



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK
Leadership in Research, Career Advancement, and Education

1701 Duke Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314 TEL 703.683.8080 FAX 703.683.8099 www.cswe.org

May 30, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Health and Human Services
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

On behalf of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), I would like to extend sincere appreciation for your recent effort to promote identification of mental health issues and access to mental health services and to help mitigate the stigma associated with receiving appropriate care and treatment. It is our hope that CSWE can serve not only as a resource but a partner to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and your staff as you continue conversations on ways to address the mental health challenges we face in the U.S.

CSWE is a nonprofit national association representing more than 2,500 individual members and more than 700 master's and baccalaureate programs of professional social work education. Founded in 1952, this partnership of educational and professional institutions, social welfare agencies, and private citizens is the sole accrediting body for social work education in the United States. Social work education prepares students for leadership and professional interdisciplinary practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities in a wide array of service sectors, including health, mental health, adult and juvenile justice, PK-12 education, child welfare, aging, and others. Social work practice is facilitated by a collaborative relationship that empowers people to be healthy, productive, contributing members of their communities.

CSWE was pleased to see the proposals included in the President's budget request on issues relating to mental health and are excited about ways that social workers can play an important role in meeting the goals outlined by HHS and the Administration to appropriately address the nation's growing mental and behavioral health needs. The Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (AWARE) project, which would provide funding to help detect mental health issues and provide access to mental health services for students and young adults, and the Health Resources and Services Administration Mental and Behavioral Health Education and Training program, which works to expand the mental and behavioral health workforce and enhance training skills, are strong steps towards meeting these goals. CSWE will work actively to support first-time or continued funding for these efforts. We look forward to contributing to the discussion to enhance training programs and skill development for mental and behavioral health professionals to address the nation's needs and meet the goals of HHS and the Administration.

As you may know, social workers work on the front lines of health care touching many Americans' lives through work in public schools, veterans' hospitals, general or special service health care facilities, substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, child protective services, family service settings, and gerontological long-term care facilities. Many social workers administer mental health care to



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underserved and vulnerable populations. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for social workers specializing in mental health and substance use is expected to grow by almost 20 percent over the 2008-2018 decade.

CSWE is dedicated to addressing this growing mental and behavioral health need, while recognizing and serving the diverse populations appropriately. We are committed to creating a diverse professional workforce to support diverse populations through cultural competency requirements for social work education programs, as well as administering the Minority Fellowship Program, which seeks to increase the number of ethnic minorities with doctoral degrees in social work education to provide culturally competent services to racial and ethnic minorities.

In February, CSWE joined others to partner with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration to create the National Dialogue on Mental Health. We are committed to advancing the federal effort and working with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education to support mental health initiatives.

While we are nearing the end of Mental Health Month in May, we look forward to continuing to promote mental health awareness throughout the year, as well as engaging with your staff to support these critical efforts. Thank you again for your leadership to advance mental health and mental health services. Please let me know how CSWE can serve as a resource to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Darla Spence Coffey'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'D' and 'C'.

Darla Spence Coffey
President and Chief Executive Officer
Council on Social Work Education

CC:

Pamela Hyde, Administrator, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Mary Wakefield, Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services