



ILLUMINATE THE IMPACT

The Need for School Social Work

School social workers are uniquely trained professionals who bridge the gap between home, school, and community to support the social-emotional well-being and academic success of all students. Despite their vital role, they are too often overlooked in conversations about student mental health, staffing, and support services.

We believe student success is a shared responsibility—and that starts with recognizing and uplifting the critical work of school social workers. We support:

- Accurate representation of school social workers in school mental health conversations
- Policy and funding efforts that expand access to school social work services
- Increase in school social worker positions to build safe and welcoming school communities for all students

Why This Matters

In today's climate of rising youth mental health needs and frequent crisis events, school social workers are not a luxury—they are a lifeline. School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals with a unique skillset to intervene early, advocate for students and families, and address the social and environmental factors that impact learning.

School social workers are exceptionally skilled in providing services to students who face serious challenges to school success, including disability, poverty, discrimination, abuse, neglect, mental illness, homelessness, bullying, familial stressors, and other barriers to learning. More students are struggling with mental and behavioral health disorders, with nearly 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 (21%) having been diagnosed with a mental, emotional, or behavioral health condition (CDC, 2021). Many individuals who wish to access community mental health services often find such services unavailable, inaccessible, or inadequate. Research indicates that school mental health programs improve educational outcomes by decreasing absences, dropout rates, and discipline referrals, while improving academic achievement.

School-based mental health programs are critical to early identification of and early intervention for mental health problems. School social workers, being licensed mental health professionals, provide necessary assessment, interventions, counseling, family outreach, and community referrals. School social workers serve as vital members of a school's education team, playing a central role in creating partnerships between the home, school, and community to ensure student academic success.

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