



## Title Protection for Social Workers in County Service

### The Problem

In Minnesota, **county government is the only employment setting** where staff can be assigned the title "Social Worker" without the required educational background or professional training.

### The Distinctive Focus of Social Work Education

- **A Historic Profession:** Social work is a 125-year-old discipline based on a complex, evidence-based body of knowledge and theories.
  - **Applied Practice:** The degree is not just theoretical; it requires extensive skill-based learning through supervised field placements.
  - **Ethical Accountability:** Graduates must commit to and abide by a rigorous Code of Ethics, distinguishing them from other degrees.
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### Our Policy Goals (What We Want)

1. **Uphold Professional Titles:** The social work degree is honored in the same manner as other regulated professions (e.g., psychologist, attorney, nurse).
  2. **Maintain Flexibility:** Licensing remains optional at the county level, and counties preserve hiring freedom (with or without social work degrees).
  3. **Future-Focused:** The proposal applies solely to future county employees, explicitly excluding all current staff.
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### Why Title Protection Matters

- **Greater Transparency:** This system ensures that anyone using the term "Social Worker" has met rigorous educational and ethical standards, thereby promoting public trust.
  - **Supports Worker Respect & Retention:** Standardized titles help counties recruit and retain qualified social work professionals by ensuring transparent and accurate job titles that honor their professional commitment and training.
  - **Promotes Equity:** Title protection directly addresses gender equity and fair pay in social work, a profession historically dominated by women that often suffers from undervaluation.
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### What This Proposal Does NOT Do

- **No Hiring Mandates:** Counties preserve the freedom to hire individuals with or without social work degrees.
- **Maintains Current Exemptions:** It preserves the existing statutory exemption for county staff with social work degrees and does not mandate licensure.
- **No Impact on Current Staff:** Current employees are explicitly protected. No one loses a title, job status, or collective bargaining rights.