NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

NASW Standards for

School Social Work Services

2012

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National Association of Social Workers

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For over a hundred years, school social workers have been providing a critical link between

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), a reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), also addresses school social work services. This reauthorization promotes the adoption of effective interventions and places a premium on prevention by allowing school districts to alter substantially the screening and identification procedures for children with disabilities. Specifically, IDEA permits school districts to use a process that determines students' ability to respond to scientific, evidence-informed interventions as criteria for special education eligibility. This approach, referred to as response to intervention (RtI), has been applied to academic and behavioral supports in special and regular education. This method can replace the discrepancy model—the process of comparing ability and achievement to identify students with learning difficulties.

The multitier model suggests a reallocation of school social work services to address schoolwide and small group intervention and consideration of more intensive interventions for individual students, based on their level of response to interventions at prior levels. The RtI framework directs school personnel to monitor student success across all three levels and to make data-informed decisions to determine which students require more intensive levels of intervention. By using data-informed decision making, schools can more effectively direct resources to where they are needed.

Educational research has focused on the following five topics and will likely continue to have a direct impact on school social work practice: (1) integrated intervention efforts that

emphasize primary prevention; (2) early screening and intervention; (3) approaches to intervention that target multiple risk factors in

2. Social Justice: Equal educational opportunity continues to be an elusive goal as indicated by discrepancies in standardized measures of achievement, graduation rates, and the percentage of students attending college across population subgroups. It is important for the school social worker to collaborate with and facilitate collaboration among students, parents, community members, administration, teachers, and other school staff to identify ways to intervene early with students who struggle to benefit fully from the educational system. An ecological perspective, the hallmark of social work education, is essential for identifying resources for addressing these disparities.

3. Multitier Interventions: The multitier model

demonstrating a lack of response to tier 1 interventions, students are referred for the additional support offered at tier 2. These strategies should be efficient to apply and effective in terms of producing rapid improvement in students' ability to learn and be successful in school.

Tier 3 refers to the use of evidence-informed individual and long-term interventions. Tier 3 interventions are provided to students who have serious academic, behavioral, or social–emotional problems that constitute a chronic condition that has not responded to data-driven tier 1 or tier 2 interventions. The goal of this tier is to reduce the negative impact of the condition on a student's functioning. Tier 3 interventions involve intensive individualized strategies that are implemented for extended periods of time and frequently involve community agencies. Data from tier 3 interventions may indicate the need to consider eligibility for special education services.

In summary, school social workers not only provide direct services to children who require basic needs or exhibit challenging behavior, but also lead prevention efforts that support children through building the capacity of family members, other school staff, and community agencies to improve student outcomes.

should expect. The standards are designed to enhance awareness of the skills, knowledge, values, methods, and sensitivity school social workers need to work effectively within school systems.

Ideally, these standards will stimulate the development of clear guidelines, goals, and objectives related to school social work services in social work practice, research, policy, and education.

The specific goals of the standards are

- to establish expectations for school social work practices and services;
- to ensure that school social work services are guided by the NASW ;
- to ensure the highest quality of school social work services will be provided to students and families;
- to provide a basis for advocating for clients' rights to be treated with respect and dignity,

Standard 1. Ethics and Values

School social workers shall adhere to the ethics and values of the social work profession and shall use the NASW as a guide to ethical decision making, while understanding the unique aspects of school social work practice and the needs of the students, parents, and communities they serve.

Interpretation

School social workers shall demonstrate core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. In

Standard 2. Qualifications

School social workers shall meet the provisions for professional practice set by NASW and their respective state department of education and possess knowledge and understanding basic to the social work profession as well as the local education system.

Interpretation

School social workers shall have a graduate degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). An MSW degree is the recommended entry-level qualification for a school social worker position. As a distinct specialty within the social work profession, school social work requires specialized knowledge and understanding of education systems, which should be provided by social work education programs. The school social worker shall actively seek this specialized training when the CSWE accredited program does not provide it. School social workers shall be licensed by state boards of social work and certified through state departments of education when available.

School social workers shall have specialized knowledge and an understanding of historical and current perspectives of public school education at the local, state, and national levels, including educational reform and legislation. School social workers shall also be knowledgeable about evidence-informed approaches to teaching and learning that promote positive academic outcomes for all students.

appropriate. Interventions shall be based on assessments relevant to the concerns in the referral and include goals, objectives, methods of evaluation, and outcome criteria. Interventions shall be applied within the multitier framework and address the ecologies (for example, home, school, community) most relevant to the problem being addressed.

Standard 5. Decision Making and Practice Evaluation

School social workers shall use data to guide service delivery and to evaluate their practice regularly to improve and expand services.

Interpretation

School social workers shall collect, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate data related to their practice. School social workers shall conduct ongoing evaluation to determine the level of effectiveness of all interventions. Methods used to evaluate social work practice shall be assessed periodically to ensure that objectives, activities, and measured outcomes are aligned with the local education agency's goals and social work ethical practice.

