



2023 Legislative Agenda

MSSWA LEGISLATIVE GOALS:

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

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) has been serving children in their schools, homes and communities for over 50 years. We are an association of licensed school social workers throughout Minnesota who work with students and their families to provide mental health related services and support within the school system. “School social workers provide a focused reach to support all students specifically in areas of social-emotional learning and mental health needs, and are uniquely trained to integrate the school, community, and family context into interventions and resource referrals. School social work interventions reduce barriers to learning enabling students to be physically, mentally, and emotionally present and ready to learn in the classrooms.” (SSWAA, 2021). Although the roles and responsibilities of school social workers vary between districts statewide, we are united in our common goal of working with the “whole child”. MSSWA defines the “whole child” as working with the child in his/her/their environment with consideration to family, community, values, culture and language. School social workers are instrumental in furthering the mission of the schools which is to provide a setting for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER:

MN school social workers are mental health practitioners and professionals, as defined by [Minnesota Statute 245.462 Subdivision 17 and 18](#), who meet Minnesota requirements to practice social work in the school setting. Social workers receive two different sets of credentials: degrees and licenses. Social work degrees are earned from accredited academic institutions. The master level social worker has the training and skills to provide services beyond mental health case management through advanced clinical mental health practice. The bachelor level social worker is prepared for practice in mental health case management. School social workers at the master level receiving clinical supervision or holding clinical licensure are prepared through their education, practicum, clinical supervision and licensure to provide clinical mental health services in a school setting. Licensed clinical school social workers use their skills to address the mental health needs of students through evidence-informed assessment, diagnosis, intervention and evaluation of individuals, small groups, families and school-wide. (SSWAA, 2013). Minnesota school social workers are dual licensed by the Minnesota Board of Social Work and the Professional Educators Licensing and Standards Board.

The [Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act](#) outlines that use of “Social Work” or “Social Worker” as a **professional title is restricted to only those who hold a social work degree from an institution accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or hold a license from BOSW to represent themselves** as a social worker. The statute further states that other professions **must not** represent themselves to the public by any title or description stating or implying that they are engaged in the practice of social work, or that they are licensed to engage in the practice of social work.



MSSWA 2023 Legislative Priorities

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER:

- 80% of mental health services nationwide are provided by licensed social workers.
- School social workers providing clinical services can generate revenue by billing Medicaid for mental health services provided.
- School social workers not only provide services to individuals, groups of students and families but also collaborate and coordinate with community agencies or other professionals (*such as school-linked mental health professionals*) to provide the necessary resources to meet student needs.
- **Interventions provided through school social work services have shown improved student attendance, reduction of child abuse and neglect, improved graduation rates and early identification of a disability; thus, increasing academic achievement.**
- School social workers address the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of **ALL STUDENTS** including students whose needs require special education support and services as well as students with in the general education setting.
- School social workers often focus on providing supports to vulnerable populations of students at high risk for truancy and dropping out of school, such as homelessness, students in foster placement, migrant children, students transitioning between school and treatment programs or the juvenile justice system, or students experiencing domestic violence. (SSWAA, 2021)
- *School social workers serve as a resource to administrators and other educators providing consultation and training on identifying students with mental health needs* and a referral process when services are sought.

MSSWA 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

1. Elevating and diversifying the social work profession:

- a. Ensure congruence in mental health laws so that social workers are recognized as mental health providers consistently in state statutes.
- b. Close loopholes that allow services to create new job titles with similar expectations as social workers, working around licensing laws.
- c. Pursue opportunities to make social work education more affordable and accessible.

2. Support Medical Assistance Reimbursement for Mental Health Services provided by School Social Workers on IEP's.

Maximizing Federal Medicaid funds is a sustainable funding resource that can aid in reducing the cross subsidy. Minnesota requires school districts to seek Medicaid reimbursement for health-related services that are provided as part of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) through special education. MN Statute 256B.0625 includes school social work services. However, the current requirements to bill Medicaid for IEP/IFSP behavioral health services provided by school social workers is time consuming, duplicative, and disparate across the state. This has resulted in Minnesota losing out on nearly \$10 million in sustainable Federal funds yearly; correcting it will come at no cost to the State of Minnesota. For more information, click on this link [ISSUE BRIEF](#)

3. Comprehensive School Mental Health Lead Positions at MDE: MSSWA supports the legislation requiring the MN Department of Ed to employ 2 lead positions to serve as a source of information and support for schools in addressing the mental health needs of students, teachers, and school staff, and developing comprehensive school mental health systems in school districts and charter schools. One lead must work on addressing the mental health needs of students and the other lead must work on addressing the mental health needs of teachers and other school staff.

4. School Support Personnel Aid: The purpose of student support personnel aid is to:

- a. address shortages of student support services personnel within Minnesota schools;
- b. decrease caseloads for existing student support services personnel to ensure effective services;
- c. ensure that students receive effective student support services and integrated and comprehensive services to improve prekindergarten through grade 12 academic, physical, social, and emotional outcomes supporting career and college readiness and effective school mental health services;
- d. ensure that student support services personnel serve within the scope and practice of their training and licensure;
- e. fully integrate learning supports, instruction, and school management within a comprehensive approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration; and
- f. improve school safety and school climate to support academic success and career and college readiness.