

# **School Social Worker**

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## **Student Services Job Description**

### **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER JOB DESCRIPTION**

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## School Social Worker Job Description

### Process

The 2008 School Social Worker Job Description was compiled collaboratively under the leadership of Teresa A. Smith, K-12 Student Support Services Consultant and representatives from school districts, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Special appreciation is extended to the committee members listed below who assisted in the preparation of the Job Description.

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Ms. Melinda Willingham	School Social Worker	Alamance-Burlington School System
Ms. Danielle Woodall	Past President and Social Work Educator	NC School Social Workers' Association and University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Additional input was gathered via feedback from the distribution of the proposed school social worker job description draft at the NCSSWA Fall Conference, via e-mail listservs to school personnel, through postings on the DPI School Social Work web page, and a zoomerang survey.

### **Purpose and Background**

This document is intended for use by North Carolina schools and local education agencies that employ school social workers. The 2008 North Carolina School Social Worker Job Description represents a revision of the 1987 North Carolina School Social Worker Job Description. In developing the 2008 job description, a variety of documents and relevant State policies and statutes were consulted including the North Carolina Standards for the Preparation of School Social Workers approved by the State Board of Education on November 3, 2005; State Board of Education Policy QP-C-006; State Board of Education Priorities; State General Statutes 115C-333 and 115C-335; current North Carolina educational staff job descriptions and evaluation systems; the National Association of Social Work Standards for School Social Work; and select pages from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction *School Social Work Practice Guide*.

### **Role of the School Social Worker**

School social work celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 2006. Social work services in schools first began independently in New York City, Chicago, Boston, and Hartford during the school year of 1906-1907 to meet the social service needs of children and to improve communication between the home and school. The first board of education to initiate and finance a school social work program was in Rochester, New York, in 1913 (Gary Shaffer as cited in Bye & Alvarez, 2006).

During this century, school social workers have grown significantly in numbers and the focus of the service has changed in response to important influences of the times. A focus on school attendance in the early 1900s showed the need for professionals who understood the influences of living conditions, socioeconomic status, poor health, family, and community on academic performance, behavior, and school attendance (Gary Shaffer as cited in Bye & Alvarez, 2006). The foremost responsibility of the school social worker at that time was home-school-community liaison. School social work has evolved considerably with the dynamic changes of society. School social workers function as change-agents more than ever before and continue to serve as the vital link between home, school, and community.

In order to be a licensed school social worker in North Carolina, a candidate must complete a bachelor's or master's degree program in social work from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited program with additional specialized preparation in school social work.

Within these school social work education programs, several standards are studied such as the foundations of school social work practice, assessment and evaluation, cultural diversity, consultative and collaborative relationships, and understanding of the role of advocacy and facilitation. Intervention strategies to support student development, discernment of statutes and case law, and completion of a school social work internship comprising a minimum of 400 contact hours in a school setting are also required.

School social workers are expected to apply their professional training in schools in order to support student success. Their capacity to influence student success is clearly influenced by school social worker-to-student ratios (*No Child Left Behind* recommends one master's level school social worker per 800 students; the School Social Work Association of America recommends one master's level school social worker per 400 students). Through specialized school social work programs, home, school, and community partnerships are strengthened and are better able to address barriers to student learning and achievement. School social workers serve as catalysts in promoting student well being and successful completion of school. This job description is a guide for the implementation of such specialized school social work programs in the public schools of North Carolina.

**SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER  
STUDENT SERVICES  
JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION:** School Social Worker

**REPORTS TO:** Supervisor of School Social Work or Appropriate Administrator

**PURPOSE:** The School Social Worker promotes and enhances the overall academic mission by providing services that strengthen home, school, and community partnerships and address barriers to learning and achievement. The School Social Worker significantly contributes to the development of a healthy, safe, and caring environment. Such an environment is achieved by advancing the understanding of the emotional and social development of children and the influences of family, community, and cultural differences on student success along with the implementation of effective intervention strategies.

The major functions of the school social worker job description incorporate the North Carolina State Board of Education guiding mission that every public school student will graduate from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the twenty-first century.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The School Social Worker's principle task is to empower students, families, and school personnel to access available opportunities and resources that develop each student's potential. Integrated into all major functions are home, school, community assimilation; diversity and cultural competence; dropout prevention; graduation awareness; and adherence to federal and state statutes, professional development and practices, School Social Work Standards and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.

