



# Life's Journey.

Help Starts Here.

**National Association of Social Workers**

**National Professional Social Work Month 2006**

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## Introduction

### **Celebrate Social Work Month – March 2006**

Since the inception of National Professional Social Work Month in 1984, March has been a month when social workers can join together to promote the profession and advocate for issues that affect social workers and their clients.

This year, we are turning our focus to an individual issue that affects social workers and their clients – Aging [**hyperlink to aging landing page**]. NASW is celebrating the efforts of social workers who help their clients through many of life's journeys.

#### **[Insert Logo]**

NASW is pleased to add social work expertise to this important and timely issue. Social Work Month is an opportunity to promote the emerging issue of aging in our practice and in our profession.

Social workers help all types of people at every stage of life. The profession promotes dignity for everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us. Additionally, social workers themselves represent a mature workforce with many years of experience. Many social workers have had tremendously rich life journeys that have inspired their work, and made invaluable contributions to their communities and the nation.

While promoting the social work role in aging is important this month, Social Work Month is also an opportunity to generally promote the profession with new tools offered through the National Social Work Public Education Campaign [**link to campaign page**].

The tools for the National Social Work Public Education Campaign [**link to campaign page**] are designed to complement the annual Social Work Month efforts. Feel free to integrate information that is provided through the National Social Work Public Education Campaign with tools provided for Social Work Month 2006 to offer the public the most compelling view of social work.

This online tool kit includes:

- Facts about Social Work and Aging
- 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 2006

If you have any questions about Social Work Month 2006, please contact NASW Communications at [media@naswdc.org](mailto:media@naswdc.org).

## General 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 even corporations.
- Professional social workers are the nation's largest providers of mental health services. According to government sources, more than 60 percent of mental health treatment is delivered by social workers.
- More than 600,000 people in the United States hold social work degrees.
- The Veteran's Administration employs more than 4,200 MSWs to assist veterans and their families with individual and family counseling, patient 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.helpstartshere.org/About\\_Social\\_Workers.html](http://www.helpstartshere.org/About_Social_Workers.html)

## Facts about Social Work and Aging

- 77 million people are considered part of the “baby boom” population, representing 27% of the population. In 2011, the first group of baby boomers will turn 65. With the aging of 27% of the population, there will be an increased need for social work services.
- Life spans are increasing. Adults who live to age 65 can expect to live an average of 18 more years. Women who reach age 85 can expect to live another seven years.
- The older Hispanic population is projected to grow faster than any other minority group, from two million in 2003 to 15 million in 2050. By 2028, the number of older Hispanic adults is expected to exceed the number of older African Americans.
- Working with older adults can mean involvement with active, healthy clients as well as those who are ill in settings that range from adult day care centers and nursing homes to hospitals, public agencies, and private corporations. Social workers form an important link between seniors and the services designed to help them.
- Social workers help clients make decisions on assisted-living arrangements, provide caregiver support through group counseling, or work with families to plan a loved one’s long-term care.
- Social worker’s one-on-one care can help seniors through feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression. That could mean direct counseling, dealing with special health care needs, or even something as basic as better nutrition – whatever it takes to keep seniors living well.
- According to the Center for Workforce Studies research on the social work labor force, the supply of professional social workers may not be sufficient to meet the demands of the aging baby boomers.
- NASW Workforce Center’s findings revealed that the social work labor force is expected to decrease in the next two years, with 13% of the survey respondents planning to leave their current positions.
- The social work labor force is older than most professions and occupations. Nearly 30% of social workers are over 55 years of age, compared with 14% of the U.S. civilian labor force.
- The Center for Workforce Studies at NASW notes that 75% of social workers report that they have older adults (55 years and older) in their caseloads. 24% of social workers report that older adults comprise at least 50% of their caseloads.
- The National Institutes of Health notes that the number of professional social workers who will be needed to serve this aging population is 60,000 to 70,000, indicating an increased demand for social workers.

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 2006**

*“Life’s Journey” theme focuses on issues related to aging*

[Insert City] – [Insert Organization Name], along with the National Association of Social Workers, proudly announce the kickoff of National Social Work Month 2006.

This year’s theme – Life’s Journey: Help Starts Here – focuses on how social workers help all people at every stage of life, while promoting dignity for everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us.

“The ‘Graying of America’ and the lengthening of life spans puts new pressures on individuals and their families,” says NASW President Elvira Craig de Silva. “Social workers have the specialized knowledge and expertise to address these pressures. They strive to promote independence, autonomy and dignity for their clients.”

Social workers help families deal with the stress of placing loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living communities. They refer family members to support groups and encourage them to participate in care plan meetings.

“The [insert local chapter or organization name] provides a vital link between our older citizens and the health-related services they may need,” said [name, title] of [local chapter or organization]. “Through individual and family counseling, psychosocial assessment and coordinating care, social workers provide a range of services to fill critical gaps in long-term care.”

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 health, mental health, child welfare, end of life, adolescent health, HIV/AIDS and family violence.

Social workers work with the most vulnerable to connect them with the services they need. 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

“We understand that the best elder care requires a broad view of social, environmental, psychological, economic and health care options,” added [last name of chapter or organization spokesperson]. “As more older Americans face the challenge of limited mobility, social workers intervene to ensure appropriate care and services are received.”

