, 2025! Before the main event starts on Thursday, dive into focused, in-depth learning with our 6 half-day forums, each offering 3 hours of valuable CE credits. You'll have the chance to choose one forum for the morning and another for the afternoon, allowing you to explore two important topics in a single day. For a sneak peek at this year's topics, check out the brochure and get ready for a powerful start to your conference journey!

Conference

April
10-12

Mark your calendar for the SSWAA Conference from Thursday, April 10, to Saturday, April 12, 2025! With your Full Conference registration, you'll enjoy a warm welcome at the SSWAA Board Mixer, daily coffee and snack breaks in the Exhibit Hall, and delicious breakfasts on Friday and Saturday morning. Plus, you can earn up to 15.5 CEs while diving into sessions that inspire and empower! For the full lineup of sessions and events, be sure to check out the conference brochure or app. We can't wait to see you there!

ACE Approval Statement

Up to
21.5
CEs

School Social Work Association of America, #1789, is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved as ACE providers. State and provincial regulatory boards have the final authority to determine whether the individual course may be accepted for continuing education credit. School Social Work Association of America maintains responsibility for this course. ACE provider approval period: 07/27/2023 - 07/27/2026. Social workers participating in this conference (pre-Conference and Full Conference) will receive up to 21.5 continuing education credits.



OMNI ATLANTA AT CENTENNIAL PARK



The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) is thrilled to host our 2025 National Conference at the beautiful Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park! Nestled in the vibrant Centennial Park District, this stunning venue offers sweeping views of Atlanta's iconic skyline and is just steps away from Centennial Olympic Park, the city's renowned cultural attractions, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, and State Farm Arena. We're excited to welcome you to this amazing location for an unforgettable conference experience!

Just a short stroll from Atlanta's top cultural and sports attractions, the Omni Atlanta offers a fantastic array of amenities to enhance your stay! Enjoy a heated pool and hot tub, a cutting-edge fitness center, and a variety of dining options with both indoor and outdoor seating, plus a cozy lobby-level coffee bar to fuel your day. Take advantage of special SSWAA block room rates—but remember, these rates are only available while rooms last. Don't miss out on this chance to enjoy both comfort and convenience during your conference experience!



For more information or to make reservations, go to the SSWAA Conference website at <https://www.sswaa.org/nationalconference>

Omni Atlanta at Centennial Park
190 Marietta St NW, Atlanta, GA, USA, 30303



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Connect with School Social Workers from your region, from another state, or from another country and share effective intervention strategies and best practices that truly make a difference! Between sessions, explore our exhibitor booths for the latest in innovative resources, tools, and educational services designed to elevate YOUR work. Don't forget to swing by the SSWAA Store to find ways to boost your campus visibility and proudly celebrate our profession!

Networking

Get ready to connect, unwind, and celebrate at the SSWAA National Conference! From energizing morning yoga and mindfulness, to meaningful relationship building at regional meetings, to late night CE opportunities focused on the National Model 2.0, Equity, and Legislation and Advocacy, there's something for everyone! Enjoy one-on-one time with the SSWAA Board, explore insightful poster presentations, and join us for our Exhibit Hall Bonanza! Be sure to check out the full schedule of events, and stop by the registration desk for more details about all of the exciting opportunities to connect, learn, and celebrate together.

SSWAA Store

Be sure to stop by the SSWAA Store for a variety of school social work goodies! From books and resources to t-shirts, mugs, and window clings, there's something for everyone to take home. For purchases under \$30, we kindly require cash or check payments to help us serve you quickly and efficiently. Don't miss out on these exclusive items—perfect for showing off your School Social Worker pride!

Exhibits

While attending workshops or enjoying refreshment breaks, don't miss the chance to explore our conference exhibits! Join us for a special Exhibit Hall Bonanza on Friday, April 11, 2025, where exhibitors from across the country will showcase a range of innovative programs, resources, and tools that can enhance your practice. From new therapeutic materials and educational toys to essential books and resources, you might just find that perfect addition for your office or home. Our exhibitors are invaluable supporters of this event—be sure to show your appreciation by visiting their booths!



GENERAL INFORMATION & SPECIAL NOTES

Attention all conference registrants! We highly encourage you to review the following general information for important details about the National Conference, including key policies and procedures. This will ensure you have the best possible experience and stay informed about everything you need to know!

Registration & Session Selection

All registrations for the conference must be completed online. You'll have the option to pay by credit card at the time of registration or choose to print an invoice for check payment, which can be submitted later or provided to your school district/agency to process a purchase order and check. Workshop descriptions are available on our conference webpage and within the conference brochure. Once payment has been received, attendees will be provided access to the conference app to make session selections (Please note: Early Bird Registrant will receive 1 week priority session selection in the conference app).

Since room sizes vary, we encourage you to make selections for the workshops you plan to attend to help us plan accordingly. Please note that registration fees not received prior to the conference will need to be paid on-site. For additional information, including the 2025 Conference Policies, please visit the SSWAA website: <https://www.sswaa.org/national-conference>.

Refund Policy

Refund requests and cancellations must be submitted in writing. If your written request is postmarked at least four weeks before the event start date, you will receive a **refund minus a 25% administrative fee**. Please note, no refunds will be issued within four weeks of the event start date, with the pre-conference date being the official start. Refund requests must be received by **March 12, 2025**.



GENERAL INFORMATION & SPECIAL NOTES

Purchase Orders

Depending on the event, purchase orders may or may not be accepted. Please be sure to carefully read the event's registration instructions to appropriately plan and make payment. When registering, individuals may make online payment at the time of registration. Additionally, individuals will be given the option to select "invoice me" when registering. This option allows individuals to mail check payment to the SSWAA address noted on the invoice. Additionally, individuals may use the "invoice me" option if they will be submitting a Purchase Order (PO). Purchase Orders are allowed as a "promise of payment" from a school district. Individuals submitting a PO must allow adequate time for the processing of payment. A Purchase Order secures registration; however, check payment must be received by the event date. **Purchase Orders will not be accepted within 30 days of the event start date** as this does not allow adequate time for actual payment to be received. Changes or recreation of invoices may incur administrative fees. Payment for a registration must be received when the service is rendered (start of the event) or entry may be denied.

Code of Conduct

"Participant" in this policy refers to anyone present at the SSWAA Annual Conference or educational programs (both in person or online), including staff, contractors, vendors, exhibitors, venue staff, speakers, members and all attendees. All individuals have the right to an optimal learning environment. SSWAA is committed to ensuring participants are all: - Treated with respect and dignity - physically and emotionally safe in an inclusive and healthy learning environment, both in-person and on digital platforms, free from abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and any other forms of violence - And privacy is honored to the greatest extent possible. Our events provide a harassment-free learning experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), or technology choices. We do not tolerate harassment of conference participants, venue staff, or SSWAA representatives and staff in any form. SSWAA expects participants to adhere to professional conduct and refrain from inappropriate or unprofessional behavior or harassment of any kind towards others during the event. In a similar manner, any communications leading up to the event, during, and after the event are held to the same expectations regarding respectful, professional communications. SSWAA reserves the right to take action they deem appropriate. Please see SSWAA Event Policies for further information.



GENERAL INFORMATION & SPECIAL NOTES

Conference App

Download the Conference Event App now to enhance your conference experience! The app includes speaker details, session handouts, and information on sponsors and exhibitors. Evaluations and CE credit tracking will also be done through the app. While we encourage all participants to use the FREE app, paper copies will be available for those who do not have access to technology, with a \$10 processing fee. You're also welcome to print and bring your handouts, or bring a laptop with downloaded information. If you prefer a hard copy of the program, please print it ahead of time. All CE credits will be tracked via the conference app.

Internet Access

SSWAA is pleased to announce that FREE internet access will be available for conference attendees in the meeting space for accessing the conference App!

ADA

If you require any auxiliary aids or services to participate in the conference, please contact the Executive Director, Rebecca K. Oliver, at r.k.oliver@sswaa.org at least 8 weeks prior to the event. The deadline to make these arrangements is **February 10, 2025**. For attendees who register after the published deadline, you will be able to participate with the schedule available at that time, which will include all keynote speakers and select meetings and workshops.

Speaker Disclaimer Statement

Views expressed by presenters are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of SSWAA. Beliefs or Rationale: SSWAA welcomes a diversity of viewpoints expressed in a respectful manner. SSWAA also recognizes that social workers can agree to disagree agreeably, and still remain professional. Some speakers may express views that are inconsistent with good self-care, competence, or ethics. When this occurs, the NASW Code of Ethics specifically states that the colleague should be professionally approached and communicated with directly, before escalating the conflict or disagreement to another level. This may not always be possible or the colleague may be unresponsive to feedback. In these circumstances, SSWAA recommends addressing it with leadership of the organization or the proper authority



NATIONAL SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE MODEL 2.0

Starting with the 2025 National Conference, the SSWAA breakout workshop sessions will all be connected to the New National Model 2.0. SSWAA will feature various sessions focused on the Professional Activities that integral to Student and School Wellbeing. Each session will feature sessions will highlight Practice, Research, Policy, Leadership, or Advocacy.

Advocacy track sessions intentionally center on advancing human rights that promote educational, social, racial, economic, environmental justice, and the role and impact of school social workers.

Research sessions focus on school social work research, applying research-informed practice, and conducting practice research.

Practice track sessions highlight how to school social workers can practice at the top of our licensure using appropriate skills and knowledge to work effectively with school systems.

Policy track workshops dive into how school social workers can influence federal, state, and local polices to champion educational access, equity, and inclusion.

Leadership sessions explore ways to facilitate school improvement plans to foster educational equity and elevate collaborators' needs.





CE PROCEDURES & INFORMATION

CE Procedures

To earn Continuing Education (CE) credits, be sure to sign in and out at each session attended; prior to the start and at the conclusion of each session. An appointed session moderator will provide a check-in and check-out code that each attendee is responsible for entering into the conference app. After each session, upon entering the provided check-out code, the app will direct attendees to a required session evaluation. All CE credits will be tracked via the Conference App. SSWAA expects the highest ethical practice of our attendees and follows the guidelines set forth by our profession; therefore, in order to obtain CE credits, attendees are expected to attend the full session. Attendees who arrive more than 5 minutes late or who miss a significant portion of the workshop will not receive full credit.

It is the attendee's responsibility to attend the full session, enter the session check-in and -out code, and complete the session evaluation to be eligible for CE credit. If an attendee is unable or prefers not to use the app, this must be indicated on the attendee's registration, and a paper copy will be provided at the registration desk for that attendee to keep track of throughout the conference event. Please note there will be a **\$10 CE Processing Fee for paper copies**, payable by cash or check only at the conference.

After attendees complete all sessions they would like to receive credit for, a full conference event evaluation will be provided in the conference app. We ask each attendee to complete this evaluation to support continued improvement and excellence at in-person events. CE Certificates will be delivered through the conference app by the **end of April 2025**. Each attendee is responsible for downloading and maintaining their own CE Certificates to ensure they are available when it's time to renew licensure with their state board/licensing agency.

Note: SSWAA DOES NOT submit CEs earned to individual licensing agencies or states. Each attendee will have four (4) weeks to access and download their CE Certificates following the conference event. **All certificates MUST BE DOWNLOADED by May 12, 2025.** It is the responsibility of the individual attendee to download, keep track of, and submit CE Certificates to their own licensing agency. CE transcripts requested after this time will incur a fee. For additional information, visit the registration desk or consult with your licensing agency. Full details are also available in the CE Procedures document on the conference website: <https://www.sswaa.org/national-conference>.

Note: Many state licensing boards impose specific limitations on course content, distance education, and/or other elements of continuing education, even when courses are taken from approved providers. It is the sole responsibility of each attendee to ensure that the courses taken will meet the requirements for their specific license.

* **New York State attendees:** SSWAA is again pleased to partner with the New York State School Social Workers' Association (NYSSSWA) to provide New York approved CEs. As in the past, you will need to register with SSWAA for the conference and ALSO register with NYSSSWA for the provision of CEs. Please refer to email communications for specific New York State CE guidelines or visit the registration booth for further details.