- 1. MAJOR FUNCTION: Assessment of Student, Family, and School Needs**  
Effectively and appropriately assesses and addresses the needs, characteristics, and interactions of students, families, LEA personnel, and community.
  - 1.1 Conducts assessments and evaluations in accordance with family and student rights.
  - 1.2 Uses student, family, and school assessment results to identify needs that affect student learning.
  - 1.3 Uses assessment and evaluation results to develop appropriate interventions for students, families, schools, and communities.
  - 1.4 Develops long-term and short-term intervention plans consistent with curriculum; students' needs, strengths, diversity and life experiences; and social and emotional factors.

- 1.5 Uses a variety of appropriate formal and informal tools and techniques including observations and interviews to evaluate the progress and performance of students and families.
- 1.6 Addresses the needs of the school, student, families, and community by collaborating with the Student Support Services Team to design a holistic approach to any barriers or problems with the educational process.

**2. MAJOR FUNCTION: Direct Services/Service Delivery**

Uses knowledge and understanding of the reciprocal influences of home, school, and community to intervene for student success via such practices as assessment, crisis intervention and response, home visits, conflict resolution, individual and group counseling, consultation, program development, dropout prevention, graduation awareness, and coordination of school and community services.

- 2.1 Promotes family support of students' learning experience within the context of multicultural understanding and competencies.
- 2.2 Provides services to students in ways that build upon individual strengths and offers students maximum opportunities to participate in the planning and direction of their own learning experience.
- 2.3 Develops and provides training and educational programs that address the goals and mission of the educational institution.

**3. MAJOR FUNCTION: Advocacy**

Advocates for appropriate services for students and their families.

- 3.1 Advocates and facilitates change that effectively responds to the needs of students, families, and school systems using appropriate statutes, case law, policies, and procedures.
- 3.2 Promotes services to students and their families within the context of multicultural understanding and competence that enhances families' support of students learning experiences.
- 3.3 Assists students and their families in gaining access to formal and informal community resources.
- 3.4 Utilizes research and technologies to assist students, families, schools, and communities.

**4. MAJOR FUNCTION: Consultation and Collaboration**

Consults and collaborates with stakeholders on behalf of students and their families.

- 4.1 Consults with stakeholders to facilitate an understanding of factors in the home, local education agency, and community that affect students' educational experiences.



- 4.2 Consults on such issues as attendance, diversity, mental health, behavior management, delinquency, crisis intervention, homelessness, child abuse, neglect, and the importance of confidentiality.
- 4.3 Initiates and supports activities to overcome institutional barriers and gaps in services as leaders and members of interdisciplinary teams with the unique contribution of bringing the home, school, and community perspective to the interdisciplinary process.
- 4.4 Works with internal and external individuals, groups, and organizations to develop programs or systems of care that support and enhance the health, social and emotional well-being, and safety of students.
- 4.5 Promotes collaboration among community health and mental health service providers and facilitates student access to these services.
- 4.6 Uses extensive knowledge of community resources, enabling the school social worker to play a critical role in facilitating the provision of community services in the local education agency.
- 4.7 Helps to build effective school-community teams and orients community providers to school climate, culture, structure, and to the laws and regulations governing practice in educational settings.

**5. MAJOR FUNCTION: Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**

Effectively plans, implements, and evaluates programs that promote student and family success.

- 5.1 Applies knowledge of environmental factors in planning programs.
- 5.2 Conducts individual and/or system-wide surveys to assess the school and/or community needs.
- 5.3 Plans school and/or system-wide programs to promote a safe, healthy, caring school climate that fosters academic success.
- 5.4 Assists the school and community in planning programs that alleviate situations that may interfere with the learning process of students.
- 5.5 Assists in the evaluation of effective departmental, school-based, system, community, and statewide programs.

**6. MAJOR FUNCTION: Accountability**

Advocates, facilitates, and contributes to School Social Worker accountability for outcomes aligned with local, state, and federal policies and guidelines.

- 6.1 Conforms to the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics and Standards for School Social Work practice.

- 6.2 Maintains accurate case records and documentation.
- 6.3 Maintains current knowledge of federal and state laws and regulations and abides by said laws and regulations with emphasis on persons with disabilities, child welfare, mental health, confidentiality, and student and parent rights.
- 6.4 Organizes time, resources, energy, and workload in order to meet responsibilities.
- 6.5 Evaluates own practice and disseminates the findings to consumers, school districts, the community, and the profession in order to maximize the effectiveness of services and resources provided to students. By reflecting upon and evaluating one's practice, more effective services, and resources will be provided.
- 6.6 Participates in appropriate professional development activities to improve knowledge and skills.

## Reference

Bye, L. & Alvarez, M. E. (2006). *School Social Work: Theory to practice*. California:  
Thompson/Brooks/Cole.