

School social workers often work behind the scenes, making sure children overcome life's obstacles so they get the best education they can.

They are school social workers such as Ana Bonilla-Galdamez in Virginia, who has developed initiatives so that students, particularly those who are immigrants, do not get pregnant, drop out of school or join gangs.

They are social workers such as Talya Mazor in North Carolina, who discovered that several students in the school were victims of sexual abuse by older children and alert authorities and guardians.

And they are school social workers like Rochelle Gauthier in New Orleans, who makes sure students who experience trauma such as witnessing a murder or living in poverty get the help they need to cope and hope for a brighter future.

Our nation needs social workers in schools more than ever, no matter whether they are in cities, the suburbs, or rural areas or in rich or poor neighborhoods.

More Americans – including young people – are grappling with mental illness. Schools throughout the country are trying to address bullying and higher rates of suicide, [the second leading cause of death for teenagers](#).

And our nation's gun violence epidemic has sadly become rooted in our schools, [with eight school shootings resulted in four deaths](#) reported before 2019 is half over.

Having more social workers in school can help address these problems.

For instance, school social workers work in preventing school violence. They are trained to understand risk factors and warning signs of violent behaviors. They are knowledgeable in classroom management and behavior intervention and can assist teachers and school personnel in identifying concerning behaviors of students and developing supportive intervention plans.

And social workers are experts in research-based school discipline policy development that can increase school connectedness and decrease incidents of school violence.

States such as Colorado have recently enacted laws to hire more social workers and other mental health professionals. Yet, many schools across the nation fail to meet National Association of Social Workers guidelines calling for at least one social worker for 250 students or one social worker per 50 students if the children have intensive needs.

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) and the National Association of Social Workers have launched a "Back to School with Social Workers" campaign this year to raise awareness about the benefits that social workers bring to school.

We urge you to find out more about social workers in your local schools, support them and urge your boards of education to make sure there are enough social workers to meet the needs of your students. The futures of our children are at stake.

