



INVESTING IN THE SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE

Sponsored by the NASW Social Work Policy Institute
In collaboration with the Action Network for Social Work
Education & Research

The Social Work Policy Institute (SWPI) of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is pleased to release the report, *Investing in the Social Work Workforce*, which is the result of a think tank symposium hosted in collaboration with the Action Network for Social Work Education and Research (ANSWER) on May 18, 2011 in Washington, DC. The symposium brought together leaders from practice, policy, research, and education, including representatives from federal agencies, national organizations, foundations, universities, insurers, and state and local service-providing agencies.

SYMPOSIUM GOALS

In recent years, there have been some specialized efforts to recruit and educate social workers and to build leadership capacity in child welfare and aging. However, all fields of practice face workforce challenges. Yet, there are not consistent or broadly available strategies that target both the recruitment and education of the next generation of professional social workers, nor are there comprehensive initiatives to provide training to ensure that practitioners have up-to-date skills. The goals of the symposium therefore were:

- > To move beyond viewing workforce issues for the social work profession within specific practice silos (e.g., mental health, child welfare,

oncology, chronic disease or aging).

- > To create an action agenda to look broadly across social work functions (e.g., clinical practice, care coordination, management and supervision) and across levels of social work education.
- > To enhance commitment to working within social work and with interdisciplinary partners, and with the executive and legislative branches of government, at both the state and national levels, to promote investments in the social work profession and to promote individual, family and community well-being.

TOPICS EXPLORED

- > Social work workforce data and trends.
- > Federal strategies and funding opportunities for workforce capacity building.
- > Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) social work provisions and CMS's increased attention to innovation, primary care, and psychosocial well-being.
- > Prospects for workforce investments through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA).
- > Workforce issues from a front-line service delivery perspective.
- > Social work practice within an interdisciplinary context.

- > Trends in service delivery interventions, addressing disparities, and responding to emerging fields of practice, i.e., services to the military and veterans.
- > Policies that can support workforce investments and capacity building.
- > Opportunities for future collaborations to address workforce gaps.

ACTION AGENDA IDENTIFIED

The anticipated outcomes of responding to the symposium's recommendations will be the development of a competent, committed social work workforce that will be employed across numerous fields of practice; that will be retained within the social work profession; and that can help to achieve positive outcomes for the clients served. Targets for action include *influencing social work education, influencing service delivery and social work practice and strengthening policy and practice linkages*. Investing in the social work workforce will require actions by multiple players both within the social work profession and on the outside. Stakeholders include:

- > Social work organizations.
- > Government agencies (at the local, state and national levels).
- > Unions.
- > Licensing boards.

- > Accrediting bodies.
- > Legislatures.
- > National organizations representing service providers.
- > Employers of social workers.
- > Clinicians and practitioners.

Social work is the safety net for a civil society. The agenda for the future is daunting and necessitates sustained relationships between the profession and government and foundation representatives as well as between the profession and interdisciplinary

partners. Maintaining and enhancing the safety net is critical. This will require that investments be made so that social workers are well prepared and available to meet the demands for their services from individuals, families, organizations and communities in need.

Investing in the Social Work Workforce

ACTION AGENDA



The complete symposium report is available at SocialWorkPolicy.org.

ABOUT THE SOCIAL WORK POLICY INSTITUTE

The **Social Work Policy Institute** was established in 2009 and is a division of the NASW Foundation. Its mission is:

- To strengthen social work's voice in public policy deliberations.
- To inform policy-makers through the collection and dissemination of information on social work effectiveness.
- To create a forum to examine current and future issues in health care and social service delivery.

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