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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Nat Kendall Taylor, PhD

Framing for Change: The Science of Effectively Communicating on Challenging Social Issues

What we have to say matters, but so does how we say it. The science of framing—the decisions we make in how we present information—can help unlock our power as communicators, allowing us to open space for new conversations and build support for solutions on issues ranging from mental health to social-emotional development and equity issues to child protection. Dr. Kendall-Taylor will offer a set of concrete framing practices—and show the social science research that underlies them—that attendees can use in their daily professional practice to more clearly and effectively communicate information and advance their goals.

Nat Kendall-Taylor, PhD (he/him) is CEO of the FrameWorks Institute, where he leads research on strategic communications to reframe complex socio-political issues for social change. An expert in psychological anthropology, he publishes widely and has presented at institutions worldwide. Nat is also a senior fellow at Harvard's Center on the Developing Child and a visiting professor at Yale. His research spans early childhood, mental health, and cultural health disparities globally. Nat holds a PhD from UCLA.



Kevin Tan, PhD, MSW

Advancing our Profession: Challenges and Opportunities with the SSWAA National Practice Model 2.0

Join us as we explore the SSWAA National Practice Model 2.0, designed to elevate school social work within today's dynamic social, political, and educational landscape. This plenary will address the challenges and opportunities in fostering meaningful collaboration with diverse and historically marginalized students, families, and communities. We'll explore the model's practical applications, highlighting the critical role of school social workers as leaders in advancing social justice. Gain actionable insights and renewed purpose to navigate the complexities of our profession, empowering both student and school well-being.

Kevin Tan, PhD, MSW (he/him), is an associate professor and Associate Dean at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. With over \$2.5M in grants, he advances SEL for Pre-K to 12 students and youth risk prevention. Dr. Tan helped revise the National School Social Work Practice Model with SSWAA and serves as Editor-in-Chief of Children & Schools. Awarded the 2021 Gary Lee Shaffer Award and the 2023 UI Distinguished Faculty Award, he holds a PhD from the University of Chicago and an MSW from Washington University in St. Louis.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



David Shonfeld, MD, FAAP

Supporting Children and Ourselves in the Aftermath of Grief and Loss

This session will describe the distinctions among trauma, bereavement, and grief due to ambiguous loss and the implications this has for supporting children grieving various types of loss. Practical advice on how to support grieving children in school settings will be addressed. A range of topics will be covered, including what not to say, considerations related to grief across different cultures, identifying and addressing guilt, appropriate academic accommodations, and managing grief triggers. Compassion fatigue and how to minimize the impact on professionals will be reviewed. Free resources for addressing these issues and many others from the Coalition to Support Grieving Students will be shared.

David J. Schonfeld, MD, FAAP (he/him), is the Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement and Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Keck School of Medicine. With over 30 years of expertise, he has consulted on crisis support following events like 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic, and numerous school shootings. Author of 150+ publications, he researches children's adjustment to illness and loss. Dr. Schonfeld also served on national boards, including the National Advisory Committee on Children and Disasters.



Rebecca Oliver, LMSW & Terriyn Rivers-Cannon, EdD

Beyond the Shadows: Elevating School Social Work to New Heights

School Social Work is at a crossroads. Too often misunderstood, underfunded, and in the shadows, our profession holds the key to unlocking student potential, yet remains underrepresented in critical areas of influence. This keynote is a call to action for every school social worker, policy influencer, and leader to recognize the crucial role we play in shaping the well-being of our schools and the value of our profession. **Rebecca Oliver, SSWAA Executive Director (she/her)**, and **Dr. Terriyn Rivers-Cannon, SSWAA Board Past President (she/her)**, will lead this transformative session. Together, they'll cut through the noise, offering a powerful vision for the future of our field. This keynote will sharpen your focus, redefine your role, and equip you with actionable strategies to amplify the voice of School Social Work. Get ready to realign your purpose and become part of the movement that will reshape how our profession is seen, valued, and supported. Join us for an inspiring journey that not only highlights the challenges we face but also empowers each of us to be the catalyst for change that our profession needs.





School Social Work
Association of America



AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

PRE-CONFERENCE

- 7:30am-9:00am Conference Registration Open for Pre-Conference Attendees ONLY
- 8:30am-9:00am Coffee Break (Pre-Conference Attendees)
- 9:00am-12:00pm Pre-Conference Morning Sessions
- 12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch ON YOUR OWN
- 1:30pm-4:30pm Pre-Conference Afternoon Sessions
- 4:30pm-5:30pm Snack Break & Board Mixer (Exhibit Hall Area)
- 5:00pm-6:30pm Registration Open for ALL Attendees
Dinner ON YOUR OWN



PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-Con Forum Morning A: 9:00am-12:00pm

Facing Our Shadow Selves: Courageous Conversations and Navigating the Compass of Equity

Join us as we explore equity in school social work, guided by Glenn Singleton's groundbreaking book *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Singleton's *Courageous Conversations Compass*® serves as a key framework for our session, focusing on the four dimensions of Believing, Thinking, Feeling, and Acting. Participants will begin by engaging in an interactive overview of the *Courageous Conversations Compass*. Facilitated by experts, this session will encourage deep reflection and journaling as we examine how personal and professional shadow roots such as Disbelief, Ignorance, Fear, and Fatigue influence our actions and mindsets. Through courageous self-exploration, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss how these barriers impact their work and their capacity to foster equitable school environments. By the end of the session, we will have identified personal challenges and gained tools for negotiating these complex scenarios, both in our professional practice and personal journey. Please join us in this session to experience a valuable space for honest dialogue, introspection, and the expansion of our understanding and ability to bring about meaningful change in our schools and community.

**Presenters: Diana Rarich, LCSW (she/her) &
Sonja Ford, LCSW (she/her)**

Pre-Con Forum Morning B: 9:00am-12:00pm

Navigating Mandated Reporting: Cultural and Ethical Considerations for School Social Workers

School social workers are often presented with challenging and complex practice scenarios/decisions that may result in ethical dilemmas around mandated reporting. For example, identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect can feel intimidating and difficult for both new and experienced social workers alike. In addition, cultural differences and our own biases can impact decision making. This training explores cultural competency and ethical considerations to help social workers.

**Presenters: April Furguson, LCSW-C &
Andrea Murray, MSW, LICSW (she/her)**



PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-Con Forum Morning C: 9:00am-12:00pm

Pre-Conference Researcher Forum

The inaugural SSWAA Research Forum was held in 2018 and championed by Dr. Michael Kelly – a long-time leader in School Social Work – whose legacy lives on in our continued efforts to mobilize the profession and researchers in the field. This annual pre-conference research forum aims to foster dialogue and collaboration among school social work researchers across institutions. Researchers are invited to take part in a half-day workshop where we will review and discuss the National School Social Work Practice Model 2.0, elicit feedback on the model, and use it as a guide to establishing a working School Social Work Research Agenda with specific research priorities. Participants will share their research ideas through a Project World Cafe, discuss the challenges facing school social workers today in small groups (education, competencies, on-the-job training), and identify research priorities related to the implementation of the SSWAA National SSW Practice Model 2.0. Through collaborative dialogue, the session will engage participants in discussion on how to strengthen the impact of school social work research and maintain ongoing research partnerships.

**Presenters: Dr. Rob Lucio, PhD, LCSW (he/him)
Dr. Brandon Mitchell, PhD, MSW (he/him) &
Dr. Tasha M. Childs, PhD, MSW, LMSW (she/her)**

Pre-Con Forum Afternoon A: 1:30pm-4:30pm

We [still] Deserve Better: Collective Self-Care and Systemic Change

Practitioner burnout remains one of the single greatest threats to school social worker well-being, as well as longevity of the profession and children's overall mental health. Experiences of burnout are varied and nuanced; however, according to the findings of the 2024 follow-up study on burnout (originally conducted in 2021), school social workers are increasingly impacted by systemic and contextual dynamics that thwart the full realization of our ethical commitments and professional mission. Such dynamics include: unchecked school-based gun violence, anti-immigrant rhetoric, "don't say gay" bills, and legislation prohibiting SEL in schools. Recognizing the limitations of historically individually focused self-care, this workshop will instead center on collective self-care, with a strong emphasis on brainstorming opportunities and strategies for systemic change.

**Presenters: Dr. Stephanie Carnes, PhD, LCSW, LL.M (she/her) &
Dr. Robin DeLuca-Acconi, PhD, LCSW (she/her)**



PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-Con Forum Afternoon B: 1:30pm-4:30pm

Empowering Change: Trauma-Informed, Restorative Justice Approaches to Social Justice and Advocacy in Social Work

This session provides school social workers and educators with actionable strategies grounded in trauma-informed and restorative justice principles to support students navigating mental health and systemic inequities. Participants will explore culturally responsive, anti-oppressive practices that foster inclusive, supportive environments, particularly for marginalized youth such as Black boys and young men. Emphasis will be placed on restorative justice principles—such as accountability, community-building, and repairing harm—as foundations for nurturing trust, resolving conflicts, and building resilient school communities. Attendees will leave with tools to engage effectively with students, build community partnerships, and drive sustainable, equity-centered change.

Presenter: Ken Bourne, MSW, LSW (he/him)

Pre-Con Forum Afternoon C: 1:30pm-4:30pm

Unlocking the Power of Data: Research Skills for School Social Work Practitioners

This presentation equips school social work practitioners with tools to conduct practice-based research. We will address common research and data collection challenges, highlighting the role of practice-based research in showing the impact of school social work. Participants will learn about data utilization for storytelling, acquire practical skills in quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and learn to examine quantitative and qualitative data. We will explore data visualization techniques and guide participants in developing a data plan for the next steps. Please remember to bring your computers for hands-on activities.

**Presenters: Dr. Rob Lucio, PhD, LCSW (he/him)
Dr. Brandon Mitchell, PhD, MSW (he/him) &
Dr. Xiao Ding, PhD, MSSW, LMSW (she/her)**

Unite to Ignite



AGENDA

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 7:00am-8:30am | Conference Registration Open
Breakfast ON YOUR OWN |
| 8:00am-8:30am | Morning Meeting (ALL Attendees) |
| 8:30am-9:45am | Opening Keynote (1.25 CEs) |
| 9:45am-10:15am | Coffee Break (Exhibit Hall Area) |
| 10:15am-2:00pm | Workshop Breakout Session A (2.0 CEs)
Staggered Lunch Break ON YOUR OWN:
(Sessions A1-A3 Lunch: 11:15am-1:00pm)
(Sessions A4-A7 Lunch: 12:15pm-2:00pm) |
| 2:15pm-3:45pm | Workshop Breakout Session B (1.5 CEs) |
| 3:45pm-4:15pm | Snack Break (Exhibit Hall Area) |
| 4:15pm-5:30pm | Thursday Afternoon General Session (1.25 CEs)
Dinner ON YOUR OWN |
| 7:15pm-8:15pm | Optional Late Night CE Session (1.0 CE) |



BREAKOUTS A1-A3

10:15AM-11:15AM
(LUNCH BREAK ON YOUR OWN 11:15-1:00PM)
1:00PM - 2:00PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

A1 Advocacy

When the ACE is a Losing Hand: Rethinking Why Minorities Don't Seek Mental Health Treatment

Black families and Black boys experience trauma at a higher rate than their White counterparts, yet they seek mental health treatment at a lower rate. Untreated childhood trauma can lead to poor outcomes in adulthood such as mental illnesses, involvement in the criminal justice system, and inability to trust and form healthy relationships. We will examine these potential outcomes and explore the reason Black families do not seek mental health treatment. Finally, I hope to leave the audience with new ways to engage Black families, meet them where they are, and help them get the mental health support they need, especially Black boys. I will also introduce a new clinical tool for clinicians when working with Black families to help with cultural competence.

Presenter: Dr. Shericka Smith, DSW (she/her)

A2 Leadership

Preparing for National Certification: Hands- on Workshop with Nationally Certified School Social Workers

Are you an active SSWAA member with 4 years of post-MSW experience who wants to become an NCSSW candidate? Attend this hands-on session to learn about the certification process from application to competency statement submission and the submission rating process. This session will prompt you to examine how the SSWAA National Practice Model and your practice intersect, test your skills at writing a competency statement, and identify artifacts that you could use to support it. Participants will receive an update on school social workers who have received a pay increase upon earning national certification and any state legislative updates. This session will help you evaluate your readiness to invest time into the national certification process and develop a plan to successfully complete it.

