



CSWE Principles for Accreditation in the Reauthorization of *Higher Education Act*

During the upcoming legislative activity surrounding the reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* (HEA), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) will abide by the following principles in determining whether to support or oppose proposed legislation. These principles will also guide CSWE's legislative priorities relating to accreditation during the reauthorization of HEA.

- CSWE believes the federal government's primary responsibility in accreditation is the enforcement of law or regulations governing the use of Title IV federal student aid funds, not educational quality. Accreditors hold the primary responsibility regarding educational quality and institutional educational performance. The upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act should reinforce this division. CSWE, along with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, supports legislation that assures an appropriate division of responsibilities between these important parties.
- CSWE supports the elimination of regulations that undermine the strength and independence of the accreditation process. We also support the streamlining of current regulations and oppose the creation of new regulations that would undermine the independence of the accreditation process.
- CSWE supports legislation and policies that recognize the importance of the academic accreditor, and opposes legislation which would allow non-academic entities to act as accreditors (i.e. states).
- CSWE joins with CHEA, the American Council on Education (ACE), and other higher education leadership associations in stating that outcomes are best determined by the academic accrediting community, and that outcome measurements should not be mandated by the federal government.
- CSWE supports legislation that seeks to protect the role of each of the important players of "the triad" in the institutional accreditation process, including the U.S. Department of Education, the state authorizing agencies, and the regional accreditors.
- The goal of specialized and professional accreditation is to ensure entry-level competency of graduates for professional practice by collecting meaningful profession-appropriate outcomes measures. CSWE believes that with input from the public and the professional workforce, specialized accreditors have the unique ability to set and assess quality measures within diverse institutions and regional environments, taking into account market and resource needs.
- CSWE supports legislation and policies that recognize the important role of professional, specialized accreditors especially in improving programs, demonstrating outcomes and ensuring quality, and providing professional expertise.
- CSWE supports legislation that maximizes academic choices for students. The upcoming reauthorization should not limit an institution's ability to serve all students or deny admission to students based on programmatic or specialized accreditation requirements to qualify for licensing exams.