

Good Morning and Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Kathy Armenta, Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. I am also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 42 years of Social Work experience. For the past 15 years, I have been in the Social Work Educator role at the UT Austin School of Social Work, and have been privileged to teach and train Masters Level Social Workers – many of whom are eager to serve in public schools throughout Texas and beyond. Prior to teaching at UT, I was a School Social Worker in Round Rock I.S.D. for several years.

I am a member of the School Social Workers Association of Texas and the National Association of Social Workers.

I am here today to highlight the importance of School- based Social Workers as the professionals who are trained to link the home with the school while targeting many of the barriers our youth face today that interfere with learning.

School Social Workers are uniquely trained to assess the whole student utilizing a systems approach. We consider the student's environment and the multiple systems in which the student is involved – incorporating home visits and collaborations with community services.

Prevention, intervention, and crisis response are the three areas of focus for service delivery with School Social Work practitioners ----- all targeting directly many of the environmental and psychosocial issues and stressors that can interfere with effective learning in the classroom such as bullying, substance abuse, parent incarceration, depression and other mental health issues, medical issues, grief and loss, family changes such as divorce, military deployment, gang influences, domestic violence, physical/sexual/emotional abuse ---- all, once again, factors that can interrupt learning.

School Social Workers link students, families, and schools to resources and programs to ensure needs are addressed, while also providing direct services including assessments, crisis intervention,

individual/group/family counseling, home/school linkage –and providing a wide range of indirect services including case management, collaboration with community agencies, parent education, and consultation with school and district personnel on student needs.

School Social Workers provide assistance to parents, teachers and administrators -- all in an effort to support academic success for youth.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) – Texas Chapter, is supporting legislation in the upcoming Session, that clearly defines the role of School Social Worker, in Chapter 33 of the Education Code – to bring more clarity and flexibility for administrators who desire to employ School Social Workers to help at-risk youth with services needed to become successful in school. This Code revision does not require fiscal commitment from the Legislature, but simply provides school districts an additional option to include a School Social Worker as a member of their Student Support Services Team. You can find a copy of the proposal on page three of your packet.

I want to thank you for your time and attention today as you grapple with the vitally important needs of educating the youth of Texas. I believe that School Social Workers can be a resource in that effort.

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National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter

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Request to add School Social Work Definition to Chapter 33, Education Code

NASW/Texas is bringing this legislation forward to clearly define the role of a school social worker in the Education Code. Our members have communicated to us that the social worker's role is not commonly understood among school administrators. We believe that adding this to the code would bring more clarity and give administrators the flexibility they need to employ social workers as needed within schools, thereby helping at-risk youth get the services they need to succeed in school.

Insert in Education code after Sec. 33.006

School Social Worker

- (a) The primary responsibility of the school social worker is to provide social services to the school and/or district to promote and enhance the overall academic mission, strengthen home/school/community partnerships and alleviate barriers to learning.
- (b) In addition to a school social worker's responsibilities under subsection (a), the social worker shall:
- (1) Assess needs and counsel students and families individually, in groups, or during home visits regarding social, emotional, or developmental issues that have an impact in the academic setting.
 - (2) Develop and implement direct intervention strategies for students, teachers, and families to resolve stressors and remove barriers that interfere with student success.
 - (3) Provide crisis intervention services as needed.
 - (4) Develop and create strategies for parents, teachers, and students on instructional and behavioral issues, including bullying, drop-out and suicide prevention.
 - (5) Mobilize, coordinate and expand community resources for students and families to address academic, behavioral, emotional, and social needs.
 - (6) Provide parent/guardian educational workshops on identified issues related to child development, stress reduction, discipline and safety, and teacher/parent/student communication.
 - (7) Serve on both school-based and system-wide committees to address educational issues, social problems, safety issues, and program development for students.
 - (8) Provide individual staff consultation and overall staff development on social/emotional/environmental issues affecting student participation in the learning process.

School Social Worker

School Social Workers have the right education, experience and dedication to help students succeed in school.

