



**National Professional Social Work Month 2007**

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## Introduction

### **Celebrate Social Work Month – March 2007**

National Professional Social Work Month is the ideal time to show pride in your profession. It is the ideal time to celebrate the accomplishments of important social workers in history like Jane Addams and important current social workers like you. It is the ideal time to advocate for issues that affect social workers and their clients.

This year we have chosen health as our focus for Social Work Month 2007. The National Association of Social Workers is tuned into the pulse of the profession and knows that this is an important area of practice that affects millions of people.



Social Work Month is a terrific opportunity to promote the important work being done in the practice of health. NASW has several different initiatives that are converging this year to highlight health practice, including a Health Initiative, a grant from C-Change – Collaborating to Conquer Cancer regarding Cancer Patient Navigation and continuing education courses related to health.

Social workers involved in health work within a multidisciplinary team, hand in hand with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals to ensure quality care for their clients. Social workers in health are advocates for their clients. This high level of care starts when a client enters the health setting and continues through recovery.

Many social workers in health settings work in hospitals where they counsel clients and their families about their illness and treatment options. Social workers are trained listeners, providing help through support groups and community health centers.

The most important role of a health social worker is to help the client and his or her family to understand the illness, to work through the emotions of a diagnosis and to provide counsel about the decisions that need to be made.

### **Why is NASW focusing on health for National Social Work Month 2007?**

In March 2007, NASW will launch its Health Initiative to accomplish the following:

- To promote the professional development and advancement of health social workers
- To elevate and advance the health social work role in practice, policy, education and leadership
- To improve the public understanding of social workers in health.

Marrying Social Work Month 2007 with the Health Initiative, NASW will promote the following key health projects:

- [Health Care Social Work Credential](#)
- [Free Continuing Education courses](#)
- [Specialty Practice Sections](#) – The Health Section has more than 800 members.
- [Center for Workforce Studies](#) – Health Report
- [Consumer Web Site](#), including an extensive Health & Wellness Section, and the National Social Work Finder
- [Educational Tools](#), such as Practice Standards and Clinical Indicators
- [Cancer Patient Navigation Toolkit](#), funded by C-Change
- [NASW Press](#) – *Social Work and Health Journal* and related publications

This online tool kit includes:

- Information about Key NASW Activities – the National Social Work Public Education Campaign and the Social Work Reinvestment Initiative
- Facts about Social Work and Health
- Press Release Template
- Sample Letter to the Editor
- Sample Op-ed
- Social Work Month Proclamation
- Public Service Announcements
- Media outreach tips
- Suggestions for leveraging Social Work Month 2007

If you have any questions about Social Work Month 2007, please contact NASW Communications at [media@naswdc.org](mailto:media@naswdc.org).

## Year-long NASW Initiatives

Social Work Month is an opportune time each year to organize multiple outreach activities that enhance the public awareness of social work. It adds the value of timeliness to any information you send out.

The National Association of Social Workers has year-round activities that promote the awareness of social work every day. Work goes on all year long through National, NASW Chapters and individuals to promote and advance the profession.

Social Work Month is the time to marry these activities – highlighting the ongoing activities of the Association with the timely ones taking place in March.

### **National Social Work Public Education Campaign**

[The National Social Work Public Education Campaign](#) is a multi-year effort led by the NASW to improve the perception of social work with the public. The goals of the campaign are to:

1. increase the awareness of and respect for the social work profession
2. educate the public on the breadth and depth of social work practice
3. expand perceptions of who can benefit from social work services
4. attract young people and career changers to the profession

The tools for the campaign are designed to complement the annual Social Work Month efforts. Feel free to integrate information that is provided through the campaign with the tools provided here for Social Work Month 2007 to offer the public the most compelling view of social work.

### **Social Work Reinvestment Initiative**

The Social Work Reinvestment Initiative is a newly minted effort led by NASW which is designed to enhance and improve the social work profession. The goal of this initiative is to

Pursue legislative, policy, and regulatory mechanisms that recognize the role of professional social workers in the delivery of health and human services and in improved outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

NASW plans to use this initiative to unify the profession of social work under the common goal of a piece of national legislation – the Social Work Reinvestment Act, which will include supports for the social work profession.