Presenters: Lou Paschall, LAPSW, NCSSW (she/her)
Ken Rautiola, LCSW, NCSSW, EdS, MSW (he/him) &
Dr. Michelle Alvarez, EdD, MSW (she/her)

A3 Practice

Beyond NAS - A Collaborative Model of Support

This educational session will share current research highlighting the long-term impact of prenatal opioid exposure on children. Many had long term behavioral, physical, educational, and developmental impacts from their prenatal opioid exposure. We will share best practice, from To The Moon and Back, a 501(c)3 that is dedicated to children born with in utero substance exposure and their families. Since 2017 we have been the leader in providing support, education, and advocacy for the children of the opioid epidemic. Some of our current work includes a collaboration with the Plymouth Public Schools (MA) providing integrated care management for children with POE to improve service delivery, improving these children's outcomes academically, behaviorally, and developmentally.

Presenters: Theresa Harmon, MSW, LICSW (she/her) &
Maxanne Wordell, MSW, LSSW (she/her)



BREAKOUTS A4-A7

10:15AM-12:15PM

(LUNCH BREAK ON YOUR OWN 12:15-2:00PM)

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

A4 Practice

Empowering Minds: Utilizing an Intersectionality-Based Approach to Address Mental Health Issues in Minority Students

The Empowering Minds workshop aims to equip educators, mental health professionals, and support staff with the tools and knowledge to effectively address mental health challenges faced by minority students using an intersectionality-based approach. By recognizing the unique experiences of students at the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and more, this workshop seeks to foster inclusive and culturally sensitive practices that promote mental well-being and academic success.

Presenter: Dania Martinez, MSW (she/her)

A5 Practice

Supporting the School-Based Play Therapist in Special Education

Balancing the needs and expectations of a school while using play therapy can be difficult. This workshop will help school-based play therapists learn how to support children from preschool to high school by using expressive therapy interventions in individual and group play therapy within a school setting. Participants will also learn how to communicate the effectiveness of play therapy to school staff and administrators, while also exploring how to create play-based universal supports in collaboration with teachers. Additionally, participants will explore play-based interventions and goals that can address common mental health issues in schools including anxiety, depression, ADHD, and more. Special attention will be given to these common issues within the parameters of IEP services.

Presenter: Kira Collins, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S (she/her)

A6 Practice

Balancing Act: DBT for Students and Self-Care

In the high-pressure environment of school settings, social workers are continually striving to support the socio-emotional and behavioral needs of their students while also managing their own stress and well-being. This presentation, titled Balancing Act: DBT for Students and Self-Care, offers an in-depth exploration of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and its applications for both student support and social worker self-care. This session will provide actionable insights and practical tools to integrate DBT into daily practice, promoting a balanced and effective approach to well-being.

Presenter: Janae Ponder, LCSW (she/her)

A7 Leadership

Advancing School Social Work: Culturally Responsive, Trauma Informed, Tech-Savvy, and Leadership Ready

This session explores the comprehensive NYU Silver's Post-Master's Certificate Program in School Social Work provides. Participants will delve into anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices, advanced crisis intervention strategies, leadership development, and integrating AI and digital tools in school social work. Emphasizing culturally responsive and evidence-based approaches, the session will equip attendees with practical skills and knowledge to create positive, sustainable change in educational settings. The discussion will highlight the program's flexible hybrid format and rigorous curriculum and focus on real-world applications and career enhancement.

Presenters: Dr. Gabriella McBride, DSW, LCSW, SIFI (she/her)

**Dr. Abigail Levites, DSW, LCSW (she/her) &
Dr. Jessica Chock-Goldman, DSW, LCSW (she/her)**



BREAKOUTS B

2:15PM-3:45PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

B1 Leadership

A Maine Adventure: The Evolution of a State School Social Work Organization
Come explore the development of a school social work organization in the State of Maine. Many states and regions of the country have a rich heritage of school social work organizations, while Maine and other states have historically lacked this supportive structure. School social work is a complex and dynamic specialty practice that, at times, can become isolating for practitioners. This session will trace the evolution of school social work support in the state of Maine over the past five years. Starting with the identification of a NEED for support, the creation of a statewide school social work committee, inconsistent participation, and leveraging the RIGHT TIME. Celebrate the importance of connecting school social workers to the profession; hear the Maine Adventure and share your story.

Presenter: Ken Rautiola, LCSW, NCSSW, EdS, MSW (he/him)

B2 Research

The Two Faces of Home Visiting: School Social Workers and Caregivers Shed Light on Home Visiting Practices

In this presentation, the presenters engaged in comprehensive interviews with school social workers (SSWers) to uncover their insights on home visits. The study's findings reveal important information regarding the purposes of these visits, safety concerns, and the challenges faced by SSWers, including obstacles from families or their own school districts. Additionally, the presenters will share current research of caretakers' perceptions when schools visit their homes. By examining these dual perspectives, the presentation aims to establish a robust framework for enhancing best practices in home visiting.

**Presenters: Dr. Dee Stalnecker, DSW, LSW, BCBA (she/her)
Dr. Stephanie Ochocki, DSW, MSW, LICSW (she/her) &
Lou Paschall, LAPS, NCSSW (she/her)**

B3 Advocacy

Recognizing and Responding to Human Trafficking: The Role of the School Social Worker and the Interdisciplinary Team

The proposed education session and discussion cover the signs of sex and/or labor trafficking and the role the school social worker may have in identifying victims/survivors, connecting these students with resources, and providing education to prevent trafficking and victimization. The relationship of trafficking to the social determinants of health, economic disparities, disabilities, racism, and other forms of discrimination will be covered. Cases will be presented, and key elements addressed. Finally, the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement will be explored, using the case example of the conception, development, and ongoing work of the Bronx Human Trafficking Task Force.

**Presenters: Diane Strom, LCSW-R (she/her) &
Dr. Peter Sherman, MD, MPH (he/him)**



BREAKOUTS B

2:15PM-3:45PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

B4 Leadership

Emerging Ethical Conundrums in Hostile School Environments

This workshop will provide participants with a framework for tackling ethical conundrums associated with their engagement in anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices and delivering mental health services when working in school environments that are hostile to core social work values. Participants will also examine how to use the Code of Ethics and federal laws when state laws and school district policies conflict with best social work practices in school settings.

Presenters: Dr. M. Annette Clayton, PhD, MSSW, ACSW (she/her) & Dr. Jim Raines, PhD, LCSW (he/him)

B5 Policy

Engaging in School Social Work Advocacy: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

To empower school social workers through advocacy, this presentation equips SSW practitioners with skills to advocate effectively across all levels, from school boards to state legislation, and even potentially organizing a state-level SSW Day on the Hill. We will explore SSW practitioners' varied roles in advocacy and developing actionable changes to legislation and policy. Strong collaboration is needed between SSW practitioners, state associations, and SSWAA to better support the needs of individual practitioners in leading advocacy efforts. Participants will develop a unified vision of SSW collaboration and advocacy through candid discussions and real-world examples. Elevate your advocacy game to create meaningful change for SSW, students, families, schools, and communities.

**Presenters: Dr. Robert Lucio, PhD, LCSW (he/him)
Emilie Souhrada, LISW (she/her) &
Dr. Brandon Mitchell, PhD, MSW (he/him)**

B6 Practice

School Social Workers Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance promotes academic equity for students experiencing homelessness within secondary settings. Students experiencing homelessness face a myriad of challenges that can cause difficulty to their academic, social, and emotional functioning. The academic setting may serve as a stable place that builds resiliency with children and youth experiencing homelessness. School social workers are uniquely placed in schools, serving as the liaison between home-school-and community and can serve as a resource for students experiencing homelessness.

Presenter: Kennesha Smith, LMSW (she/her)

B7 Advocacy

Embracing Neurodiversity: Creating Sensory-Friendly and Inclusive School Spaces

School social workers will gain practical strategies to create accessible spaces for neurodivergent students and staff in schools. Participants will leave with concrete action steps on implementing accommodations such as sensory-friendly classrooms, group spaces, and offices. By the end of the session, attendees will be equipped with the tools and knowledge to foster inclusivity and support neurodivergent individuals in their school environment.

Presenter: Dr. Sara Rodrigues, DSW (she/her)



THURSDAY LATE NIGHT CES

7:15PM-8:15PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

Option #1 Leadership

Converging Diverse Voices: Advancing the Profession with the National Practice Model 2.0

Join us for a panel discussion on the National Practice Model 2.0, featuring diverse voices including a superintendent, state consultant, university educator, parent, teacher, and youth. Together, we will explore the implications of the National Practice Model 2.0 for today's educational context. Our panelists will share their insights and experiences, discussing how the model can drive excellence and innovation in school social work. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the model's relevance for practice, research, policy, leadership, and advocacy. We will unpack how these activities within our home-school-community partnerships influence student academics, school climate, social and emotional well-being, mental health, ultimately advancing overall student and school well-being.

Presenter: Dr. Kevin Tan, PhD, MSW (he/him)

Option #2 Policy

From the Classroom to the Capitol: School Social Workers on the Frontlines of Advocacy

This roundtable discussion unites school social workers to explore the power of advocacy in enhancing student outcomes. Participants will examine the significance of professional advocacy at national and state levels, emphasizing benefits for students and families. The conversation will encompass effective advocacy strategies, influencing decision-makers, overcoming challenges, delving into national-level issues impacting students, and discussing how school social workers can collaborate with national organizations for a more significant impact. The roundtable will address specific policies, their direct impact on students, and experiences working with legislators.

**Presenters: Dr. Rob Lucio, PhD, MSW (he/him) &
Emilie Souhrada, MSW, LISW (she/her)**



AGENDA

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

- 7:30am-8:30am Breakfast in Grand Ballroom D
Morning Meeting (ALL Attendees)
- 8:30am-9:45am Friday Morning General Session (1.25 CEs)
- 9:45am-10:15am Coffee Break (Exhibit Hall Area)
- 10:15am-2:00pm Workshop Breakout Session C (2.0 CEs)
Staggered Lunch Break ON YOUR OWN:
(Sessions C1-C4 Lunch: 11:15am-1:00pm)
(Sessions C5-C7 Lunch: 12:15pm-2:00pm)
- 2:15pm-3:45pm Workshop Breakout Session D (1.5 CEs)
- 3:45pm-4:45pm Snack Break, EXHIBIT HALL BONANZA, &
Poster Presentations(Exhibit Hall Area)
- 4:45pm-5:45pm Regional Meetings (Check App for your
Region's Meeting Location)
Dinner ON YOUR OWN
- 7:15pm-8:15pm Optional Late Night CE Session (1.0 CE)



BREAKOUTS C1-C4

10:15AM-11:15AM

(LUNCH BREAK ON YOUR OWN 11:15-1:00PM)

1:00PM - 2:00PM

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

C1 Advocacy

Training Ambassadors for Awareness Campaign

In this powerful and transformative session, school social workers will delve into the urgent themes of the SSWAA's Awareness Campaign, exploring new ways to uplift voices, dismantle barriers, and foster unbreakable connections within school communities. As we gather in Atlanta, the cradle of movements that changed history, this session will ignite a renewed sense of purpose and action among participants, empowering each person to stand resiliently in the face of today's most pressing social and educational challenges. Attendees will engage in discussions, skill-building activities, and collaborative planning designed to bring an earth-shaking impact to their practice and communities. We'll dive into strategies that enable school social workers to become even stronger advocates for students, driving equity and transformation within their schools, and reaching the hearts of students, families, and staff alike. Join us for an inspiring 2-hour journey that is bound to leave you recharged, refocused, and ready to create lasting change.

Presenters: Dr. TerriIn Rivers-Cannon, EdD (she/her) & Rebecca Oliver, LMSW, CSW (she/her)

C2 Leadership

Where's my SSWAA Compass? Navigating Social Work Leadership in Schools and Districts

Using SSWAA and NASW standards as our compass, we will learn how to best navigate the waters of being a social work administrator in school systems. We will start with assessing our leadership style and dig deeper into the elements of transformative leadership using a trauma informed cultural humility approach beside professional standards of school social work practice. Participants will learn how to use professional standards, trauma informed practices, and a cultural humility approach to advocate and be a leader for system change. Presentation will be interactive with activities focusing on self-awareness, case scenarios, and evidence-based practices.

