



Role of Social Work Education in School Safety and Gun Violence Prevention

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), a national nonprofit association, advances social work education to ensure preparation for a professional practice that promotes individual, family, and community well-being as well as social and economic justice. CSWE's membership consists of more than 2,500 individual members and more than 800 accredited master's and baccalaureate programs of professional social work education.

The issue of school safety, and the accompanying impact of gun violence, have risen to national prominence. Gun violence is a growing public health concern that impacts families, schools, and communities across the nation, making prevention efforts critical now more than ever. Social workers who work in both school and community settings, are well equipped to provide clinical intervention strategies that address the holistic needs of students, including mental health and behavioral health. Social workers are integral in ensuring school climates that are welcoming, supportive, safe, and positive. Addressing the behavioral and mental health needs of students requires sufficient funding to support schools, flexibility on the use of that funding as it relates to hiring and services, and partnerships that extend into the community.

If Congress intends to pursue school safety measures, CSWE believes that a comprehensive approach is needed, one that incorporates behavioral, mental health, and social services. CSWE supports efforts that address school safety and gun violence that are evidenced-based and acknowledge the need for a continuum of services both inside and outside school settings. Examples of these services include violence prevention programs, early identification, programs that address bullying and anger management, and efforts to address other social and emotional issues. CSWE will continue its work to ensure that social work students are prepared to address these vital needs. Additionally, CSWE supports the teaching and researching of these issues.

- CSWE firmly supports efforts to expand access to mental and behavioral health supports in schools and communities. This includes increasing the number of school-based mental health services providers, in particular school social workers and mental health social workers.
- CSWE believes that supporting mental and behavioral health for students means providing support and resources not just at school, but at home and in communities. This includes supporting access to nonprofit, public, and private mental health agencies and institutions, and improving coordination of services between students, families, schools, and other community organizations and institutions.
- CSWE encourages policymakers to support a pipeline of workforce development efforts to increase the number of qualified licensed professionals who provide mental health services and support in both school and community settings.
- CSWE encourages policymakers to incorporate efforts to address social determinants into legislation.
- CSWE advocates for a bipartisan and comprehensive legislative solutions to address firearm-related injuries and fatalities.
- CSWE believes that federal policy should make addressing gun violence a public health initiative. This means utilizing research and evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies to improve health, safety, and life expectancy.

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