



Social Work Education Principles for Health Care Public Policy

As federal policymakers consider health care policy legislation and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) maintains the position that mitigating health inequities, strengthening mental health and substance use disorder services, addressing social determinants of health, promoting interprofessional team-based care models, and recognizing the value of education and training in adequately preparing the health care workforce are all critical to improving overall health and health outcomes in the U.S.

Social workers are vital to the U.S. health care system. They are one of the few professions that can address critical gaps across the entire continuum of care—from prevention to services to treatment. Social workers also provide care in a variety of settings within our nation’s communities including schools, clinics, hospitals, child welfare agencies, and local, state, and federal agencies. In some areas, such as mental health and substance use services, social workers are estimated to be one of the largest providers. Furthermore, social workers play a leading role in addressing social determinants of health, which is essential to effectively mitigate health inequities and improve overall health outcomes. As policy makers consider health care policy, CSWE supports the following principles that support its mission:

- **Ensure Access to Health Care for All Populations and Eradicate Health Inequities:** Federal policy should ensure access to health care and coverage for all populations, without the creation of new and undue burden, especially for low-income and vulnerable populations. CSWE does not support policies that disadvantage or create gaps in care, particularly for underserved populations, and instead endorses policies that aim to eradicate health inequities.
- **Address Social Determinants of Health to Improve Overall Health and Health Care:** As our nation’s health care system continues to move away from a volume-based system and towards a value-based system, federal policy should embrace innovative care models, including those that integrate social care into healthcare delivery. While policymakers have begun to recognize the importance of addressing social determinants of health, policies supporting the adoption of social care and health care integration are not meeting the current pace of the health care sector. CSWE urges Congress and federal agencies to adopt policies that facilitate the incorporation of social determinants of health into care delivery models.
- **Continue Efforts to Transition to Coordinated Interprofessional Team-Based Health Care:** There is growing recognition that coordinated team-based care models can improve health outcomes, especially when a social worker is included in the team. For example, given the multi-faceted nature of the nation’s substance use disorder crisis, an “all hands-on deck” approach has been essential to eradicate this devastating epidemic. Federal health care policy should continue to support interprofessional team-based care to meet the needs of populations with complex health care conditions.
- **Recognize the Important Role of Education and Training in Health Care Policy:** Federal policy should reflect the importance of education and training programs for health professions, which includes social work, to successfully increase the number of health professionals prepared to work in integrated team-based environments and help meet the increasing health demands in the U.S.

CSWE is a national association of social work education programs and individuals that ensures and enhances the quality of social work education for a professional practice that promotes individual, family, and community well-being, and social and economic justice.



CSWE believes that robust federal investments should be made in health care workforce programs that include social work.

- ***Maintain Physical and Behavioral Health Parity:*** The U.S. has made great strides recently to ensure that individuals with mental and behavioral health disorders do not fall through the cracks. A critical step has been making health care coverage available for those living with, or at risk for, mental and behavioral health diseases, and ensuring that individuals get the proper treatment and preventive services. Federal policy should build on, not erode, the progress that has been made to ensure mental and behavioral health parity.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact CSWE's Government Relations Otto Katt (otto@lewisburke.com).

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