Presenters: Dr. Elaine Swain, DSW, LMSW, BA (she/her) & Alexis Scurry, MSW, BSW (she/her)

C3 Practice

Dismantling Systems of Oppression During Suicide Assessments in K-12 Settings.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for youth in the United States. It is imperative that school systems understand the need for youth support and evaluation. In this presentation, the focus will include basic information on assessing youth for suicide and power dynamics at play when assessing and determining supports for diverse youth. Parental engagement will be explored from the lens of understanding systems of power, and how to foster relationships with parents and students during a mental health crisis. Also addressed will be exploration of policy, staff bias and systemic racism impacting student interventions with regards to suicide. Finally, an overview of Postvention will be included to prepare learners with tools to implement following the death of a student by suicide.

Presenter: Sheri Koller, LCSW, LCSW-C, PPSC, NCSW (she/her)



**C4
Practice**

**Abolitionist Perspectives in School Social Work:
A Call for Justice-Oriented Practice**

This interactive session will delve into abolitionist perspectives in school social work, emphasizing the need to shift from punitive and deficit-based frameworks to justice-oriented practices. Participants will gain insights into SSW's historical roots and contemporary challenges and explore strategies from abolitionist teaching to reimagine their practice. Through engaging activities, case scenarios, and group discussions, attendees will learn and apply skills for creating inclusive, equitable, and supportive school environments that uplift and heal minoritized youth.

**Presenters: Dr. Krystal Folk-Nagua, DSW (she/her) &
Dr. Brandon Mitchell, PhD (he/him)**

BREAKOUTS C5-C7

10:15AM-12:15PM

(LUNCH BREAK ON YOUR OWN 12:15-2:00PM)

**C5
Practice**

AI-Powered School Social Work: Ethical, Equitable, Personalized Solutions

In an era where student mental health needs are increasingly complex, this workshop offers school social workers a look at leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance their practice. Participants will examine AI's application and impact, first exploring ethical and responsible uses of open-source generative AI tools to improve day-to-day efficiency. From there, participants will explore research-backed interventions that provide personalized and culturally responsive student support, while leveraging technology to provide scalable, affordable solutions in communities that have traditionally lacked access to these kinds of resources. Participants will gain hands-on experience with the tools presented and develop a personal plan to experiment further with AI in their practice.

Presenter: Dr. Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW (she/her)

**C6
Practice**

**Reclaiming Black Childhood: Engaging
Adultified Black Children in Play Therapy**

Play therapy with adultified Black children may be challenging, especially gaining buy-in with Black caregivers. Systemic & institutional racism in American Black children often robs them of a childhood. As a result, Black caregivers may also encourage their children to abandon play to prepare them for an unjust world. In turn, they are often denied the ability to fully engage in play, in and out of the playroom. This also may lead to difficulty gaining play therapy buy-in from Black caregivers around certain categories of toys that may be taboo. Using an Ecosystemic Play Therapy approach, this workshop explores how adultification appears in play therapy with Black children and family, including how the grief of the killing of unarmed Black Americans may contribute to parenting practices

Presenter: Dr. April Duncan, DSW, LCSW, RPT-S (she/her)

**C7
Research**

Equity in Mind: Transforming School Mental Health

An engaging and dynamic workshop designed for school social workers, where we delve into over seven years of school and community-based mental health partnerships and program evaluation. This journey, which began as a pilot in one district, has successfully expanded into six school districts, creating a robust and universal mental health system of care. Design Thinking: Engage in problem-solving to enhance interprofessional teams. Interactive Learning: Dive into real-world scenarios from our practice to shape your school's MTSS. Self-Reflection: Explore biases and strengthen critical consciousness through guided activities. Expressive Modalities: Use art, music, and movement to foster self-awareness and team collaboration. Group Collaboration: Collaborate with peers to spark ideas.

Presenter: Dr. Rachel Phelps, DSW (she/her)

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2025



BREAKOUTS D

2:15PM-3:45PM

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

D1 Advocacy

Black Girl Magic SEL: Creating Social Emotional Learning Programs for Black Adolescent Females

In this workshop, we will discuss creating SEL Programs for Black Adolescent Females. School social workers will learn about the unique challenges of Black adolescent females in school environments and society, examine the intersectionality of race and gender and its impact on the academic success, emotional well-being and positive social interactions of Black adolescent females, and identify tools and strategies they can use to create and effectively implement SEL programs that are relevant to and support the unique experiences and challenges of Black adolescent females. This interactive session will combine lecture-style learning with small group discussion so participants can explore creating SEL programs tailored to Black adolescent females in their unique school environments.

Presenter: Dr. Nina Ruffin, DSW, LCSW-R (she/her)

D2 Leadership

Our School District is Trauma Informed, Isn't that Enough? Elevate Your Trauma Knowledge & Practice.

Join us along the journey from being simply trauma informed to becoming trauma responsive. Examine the step-by-step process begun by the Cherokee County School District and the key roles played by District leadership, behavior specialists, and school social workers. Explore the ways in which you as an individual or member of a school district can leverage community partnerships, free trauma trainings, and more intensive programs including an in-depth look at the Trauma-Based Relational Intervention training from the Karyn Pervis Institute of Child Development. Attendees will learn from certified TBRI Practitioners and take away evidence-based resources, discuss strategic behavioral strategies, and create a template formulating a practical trauma responsive plan for your school district.

**Presenters: Dr. Tara Quinn-Schuldt, PhD, MS, MSW, LMSW (she/her)
Patrick Walker, EdS (he/him) &
Megan Allen, MSW, LCSW (she/her)**

D3 Policy

Unhoused Youth: One District's Journey to Breaking Barriers and Creating Systemic Change

As our nation's schools continue to grapple with the rising numbers of unhoused youth and families, districts have used outreach, collaboration, and education to decrease stigma and increase access to community services. In this session, we will review McKinney-Vento law, demonstrate how a strong partnership between McKinney-Vento Liaisons and School Social Workers increases opportunities for advocacy, district and community education, access to mental health services, and systemic change. You will learn how a partnership with your local Continuum of Care (CoC) can change the trajectory of a student's life through easier access to services and housing permanency.

**Presenters: Lori Carmack, MSW (she/her)
Laura Grier, BA, Student master's in counseling (she/her) &
Mackenzie Kelly, MPA (she/her)**



BREAKOUTS D

2:15PM-3:45PM

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

D4 Practice

Partnering for Animal-Assisted Activities in Schools: Social, Physical, and Academic Impacts

Working in concert with multidisciplinary teams, School Social Workers are uniquely positioned to bring animal-assisted activities into school districts and implement interventions with students and staff. Animal-assisted activities (AAAs) can positively impact student's social, physical, and academic well-being and improve school culture. There are a variety of ways to bring AAAs into a district and many aspects to consider before doing so. Attend this session to learn how one district started a therapy dog program from scratch, reflect on the impact thus far and goals for growth, and have the opportunity to interact with the district therapy dog.

**Presenters: Lou Paschall, LAPSW, NCSSW (she/her)
Leslie Brasfield, RN (she/her) &
Randall Robinson, Ed.S. (he/him)**

D5 Research

Evidence-Based Approaches in School Social Work Education: Needs Assessments and Effective Interventions

To effectively and efficiently navigate the complexities of school climates, school social workers must understand the lifecycle of needs assessments and how data-driven and evidence-based interventions can affect positive social change by addressing student and community needs. This panel of faculty and MSW students from Concord University will offer participants an overview of the experiential approach we use to teach the entire lifecycle of assessment initiatives - from planning and dissemination to data collection, evaluation, and communicating findings to stakeholders. We will explore the key areas of our needs assessment: school safety, family outreach and basic needs provision, and mental health and student support services, and students will discuss their findings.

**Presenters: Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW, MBA (she/her) &
Dr. Irene Hagarty, DSW, MSW (she/her)**

D6 Practice

Supporting Students, Staff, and Ourselves in the Aftermath of Crisis

Crises have the potential to cause short- and long-term effects on the psychological functioning, emotional adjustment, health, and developmental trajectory of children. This session provides practical suggestions on how to identify common adjustment difficulties in children in the aftermath of a crisis and to promote effective coping strategies, including incorporating the principles of psychological first aid. Professionals residing and/or working within a community impacted by a crisis event often experience similar impacts as the children they support throughout the recovery and renewal phases, underscoring the need for professional self-care. The presenter, David J Schonfeld, MD, established and directs the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Children's Hospital

Presenter: Dr. David Schonfeld, MA, FAAP (he/him)

D7 Leadership

School Social Workers Building Relationships with Immigrant Students: Utilizing a Chicana/Latina Feminist Ethic of Care

Schools function as a primary setting that can support equity for immigrant children, providing education, a link to resources, and the development of positive social identities. School social workers (SSWs) have the potential to promote equity for immigrant students by fostering a welcoming school climate, being a bridge to resources, and challenging policies and practices that exclude immigrant students. However, traditional SSW practice lacks models that disrupt racial inequity. This study seeks to draw from a Chicana feminist critical ethic of care framework to analyze the ways in SSWs approached their work with immigrant students to foster equity and support their social, emotional and material needs.

**Presenters: Dr. Leticia Villarreal Sosa, PhD, LCSW (she/her) &
Kristina Luna, BS, MSSW student (she/her)**



POSTER PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2024 3:45PM-4:45PM

Environmental Justice and Implications for School Social Work

This poster presents themes from racial healing circles focused on environmental justice, illuminating themes for school social work practice. Three circles were conducted with community partners and university students to understand the intersections of race, environment, and equity. Key themes include the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on marginalized communities, such as pollution and the lack of green spaces impacting student outcomes. The role of school social workers emerges as pivotal in advocating for policies that mitigate environmental injustices and promote equitable access to resources. We suggest ways to address these challenges within educational settings, promoting environmental justice as integral to social work's mission of equity and empowerment.

**Presenters: Priscilla Ahearn, BSW (she/her)
Citali Tover, BSW (she/her) &
Lisa Sanchez, BSW (she/her)**

The Promise of Racial Healing Towards Equity in Schools

This poster explores themes from five racial healing circles involving BSW & MSW students, focusing on advancing equity within school environments. These circles identified issues such as systemic racism, implicit biases in educational settings, and the impact of student well-being and academic achievement. Themes also include strategies for promoting cultural humility, fostering inclusive curricula, and enhancing community engagement to dismantle barriers to equity. The role of school social workers emerges as pivotal in advocating for anti-racist policies, supporting culturally responsive practices, and promoting healing-centered approaches that empower students and families. We present actionable strategies to advance social justice through collaborative practice in school social work.

**Presenters: Sharlei Deltang, BSW (she/her)
Priscilla Ahearn, BSW (she/her) &
Janna Fouly, BSW (she/her)**

Assessing and Intervening to Address Gaps in Basic Needs Provisions in WV Schools

Basic needs provision is an essential step in creating an educational environment where students can thrive. This poster presents key findings from a needs assessment conducted during an advanced MSW practicum and subsequent actions taken to alleviate identified gaps in basic needs services. The assessment involved surveys of teachers and administrators in six counties throughout West Virginia to evaluate the current state of basic needs support, alongside other critical areas such as parent engagement, school safety, and mental health services. Discussion of the implementation of evidence-based interventions related to meeting the students' basic needs will be included.

**Presenters: Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW (she/her) &
Laura Thompkins, MA, BA (she/her)**



POSTER PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2024 3:45PM-4:45PM

Investigating and Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions to Improve School Safety in WV Schools

Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment is fundamental to ensuring students' well-being and academic success. This poster explores important findings from a needs assessment conducted during an advanced MSW practicum, focusing on school safety across six counties in West Virginia. This needs assessment surveyed teachers and administrators and aimed to evaluate current safety practices alongside other areas, including basic needs provisions, parent engagement, and mental health services. A discussion of how evidence-based interventions aimed at improving school safety will be included in this poster.

**Presenters: Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW (she/her) &
Tamala Gore, BSW (she/her)**

Key Findings and Strategies for Enhancing Parent and Caregiver Engagement in West Virginia Schools

Effective parent and caregiver engagement is crucial to support students' academic and social successes. This poster presents key findings from a needs assessment conducted during an advanced MSW practicum, focusing on parent and caregiver engagement within six counties in West Virginia. The needs assessment surveyed teachers and administrators to evaluate their perceptions of strengths related to parent or caregiver engagement and other critical areas, including basic needs provisions, school safety, and mental health services. Additionally, evidence-based interventions suited to increasing parent and caregiver engagement will be examined.