- **School Social Workers enhance a school district's academic mission. We address behavioral, social, emotional and societal factors that impact a student's success.**
- **School Social Workers may be hired using State Compensatory Education Funds specifically for preventing students from dropping out and improving academic performance of students at risk of dropping out (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4082>)**
- **School Social Workers are members of a multidisciplinary student support team. We possess training, skills, and expertise that provides the basis for a wide range of services for students and families.**
- **School Social Workers are uniquely trained to assess the whole student utilizing a systems approach. We consider the student's environment and the multiple systems in which the student is involved.**
- **School Social Workers are uniquely qualified to address challenges and provide services. We work at all levels – school wide, family, small group, and individual levels.**
- **School Social Workers link students, families, and schools to resources and programs to ensure needs are addressed. We are skilled in building relationships and developing partnerships.**
- **School Social Workers are trained to meet the needs of their campuses or districts by identifying needs, providing services, accessing resources, and engaging the community. We match our skills to the requests and concerns of schools.**
- **School Social Workers focus on the strengths of the student and family. We identify positive aspects and serve as strong student and family advocates.**
- **School Social Workers are trained in cultural competencies. We deliver culturally competent services to an ever-changing population.**
- **Professional School Social Workers are licensed by the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners and are bound by a professional Code of Conduct.**

Elements of School Social Work Services

<p>Direct Services Direct intervention to address the immediate concerns of at-risk students.</p> <p>Purpose Prevention, Intervention, Crisis Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with Stress • Family Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Divorce o Domestic Violence o Financial o Parenting • Grief/Loss Issues • Medical Issues • Mental Health Issues • Parent Education • Physical/Educational Neglect • Physical/Sexual/Emotional Abuse • Pregnancy • Psychiatric Issues • Relationship Concerns • School-Related Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Absences and truancy o Academic Achievement o Bullying o Dropout Prevention o Harassment o Misbehavior o School Avoidance o Special Education o Tardiness o Underachievement • Sexuality Issues • Substance Abuse 	<p>Indirect Services Work with school, community and agency personnel to address at-risk student concerns.</p> <p>Purpose Prevention, Intervention, Community/Agency response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Collaboration • Community Outreach • Interdisciplinary Team Problem Solving • Intervention Plan Development • Policy and Supplemental Program Development • Public Relations • Research and Publishing • School Improvement Planning • School Social Worker's Professional Development • Special Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Case Management o Consultation o Process Coordination o Related Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bio-psychosocial Assessment ▪ Counseling (group, individual and/or family) ▪ Functional Behavioral Assessments ▪ Mobilizing family, school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program. ▪ Positive Behavioral Intervention Plans ▪ Social Developmental Histories ▪ Working with those problems in the child's living situation that affect the child's adjustment in school. • Staff Development for Educators • Teacher/Administrator Consultation
<p>School Social Worker Role Bio-psychosocial Assessment Crisis Intervention Family Counseling Home/School/Community Liaison Individual Therapy/Counseling Mediation Small Group Therapy/Counseling</p>	<p>School Social Worker Role Advocacy; Multidisciplinary Teams; Case Management; Outside Agency Liaison; Collaboration; Parent Education; Consultation; Prevention; Coordination; Referrals; Facilitation Support Student Learning Grant Writing; Home/School/Community Liaison;</p>

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

WHY do today's schools need School Social Workers?

Children today are increasingly victims of many social forces that negatively affect their role as students. The family is in a state of change and until it becomes stabilized, in whatever form, children's unmet physical and emotional needs will continue to interfere with their ability to learn and adjust in school.

WHO are School Social Workers?

School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals with a degree in social work who provide services related to a person's social, emotional and life adjustment to school and/or society. School Social Workers are the link between the home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students' academic and social success.

WHAT are some of the specific services that School Social Workers provide?

