



International Network for School Social Work

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

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The Status of School Social Work Around the World

School social work continues to grow around the world. Contacts between school social workers in different countries are expanding, aided by the International Network for School Social Work. You are part of this international community that serves children in their school. Six international conferences have taken place so far, the first in Chicago, USA in 1999, the second in Stockholm, Sweden in 2003, the third in Pusan, Korea in September 2006, the fourth in Auckland, New Zealand in April 2009, the fifth in Accra, Ghana in April 2012 and the sixth in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia in June 2015. The conferences helped to link us together as a movement for children.

Surveys of the status of school social work started in the 1990's with the most recent in 2016. As contacts with school social work associations and school social workers have grown in the last 25 years, more information has been gathered and shared. In 2016 questionnaires were sent to school social work contacts in 56 countries to obtain information about the extent of school social work services, qualifications, roles for school social workers and to update contact information.

Responses were received from 36 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Laos, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macau, Macedonia, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam. Information from earlier surveys conducted in 2012, 2006 and 2003 rounds out the survey with results from Curacao, the Czech Republic, Estonia, India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates.

School social work is well established in some of these countries, and is being introduced in others. Schools need help to keep children in school despite barriers to education such as disabilities, physical and mental health problems, drug use, adolescent pregnancy, and learning problems. Many school social workers help children with their family problems including domestic violence, divorce, child abuse, homelessness, and family illnesses. They usually address problems within the school system such as discrimination, bullying, and inappropriate discipline by staff. School social workers sometimes join with communities to work on community-wide problems that impact school performance such as violence, crime, decaying neighborhoods, lack of community services, racism, and poverty. As they work on resolving the problems that interfere with learning, school social workers defend the right to education that respects the dignity, worth and culture of every child whatever their differences from mainstream culture.

National associations for school social work have been developed in several countries, including Finland, Ghana, Mongolia, Sweden and the US to provide effective communication with Departments or Ministries of Education and other decision-makers who influence how support services are implemented in schools. Several national school social work associations have effective Web sites that provide extensive, free and accessible resources. Provincial or state school social work associations often provide much of the local support and expertise that school social workers need for professional development and advocacy at the local level.

In many countries the title social worker is governed by statutes that specify licensing, registration or certification. In addition to this requirement, Departments or Ministries of Education may apply additional conditions for social workers to practice in schools. For example, to practice as a school social worker in the United States the most typical requirement is a combination of State licensing as a professional social worker plus a school personnel certificate issued by the State Department of Education. Both require either a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social work, post-graduate supervision and continuing education credits. Each of the 50 states has distinct licensing and certification requirements. This complexity can be multiplied many times in a discussion of the professional standards of school social work around the world. The goal is to provide standards of care for school children.

The International Network for School Social Work

The goals of the International Network are to provide information about school social work around the world and links between school social work associations. You are part of this international group that works for school children. Conducting periodic surveys and this monthly newsletter are some of the ways that the International Network lets you know that you are part of a movement for school children. Many school social workers have contributed articles to the newsletter since 2006, providing information about how school social work is organized in their country, how they do the work and what the children need. For example, last month Melissa Ler-Lim provided an article showing the beginnings of school social work in Singapore, the services offered by Students Care with some examples of exciting programs and discussing the challenges ahead in providing for rapidly changing needs of the students.

A correction to the January article on Students Care Service in Singapore: The Ministry of Education set up its first Social Work Unit in the early 70's, and in the 80's (*not the 70's*) placed more prominence on pastoral care leading to a proliferation of school social work services and other supports to schools. It takes time to get results, but government will respond to a clear need.

Most of the newsletters since 2006 can be found in an archive at <http://www.schoolsocialworkhistory.com/school-social-work-across-the-globe.html>. It is a good look into what is happening in your field around the world and worth visiting.

The newsletter has published articles from many countries. Articles for the newsletter should be on topics of interest to school social workers from all countries. It helps to provide some background information about your country. Articles can be no longer than 900 words and easy to read for school social workers from many countries around the world.