



## International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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## Electronic Newsletter December 2016

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### What do school social workers do?

The social world is changing fast, bringing stress for children and schools. Schools are recognizing that they cannot handle alone the stress and complex issues that affect children and their progress in school. The students need support from social workers to help them cope with change, stress and many kinds of problems so that they can succeed. School social workers' goal is to help all learners reach their potential. They also have the humanistic mission to protect the right to education that respects the dignity, worth and culture of the individual. How do school social workers work both on their humanistic social justice mission and the practical goal of helping students succeed in school? School social workers work with students individually and in groups, with families and with communities to tackle problems that affect school attendance and performance. To understand how this is done and the results achieved, it is worth looking at some examples of how experienced school social workers combine the humanistic mission of social work with work on outcomes for students, while helping schools reach their own goals for improved results.

### In a high school in New York

<https://notesfromanaspirlinghumanitarian.com/a-school-social-workers-story/>

This 13-minute video is an example of how implementing the mission of social work can help adolescents meet the challenges of growing up and succeeding in school. At this Catholic high school in New York all sophomores (15 to 16 year-olds), both boys and girls, enroll in a support group conducted by the school social worker, so there is no stigma about needing help. The video shows how the school social worker conducts the support groups, teaches classes, prepares teens to act as peer mentors and counsels individuals. The video shows details of the work, including a look inside the social worker's office, how to deal with typical adolescent problems, how to manage confidentiality and the teens' reaction to the school social worker. The school social worker emphasizes the importance of using objective research to understand teens. The students are fortunate to have a school social worker based full-time at the school and available to every student. The video illustrates how this makes it possible to be an influence on the school and its community.

### It takes a long-term trusting relationship

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2015/03/25/helped-turn-young-boys-life-around-now-hes-soap-star/>

A school social worker in Salford, a borough of Greater Manchester in the Northwest of England, describes what it took to turn around the life of an angry boy who felt the world was against him. *"It took a lot of time [two years] and patience and consistency, then more patience, understanding and*

*really listening to his wants and needs. Even if he didn't turn up for a session, the door didn't close. I was flexible and persistent to the point of annoying him at times until he began to feel that I was on his side."* With such care and patience, based on a long-term trusting relationship, the boy transformed himself into a successful student, graduated from drama school and is now a popular TV star. The key here was establishing trust and commitment to the long term.

### **Working with seriously emotionally disturbed children**

<http://www.citytowninfo.com/career-story/family-and-school-social-workers/public-school-social-worker>

In Connecticut a school social worker writes about her responsibility for working not only with the whole school of over 600 students, but also with small classes of children with severe behavioral and emotional problems. She writes behavioral plans, conducts standardized tests, consults with the teachers, works with the families and coordinates with outside agencies. She describes a great sense of accomplishment from seeing the students change and feel better about themselves. She writes, *"On a typical day I do group and individual therapy with one or more students. I am involved in all the crises that occur in the school. I attend parent-teacher meetings for special education students and act as a liaison between the school, the parents and the community. I teach social skills, anti-bullying and coping skills. My job can be a high stress job. Because the children I work with are emotionally volatile, there are almost daily crises. The children often attack adults, use profanity, destroy school property, bring weapons to school and throw things. We then have to deal with their parents who often do not believe the school's version of events."*

### **In Germany a school social worker talks about the impact of social media**

<http://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.schulsozialarbeit-in-weinstadt-zank-und-mobbing-via-internet.6981c50b-ecb7-4ba8-829d-56b57f0f2ac4.html>

In the Stuttgart News a school social worker in the small town of Weinstadt in Baden-Württemberg describes how disputes or bullying have acquired a different quality through the possibilities of new media. She has been working with youth since 2002, 25% of her time in the Youth Café and 25% as a school social worker. During this period students have acquired smartphones. Conflicts, insults and exclusions can be carried on long distance through Whatsapp, a widely-used messaging application of smartphones. Bullying has a new dimension in an extended network, placing a demand on school social workers to develop new skills. It means there is more for school social workers to do to help students deal with conflict, in both prevention and direct work with individuals.

### **In Nigeria**

<http://naija247news.com/2016/12/lagos-express-concerns-over-shortage-of-social-workers-in-schools/>

School children in Nigeria have the same problems in growing up as these other countries: stress, family problems, bullying and peer conflict. The government is concerned about social problems in schools and the inadequate supply of school social workers to counsel children and deal with problems. In Lagos State there are almost one million pupils in primary schools alone. Yet there are only 200 social workers in schools in the state. Other states usually have none. One recent concern is the rising number of reports of sexual abuse of school children. This is driving awareness of the need to train more social workers to work in schools, to develop school policies on abuse and to address how schools report and handle child abuse. The country's population of 190 million people is young, culturally diverse and growing at a fast rate. The schools need school social workers and other support services to help the school children prepare for life in a world where cultural, political and environmental changes are exerting a dramatic impact on schools, families and children.