The NASW Chapters are gathering in April 2006 in Washington, DC for a national lobby day and planning meeting for the Social Work Reinvestment Initiative. More details will be forthcoming.

## General Facts about Social Work

A 2006 study of licensed social workers from the NASW Center for Workforce Studies revealed the following about the profession of social work:

- Social workers have advanced educational preparation and practice experience. A master's in social work is the predominant social work degree for licensed social workers (79% of active practitioners).
- Social workers' most frequent specialty practice areas are mental health (37%), child welfare/family (13%), health (13%) and aging (9%).
- Social workers spend the majority of their time providing direct client services (96%), followed by consultation (73%) and administration/management (69%).
- With 12% of respondents planning on leaving the workforce in the next two years and the increasing need for social work services, there will not be enough social workers to meet the needs of their clients.

Additional facts about social work:

- Social workers have the right education, experience, and dedication to help people help themselves whenever and wherever they need it. It takes a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral social work degree — with a minimum number of hours in supervised fieldwork — to become a social worker.
- Social workers help people in all stages of life, from children to the elderly, and in all situations from adoption to hospice care.
- You can find social workers in hospitals, police departments, mental health clinics, military facilities, and corporations.
- Professional social workers are the nation's largest providers of mental health services. Social workers provide more mental health services than psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses combined.
- More than 600,000 people in the United States hold social work degrees.
- The Veteran's Administration employs more than 4,400 social workers to assist veterans and their families with individual and family counseling, client education, end of life planning, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention, and other services.
- Forty percent of mental health professionals working with the Red Cross Disaster Services Human Resources system are social workers.
- There are more than 170 social workers in national, state, and local elected office, including two U.S. Senators and four U.S. Representatives.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for social workers is expected to grow twice as fast as any other occupation, especially in gerontology, home healthcare, substance abuse, private social service agencies, and school social work.

For more information about Social Workers, please visit  
[http://www.helpstarthere.org/About\\_Social\\_Workers.html](http://www.helpstarthere.org/About_Social_Workers.html)

## Facts about Social Work and Health

A 2006 study of licensed social workers from the NASW Center for Workforce Studies revealed the following about the practice of health social work:

- There is a potential shortage of social workers in health care services because of the increase in demand for both chronic and acute medical care with the dramatic increase in the number of older adults.
- The Master of Social Work (MSW) is the predominant degree of social workers across health care settings. MSWs comprise 82% of social workers in this practice area.
- More than half of health care social workers are employed in hospitals. Significant numbers of social workers also work in health clinics (14%) and hospices (14%).
- Health care social workers are most likely to practice in metropolitan areas (85%), while few practice in micropolitan areas (7%), small towns (6%), or rural areas (2%).
- Health social workers provide direct services to clients, impart information and make referrals, screen and assess clients, and intervene in crisis situations most often in their area of practice.
- More than three-fifths of social workers report an increase in the severity of client problems, caseload size, paperwork and waiting lists for services.
- Social work in health care settings is a major practice area serving older adults. Health care social workers comprise more than one-third of all social workers who serve predominantly older adult caseloads.

### Additional facts about social work and health

- There are many different specialties in the health practice of social work, including oncology, hospital, nephrology, pain management and hospice.
- Nearly 34 million people were admitted to hospitals in 2004.
- Social workers are an integral part of the multidisciplinary team, working closely with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were about 110,000 medical and public health social workers in 2004.
- Because hospitals are releasing patients earlier than in the past, social worker employment in home health care services is growing.
- The median annual earnings of medical and public health social workers were \$40,080 in May 2004.

For more information about social workers and health, please visit [http://www.helpstartshere.org/Health\\_And\\_Wellness/Default\\_Page.html](http://www.helpstartshere.org/Health_And_Wellness/Default_Page.html)

Press Release Template

For Immediate Release  
[Date]

Contact: [Name]  
[Phone Number]  
[E-mail Address]

**[Insert Organization] and [National Association of Social Workers](#) Celebrate  
National Social Work Month in March 2007**

*“Hope and Health” theme focuses on issues related to wellness*

[Insert City] – Receiving the diagnosis of an illness can be a confusing time for anyone. Will I be able to handle the treatment? How will I balance my care with the needs of my family? How will this affect my job? Who will help me figure all this out?

