

# Chapter 1



## School Social Workers' Practice Mission

School Social Workers' Roles: Philosophical Perspectives

# Chapter 1: School Social Workers' Practice Mission

## Objective

To describe philosophical and ecological perspectives used by school social workers within Minnesota schools.

## School Social Workers' Mission

School social workers' mission is to promote academic success by reducing social, emotional, economic, and environmental learning barriers.

## School Social Workers' Philosophical Perspective

School social workers' unique perspective can be attributed to an ecological or person-in-environment focus (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Students are viewed within multiple contexts (e.g., classroom, family, community, and cultural experiences), which helps school social workers both appreciate how community and societal issues impact students and assess individual functioning within multiple environmental contexts. School social workers concurrently employing student-, family system-, and environment- focus help further organize and facilitate strength-building approaches to work with students (versus pathology or deficits). School social workers focus upon positive educational outcomes for all students aligns with social work's historical commitment to social and economic justice for all people. School Social Workers facilitate partnerships between families and schools that promote learning for all students.

## School Social Workers' Roles

School social workers are licensed professionals who uphold state requirements to practice social work within school settings. School social workers help students address learning barriers through ecological or person-in-environment perspectives (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in which students are considered within classroom-, family-, community, and cultural- contexts. School social workers are prepared to understand and assess the students' individual function within multiple environmental contexts. School social workers provide support intended to benefit all students in the service of social and emotional adjustment (e.g., to school, family, community, and society). School social workers provide linkage between students' home, school, and community. School social workers offer direct and indirect services to students, families, and school personnel that promote and support students' academic and social success. As members of multidisciplinary school teams, school social workers are prepared to provide a breadth of services (see also Appendix: Role of the School Social Worker) such as:

- Assess, screen, and evaluate student stressors,
- Offer individual and group therapeutic and individual skills training support,
- Provide crisis intervention,
- Support students who are experiencing homelessness,
- Facilitate home-school collaboration,
- Teach Social Emotional Learning (SEL),
- Follow through with truancy,
- Administer third party billing support,
- Advocate,
- Serve families,
- Support school staff,
- Coordinate community agency services,
- Prepare and deliver classroom presentations, and

- Develop programs, resources, and policies.

### **References**

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.