RELATED SERVICES:

- Participating in special education assessment meetings as well as Individual Educational Planning meetings.
- Working with those problems in a child's living situation that affect the child's adjustment in school. (home, school, and community)
- Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability.
- Counseling (group, individual and/or family)
- Mobilizing family, school, and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program
- Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.



SERVICES TO STUDENTS:

- Providing crisis intervention.
- Developing intervention strategies to increase academic success.
- Assisting with conflict resolution and anger management.
- Helping the child develop appropriate social interaction skills.
- Assisting the child in understanding and accepting self and others.



SERVICES TO PARENTS/FAMILIES:

- Interviewing the family to assess problems affecting the child's educational adjustment.
- Working with parents to facilitate their support in their children's school adjustment.
- Alleviating family stress to enable the child to function more effectively in school & community.
- Assisting parents to access programs available to students with special needs.
- Assisting parents in accessing and utilizing school and community resources



SERVICES TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL:

- Providing staff with essential information to better understand factors (cultural, societal, economic, familial, health, etc.) affecting a student's performance and behavior.
- Assessing students with mental health concerns.
- Developing staff in-service training programs.
- Assisting teachers with behavior management.
- Providing direct support to staff.



SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON:

- Obtaining and coordinating community resources to meet students' needs.
- Helping school districts receive adequate support from social and mental health agencies.
- Advocating for new and improved community/school service to meet the needs of students and families.
- Helping the system respond effectively to each child's needs.

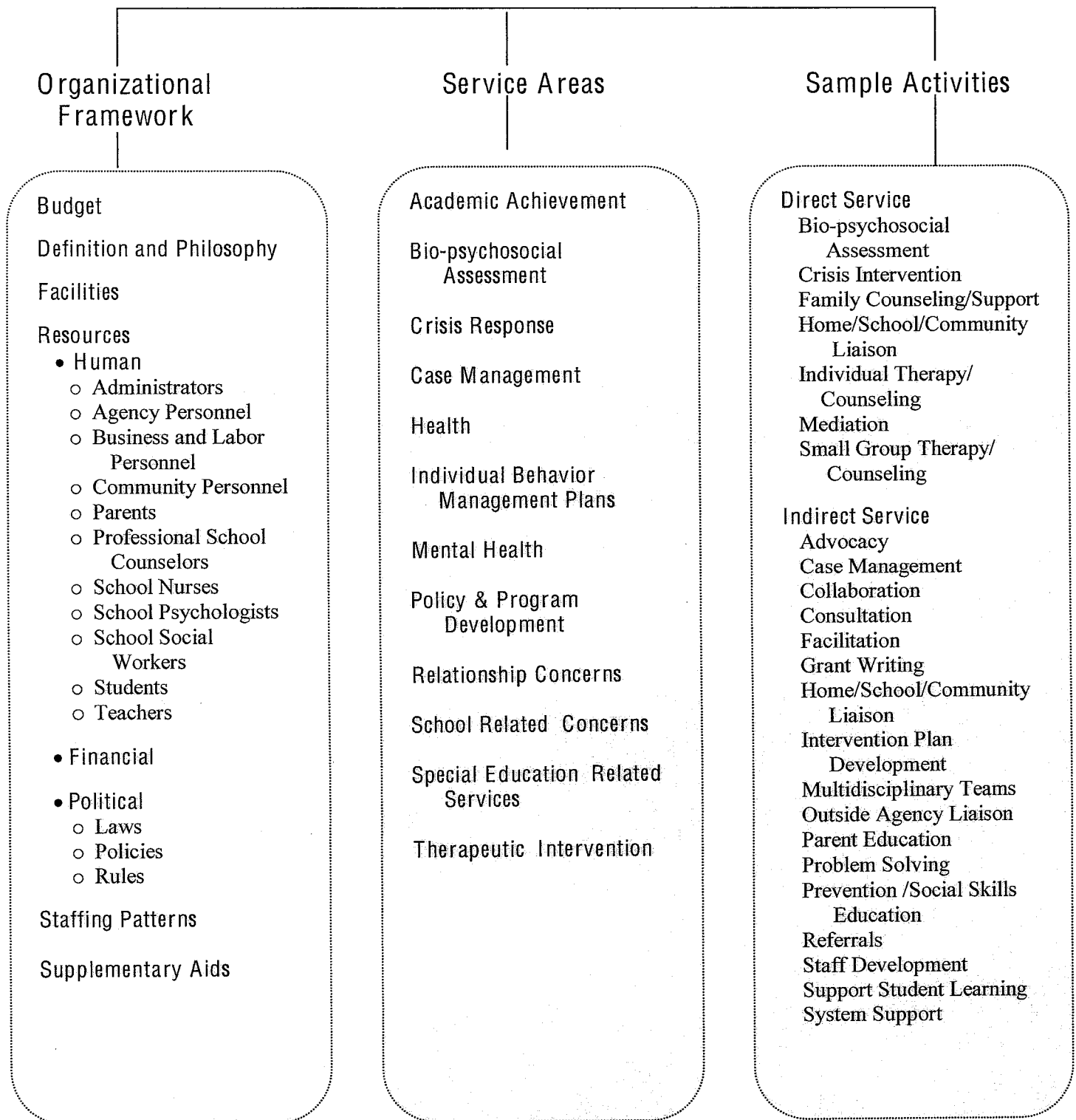
SERVICES TO DISTRICTS:

- Assist in developing and implementing educational programs for children and for exceptional children
- Developing alternative programs for drop-outs, truants, delinquents, etc.
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.
- Providing consultation regarding school law and school policy including IDEA and Section 504.
- Providing case management for students and families requiring multiple resources.



*Developed by Dot Kontak, LCSW, SSWS Rev. 12/30/05
State Consultant for the School Social Workers Association of Missouri Note: These lists are exemplary and not exhaustive.*

Frameworks of School Social Work



*Note: These lists are exemplary and not exhaustive
 Developed by Dot Kontak, LCSW, SSWS (Revised 8/12/08) St. Louis, Missouri
 State Consultant for the School Social Workers Association of Missouri and adjunct faculty at Washington University*



Senate Education Committee
Charge #1: Examine the Role of Regional Education Service Centers

July 17, 2012

Texans Care for Children is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to the children of Texas. We look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners and more than 200 members throughout the state who together represent thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our policy agenda. We co-convene various stakeholder groups that bring together a wide range of organizations, families, and advocates around our areas of focus—family economic security; infant, child and maternal health; children’s mental health; child welfare; and juvenile justice and at-risk youth.

Texans Care strongly supports state efforts that effectively assist schools in preparing *all* Texas students for success in school, at home, in their communities and future workplaces.

- Research tells us that students do better in school when they are physically and emotionally well and when they feel safe and supported in school.ⁱ
- Too many Texas students are getting pushed out of school into the juvenile justice system.ⁱⁱ
- Students with serious mental health concerns tend to experience high rates of absenteeism, poor social integration, and are twice as likely as peers without serious mental health concerns to drop out of school.ⁱⁱⁱ Nine out of 10 students with emotional disturbance have received a discretionary disciplinary referral in Texas schools.^{iv}
- Most schools offer some range of services to support students’ mental and behavioral health, but strategies are often limited in scope and are not coordinated, leading to both gaps in services and duplication of efforts.

Schools can support student success by addressing students’ mental well-being and promoting a positive school climate.

- When students’ mental health needs are properly addressed, the likelihood of school success increases.^v
- School climate impacts students’ academic achievement,^{vi} and school programming that promotes a positive school climate reduces problem behaviors, improves classroom environment, increases school bonding, and enhances youth competence.^{vii}

Many school staff in Texas report feeling unprepared to address students’ mental health within their scope of practice.^{viii}

- About 1 in 4 school health services staff report lacking training or support they need to effectively address their students’ behavioral health. General classroom teachers report similar rates.
- Nearly 1 in 3 special education teachers feel they do not have the training, support, or supervision necessary to “handle students’ behavioral health issues.”
- More than half of Texas teachers and school health staff express an interest in training across a broad range of behavioral health topics.

