

School Social Workers: Vital Links for Student Success

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Greetings Superintendent _____,

If you want an expert to help the school district address the many needs of students and families that impede academic success, then look no further than the hidden gem of school social workers. School social workers are an important part of our school communities. We are licensed and/or certified mental health professionals who connect the home, the school, and the community in our quest to educate the whole child. The profession of school social work has been in existence for more than 100 years. As professionals, we have been working on the academic front lines to eliminate barriers that would otherwise prevent students from obtaining the quality education all children inherently deserve.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) recommend that school systems employ one school social worker per 250 students.

We know that in most of our K-12 districts, however, the actual number of school social workers employed is far below this recommendation. In reality, the actual number is more like one school social worker per 2,100 students - substantially exceeding what is necessary to adequately address the social and emotional needs of students, according to American Civil Liberties Union ([ACLU](#)) data.

With an increase in the number of crises occurring in our schools - including shootings, bullying, suicides, gang violence, violence resulting from disputes on social media, an a plethora of social ills such as poverty and opioid addiction - the expertise of school social workers is needed more than ever. We are trained mental health professionals who know how to deal with difficult situations. Most often, we are the first responders contacted during school crises and we focus on supporting the students, their families, and the school.

School social workers are change agents. We work to address the broader school culture and climate issues, including services related to social emotional learning. We work with truant students to help them recognize the importance of regular school attendance. We work with youth who are homeless to help them secure food, housing, transportation, school supplies, and other vital needs. We assist students living with disabilities to help them access academic services and emotional support services. School social workers are part of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team and help to support successful academic and behavioral outcomes for special needs students. School social workers are innovators. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs ([Maslow, 1943](#)), the child's basic needs must first be met before academic concerns can

be addressed. As a result, school social workers help link families to community and school-based supports to mitigate barriers that students face. Collaboratively, these efforts assist with supporting student academic achievement and consequently, helps improve the district's overall graduation rate.

School social workers compliment the services provided by the school psychologist, school counselor and school nurse to extend support to students, families, and communities to address the challenges faced by the school district.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter to learn more about school social work and a few of the ways that we work to help get students over the graduation finish line. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how your school district could benefit more from the services that we provide, please feel free to contact _____ at _____.

Professional Regards,

Name, Credentials, Title

School Social Workers are "trained mental health professionals who are prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs as well as provide support to administration and staff when school crises occur," (NASW, 2013)

For more information log into <https://www.socialworkers.org/>

"School Social Workers are licensed and/or certified mental health providers serving diverse groups of students, families, schools, and communities. School Social Workers provide evidence-based behavioral, social emotional, and mental health services. School Social Workers promote a safe and equitable school climate and culture supporting positive academic and behavioral outcomes. School Social Workers collaborate with school and community resources empowering students to reach their full potential"
School Social Work Association of America, 2019

For more information log into <http://sswaa.org>