

Social Work Month is in March and this year's theme is SOCIAL WORKERS ARE ESSENTIAL

Each day more than 700,000 social workers nationwide make life better for others. They empower people, giving them the skills and encouragement, they need to overcome life's challenges. They also link clients to resources they may need to live more fulfilled lives.

Social workers are everywhere. They work in schools, helping children get the services they need to get the best possible education. They are in mental health centers and private practices, helping people overcome mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety and substance use disorders.

They protect children from neglect and abuse and help form new families through adoption. Social workers are in hospitals, helping patients get the best possible care not only while in treatment but when they return to their families and communities. And they help those cope with the loss of loved ones.

Social workers also play a vital role in community organizations and local, state and federal governments, helping create programs and policies that help make our society a better and more equitable place for all.

This year's theme for Social Work Month is "Social Workers are Essential." Social workers are woven into the fabric of our society, although they are often unsung heroes. As our nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, and racial unrest social workers are needed more than ever.

These include social workers such as Mary Anne Cohen, director of the New York Center for Eating Disorders, who helps people overcome crippling eating disorders; Chad Dion Lassister, Executive Director at the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC), who has dedicated his career to helping end racism; and Rosanelly Garcia, a trauma social worker in the emergency room at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago who is helping patients recover from COVID-19.

(OPTIONAL PUT EXAMPLES OF LOCAL SOCIAL WORKERS YOU MAY KNOW HERE)

The fact social workers are essential is reflected in data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which lists social work as one the fastest growing professions in the United States. Due to increased demand for the services social workers provide – for instance our nation's population is aging and more social workers will be needed to care for them – the number of U.S. social workers is expected to rise to more than 800,000 in 2029, up 13 percent from 2019.

Yet, social workers need support from our nation. They deserve higher salaries and more programs that would make it easier for people to enter and work in the field, such as debt forgiveness programs.

There is legislation in Congress—the Improving Access for Mental Health Act—that would help raise Medicare reimbursement rates for social workers who account for one of the largest groups of mental health service providers in our nation. Another bill, the Social Work Reinvestment Act, would tackle high caseloads, low salaries, student loan debt, and other challenges the social work profession is facing.

During Social Work Month in March we urge you to learn more about the essential work of social workers and what you can do to help members of this profession do their positive, life-changing work.