**Presenters: Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW (she/her) &
Alexis Straunton, BA (she/her)**

Reducing Pathways to the School-to-Prison Pipeline through Incentivized Attendance-Based Programming

Consistent school attendance is crucial for student success, but various obstacles can lead to absences and lateness. Attendance policies often punish students, especially those of color, unfairly treating noncompliance as a crime. This study explores incentive-based programs to tackle absenteeism and tardiness. Using a single-subject design, students set attendance goals to earn rewards upon achievement. The findings show improvements in attendance, more positive interactions among students and staff, a stronger sense of belonging, and better relationships with adults at school.

**Presenters: Dr. Zalia Powell, PhD (she/her)
Ali Rollason, MSW student (she/her) &
Lindsay Singewald, MSW student (she/her)**

Pennsylvania School Social Workers' Trauma-Informed Practices: Status and Future Needs

This poster presentation highlights the findings from a study that surveyed 239 Pennsylvania school social workers and obtained qualitative data from 10 school social workers via focus groups to obtain information regarding their use of trauma-informed practices and interest in professional development regarding trauma-informed practices. Despite variables in the work setting influencing their use and interest in professional development related to trauma-informed practices, participants reported that they are using this form of engagement and wanting to learn more via quality professional development sessions that are tailored to their learning needs.

Presenter: Dr. Jessica Schoonmaker, DSW, LCSW (she/her)



POSTER PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2024 3:45PM-4:45PM

Key Findings and Interventions for Enhancing Mental Health Services in West Virginia Schools

Mental health services are vital for supporting student well-being and academic success. This poster highlights key findings from a needs assessment conducted during an advanced MSW practicum, with a focus on mental health services in six counties across West Virginia. This needs assessment surveyed teachers and administrators to evaluate the current state of mental health support alongside other essential areas such as basic needs provisions, parent engagement, and school safety. This poster will also discuss evidence-based interventions implemented to mitigate identified gaps in mental health services.

**Presenters: LeeAnn Weaver, BSW, MSSW, LSW (she/her) &
Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW (she/her)**

A Systematic Review of Caseworker Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Child Welfare Services.

Caseworkers play a crucial role in supporting and shaping the experience of the most vulnerable children, youths, and families involved in the child welfare system. However, caseworker recruitment and retention remain challenging for public and private child welfare organizations. In this project, the researcher conducted a qualitative literature analysis of the peer-reviewed scholarly works published in the past ten years (2014-2024). In doing so, the researcher aims to provide a holistic framework for other social service professionals with evidence-based, practical strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce to better support social service organizations in meeting the diverse needs of their local communities.

**Presenters: Dr. Jing Zhang, EdD (she/her) &
Betsy Caroff, MSW (she/her)**

SSWEND Scholar Experiences (Group 1)

This poster will provide an overview of the school-based practice experience of advanced generalist SSWEND Scholars working in Anchorage School District, a high-needs LEA in Anchorage, Alaska. The poster will discuss models of practice, identification and recommendations around student and community needs in Alaska's public schools, and implications for school social work practice in Alaska. This presentation will focus specifically on culturally responsive school-based clinical practice in Alaska.

**Presenters: Rachel Studebaker, MSW Student (she/her)
Natalie Mobley, MSW Student (she/her)
Mary Wood, MSW Student (she/her) &
Dr. Donna Aguiniga, PhD, MSW (she/her)**

SSWEND Scholar Experiences (Group 2)

This poster will provide an overview of the school-based practice experience of advanced generalist SSWEND Scholars working in Anchorage School District, a high-needs LEA in Anchorage, Alaska. The poster will discuss models of practice, identification and recommendations around student and community needs in Alaska's public schools, and implications for school social work practice in Alaska. This presentation will focus specifically on the role of community engagement in promoting safe and supportive schools in Alaska.

**Presenters: Claire SharpBA, AA, MSW Student (she/her)
Heidi McCroskey Heimrl, LMSW (she/her) &
Dr. Matthew Cuellar, PhD, MSW (he/him))**



REGIONAL MEETINGS

4:45PM-5:45PM

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

Regional Meetings

Regional Meetings

SSWAA holds space for regional meetings, which is a dedicated time/space for School Social Workers to meet and greet, network, and share ideas with other School Social Workers from your geographic region. Please see the app for the location where your Region will be meeting (Northeast, Midwest, Southern, and Western). Each regional meeting will be hosted by your SSWAA Board Regional Representative.

Hosted by:

Northeast Rep: Dr. Krystal Folk-Nagua
Midwest Rep: Tynisha Jointer
Southern Rep: Dr. Kasheria Guy-Robinson
Western Rep: Dr. Sheri Olson

FRIDAY LATE NIGHT CES

7:15PM-8:15PM

Late Night Advocacy

SSWAA Practitioners of Color Advisory present Decolonizing School Social Work: Centering Voices of Social Workers of Color

The goal of this presentation is to empower social workers of color by exploring and amplifying decolonizing practices in school social work to create more equitable, culturally responsive support systems for students. Participants will explore historical and systemic barriers in school social work, identify challenges and solutions for social workers of color in decolonizing school spaces, and share culturally responsive and decolonizing strategies for the field of social work.

**Presenters: Dr. Blanca Sanchez McGee, DSW, LCSW-S (she/her),
Dr. Ashely Johnson, EdD, LSSW (she/her), &
Verline Gaddis, LCSW (she/her)**

Moderator: Jasmine Gaines, MEd, LMSW (she/her)





School Social Work
Association of America

Unite to Ignite

A graphic logo consisting of three stylized human figures in blue, red, and yellow, with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture, positioned to the right of the text 'Unite to Ignite'.

AGENDA

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

7:30am-8:30am Breakfast in Grand Ballroom D

8:15am-9:15am SSWAA Board Awards Ceremony
ED Closing Remarks & Final Announcements

9:15am-10:30am Closing Keynote (1.25 CE's)

11:00am-12:30pm Workshop Breakout Session E (1.5 CE's)

12:30pm Conference Adjourns



BREAKOUTS E

11:00AM-12:30PM

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

E1
Advocacy

Becoming an "Inspired Ally" to LGBTQ+ Youth
Data from The Trevor Project shows that LGBTQ+ students experience more disparities compared to non-LGBTQ+ youth. Some of these disparities include violence, suicide risk, and mental health concerns. Many of these disparities are linked to social disadvantages including a history of exclusion or discrimination. With an increasing number of students identifying as LGBTQ+, it is essential that educators and administrators develop increased competence and confidence in supporting queer youth in their school settings. This workshop will introduce the "Inspired Allies" curriculum and will present concrete and actionable steps for participants to bring back to their teams to create more affirming educational spaces for LGBTQ+ students and more confidently partner with queer youth and families.

Presenter: Christopher McLaughlin, MSW, LCSW (he/him)

E2
Leadership

Tiered Attendance Interventions: A School District's Experience How They Reduced Chronic Absenteeism Rates
This session will focus on how successful tiered attendance interventions to reduce chronic absenteeism rates across the district. In this presentation, the focus will be on the lessons learned and how to apply interventions to create a culture where attendance matters through exploration of how one school district implemented a district-wide tiered attendance intervention approach that has systematically decreased chronic absenteeism rates in the 2022-2023 and the 2023-24 school years.

Presenters: Abby Cobb, LISW-CP (she/her) & LaVernda Ragins, LMSW (she/her)

E3
Research

Navigating Student Support: Metro Nashville's Scalable Student Mentorship Program & Its Impact on School Social Work
Metro Nashville Public Schools set an ambitious goal to have "Every student known" and has spent the last several years building out scalable structures to ensure each student has consistent access to a caring adult. This initiative proactively identifies and supports student well-being, and gives social workers and other leaders insights to effectively target support, while ensuring no student flies under the radar. We will unpack the journey behind the Navigator program, from its pedagogical roots in student belonging & mentorship, to the practical strategies necessary to scale implementation, and how data collected from this program enhances other integrated school social work systems. Participants will ideate ways to implement similar practices and data sources into their communities.

Presenters: Dr. Monica Coverson, EdD, MSW, LSSW (she/her) & Kate Coulouras, MEd (she/her)





BREAKOUTS E

11:00AM-12:30PM

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

E4
Leadership

Empowering Tomorrow's Workforce: Innovations in Internship Programming for Sustainable Development

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has developed an innovative internship program to tackle the shortage of school mental health providers while fostering workforce development in school social work. In collaboration with 12 universities and 15 partner school districts, LACOE offers bachelor and graduate level interns hands-on training and experience providing multi-tiered mental health support in schools throughout Los Angeles County. This innovative project not only aims to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of mental health services in schools but also to promote the profession of school social work while cultivating a skilled workforce capable of addressing the escalating mental health needs of students.

Presenters: Kim Griffin Esperon, MSW, LCSW (she/her) & Elsa Garcia-Sanda, MSW, LCSW (she/her)

E5
Practice

Change the Anxiety Conversation

Hear strategies for how to make comprehensive changes in addressing student anxiety in your building. Examine some of the most used interventions and why many of these may often do more harm than good. Discover alternative, more effective strategies using parent book groups and professional development to introduce these concepts to caregivers and school staff. Examine your own levels of and reactions to anxiety and how these cannot only influence the interventions you attempt to use, but also how they impact the students you serve. Walk away with outlines for both parent and educator book studies.

Presenters: LeAnne Hale, MSW, Ed.S (she/her) & Dr. Cindy Murphy, PhD (she/her)

E6
Research

Race, Racism and School Social Work: Exploring Perspectives and Experiences from School Social Work Practitioners

The aim of this presentation is to explore findings from focus groups with school social workers (SSWs) about their experiences with race and racism in the school setting. While SSWs have long shown a capacity to address race and racism (ex. punitive discipline and staff hiring), they are often more engaged in micro-interventions (ex. individual counseling) and passive response (ex. addressing community needs), which have limited impact on policies and practices in schools. We gained in-depth understanding of school social worker experiences and found the following: 1) varied school climates and focus on race (via professional development); 2) deficit perspectives from other school staff; 3) limited ability to address race-related concerns; and 4) limited formal learning opportunities.

Presenters: Dr. Kate Phillippo, PhD (she/ella) & Dr. Jennifer Murphy, PhD, MS, MSW (she/her)

E7
Research

Using Data to Assess Practice: Aligning with the National Model 2.0 to Advance Sustaining and Equitable Student and School Well-Being Outcomes

The launch of the National Practice Model 2.0 is an opportunity for school social workers to promote sustaining and equitable outcomes and increase the visibility of our work through alignment of our practice. As such, it is imperative for school social workers to collect quantitative data about their use of time in order to assess the impact of their role and delineate appropriate tasks that maximize the use of our professional training and specialized skills. This workshop will provide an overview of a use of time study used by the school social work team at one school district, share data collected and how it informed ongoing practice, and introduce a new tool that social workers can use to measure their work in alignment with the National Practice Model 2.0.

Presenter: Faiza Jackson, MSW, LCSW (she/her)



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SPEAKER BIOS



Donna Aguiniga, PhD, MSW (she/her) is the Assistant Dean and a Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Her research focuses on child welfare, including adoption, kinship care, and the impact of poverty on families. With a background in child protective services and community mental health, she also led UAA's Dialogues for Public Life program (2014-2022) and served as Interim Director of the UAA Center for Community Engagement & Learning, fostering community partnerships and dialogue facilitation.



Priscilla Ahearn, BSW (she/her) earned her Bachelor's in Social Work from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is on track for her MSW. She has worked with domestic violence survivors, foster youth, LGBTQ+ community, children with IEPs, individuals with disabilities, and college students. Her research experience extends from the effectiveness of trauma informed training to understanding substance use recovery in adolescents. She believes diverse experiences are crucial for school social workers.



Megan Allen, MSW, LCSW (she/her) has worked in the field of social work since 2005. Megan is a graduate of Woodstock High School, so she is thrilled to now be working in the community where she grew up. Megan earned both her Master's Degree and Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from The University of Georgia. Go Dawgs! Megan is certified by the Georgia Department of Education in School Social Work and by the GA Composite Board as a Licensed Clinical Level Social Worker.



Dr. Michelle Alvarez, EdD, MSW (she/her) is the President-Elect of SSWAA and a member of the team that launched the first national school social work model and national certification for school social workers. She has published articles and books in the field in an effort to advance the field of school social work and continues to research and write. She was a school social worker in Pinellas County Florida and project director for a grant that employed school social workers in Evansville, Indiana.