Standard 6. Record Keeping

School social workers shall maintain accurate data and records that are relevant to planning, implementation, and evaluation of school social work services.

Interpretation

School social workers shall maintain timely, accurate, and confidential records that document school social work services, demonstrate outcomes, and promote accountability to the local education agency

and community. Records shall be maintained according to federal, state, and local laws.

Standard 7. Workload Management

School social workers shall organize their workloads to fulfill their responsibilities and clarify their critical roles within the educational mission of the school or district in which they work.

Interpretation

School social workers shall manage their work in an efficient and effective manner. Priorities for practice shall be developed collaboratively between the school social worker and the supervisor. Priorities shall be established on the basis of the needs of students, professional skills of the school social worker, program needs, research, and availability of other resources. School social workers shall perform roles and responsibilities across a multitier framework for service delivery and use technology to enhance communication, obtain and organize information, demonstrate accountability, and complete workload assignments.

Standard 8. Professional Development

School social workers shall pursue continuous enhancement of knowledge and skills to provide the most current, beneficial, and culturally appropriate services to students and their families.

Interpretation

School social workers shall adhere to the

and follow state professional regulation regarding continuing education requirements. School social workers shall access

ongoing supervision and consultation to increase their professional proficiency and competence.

Standard 10. Interdisciplinary Leadership and Collaboration

School social workers shall provide leadership in developing a positive school climate and work collaboratively with school administration, school personnel, family members, and community professionals as appropriate to increase accessibility and effectiveness of services.

Interpretation

School social workers shall serve as leaders and consultants in promoting positive school climate. School social workers shall also serve as leaders and consultants to facilitate an understanding of factors in the home, school and community that affect students' educational experiences. School social workers shall provide training and engage parents, school personnel, other professionals and community members in the removal of barriers to learning. School social workers shall also provide leadership and collaboration in the implementation of comprehensive school-based and school-linked programs that promote student well-being and positive academic outcomes.

Standard 11. Advocacy

School social workers shall engage in advocacy that seeks to ensure that all students have equal access to education and services to enhance their academic progress.

Interpretation

School social workers shall advocate for students and their families. This advocacy includes helping them gain access to and effectively use formal and informal community resources that enable families to self-advocate. School social workers, as systems' change agents, shall identify

areas of need that are not being addressed by the local education agency and community and shall work to create services that address these needs. School social workers shall be informed about court decisions, legislation, rules and regulations, and policies and procedures that affect school social work practice, to effectively advocate for students.

Qualifications and Title

An MSW degree is the recommended entry-level qualification for school social workers. Local education agencies should ensure that school social workers have an MSW degree from a program accredited by CSWE. However, should the local education agency employ school social workers whose highest degree is a BSW, an MSW-level social worker should provide supervision for the BSW-level social worker.

Salaries and job classifications of school social workers should be commensurate with their education, experience, and responsibilities and be comparable to similarly qualified specialized instructional support personnel employed by the local education agency.

"School social worker" is the position title that correctly identifies the educational background, profession, and function of a social worker employed by a local education agency. Other titles, such as "attendance officer," "pupil personnel worker," "home and school visitor," "home–school coordinator," "visiting teacher,"

"family collaborative worker," "family specialist," or "home family specialist," project incomplete and misleading notions of school social workers' qualifications and functions and should not be used.

All social workers in school settings should adhere to the

.

Roles of State Education Agencies/ Credentialing/Licensing Boards

State departments of education or other state entities that license or certify educational personnel should regulate school social work practice.

State departments should support a state consultant position to oversee quality assurance of school social work practice. A state consultant should have an MSW degree, have direct experience as a school social worker, and be knowledgeable about current trends in school social work practice and policy. The state consultant should work closely with state, regional and national professional organizations that support school social work practice and are knowledgeable about the field of school social work.

Roles of Local Education Agencies

Administrative Support. The administrative structure of the local education agency should delineate clear lines of support and accountability for the school social work program and provide for optimum use of the school social workers' knowledge and skills. Realistic job descriptions, working conditions, and workload standards are essential for

effective practice. Regular review of goals, objectives, accomplishments, and accountability procedures of the school social work program are also necessary. Designation of a lead social

Ratios

The local education agency should establish and implement a school social worker-to-student population ratio to ensure reasonable workload expectations. The local education agency should provide school social work services at a level that is sufficient to address the nature and extent of student needs. Appropriate ratios for school social work staff to students depend on the characteristics and needs of the student population to be served, as well as other resources in the local education agency and community available to address these needs. Each local or state education agency should establish adequate levels and types of school social work services on the basis of comprehensive needs assessment data.

School social work services should be provided at a ratio of one school social worker to each school building serving up to 250 general education students, or a ratio of 1:250 students. When a school social worker is providing services to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio, such as 1:50, is suggested.

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