[Insert Organization Name], along with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), proudly announces National Social Work Month 2007.

This year’s theme – *Hope and Health: Help Starts Here* – highlights the important role of health social workers in the well-being of their clients. More than simply treating a client, health social workers take a holistic, psychosocial approach to working with a client providing the best overall care.

“Social workers in the health setting remove barriers to effective treatment for a client,” says Elizabeth Clark, PhD, ACSW, MPH, executive director of NASW. “They provide hope throughout the course of an illness, helping clients to overcome their devastation and look to the future.”

As an integral member of the interdisciplinary team, more than 110,000 health care social workers across the country act as the advocate for a client’s needs and guide them in making decisions about their physical and emotional care. Social workers also work with the family to understand and to help the client through counseling or support groups.

“Social workers play a key role in the quality of care for clients in [local city]’s hospitals and clinics,” said [name, title] of [local chapter or organization]. “Social workers see a client through the entire trajectory of their illness – from diagnosis to treatment to recovery and beyond.”

Social Work Month also provides an opportunity for social workers to highlight the essential role they play in alleviating some of America’s most difficult problems. Through education, training and dedication, social workers provide assistance in many different practice areas including aging, mental health, child welfare, cancer, end of life, adolescent health, HIV/AIDS and family violence.

Social workers are essential to the hope and health of their clients. To find comprehensive information about the role of social work and where to go for assistance for these and other issues, visit [www.HelpStartsHere.org](http://www.HelpStartsHere.org).

[Optional Section]

To honor the achievements of its members and bring to light the issues faced by social workers, [Organization Name] is celebrating National Social Work Month by:

- 1-3 bullets mentioning specific activities/events planned in your area/by your organization to celebrate Social Work Month

“Social workers have the unique ability to look at person’s situation from a broad perspective,” added [last name of chapter or organization spokesperson]. “We understand that the best health care requires a broad view of social, environmental, psychological, and economic options.”

For more information on how [name of organization] is supporting National Social Work Month, please contact [name] at [phone number] or via e-mail at [e-mail address]. Or visit [Insert URL].

[Insert Boilerplate information. Note: A boilerplate is a short paragraph that best summarizes who you are and your mission as an organization or chapter. The paragraph should remain constant throughout all media information. See example below.]

#### [About the National Association of Social Workers](#)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, D.C., is the largest membership organization of professional social workers with 150,000 members. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.

###

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Receiving the diagnosis of an illness can be a confusing time for anyone. Will I be able to handle the treatment? How will I balance my care with the needs of my family? How will this affect my job? Who will help me figure all this out?

This year's Social Work Month theme – *Hope and Health: Help Starts Here* – is the answer. Social workers have the right education to help clients navigate the confusing world of health options. With more than 110,000 social workers trained and employed in hospitals, their clients have access to the resources and hope that social workers bring.

With nearly 37 million people admitted to hospitals in 2004, social workers serve many of these clients during their hospital stay. As an integral part of many interdisciplinary teams, working closely with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, social workers become the advocate for the client for the right course of action.

Social workers commitment to a client starts with diagnosis and continues through recovery and beyond. Many times you'll find social workers in hospitals where they counsel clients and their families about their illness and treatment options.

Social workers have the ability to view a client through a holistic lens. More than just treating the physical effects of an illness, social workers need to be aware of the other psychosocial issues that play into the client's treatment and recovery.

As the American population ages, social workers are going to be increasingly called upon to meet the needs of older adults in health care settings. Nearly half of all social workers in health care are currently seeing older clients, according to the NASW Center for Workforce Studies, and that number is expected to increase.

Social Work Month also provides an opportunity for social workers to highlight the essential role they play in alleviating some of America's most difficult problems. Through education, training and dedication, social workers provide assistance in many different practice areas including aging, mental health, child welfare, end of life, adolescent health, cancer, HIV/AIDS and family violence.

