



2018 Legislative Agenda

Legislative Goals

- *Advocate for the social, emotional, and educational well-being of children and families*
- *Increase awareness of School Social Worker's role in addressing mental health needs*

The ever-increasing changes in our society continue to bring new and daunting issues for our educational systems requiring innovative approaches that truly impact the achievement of students. School Social Workers play a pivotal role in this movement by continuing to connect and increase collaboration between families, schools and community members. School Social Workers assessment and interventions have shown to improve student attendance, reduce child abuse and neglect, increase graduation rates, identify mental health needs earlier, and advance academic achievement. School Social Workers approach from a multi-tiered system to universally impact the school and specifically target individual students. KSSWA has been serving children for 44 years impacting thousands of individuals, families, and educational systems. Communities in Kansas are still in need of expanding their mental health services and the social, emotional and educational well-being of our students and families only benefit from increasing School Social Workers across the state.

Qualifications of a School Social Worker

Kansas School Social Workers are educated at a Master level receiving an advanced degree in social work from an accredited university. All practicing School Social Workers must pass a licensing exam allowing each individual to practice in the state. The social work education and training specifically give the knowledge and skills needed to provide advanced clinical mental health services beyond mental health case management. Uniquely most School Social Workers receive direct training in providing mental health services in a school setting. All Social Workers must complete a one year clinical practicum and supervision before being allowed to practice. During a School Social Worker practicum, Social Workers learn the best ways to address student mental health needs through biopsychosocial assessments, evidence based interventions, school wide positive behavioral supports, and evaluations of student and family needs.

Role of the School Social Worker

- 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 within the general education setting.
- *School Social Workers serve as mental health and behavioral experts who consult with administrators and teachers on how to best serve and educate students.*
- School Social Workers play a pivotal role in identifying students with exceptionalities by providing biopsychosocial assessments, adaptive functioning analyses, behavioral observations, & connecting with the family.
- The focus of many School Social Workers is providing supports to vulnerable populations such as students in foster care, those transitioning between treatment programs, students involved in the juvenile justice system, those facing homelessness, migrant children, and those at risk for truancy/ dropping out.
- School Social Workers use evidence based interventions to implement multi-tiered system of support programs and practices that **enhance all aspects of a student's education.**



2018 Legislative Priorities

1. **KSSWA supports the reconfiguration of a new school funding formula that adequately provides the necessary resources for students not only in the classroom but also gives access to expanded mental health supports.**

In recent years, legislators have attempted to solve the school funding issue only to be overruled by the courts who continually resolve that the current funding solutions are not adequate for schools. Schools being the backbone of our society need adequate funding to promote the learning needed by our students to master the world that they now live in. This includes social emotional growth which is now a state standard and emphasis for all students' overall maturity.

2. **KSSWA will continue further communication & collaboration with the School Mental Health Advisory Council**

The School Mental Health Advisory Council was established by the State Board of Education to “advise on unmet needs of school mental health and coordinate with legislators and stakeholders in efforts to benefit students in social and emotional growth.” KSSWA has collaborated with the council and currently supports their recommendations.

3. **KSSWA supports the following recommendations created by the Governor’s Behavioral Health Planning Council, Children’s Subcommittee**

- **Promote interconnected systems of care that provide an integrated continuum of person and family-centered services.** Students have different needs which require unique approaches. This requires moving from preventative/ universal approaches to more targeted and individually focused supports. This tiered system can effectively impact more students and target those that have more specific needs.
- **Support Coordinated State Data Systems.** State data systems would ease the transition of those moving from early childhood services into K-12 and tracking migrant and mobile families when moving throughout the state.
- **Capitalize on upcoming Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) changes to ensure early childhood programs are supported, including funding.** More rigorous and wide known early childhood screening is needed to catch those children needing supports. Research indicates starting services at an earlier age creates higher success rates. KSSWA supports behavioral health plans for early childhood screening, assessment, and treatment.
- **Support early childhood best practices that align with research.** The first five years of life are incredibly important for children as it provides the foundation for their later academic successes. It’s imperative that further support is given so that students come in with more skills and abilities so they have an equal opportunity for success. This is why aligning services with best practices will only enhance the ability of those in early childhood.
- **Support school-employed and community mental health providers in coordinating behavioral health supports.** KSSWA supports the recommendation to expand School Mental Health services throughout the state in collaboration with other professional organizations. Individuals, families, and educational systems benefit by increasing mental health support in the school setting by earlier identification and connection to mental health systems, increases in positive behavioral supports, and further development of state social emotional standards.
- **Continue to promote the education and implementation of trauma-informed practices across all child and family-serving sectors.** 1 in 5 Kansas adults report to have experienced at least 3 adverse childhood experiences. Adverse childhood experiences have been proven to substantially impact the ability of students to succeed both socially and academically. KSSWA strongly supports the implementation of trauma informed practices which only help to enhance the ability of children to cope with adverse experiences.

4. **KSSWA will establish communication with the House Children and Seniors Committee and provide information as requested in regards to protection of children**

KSSWA encounters and works with many Kansas Children who are impacted by various concerns and recognize the need for these children to be protected. KSSWA wants to continue advocating for their needs ensuring practices are evidenced based and focused on making Kansas children safe.