Regional Educational Service Centers (ESCs) are a critical component of the state infrastructure to assist schools in creating positive school environments and effectively addressing barriers to student learning. Two ESC initiatives are especially valuable in supporting a comprehensive, coordinated approach to promote positive behavior and student wellness and should be supported and strengthened:

- Texas Behavior Support Initiative, which assists schools in expanding their knowledge and skills in implementing Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) for students. Schools that implement school-wide PBIS have been shown to see fewer disciplinary problems, reduction in bullying behavior, greater sense of safety on campus, improved academic performance, increased attendance, and reduced staff time spent on disciplinary issues.
- Texas School Health Network Project, a collaborative effort with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) School Health Program and School Health Specialists working in 13 of the ESCs, to assist schools in locating and promoting resources and materials on a wide variety of health topics and serve as a central coordinating point for all school health issues and assist school districts in developing an integrated and coordinated approach to school health programming.

With the support from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Texans Care for Children is convening a summit on July 16-17, 2012, bringing together key stakeholders to inform the development of a state plan that will provide a roadmap of how Texas can promote the use of school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) in schools across the state and how it can support schools choosing to implement this proven approach. The *Texas Behavior Support Initiative* and the *Texas School Health Network Project* are well positioned to be valuable assets in assisting schools to implement school-wide PBIS. Any state action that weakens either of these efforts will have a detrimental impact on the state's ability to assist schools in coordinating resources to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all students. Texans Care looks forward to sharing with you the results of summit and will offer recommendations on how the state can support local efforts to promote positive behavior and wellbeing in schools in order to support the success of all students.

Thank you for your time and commitment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the staff of Texans Care for Children at 512.473.2274.

Respectfully,

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 Mental Health Policy Associate
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ⁱ ASCD. (2011). *Making the Case for Educating the Whole Child*. <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/resources/WholeChild-MakingTheCase.pdf>

ⁱⁱ CSG Justice Center. (2011) *Breaking School Rules Report*. <http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles> Accessed May 1, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wagner, M. (1995). "Outcomes for youths with Serious Emotional Disturbance in Secondary School and Early Adulthood." *Critical Issues for Children and Youths*. 5(2).

^{iv} CSG Justice Center. (2011) *Breaking School Rules Report*. <http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles> Accessed May 1, 2012.

^v National Assembly on School-Based Health Care. (2010) *Using Coordinated School Health to Promote Mental Health for All Students*. <http://www.nasbhc.org/atf/cf/%7Bcd9949f2-2761-42fb-bc7a-cee165c701d9%7D/white%20paper%20csh%20and%20mh%20final.pdf>

^{vi} Battistich, V., Solomon, D., & Delucchi, K. (1993). "Interaction processes and student outcomes in cooperative learning groups." *The Elementary School Journal*, 94, 19–32.

^{vii} ^{vii} Elias, M. J., Gara, M. A., Schuyler, T. F., Branden-Muller, L. R., and Sayette, M. A. (1991). "The promotion of social competence: Longitudinal study of a preventive school-based program." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61(3), 409-417; Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Graczyk, P. A., & Zins, J. E. (2005). "The study of implementation in school-based preventive interventions: Theory, research, and practice." *Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders*. <http://casel.org/publications/the-study-of-implementation-in-school-based-preventive-interventions-theory-research-and-practice/>; Fredericks, J., Blumenfeld, O., & A. Paris. (2003). "Culture by Putting Research into Practice: Scarecrow Education, School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, and State of the Evidence." *Review of Educational Research*, Spring 2004, 74(1), 59-109.

^{viii} Texas Mental Health Transformation Project. (2009) *Texas School-Based Behavioral Health Survey: Results and Recommendations*. http://www.mhtransformation.org/documents/pdf/sbbh/SBBH_Report_FINAL_10.2.09.pdf