Information about health concerns the role of social work in health and all areas of practice can be found at [www.HelpStartsHere.org](http://www.HelpStartsHere.org).

Signed,

[Name]

[Title]

[Chapter/Organization Name]

[Phone Number]

[E-mail address]

## Sample Op-Ed

### *Hope and Health – Help Starts with a Social Worker*

By [Name, Title, Organization]

Receiving the diagnosis of an illness can be a confusing time for anyone. Will I be able to handle the treatment? How will I balance my care with the needs of my family? How will this affect my job? Who will help me figure all this out?

This year's National Social Work Month theme – *Hope and Health: Help Starts Here* – is the answer to many of these questions. Social workers have the right education and training to help patients navigate the confusing world of health options.

With nearly 37 million people admitted to hospitals in 2004, social workers serve many of these patients during their hospital stay. As an integral part of many interdisciplinary teams, working closely with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, social workers become the advocate for the client for the right course of action.

A social worker's commitment to a client starts with diagnosis and continues through recovery and beyond. Social workers see a client through a holistic lens. More than just treating the physical effects of an illness, social workers are aware of the other psychosocial issues that play into the client's treatment and recovery and help them overcome those barriers to complete health care.

[Optional Section – provide the name of a social worker in your community that has made a difference in working in health and his/her accomplishments.]

[Insert the word "SAMPLE" behind background of this proclamation]

Social Work Month Proclamation

**WHEREAS** social workers have the right education and experience to guide individuals, families, and communities through complex issues and choices;

**WHEREAS** social workers connect individuals, families, and communities to available resources;

**WHEREAS** social workers are dedicated to improving the society in which we live;

**WHEREAS** social workers are positive and compassionate professionals;

**WHEREAS** social workers stand up for others to make sure everyone has access to the same basic rights, protections, and opportunities;

**WHEREAS** social workers help people help themselves, whenever and wherever they need it most;

**WHEREAS** social workers have been the driving force behind important social movements in the United States and abroad;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, in recognition of professional social workers and their commitment and dedication to individuals, families, and communities everywhere through service delivery, research, education, and legislative advocacy.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, proclaim the month of March 2007 as **Professional Social Work Month** and call upon all citizens to join with the **National Association of Social Workers** and \_\_\_[your organization]\_\_\_ in celebration and support of social workers and the social work profession.

Public Service Announcements

“Social Work – Help Starts Here”: 15 Second Spot

[Local Chapter or Organization Name]  
[Local Chapter or Organization Address]  
[Local Chapter or Organization City, State, Zip]  
[Local Chapter or Organization Contact – Name, Phone, E-mail]

(Announcer): FROM ADOPTION TO GERIATRICS. FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE TO DISASTER RELIEF. IN SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS, BATTLEFIELDS AND COURTROOMS. SOCIAL WORKERS HELP. TO FIND A SOCIAL WORKER, VISIT HELP-STARTS-HERE-DOT-ORG. SOCIAL WORKERS. HELP STARTS HERE.

(Announcer): IN HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. IN CORPORATIONS AND THE MILITARY. IN SENIOR CENTERS AND ADOPTION AGENCIES. ANTTIME, ANYWHERE. HELP STARTS WITH A SOCIAL WORKER. VISIT HELP-STARTS-HERE-DOT-ORG TO FIND OUR MORE. SOCIAL OWRKERS HELP STARTS HERE.

Announcer: SOCIAL WORKERS HELP. IN HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. ADOPTION AGENCIES AND SENIOR CENTERS. ANYTIME, ANYWHERE. TO FIND A SOCIAL WORKER FOR YOU, YOUR PARENTS, YOUR CHILDREN, VISIT HELP-STARTS-HERE-DOT-ORG. SOCIAL WORKERS. HELP STARTS HERE.