Dr. Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW (she/her) is an experienced school administrator and counseling director with a demonstrated history of working in community mental health and education as a social worker. Currently, Dr. Badillo-Diaz is a consultant focusing on the training of educators and social workers with MABD Consulting. She is also an adjunct professor and board member of the National School Social Work Association of America. She is also the author of the blog, "The AI Social Worker".



Kenneth L. Bourne Jr., MSW, LSW (he/him) is an award-winning social worker, educator, and advocate for equity for Black boys and men. Named NASW-PA's 2024 Social Worker of the Year, he's the author of *Anger Management for Black Male Teens* and founder of *Bourne Anew*, offering trauma-informed, culturally relevant programs. A first-gen college graduate, Bourne is a sought-after speaker on antiracist, healing-centered practices and serves on the faculty at Widener University and the University of Tennessee.



Leslie Brasfield, RN (she/her) is the Manchester City Schools Coordinated School Health (CSH) Director. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga and has worked in hospital settings in critical care areas for 16 years and as a school nurse for 11 years. Tennessee implemented CSH statewide in 2007 and she has served 2 South Central region districts as CSH Director. A member of the Rural Health Association of Tennessee since 2007, she currently serves on the board.



Lori Carmack, LMSW, LSSW (she/her), serves as the Coordinator of School Social Work for Hamilton County Schools, TN. Lori has almost two decades of experience in School Social Work, practicing in six states in both urban and rural settings. Prior to working in the schools, Lori practiced as a mental health therapist providing individual, family, and group therapy at a residential facility for adjudicated youth. She received her Master of Social Work from the University of South Florida.



Dr. Stephanie Carnes, PhD, LCSW, LL.M (she/her), is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Sacred Heart University, bilingual clinician, and advocate. With 15 years of experience, she has worked with Central American immigrant youth in shelter programs and as a school social worker in New York. Her research focuses on school social worker burnout and collective self-care. Stephanie holds a PhD in social welfare, an MSW, and an LL.M in International Human Rights Law.





Betsy Caroff, MSW (she/her) has dedicated over 26 years to the field of social work at Allegheny County Children Youth and Families. She transitioned through various roles, from caseworker to director. Currently serving as the interim director, Betsy Caroff has played a pivotal role in addressing workforce challenges and driving initiatives aimed at fostering a positive, efficient, and engaged workplace. Betsy Caroff holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from St. Louis University and a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh.



Dr. Tasha Childs, PhD, MSW, LMSW (she/her) is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Missouri and a licensed social worker trained as a school social worker. Her research focuses on eliminating racial inequities in schools, addressing teacher bias, and improving access to mental health services. Over the past seven years, she has collaborated with schools in multiple states to enhance mental health access and school improvement models. Since joining in 2023, she developed a Graduate Certificate in School Social Work and serves as an Associate Editor for the Journal of Child and Family Studies, with 17 peer-reviewed publications and 40 national presentations.



Dr. Jessica Chock-Goldman, DSW, LCSW (she/her), is the Director of Clinical Services/Social Worker at Bard High School Early College of Manhattan. She received her DSW at NYU School of Social Work, focusing on restructuring how mental health and suicidal ideation are addressed within the DOE. She is an adjunct professor at NYU School of Social Work, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, and has taught numerous CE Workshops on Culturally Responsive Suicide Prevention and Intervention in School.



Dr. M. Annette Clayton, PhD, MSSW, ACSW (she/her) is an Associate Professor with 10 years+ experience in higher education. As an avowed practitioner-scholar, with more than 30 years of prior practice experience, her research interests are primarily school social work practice efficacy and the schooling experiences of adolescents. She has presented at numerous state and national conferences and published manuscripts in Children & Schools, Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, and the Journal of African American Studies.



Abby Cobb, LISW-CP (she/her) is a Licensed Independent Social Worker – Clinical Practice (LISW-CP) and is the Lead Social Worker for Richland School District Two. She joined Richland Two in 2007 as a school social worker and became the lead in the 2012. Abby also serves as the district's McKinney Vento Liaison, Foster Care Liaison, Attendance Lead, and Coordinator of the Healthy Choices, Positive Decisions program. Prior to joining Richland Two, she worked with children in foster care through a therapeutic foster.





Kira Collins, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S (she/her) has a passion for working with children, youth, and families. She holds a Bachelor’s in Psychology with a minor in Family Studies from the University of Missouri – Kansas City and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Kansas. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor. Kira has provided individual, group, and family counseling to preschool, elementary, and middle schools in various school districts and non-profit agencies.



Kate Coulouras, MEd (she/her) is the Manager of Strategic Implementation and Training for Sown To Grow, working with district and school administrators of student support services to implement high fidelity tiered whole child supports. Ms. Coulouras has 12+ years of experience as an educator, working as a teacher (bilingual, Spanish, English), administrator, and most recently as a high school principal in Sacramento, CA. She received her Masters in Educational Leadership from the University of Notre Dame.



Dr. Monica Coverson, EdD, MSW, LSSW (she/her) brings over 20 years of experience providing individual and group counseling work. In Metro, she manages a staff of 50 social workers who serve over 83,000 students. Dr. Coverson was instrumental in building the district's robust staff of Clinical Trauma Professionals and LGBT+ Equity & Inclusion Specialists, and increasing the number of social workers across the district by 30%. Dr. Coverson holds her MSW from Western Kentucky University and Ed.D from Lipscomb University.



Dr. Matthew J. Cuellar, PhD, MSW (he/him) is a professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He holds a PhD in Social Work from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a Minor in Statistics, and an MSW from The University of Alabama. With extensive experience in child-serving systems, Dr. Cuellar’s research focuses on school social work leadership and safety. His interdisciplinary work has appeared in prominent journals, including Social Work Research and the Journal of School Violence.



Sharlei Deltang, BSW (she/her) is a graduate of the University of Illinois School of Social Work, pursuing her MSW in Schools. She is guided by a deep-seated belief that every individual, regardless of their background, deserves equitable access to quality support. Her passion is in de-stigmatizing mental health, focusing on marginalized communities. Sharlei has worked with foster youth, military-connected populations, AAPI, and school communities, and hopes to continue work in restorative justice!





Dr. Robin DeLuca-Aconi, PhD, LCSW (she/her), is a Clinical Associate Professor and Director of School Social Work programming at Stony Brook University. She consults with Long Island schools on trauma-sensitive practices, school avoidance, and empathetic distress. A former school social worker for 20 years, she created Stony Brook's social work program in 2024. Her research focuses on educational equity and student outcomes. She is an author and co-founder of the nonprofit What Better Looks Like, supporting education and community development in Rwanda.



Dr. Xiao Ding, PhD, MSSA, LMSW (she/her), is a postdoctoral scholar in trauma and violence prevention at the Begun Center for Violence Prevention at Case Western Reserve University. She specializes in school social work, mental health services for children and families, and brief interventions for high-needs adolescents. Her research focuses on adapting evidence-based interventions for trauma-informed care. Xiao's work is published in *School Mental Health*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, and *Research on Social Work Practice*.



Dr. April Duncan, DSW, LCSW, RPT-S (she/her) obtained her Bachelor's in Arts & Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia (2006), Masters of Social Work from Saint Louis University (2012) and Doctorate of Social Work from the University of Southern California (2021). She is the founder of BMH Connect, an organization focused on Black youth empowerment through the use of play therapy. Dr. April is a racial trauma expert and leader in her field in advocating for the mental health needs of Black children.



April Ferguson, LCSW-C, is the Children and Adolescents Senior Practice Associate at the National Association of Social Workers, providing expertise on issues impacting children and families. After transitioning from engineering, she began her social work career in child welfare, supporting foster youth. April also provided trauma-informed therapy and case management as part of the National Health Service Corps. She has testified before legislatures and helped plan a congressional briefing on youth behavioral wellness.



Dr. Krystal Folk-Nagua, DSW (she/her), is a Black feminist and abolitionist social worker passionate about dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and advocating for and advancing the lives of Black and Brown youth and women. She is an Adjunct Professor at NYU Silver School of Social Work and the University of Kentucky College of Social Work. Dr. Folk-Nagua sits on the board of the School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA) and the New York State School Social Work Association (NYSSWA).





Sonja Ford, LCSW (she/her) is a dedicated advocate for inclusivity in education with a strong background collaborating with the Colorado Department of Education, where she helped secure federal funding for students with disabilities. As a member of the National Association of Black Social Workers, she promotes social justice and equity in social work. Currently, Sonja serves as a school social worker and Equity Liaison in the Cherry Creek School District, facilitating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) trainings and early childhood education workshops.



Janna Fouly, BSW (she/her) earned her Bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is currently pursuing her MSW. Her work experience includes roles as a childcare provider, facilitator for racial healing dialogues, and peer mentor. Janna is actively involved in volunteer work, including mentoring, guiding and supporting students, and reproductive justice advocacy. She values inclusion and the power of collaboration with others to create meaningful change.



Verline Gaddis, LCSW (she/her), has 20 years of experience in school social work, specializing in trauma-informed care and culturally responsive practices. Passionate about fostering resilience and social-emotional learning, she emphasizes family engagement and inclusive environments where all students feel valued. Verline holds an MSW from Loyola University Chicago and a Master's in Educational Leadership and is pursuing an Ed.D. at the University of St. Francis, focused on empowering student success.



Jasmine Gaines, MEd, LMSW (she/her), with 13 years in Grand Prairie ISD, Jasmine Gaines has held roles as a Teacher, Behavior Intervention Specialist, Counselor, and Student Mental Health & Grant Programs Manager. She is an advocate for people of color, serving in many leadership roles that focus on equity for all. She holds a Master of Education and Master of Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington.



Elsa Garcia-Sanda, MSW, LCSW (she/her) has over 28 years of experience working in the field of social work, with the last 25 years specializing in schools. Ms. Garcia-Sanda has served in several roles through her years in education including: Psychiatric Social Worker, Pupil Services Lead, and College Empowerment school social worker. Most recently she has served as Coordinator III, Mental Health & School Counseling for the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Mental Health & School Counseling Unit.





Tamala Gore, BSW (she/her) will graduate with her Master of Social Work (MSW) from Concord University in Athens, West Virginia in May 2025. She received the CU in Schools Scholarship Award and is currently completing her advanced practicum placement in Mercer County Schools. Gore completed her BSW with a criminology minor at Concord University in May 2023. While working towards her MSW, Gore continues to work as a cosmetologist at Klassy Kuts, a salon she owns and operates.



Laura Grier, BA (she/her) serves as the Homeless Liaison for Hamilton County Schools where she brings 11 years of case management experience to serve and advocate for students and families experiencing homelessness. She has increased the Families in Transition (FIT) Program funding by over one million dollars, allowing for expanded programming to over 90 schools in Hamilton County, TN. Laura's work has gained statewide recognition, allowing her to implement new initiatives statewide in other districts.



Kim Griffin Esperon, MSW, LCSW (she/her) has over 25 years experience serving as a school social worker, with the last 13 years spent developing and managing district and school mental health programs. She is currently the Project Director III for the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Mental Health & School Counseling Unit where she oversees direct service programs as well as staff providing consultation and training around school counseling and mental health to support LA County's 80 school districts.



Dr. Irene Hegarty, DSW, MSW (she/her) earned her DSW from Tulane University in 2021, where she investigated the impact of COVID-19 on family violence crisis services. She completed her MSW in 2018, at Our Lady of the Lake University, and received a BA from West Chester University of Pennsylvania in Psychology. Irene's writing spans intervention effectiveness of mental health supports for survivors of interpersonal violence and the use of technology in identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking.



LeAnne Hale, MSW, Ed.S (sh/her) is a School Social Worker and former Elementary School Counselor in her 26th year of service to public education. Helping to empower students, their parents, and their teachers to normalize and manage anxiety in healthy ways in order to achieve their goals and live full lives is a passion of hers. LeAnne is also the mother of two children, a daughter who is a junior at the University of Louisville, and a son, a high school senior.





Theresa Harmon, MSW, LICSW (she/her) is the Founder and Director of To The Moon and Back 501 (c)3. She works full time as a high risk case manager for Mass General Brigham as well as in private practice working with adults with chronic illness, trauma, and substance use disorder. She is completing her last semesters to become a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner focusing on addiction medicine. However, her biggest accomplishment is raising two amazing children born opioid dependent who are 11 and 6 and thriving.



