

NOTES *from the* FIELD ...

Child Welfare & Schools

PROGRAM, POLICY & PRACTICE

OVERVIEW

Healthy children and stable families are at the core of strong communities and a viable nation but, all too often, families are threatened by poverty, substance abuse, violence, mental illness, homelessness, despair, and a host of related stressors. Helping schools and communities meet the social, emotional, physical, and educational needs of children and families in the face of multiple challenges has long been a priority of the social work profession. Professional social workers in child welfare and school settings work to support families so they can create safe and nurturing environments where children can thrive and learn.

The following is a brief summary of activities that NASW has been involved in to promote social work practice in child welfare and school.

ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION—PRESERVING SOCIAL WORK ROLES IN THE WORKFORCE

- **National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations (NAPSO)**—NASW is a member of this national coalition representing more than one million pupil services providers, including psychologists and school psychologists, school counselors, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, creative arts (i.e., dance, music, and art) therapists, and school nurses. Together, NAPSO member organizations advocate for positive changes in special education services and counseling programs for school-aged children and youth. NAPSO also engages in activities that educate school administrators, pupil and related services providers, teachers, and parents through conferences and other national presentations.

- **National Family Heritage Coalition**— It is an undisputable fact that children and families of color are over-represented in child welfare systems throughout the country (AFCARS, 2000). The National Family Heritage Coalition is a network of individual service providers, researchers, policy analysts, advocates, and organizations—including NASW—dedicated to addressing issues of race and culture in child welfare services. The Coalition has developed several position papers on culture and race matters in child welfare including, *For the Good of Us All: Why Issues of Race and Culture in Child Welfare Must Be Addressed*; convened a national summit, “For the Good of Us All: Addressing Issues of Racism and Cultural Bias in Child Welfare Services,” in Washington, D.C. ; and assisted the Congressional Black Caucus in organizing regional hearings on race and cultural issues in child welfare. The National Family Heritage Coalition meets regularly in Washington, D.C., continuing to stimulate dialogue about the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system, as well as the federal laws that shape child welfare policy and practice at the national and state levels.

ENHANCING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

- **National Bullying Prevention Campaign**— NASW is a co-sponsor of two major youth bullying campaigns: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resource Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau’s “National Bullying Awareness” campaign and the National Education Association’s “National Bullying Prevention” campaign. NASW contributes to the development of resources for both.

- **Conference on Foster Care and Mental Health**—The Conference meets quarterly, convened by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). A primary focus of this group is the mental health assessment of children in foster care, including the availability of screening and assessment upon entry and exit, and ongoing interim services. The Conference has developed several position papers, including a statement titled, *Mental Health and Use of Alcohol and Drug Screening and Assessment of Children in Foster Care*. It has also focused its efforts on the development and evaluation of uniform screening and assessment instruments for use by frontline staff, including child welfare (social) workers, and other professionals concerned with the mental health and emotional well-being of children and youth in foster care. More than 30 organizations, including NASW, participate in the Conference and contribute to its success.

- National Association of Social Workers. (2003, June). *Bullying among school-age youth, Part IV: Children and youth as victims of bullying*. Children, Families & Schools Practice Update. Available at www.socialworkers.org/practice/children
- National Association of Social Workers. (2003, June). *Child welfare: A congressional report on workforce issues*. Children, Families & Schools Practice Update. Available at www.socialworkers.org/practice/children
- National Association of Social Workers. (2002). *NASW standards for school social work services*. Washington, DC: NASW Press. Available at www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards
- National Association of Social Workers. (2003). *Youth bullying: How social workers can help*. Brochure. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

RECENT RESOURCES FROM NASW IN CHILD WELFARE AND SCHOOLS

National Association of Social Workers. (2003, May). *Bullying among school-age youth, Part III: Children and youth as victims of bullying*. Children, Families & Schools Practice Update. Available at www.socialworkers.org/practice/children/cfp0503.pdf

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