“Social Work – Help Starts Here”: 30 Second Spot

[Local Chapter or Organization Name]  
[Local Chapter or Organization Address]  
[Local Chapter or Organization City, State, Zip]  
[Local Chapter or Organization Contact – Name, Phone, E-mail]

(Announcer): FROM HELPING A SENIOR CONNECT WITH NEW FRIENDS, TO HELPING A YOUNG COUPLE ADOPT A CHILD. FROM HELPING DISASTER VICTIMS REBUILD THEIR LIVES, TO HELPING TEENAGERS RESIST DRUGS. IN SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES AND CORPORATIONS, HELP STARTS WITH A SOCIAL WORKER. IF YOU’D LIKE TO FIND A SOCIAL WORKER FOR HELP AND ADVICE, WHETHER IT’S FOR YOUR SPOUSE, YOUR PARENTS, YOUR CHILDREN, OR YOURSELF, YOU’LL FIND A WORLD OF HELP ONLINE AT HELP-STARTS-HERE-DOT-ORG. SOCIAL WORKERS. HELP STARTS HERE.

## Media Outreach Tips

### *General Media Tips*

- Seek out journalists who have written about your issue or topic recently. These individuals will be more likely to cover the topic again.
- Journalists, especially those in smaller media outlets, tend to change beats and outlets frequently. Those who you spoke with for last year's Social Work Month may not be the appropriate contacts this year.
- All of the materials NASW has provided can be modified to include local information or activities. Local media are more likely to cover a local twist to a national observance.

### *Tips for Facts about Social Work*

- Fact sheets should always be made available for the press. They are good items to have on hand to provide to reporters.
- Include local facts about social work in your fact sheets. Local reporters gravitate toward facts that have a local angle.
- When holding an event, conference or presentation, have local social work facts on hand to provide to attendees.
- Make sure to include these facts in your press kits. A press kit is a collection of background materials that you can send to media outlets. Other items to include in a press kit can include a press release about the event and bios of key spokespeople for your organization.

### *Tips for Press Releases*

- Most journalists prefer to receive press releases via e-mail. This gives them the opportunity to read all the information and quickly respond if they want more details. Many news outlets list reporter's names with their stories or in the "Contact Us" section of their Web site. If you can't find their e-mail address, faxing or mailing can be a second option.
- Include information in the subject line of an e-mail that will catch their attention. It is also helpful to include a short e-pitch – a paragraph or two describing the press release and why this reporter should cover this story. Think WIIFM – What's in it for me (and my readers, viewers and listeners)?
- Don't attach a press release to your e-mails. Copy and paste the document into the body of the e-mail. Most journalists will not open e-mails with attachments for fear that they may open themselves up to viruses. If you have pictures or graphics to offer to a journalist, ask for their permission to send.
- When you send out a press release, make sure that your spokesperson will be available for interviews. Keep in mind a back up for an interview in the event that your first choice is not available.
- Following up with a reporter is a delicate balance between ensuring your success and annoying the reporter. You should only follow up when you have new information to provide or when you have breaking, timely news.

### *Tips for Interviews*

- Know your message. Before your interview, review your message points. Identify two or three essential points that you must get across during the interview.
- Be prepared. Prepare several facts and anecdotes from your experience that you can share to underscore your main points.
- Try to avoid space fillers, such as “um” and “ah.”
- Be engaging, natural and firmly in support of your message.
- Make sure your message is simple and compelling. Focus on answering questions succinctly, but don’t leave key points out to save time.
- Try to incorporate one key theme in all of your responses to a journalist.
- Avoid speculation and hypotheticals. It may lead to being misquoted.
- Avoid technical terms, jargon and acronyms. Only people who are familiar with your program are familiar with your terms.
- Do not say “no comment.” If you cannot answer, explain why.
- Do not be afraid to say, “I don’t know...but I will find out for you.”
- In most broadcast interviews, you will be taped and will have the opportunity to restate yourself if something doesn’t come out quite right.
- Be confident. You’re the expert in the interview!

### *Tips on Placing Letters to the Editor*

- Visit the newspaper or magazine Web site to find information on how to submit letters to the editor. Many publications allow you to submit through their Web site.
- Time is of the essence. If a response needs to be made to a story, the response must be made within a day or two of the article.
- Keep letters concise and always refer to the specific article to which you are responding.
- If you are supporting the stance taken in an article, be sure to point out the valid arguments, while adding your own expertise. If you are opposing the stance taken in an article, point out the flaws in a constructive manner and offer your opposing position.
- Always include the contact information for the person who wrote the letter, along with the association or organization to which he or she is affiliated.