Heidi McCroskey Heimerl, LMSW (she/her) is a passionate community advocate, licensed social worker, and lifelong learner, Heidi Heimerl has spent over 15 years advancing public, behavioral, and community health in Alaska. Her work is driven by a deep commitment to improving access to mental health services and reducing barriers for students and families, particularly through school-based mental health service initiatives.



Ms. Faiza Jackson, MSW, LCSW (she/her) began her career as a school social worker in Chicago, IL providing direct intervention and crisis management as well as professional development to staff and leading the implementation of school wide social emotional learning. Currently, Ms. Jackson serves as the Director of School Social Work for ACPS. As Director, she provides training, support, and supervision for the district team. Ms. Jackson earned her master's from the University of Chicago Crown School of Social Work.



Mackenzie Kelly, MPA (she/her), is the Executive Director of the Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition, where she oversees the strategic direction, operations, and funding to address homelessness in Southeast TN. Since joining the CRHC in 2021, Mackenzie's leadership and dedication have driven significant progress in the organization, positioning it as a national model in coordinated homeless response and community engagement. She has gained national recognition for her work to end homelessness.



Dr. Ashley Johnson, EdD, LSSW (she/her) is a School Social Worker for Memphis Shelby County School District, an adjunct professor with Western Kentucky University MSW program, and CEO of Wheat & Johnson, LL, an Education Consulting agency. Dr. Ashley Johnson earned doctorate in Education Policy and Leadership from the University of Memphis. Dr. Ashley Johnson is the current President of the Tennessee Association of School Social Workers and the 2024 Tennessee School Social Worker of the Year Award recipient. Dr. Ashley Johnson is a national and international presenter on research focused on education policy, SEL practices, and the role(s) of school social workers' implications of professional and personal ethics within the profession of social work. Dr. Ashley Johnson is a coffee lover and her hobbies include cooking/baking and showcasing her daily work as the Sassy Social Worker!





Dr. Nat Kendall-Taylor, PhD (he/him) is the CEO of the FrameWorks Institute, where he leads a team applying social science research to reframe complex socio-political issues for social change. An expert in psychological anthropology and communications science, Nat has published in journals such as *Science Communication* and *Human Organization* and has presented globally, from Harvard University to Amnesty International. He is also a senior fellow at Harvard's Center on the Developing Child and a visiting professor at Yale School of Medicine.



Sheri Koller, LCSW, LCSW-C, NCSSW, PPSC (she/her) is the 3rd individual to receive the NCSSW Certification. With over 20 years of experience as an SSW, Sheri is an expert in the field of student mental health and suicide prevention. As the owner of Brave Journeys LLC, she supports schools nationwide through her consulting business and develops programs to address the complex mental health issues facing our schools, including a fundamentally different approach to suicide prevention and intervention.



Emily Landseidel, MSW, LCSW, MBA (she/her) completed her Master of Social Work (MSW) at Simmons University in 2020, her Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Antioch University in 2011, and her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, in 2007. Emily has been a Licensed Social Worker in West Virginia since 2020, and currently holds an LCSW. Emily has a diverse employment background, including as a clinician, case manager, farm-to-school educator, and AmeriCorps Program Manager.

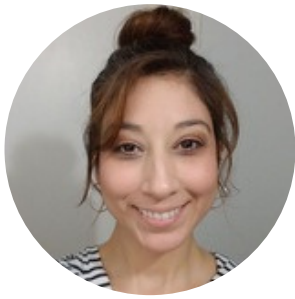


Abigail Levites, DSW, LCSW (she/her), is a School Social Worker for the NYC Department of Education. She has experience working within school system for youth in juvenile detention and placement and transfer schools, sparking her passion for helping previously disengaged youth obtain their education. In 2017, she became a founding School Social Worker for Judith S. Kaye High School, a transfer school in District 79 aimed at serving youth involved in the criminal legal system. She received her DSW from NYU.



Dr. Rob Lucio, PhD, LCSW (he/him) has over 30 years of experience and research supporting youth facing heightened vulnerability to impacts in behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes. He consults with local school districts to enhance social workers' use of evidence-informed interventions, advocacy, and school behavioral health. Additionally, he is experienced in developing youth risk and protective factors models and provides training on advocacy, data-based decision-making, and culturally relevant intervention.





Kristina Luna, BS, MSSW student (she/her) is a graduate assistant at the School of Social Work, contributing to research on Latino caregivers, mental health access among people of color, and culturally informed care. She is completing her practicum under the UTRGV School-Based Mental Health Service Providers grant as a school social worker and will graduate in May 2025. Ms. Luna received her Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Services in 2018 but wanted to expand her capacity to help others, so she returned to school to acquire her MSSW. Her plans post-graduation are to become licensed and support students who need assistance with educational, social, and mental health concerns in the school setting.



Dania Martinez, MSW (she/her/ella), a proud native of Paterson, NJ, is committed to empowering women and uplifting her community. As a mother of two, she values education as a catalyst for change. She earned her bachelor's degree in Spanish with minors in Women & Gender Studies and Latin American Studies from William Paterson University. She completed her Master's in Social Work at Monmouth University. Currently, pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Social Work with a focus on Human Rights Leadership.



Dr. Gabriella McBride, DSW, LCSW (she/her), earned her MSW degree from CSSW in 2006 and DSW from NYU in 2023. She joined Mott Haven Academy Charter School in 2009, serving as a Founding Social Worker and the Director of Social Services until 2021. Gabriella has taught as an adjunct faculty member at NYU Silver since 2016. Gabriella is launching the School Social Work Training Academy at NYU Silver School of Social Work, a program dedicated to training school social workers serving youth and families in NYC.



Dr. Blanca Sanchez McGee, DSW, LCSW-S (she/her), is the Executive Director of Social and Emotional Learning for Grand Prairie ISD and a passionate advocate for integrating social work into education. She earned her Doctor of Social Work from Tulane University, is the 2022 NASW Fort Worth Area Social Worker of the Year and has led groundbreaking efforts in SEL research and implementation. Recognized nationally and locally for her contributions, Dr. McGee is also a dedicated family woman and community leader.



Chris McLaughlin, MSW, LCSW (he/him) is the owner of Inspired Consulting Group, LLC. Chris has spent 30 years as a provider and a leader in behavioral health services for queer youth and families across a variety of settings. Chris is a nationally known speaker and expert in LGBTQ+ youth care and is the developer of the "Inspired Allies" certificate program for those seeking to advance their skills in better supporting the LGBTQIA+ community. He is cohost of the Inspired Insights podcast and lives in Maine.





Jasmin Miller, MSW, LGSW (she/her), a recent alumna of Howard University School of Social Work, specialized in school social work, conducting research on attendance patterns and punitive consequences for chronically absent students. She holds licensure as a Graduate Social Worker in the District of Columbia. Currently, Jasmin is engaged in professional endeavors at the TrueYou Center, delivering multi-tiered mental health services to Sousa Middle School students.



Dr. Brandon D. Mitchell, Ph.D., MSW (he/him), is an Assistant Professor of Social Work in the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work at Norfolk State University. His research is positioned along two pathways to examine and understand: (a) the impact of policies and media discourse on education, youth development and school-based support mechanisms, and (b) research to improve the role and practice of school social workers toward healing-centered frameworks and justice-oriented action.



Natalie Mobley, MSW student (she/her) is currently a middle school counselor at Central Middle School in the Anchorage School District. She is a member of the SSWEND scholarship program that prepares students for school-based mental health. Natalie anticipated graduation date is May 2025, and she plans on working toward her LCSW.



Dr. Cindy Murphy, PhD (she/her) has been in the counseling profession, in some capacity, for 29 years. The majority of her career was spent in a school counseling role. Currently, she has a small private practice and is a full time online faculty member at Grand Canyon University where she teaches and supervises school counseling interns. She lives in Athens, GA and is the mother to a son who is a freshman at the University of Colorado.



Dr. Jennifer Murphy, PhD, MS, MSW (she/her), is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Arlington. Dr. Murphy's research focuses on adolescent and young adult mental health, examining mental health service utilization. Her work has specifically centered around school-based mental health service use and the longitudinal impacts of service use on continued services and mental health symptoms.





Andrea Murray, MSW, LICSW (she/her) is Director of the NASW Office of Ethics and Professional Review, overseeing ethics programming and professional review. She holds an MSW from The Ohio State University and a Bachelor's from the University of Toronto. A certified project manager and mediator, Andrea began her career in D.C.'s child welfare system and later worked with Casey Family Programs. She develops NASW ethics resources, including the Ethics 8 series and NASW's 2022 online ethics course.



Dr. Stephanie Ochocki, DSW, MSW, LICSW (she/her) leads school mental health & SEL efforts for the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School District 196. She is an experienced school mental health professional and recognized leader in the field of SSW. Stephanie's areas of interests include SEL, PBIS, suicide prevention, threat assessment, and crisis response. Stephanie has held a variety of leadership roles advocating for the needs of children, families and schools, including President of MSSWA and the Midwest rep for SSWAA.



Rebecca K. Oliver, LMSW (she/her) is the Executive Director of the School Social Work Association of America, serving in the role since 2015 after more than 20 years as a school social worker and administrator. She has presented nationally on school social work and taught as adjunct faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. Rebecca holds an MSW from UT Austin, a BA in Psychology from Baylor, and a certificate in Nonprofit Management from Northern Kentucky University. She is passionate about mental health awareness and collaboration.



Lou Paschall, LAPSW, NCSSW (she/her) has practiced School Social Work for 21 years. In 2022, she became the first Tennessean to earn the Nationally Certified School Social Worker (NCSSW) designation. She attended the Manchester City Schools as a child and is honored to provide School Social Work services there. Her research interests are the ethical use of technology, School Social Work supervision, Social Work history, self-care, play therapy, bibliotherapy, and animal-assisted interventions.



Dr. Rachel Phelps, DSW, LMSW (she, her), a dynamic force in education championing inclusivity and equity in school-based mental health programming. With over a decade in school social work and district leadership, Dr. Phelps innovates program and professional development, increasing access to mental health services in urban schools.





Dr. Kate Phillippo, PhD (she/ella) is a Professor in Loyola University Chicago's Schools of Social Work and Education, and the Associate Dean of Loyola's Graduate School. A former school social worker in Illinois and California, her work as a scholar centers youth experience of schools and schooling, and policy and practice attunement to youth needs. Her focal policy areas are equity-oriented urban education policy and student wellness policy.



Janae Ponder, LCSW (she/her), has over 13 years of experience in mental health & social work. Since 2019, she has served as a School Social Worker & DBT trainer for Volusia County Schools, addressing students' socio-emotional needs & empowering student services with effective DBT techniques. As the owner of Life-Spire Counseling Services in Deltona, FL, she specializes in helping all ages overcome mood disorders, trauma, stress, & anxiety.



Dr. Zalia Powell, PhD (she/her) is an academic at the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) in Australia. Zalia's research interests focus on lived experiences of perinatal anxiety, well-being of diverse young people and their families. Zalia has presented the findings of her research both nationally and internationally. Prior to her appointment with UniSC, Zalia was a clinical social worker with experience in child and family mental health, health, and women's and family's services.



Dr. Tara Quinn-Schuldt, PhD, MS, MSW, LMSW (she/her) has worked in the field of social work since 2005 in a variety of settings including the public school system, medical social work, higher education, and private clinical practice. Tara currently serves as a Student Support Specialist for the Cherokee County School District managing and supporting district initiatives and interventions related to the social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health for both students and staff. Tara is a licensed Master Level Social Worker.



LaVernda Ragins, LMSW (she/her), is the Lead Attendance Interventionist at Richland School District Two. She holds a Master's in Social Work from the University of South Carolina-Columbia and has over 20 years of experience in educational social services. Her career includes roles as a School Social Worker, Regional Program Director, and Lead School Social Worker. LaVernda's expertise in attendance intervention reflects her dedication to ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed in their educational journey.





Dr. Jim Raines, PhD, LCSW (he/him) calls himself an accidental academic with the heart of a practitioner. He is the author of over fifty publications and five books: *Evidence-Based Practice in School Mental Health* (2008); *School Social Work* (2010); and *Ethical Decision Making in School Mental Health* (2011, 2021) and *Evidence-Based Practice in School Mental Health* (2019). He has held numerous leadership positions including President of the Midwest Council for School Social Work (2009-2010) and SSWAA (2017-2018).