NASW chapters and organizations during National Social Work Month will help social workers across the country advocate for policies that are humane, fair, and above all beneficial to the nation’s citizens.

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 153,000 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.

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

More than 77 million Americans are considered part of the baby boom generation. Adults born between 1946 and 1964 have the distinction of being the largest generation, representing 27% of the population. With the aging of baby boomers and the lengthening of life spans, both the number and proportion of older people is rapidly increasing.

Social workers understand that the best elder care requires a broad view of social, environmental, psychological, economic and health care options. It is the ability to see the intersection of these elements that allow social workers to connect clients with the best resources for them – the best resources to help them along life’s journeys.

March is National Social Work Month and the perfect opportunity to highlight the essential role that social workers play in working with all vulnerable populations, especially with older people. Social workers have the specialized knowledge and expertise to address issues facing older Americans, including providing individual and family counseling, psychosocial assessment and coordinating care.

This year’s Social Work Month theme – Life’s Journey: Help Starts Here – focuses on how social workers help all people at every stage of life, while promoting dignity for everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Social workers strive to promote independence, autonomy and dignity for their all of their clients. They offer families ways to deal effectively with long-term care responsibilities and work through hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, independent and assisted-living facilities, public agencies and even in client homes.

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 health, mental health, child welfare, end of life, adolescent health, HIV/AIDS and family violence.

Information about seniors and aging and the role of social work in 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

### Social Work – An Investment in Care for Baby Boomers

By [Name, Title, Organization]

More than 77 million Americans are considered part of the baby boom generation. Adults born between 1946 and 1964 have the distinction of being the largest generation, representing 27% of the population. With the aging of baby boomers and the lengthening of life spans, both the number and proportion of older people is rapidly increasing.

The demand for social work will only increase as the needs of this large section of the population increases. The National Association of Social Workers Center for Workforce Studies recently completed its first major study of the social work labor force where findings show that the supply of professional social workers may not be sufficient to meet the demands of aging baby boomers.

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

National Social Work Month is the ideal time to highlight the immediate and on-going need for an investment in the social work labor force. Social workers have the specialized knowledge and expertise to address issues facing older Americans. This year's Social Work Month theme – Life's Journey: Help Starts Here – focuses on how social workers help all people at every stage of life, while promoting dignity for everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us.

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 legislative advocacy, service delivery, research, and education,

I, \_\_\_\_\_, proclaim the month of March 2006 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): MENTAL HEALTH. ADOPTION. SUBSTANCE ABUSE.  
GERIATRICS. DISASTER RELIEF. HOSPICE. ONCOLOGY. SOCIAL  
WORKERS. WE HELP. ANYTIME. ANYWHERE. 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): HELP AN OLDER MAN LAUGH AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS.  
HELP A TEENAGER RESIST DRUGS. HELP A COUPLE BECOME A FAMILY  
THROUGH ADOPTION. HELP THOSE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS GET THE  
TREATMENT THEY NEED. HELP A FAMILY WHO HAS LOST EVERYTHING  
REBUILD THEIR LIVES. WE HELP. ANYTIME. ANYWHERE. VISIT HELP-  
STARTS-HERE-DOT-ORG. SOCIAL WORKERS. HELP STARTS HERE.

## Media Outreach Tips [[Link to media toolkit in press room](#)]

### *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. These 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 these 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 Sites. If you can't find their e-mail address, there's nothing wrong with faxing or mailing a press release. But, please remember that in a busy newsroom they may get lost in the shuffle.
- It is helpful to journalists to 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 readership)?
- Don't attach 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.
- Be cool – Be engaging, natural and firmly in support of your message.
- Answer questions...and bridge to positive points.
- Make sure your message is simple and compelling. Focus on answering questions succinctly, but don't leave key points out to save time.
- 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.”
- Be confident. You're the expert in the interview!

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

- Visit the Web site to find information on how to submit letters to the editor. Many publications allow you to submit through their Web site, while most still allow for submissions through the mail.
- 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 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 and newsworthy. Bring in local stories 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 the week of 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 these opportunities. 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 aging in your area. Discuss social work’s vital role in working with older people to connect them to the resources they need.
- **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 aging.
- **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 the aging community.
- **Panel Discussion** – Hold a conference or panel discussion about aging and the role of social work with the aging population.
- **Editorial Board** – Set up a meeting with your local paper editorial board to discuss their coverage of the topic of aging. You can provide the social work slant 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 hold, 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. Rotate different areas of practice each time you send it out so that it appeals to a wide range of audiences. Start with the aging practice area in March to highlight the theme of Social Work Month 2006.
- **CE Workshop** – Offer a workshop for CE credits on the topic of aging 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 organizations Web site has the most up-to-date information about the celebration of Social Work Month 2006 and specific information on the topic of aging.

- **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 aging. Please follow this link to see this ad. [**link to St. Barnabas 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 2006 and throughout the year.

For more information about Social Work Month 2006, please contact NASW Communications at [media@naswdc.org](mailto:media@naswdc.org).