



## **International Network for School Social Work**

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

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### **Electronic Newsletter July, 2007**

Editor: Marion Huxtable

#### **Developing School Social Work in Slovakia by Barbora Ciuttiová**

School social work in Slovakia is still in its beginning. About ten years ago, there were efforts to include school social work in state law in order to introduce social work into the schools. Courses in school social work were taught previously at Comenius University in Bratislava. However, there was little progress in establishing school social work in the schools and few social work students were able to find employment in schools due to lack of a mandate and resulting lack of job security.

Since that time, social problems in schools have grown and schools are theoretically a wide field of activity for the social work profession. Some Slovak authors warn of deterioration in school climate. Since the year 2000, the Department of Social Work at Trnava University has therefore focused on learning how to establish school social work in the school system to support efforts to improve school climate.

Several students from the Department of Social Work at Trnava University became interested in the course of their studies in introducing school social work to the Slovak school system. They wrote a list of competencies for school social workers and set up practical activities for Slovak schools with the help of their teachers and school social workers in foreign countries (mostly the USA, including Marion Huxtable of the International Network). Following their graduation from Trnava University last year with master degrees in social work, Barbora Ciuttiova and Peter Lengyel are putting this plan into practice. They work at three primary schools: Angela Merici Primary school in Trnava, and at two primary schools in Považská Bystrica.

The school in Trnava obtained permission from the state government (Department of Education) to provide school social work services, however without any financial support since it is administered by a religious institution. Two state schools in Považska Bystrica hired Peter. His salary is covered by Government funding from a proposal he wrote for a project at these two schools.

Firstly we saw the need to inform schools, teachers, pupils, parents and local and state authorities about how school social work can make a positive contribution in the education

system. We did this through visits to local agencies, articles in newsletters, TV appearances, school websites, distribution of leaflets and by speaking at parent and teacher meetings.

The chief focus of our work was communication with teachers, pupils and parents, listening to the people at school and cooperation with another organizations. In this way, we built bridges between school and family while collaborating with other experts, organizations, and institutions in order to help pupils solve their problems. The main activities have been prevention, intervention, administration, case work, counseling and networking.

After one year in the schools, there is strong interest in inviting school social workers into other schools because of the good results of our work. There was a conference at Trnava University and seminars about school social work held in several regions of Slovakia and those also helped to foster interest in the service.

There are many barriers to introducing school social work into state legislation, plus problems with funding and working conditions. However, we believe that the positive results we have achieved will open the way for school social work to contribute to creating a positive school climate with a harmonious, united school community of pupils, families and teachers.

## **School Social Work Association of America Annual Conference**

The SSWAA is now accepting proposals for workshop sessions for the 2008 Annual Conference in Denver April 3-5. SSWAA is seeking proposals concerning school social work effectiveness for both experienced and new school social workers. The deadline for workshop proposals is September 1. For more information, contact SSWAA at 2 Pidgeon Hill Drive, Suite 340, Sterling, Virginia 20165 or e-mail [21]david.poisson@sswaa.org.

Apply for a visa early if you plan to attend the conference.

## **The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA**

The School Practitioner Listserv Sent is out each Monday. The listserv briefly presents one or two requests for help, responses to the requests, and shared information and comments. The requests, responses and links to online information provide regular opportunities to focus on real concerns and questions. If you are interested in participating, send in your name, title, organization, address, phone, fax and email address to:

**Howard Adelman, Linda Taylor, Perry Nelson, and all the other Center staff**  
**School Mental Health Project/Center for Mental Health in Schools,**  
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**Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563**  
**(310) 825-3634 / Toll Free: (866) 846-4843 / Fax: (310) 206-8716**  
**smhp@ucla.edu:**

See the Center's web site at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/> for this week's School Practitioner Listserv in pdf (portable document format), and to see a list of resources by topic. This Online Clearinghouse provides information on a growing range of topics of interest to school social workers. It is not limited to mental health. It includes information about programs, policies, staff development and system change.