Diana Rarich, LCSW (she/her) is a school social worker with 20 years of experience, having previously supported youth and families in residential, foster care, and child protection services. She has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work and volunteers with the American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Services. A Certified Daring Way™ facilitator, Diana integrates yoga and bodywork into her practice. She is a former conference coordinator for the Colorado School Social Work Association and currently serves as the Social Emotional Learning Coordinator in Cherry Creek Schools (CO).



Ken Rautiola, LCSW, NCSSW, EdS, MSW (he/him) is a Nationally Certified School Social Worker (NCSSW). He earned his MSW degree from the University of Maine and is currently an EdD candidate at Liberty University. In 2024, Ken served as the Mental Health Distinguished Educator at the Maine DOE. Ken serves on the SSWAA Standards & Practice committee, NASW School Social Work Specialty Practice Committee, and is a lead rater for the NCSSW process. Ken serves on the NASW-ME Board and is co-chair of their school social work committee.



Dr. TerriIn Rivers-Cannon, EdD, MSW (she/her), from Savannah, GA, excels as an author, speaker, and school social worker with a focus on human trafficking, mental health, and DEIBJ. Her advocacy supports at-risk students nationally. As SSWAA's 2023 President, she's the first Georgian and African American in the role. Holding a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and an MSW, her professional life is rich with honors, including features on major networks and numerous awards. She also founded "Soar with K.AT.I.E."



Randall Robinson, EdS (he/him) earned his Bachelor of Science in Secondary and Special Education from Middle Tennessee State University and his Master in Curriculum and Instruction and Education Specialist in Administration and Supervision from Tennessee Technological University. After 19 years of teaching, he became Instructional Supervisor and then Assistant Principal. As Manchester City Schools' Director of Student Management and Attendance, he works with local organizations to serve runaway, immigrant, youth and families.





Dr. Sara Rodrigues, DSW (she/her) is the founder and Executive Director of Balanced Learning Center, a neurodiversity affirming non-profit organization, an adjunct professor at several universities, and a national speaker and consultant. She earned her DSW from Simmons University in 2023 and has over 20 years of experience working with children and families in across multiple settings.



Ali Rollason, BA (she/her) is a counsellor and certified national mediator in Australia. She is currently completing her MSW at the University of Tennessee. She is working as a school social worker and has a passion for working with children and young people who are struggling with stress, social and family issues, trauma and the many challenges faced by young people. She works with a compassionate and non-judgmental approach, Ali is dedicated to creating a safe and supportive environment for young people.



Dr. Nina Ruffin, DSW, LCSW-R (she/her) is a NYS Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She holds a Doctorate in Social Work and a Trauma Counseling Certificate from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and has been a School Social Worker, Clinical Supervisor and Lead Social Worker at a large, urban K-12 district for almost 10 years. Dr. Nina also has 10 + years of experience providing individual, couples, family and group counseling to adolescents and adults in private practice and community based settings.



Lisa Sanchez, BSW (she/her) earned her Bachelor's in Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is currently pursuing her MSW degree. She is actively involved on campus through LSWO and SWSA due to her commitment to serving the communities she is a part of. Her experience is in working with diverse populations including latinx college students, children, and individuals experiencing substance use issues.



Dr. Jessica Schoonmaker, DSW, LCSW (she/her) is passionate about trauma-informed practices, particularly with children and adolescents, as she believes that all children and students have the right to feel connected and supported, regardless of life circumstances. She has over 7 years' experience working as a school social worker and has previously worked in the child welfare system and emergency mental field health.





Alexis Scurry, MSW, BSW (she/her) is a Social Work Professor and Director of Social Work Field Education at Columbia College in South Carolina. She joined as an adjunct in Spring 2021, teaching in the Masters in Education in Trauma-Informed Practices program. Alexis earned her Bachelor's in Family and Consumer Sciences from Winthrop University and her Master of Social Work from the University of South Carolina-Columbia. With ten years of experience in training, curriculum development, and child welfare, her motto, "each one, teach one," reflects her commitment to sharing knowledge with her students and community.



Claire Sharp, BA, AA, MSW student (she/her) is passionate about supporting young individuals in their goals, the therapeutic benefits of outdoor experiences, social justice and physical sciences, most recently fjords! She's looking for new ways to blend those passions and find a personal balance while doing good in the world. Claire is a wilderness guide in the summers and is hoping to start a career in school social work after graduating with her MSW in May 2025.



Dr. Peter Sherman, MD, MPH (he/him) has been caring for children and adolescents of the Bronx for 30+ years. He is Chair, BronxCare Department of Pediatrics and Founder/Director of the Bronx Human Trafficking Task Force. Dr. Sherman is treasurer of AAP Section II, Chapter 3 and is President-Elect. He has sat on and continues to part of many boards/committees focusing on advocacy for children's health and prevention of violence. He is Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine.



Dr. David J. Schonfeld, MD, FAAP (he/him), directs the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and is a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine. With over 30 years of experience, he consults and trains schools on supporting students during crises and has responded to events like the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous school tragedies. An author of over 150 scholarly works, he frequently speaks on crisis topics. Dr. Schonfeld is involved with the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Children and Disasters and has held leadership roles in national commissions on children and disasters.



Lindsay Singewald, BS (she/her) completed her Bachelors of Science degree in psychology/sociology from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and she is currently completing her MSW and trauma certification at the University of Tennessee. She has experience as a school social worker in Knox County Schools, and she is currently working in the area of child-centered play therapy. Lindsay is committed to working in the area of mental health with children and young people.





Kennesha Smith, LMSW (she/her) earned a Master of Social Work from Georgia State University. Throughout her career, she has served different populations in a variety of roles, but her passion resounds with school social work practice. She served as a School Social Worker for five years in Metropolitan Atlanta prior to transitioning to Louisiana State University in pursuit of a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work. Her research interests include students experiencing homelessness and school social work practice.



Dr. Shericka Smith, DSW (she/her) is from Lexington, KY and is a mental health coordinator at her local school district. Most recently, she obtained her Doctorate in Social Work at the University of Kentucky where she researched the impact of childhood trauma and the lack of mental health resources for Black families. She is passionate about helping minorities navigate a path to better and more equitable mental health resources.



Emilie Souhrada, MSW, LISW (she/her), is a licensed independent social worker who received her MSW in 2005 with a school social work specialization from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a school social worker for Central Rivers Area Education Agency. Emilie is a Past President of the Iowa School Social Workers' Association (ISSWA) and Past Vice President of the Midwest School Social Work Council. She is also the Advocacy Legislative Committee Chair/Co-chair for ISSWAA and SSWAA.



Dr. Dee Stalnecker, DSW, LSW, BCBA (she/her) is a school social worker at Derry Township School District in Hershey, PA. She completed a DSW through Millersville University. Her published work and professional development presentations are focused on areas of home visiting, perceptions of school colleagues about SSW, and educational funding. She is also an MSW graduate of Temple University, PA licensed SW, and a BCBA. She is a board member of the Pennsylvania Association of SSW personnel.



Rachel Studebaker, MSW student (she/her) is a MSW student at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Rachel is from Denver, now settled with her family in Anchorage and learning to love the north. Currently focused on the intersection between youth and families, wellbeing, and environment. As a SSWEND scholar she is making connections to how these things play out in the school environment. Her social work dream would be to see a social worker and mental health clinician at every school in Alaska.





Alexis Staunton, BA (she/her) received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from West Virginia University in 2019. Currently, Alexis is pursuing her Master of Social Work at Concord University in WV, with an emphasis on school social work. She works as a Child Protective Service Worker (CPS) and is registered with the WV Board of Social Work. Alexis finds fulfillment in working with CPS to help children and families involved in the system and create positive change in their lives.



Diane Strom, LCSW-R, MSW (she/her) has been a social worker in the BronxCare Health System for more than 30 years. She is presently the Assistant Director of the Department of Pediatrics for Grants and Community Engagement and the Coordinator of the Bronx Human Trafficking Task Force. Ms. Strom is also an adjunct lecturer at Lehman College School of Social Work where she teaches Social Work Practice, Health Counseling and Substance Use in the Urban Environment.



Dr. Elaine Chavez Swain, DSW, LMSW, BA (she/her) is a Filipina-American, born and raised in New York City. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 1995 and a Masters Degree in Social Work in 1999 from the University of South Carolina. After 26 years of professional experience in the social work field, Elaine achieved a Doctorate in Social Work from Capella University in 2023. As a licensed social worker, she worked in many areas of social work including foster care, hospitals, and psychiatric care.



Dr. Kevin Tan, PhD, MSW (he/him) is a leader in school social work, focusing on social emotional learning (SEL) for Pre-K to 12th-grade students. With six years of practice experience in Singapore and the U.S., he has secured over \$2.5 million in grants, collaborating with educators and organizations to support SEL and youth risk prevention. He played a key role in revising the National School Social Work Practice Model with the School Social Work Association of America. Currently, he is the Editor-in-Chief for Children & Schools and serves as Associate Dean for Engagement, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



Laura Tompkins, MA, BA (she/her) is working towards completing her Master of Social Work at Concord University, WV, with a special focus on school social work. Laura completed her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Psychology from Marietta College in Ohio in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Laura's professional experience includes clinical work, managing an emergency children's center, case management for children, and working as a Mental Health Technician in an adult in-patient psychiatric unit.





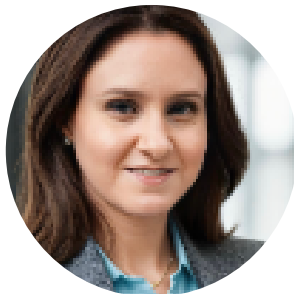
Citali Tovar, BSW (she/her) recently graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor's in Social Work and is actively pursuing her MSW there. She has worked with students with disabilities, and volunteers at a food pantry in her community to address food insecurity. She is passionate about ensuring all students have access to the resources they need to thrive in school.



Dr. Leticia Villarreal Sosa, LCSW, PEL SSW (she/her) is Associate Dean and Professor in the School of Social Work at UTRGV. Her current research focuses on utilizing Photovoice as a tool for advocacy, and an immigrant student equity project. Her forthcoming book focuses on the testimonios of older adult Latina trailblazers in Chicago. She was awarded a grant from New York Life Foundation to develop a culturally informed response to grief and loss certificate for school based professional.



Patrick Walker, EdS (he/him) is a Behavior Intervention Strategist for the Cherokee County School District. Patrick has spent much of his tenure working with the most difficult behaviors in a Psycho Ed Program, trained under the Marcus Autism Center, TEACCH, Wired Differently and Trust Based Relational Intervention. Patrick is also a certified Trainer in Mindset and Dialectical Behavior Therapy. Patrick earned a B.A. in Vocal Performance, MAT in Special Education, and an Ed.S. in Curriculum and Instruction.



LeeAnn Weaver, BSW, MSSW, LSW (she/her) is enrolled in Concord University's Master of Social Work Program and expects to graduate in July 2025, with a focus on school social work. In addition to pursuing her MSW, LeeAnn works as a Social Services Supervisor for a Skilled Nursing Facility in West Virginia. She completed her Bachelor of Social Work in 2004 and obtained a Master of Science in Strategic Leadership in 2012 from Mountain State University. LeeAnn has been a Licensed Social Worker since 2004.



Mary Wood, MSW student (she/her) Mary is pursuing a masters degree in Social Work, expected graduation to be May 2025. She is a member of the SSWEND scholarship program.





Maxanne Wordell, MSW, LSSW (she/her) is a licensed school social worker with over 20 years of experience supporting children and families in Massachusetts and the UK. She holds an MSW from Boston University and post-master's trauma-informed education training from Lesley University. As a mother, foster, adoptive, and birth parent, her personal experiences fuel her advocacy for children who've faced trauma. Maxanne's work emphasizes intergenerational healing, social-emotional well-being, and creating nurturing environments for all children.



Jing Zhang, MA, BA, EdD student (she/her) earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees in English and English Education before pursuing her doctorate at West Virginia University. Her major is Curriculum & Instruction, focusing on DEI in higher education. Currently, Jing works as a Racial Equity Fellow at the Allegheny County (PA) Department of Human Services (DHS). Her project is to establish a Competency-Based Selection Model for caseworkers across all the offices within DHS.

