

Box 11.7 More About...School Social Work Standards

NASW Standards for School Social Work Services include the following:

Standard 2: As leaders or members of interdisciplinary teams, school social workers shall work collaboratively to mobilize the resources of the local education agencies (the school) and the community to meet the needs of children and families.

Standard 6: School social workers shall be responsible for identifying individual children and target populations in need of services. They shall do so through a process of needs assessment that includes planned consultation

with personnel of the local education agency, community representatives, and children and their families.

Standard 12: School social work services shall be extended to children in ways that build on the children's individual strengths and that offer them maximum opportunity to participate in the planning and direction of their own learning experiences.

Standard 13: School social workers shall empower children and their families to gain access to and effectively use formal and informal community resources.

Source: National Association of Social Workers (1992).

and Youths" (NASW, 1997). Excerpts from the *Standards for School Social Work Services* are reprinted in Box 11.7.

The school social work standards emphasize the social worker's obligation to identify student needs and mobilize community resources to maximize opportunities for students to reach their potential. This requires school social workers to become involved in school funding issues. The need to reduce class sizes, hire more teachers, and increase opportunities for tutoring and computer skills training is well documented. Ethically, social workers need to actively advocate and campaign for funding methods that will achieve these and other goals.

CASE EXAMPLE

Sixteen-year-old Alexandra has just discovered that she is pregnant. She asks her school social worker for information about adoption and abortion, and she mentions that she is also thinking about keeping the baby. Alexandra does not want her parents to know about the pregnancy. What should the school social worker do?

In a school setting, ethical issues and decisions related to confidentiality can be complicated. In 1974, Congress passed the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which allows parents access to their children's school records and gives them control over access to the records by other people. Although these parental rights are necessary and appropriate, they conflict with students' rights to confidentiality.

In Alexandra's case, the social worker must be certain of policies and laws pertaining to pregnancy counseling in schools, particularly when a student wants information about abortion. In some states, abortion counseling is permitted on school sites, but in many others school social workers have to refer students to community social service agencies that offer pregnancy counseling services. The law does recognize Alexandra's right to make her own decision

about whether to keep the child, place the child for adoption, or have an abortion. However, in some states Alexandra's parents would have to be notified before she could have an abortion.

What standard do school social workers use to determine whether to involve parents or other adults when students like Alexandra come to them for assistance? The NASW Code of Ethics clearly states that the only time confidentiality does not apply is when "disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person." In Alexandra's case, the decision to breach confidentiality is not clear-cut. The social worker's responsibility is much clearer when a student talks about wanting to harm another student or a teacher, or mentions having suicidal thoughts. If a student says to a school social worker, "I need to tell you something, but you have to promise not to tell my parents," the school social worker must explain the limits of confidentiality before the student proceeds. School social workers are mandated by law to report child abuse and neglect to law enforcement or child protective services.



EP 1a

Challenges Facing School Social Workers LOS

School social workers face several serious challenges, including school violence, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol use, and high dropout rates. Social workers can best deal with these challenges by focusing on empirically based prevention and intervention efforts. This section briefly describes the major challenges and the way social workers are currently confronting them.

Violence Prevention

For every 1,000 students, 40 are victimized by crime while in school (Snyder & Truman, 2013). Approximately 28 percent of students report being bullied and being injured by bullies during school (Snyder & Truman, 2013). Burdick-Will (2013) found that "that violent crime rates affect the amount of material learned by the entire student." The Burdick-Will study also demonstrated:

that students' perceptions of safety go relatively unchanged, even in years when violent crime rates are low. One explanation may be that the research only looks at reported crimes that involved police intervention. There could be many more incidents, such as shoving in the hallway and verbal altercations, that go unreported but still have an effect on students' sense of well-being.