



2024 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 2024 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 & COALITION OF LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Elevating and diversify the social work profession:

- Pass the social work interstate licensure compact.
- Develop alternative pathways for social work licensing to ensure broader representation in the profession.
- Close loopholes that allow services to create new job titles with similar expectations as social workers, working around licensing laws.
 - Expand title protection to include county social workers to ensure only those with a social work degree can be called a social worker when employed by the county.
- Ensure congruence in mental health laws so that social workers are recognized as mental health professionals consistently in state statutes.
- Ensure social work services are reimbursed at similar rates to other professionals.
 - Monitor implementation of legislation allowing school districts to access federal Medical Assistance for social work mental health services.
- Pursue opportunities to make social work education more affordable and accessible:
 - Expand funding eligibility for the mental health provider supervision grant program to include rural areas.*
 - Increase funding for mental health provider supervision grant program.*