### *Tips on Placing Print Op-Eds*

- When writing your op-ed, be sure to keep in mind the audience who will be reading the article – the readership of the publication.
- Make sure that the topic is timely. Bring in local issues if it is for a local paper.
- Check the Web site for submission guidelines.

### *Tips for Promoting Events*

- Write a press release announcing the event, including the who, what, when, where and why for the public. Disseminate the press release two to three weeks before the event.
- Send a reminder about the event and make follow up phone calls with the press.

- Send a press release about the event to the “calendar” and “week ahead” section of the local paper. The Associated Press also has a daybook listing for each city. Contact your local AP office and ask how to get a listing in their daybook.
- Have press kits on hand at your event.

## Suggestions for Leveraging Social Work Month

Social Work Month is an excellent opportunity to showcase social workers to key audiences – consumers, media and even other social workers. These efforts bring attention to your chapter or organization, while focusing on the extraordinary efforts of social workers. From small gatherings to large events, the media likes to hear about people in the community. Look for information in the Social Work Month section of the NASW Web site and on the National Social Work Public Education Campaign site. **[link to campaign page]**

Here are some suggestions of ways to leverage Social Work Month:

- **Town Hall Meeting** – Hold a Town Hall Meeting to engage lawmakers, state, city or county officials in a dialogue about the efforts to address the issue of health care in your area. Discuss social work's vital role in ensuring that clients receive quality care.
- **Press Conference** – Conduct a Press Conference at which the mayor and/or governor issues a proclamation designating March as National Professional Social Work Month. Highlight local social workers in your area who are making a difference, as well as initiatives taken on by your organization or chapter this year to promote social work and the issue of health.
- **Speaking Opportunities** – Arrange for speaking opportunities for the executive director or president of your organization or chapter to highlight the important role of social work in health care.
- **Panel Discussion** – Hold a conference or panel discussion about the role of social work in health care.
- **Editorial Board** – Set up a meeting with your local paper editorial board to discuss their coverage of the topic of ensuring quality health care. You can provide the social work thoughts to the conversation to ensure that they know all the efforts that social workers are making.
- **Information Dissemination** – At every meeting, panel, or conference you attend, make sure that you have information available about Social Work Month and the National Public Education Campaign for those in attendance.
- **E-newsletter** – Create an e-newsletter that captures all that your chapter or organization is doing surrounding Social Work Month. Rotate different areas of practice each time you send it out so that it appeals to a wide range of audiences. Start with the health practice area in March to highlight the theme of Social Work Month 2007.
- **CE Workshop** – Offer a workshop for CE credits on the topic of health to social workers in your area.
- **Exhibit** – Set up an exhibition booth at a local hospital, school or community center to disseminate information about social work.
- **Banners** – Display banners in highly visible areas promoting March as National Professional Social Work Month.
- **Web site** – Makes sure that your chapter or organization's Web site has the most up-to-date information about the celebration of Social Work Month 2007 and specific information on the topic of health.

- **Consumer Site** – Link from your Web site to the Social Work Consumer Site – [www.HelpStartsHere.org](http://www.HelpStartsHere.org).
- **Advertise** – Advertise in local newspapers and magazines using the National Social Work Public Education Campaign materials [**link to campaign page**]. From small and large ads to billboards and banners for Web sites, NASW has advertising that will fit your need. Additionally, NASW has an engaging advertisement that focuses on the issue of health. This advertisement highlights the important work of Alycia Hughes, LMSW, a social worker and M.D. Anderson Cancer Center who helped Ivory Pete through her second bout with cancer. Please follow this link to see this ad. [**link to Oncology ad**] Contact [media@naswdc.org](mailto:media@naswdc.org) for more information on running this or any other ad.

These are just a selection of suggestions that chapters and organizations can use to promote the profession during Social Work Month 2007 and throughout the year.

For more information about Social Work Month 2007, please contact NASW Communications at [media@naswdc.org](mailto:media@naswdc.org).