



# SOCIAL WORKERS ARE ESSENTIAL

## THEME & RATIONALE FOR SOCIAL WORK MONTH — MARCH 2021

### **Social workers are essential to community well-being.**

As practitioners, social workers are trained to help people address personal and systemic barriers to optimal living. They are employed to effect positive change with individuals, families, groups and entire communities.

As a profession, social workers frequently use their collective power to pass laws and establish policies that give more people access to community services and benefits, improving the quality of life for everyone.

Social work is the only helping profession which requires social justice advocacy as part of its professional code of ethics, and is therefore a large workforce mandated to advance the rights of the most vulnerable in society.

For more than 120 years, the social work profession in the United States has helped bend the arc of justice, making our nation a more equitable and inclusive place.

### **ABOUT SOCIAL WORKERS**

There are more than 700,000 professional social workers employed in the United States, and more than three million worldwide. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics continues to identify social work as one of the fastest growing professions in the United

States. Other government sources report there are more clinically trained social workers providing mental health and behavioral health services than any other professional discipline in the nation.

The nation needs more social workers as it continues to deal with entrenched problems that have stressed our society, including systemic racism and the Coronavirus pandemic. The United States is also experiencing one of its worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. Social workers are on the front lines, helping people overcome these crises.

In fact, social workers are everywhere people need help navigating tough life challenges. They contribute to interdisciplinary care teams in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, nonprofits, corporations, the military—and in local, state, and federal government. Many social work professionals also own private consultation practices.

### **Throughout U.S. history, social workers have:**

- » Fought for civil and voting rights for people of color
- » Protested American intervention in wars
- » Achieved the minimum wage and safer workplaces for poor people
- » Expanded reproductive and employment rights for American women
- » Supported marriage and employment protections for LGBT people
- » Advocated for immigrants seeking asylum

- » Pushed for sensible gun laws and anti-violence initiatives
- » Raised awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment
- » Fought for client privacy and mental health services

### **ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND:**

During the COVID-19 public health emergency and in response to growing racial unrest, social workers gained national visibility as a crisis-ready workforce trained to help people find resources and de-escalate community conflict.

Hospital social workers such as Rosanelly Garcia at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago scrambled to help patients suffering from coronavirus infections get the best possible care, stay in contact with their families, and access necessary services for recovery after being released from the hospital. And when patients died, Garcia was there, comforting survivors and helping them manage their grief.

Other social workers helped isolated older adults create life-enhancing social connections; ensured homebound schoolchildren got meals and other resources needed to learn; and found emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness. Many quickly pivoted to offering virtual therapy to accommodate more clients seeking mental health support. Social workers also pressed local, state and the federal governments to help already struggling families survive during the pandemic's economic downturn.

In addition, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and social work organizations have pledged to work to end systemic racism within the social work profession and across key social institutions, such as law enforcement.

### **CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES**

- » **Media Training Program.** Social workers and other experts will offer advice via video on how social workers can use media and the news to show how essential social workers are to our society.
- » **Social Media Campaign**  
NASW will provide social media messaging to help you celebrate the month.
- » **Draft Press Release and Draft Letter to the Editor**  
Use the release and letters to the editor to inform your local media about Social Work Month.
- » **Proclamations**  
The Social Work Month online toolkit will also include a sample proclamation that social workers can send to city, local or state government officials. The proclamation will include information on the contributions of social work and why the social work title is so valued.
- » **Radio Tour** by NASW CEO Angelo McClain or NASW President Mit Joyner
- » **Video Public Service Announcement** that can be used in presentations or shared on social media or websites.
- » **Logos**  
NASW will offer logos the public can use on Social Work Month promotional materials.
- » **Merchandise**  
Social Work Month merchandise will be used to promote the **Social Workers Are Essential** theme. Jim Coleman LTD is our official vendor.

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**For more information on the 2021 Social Work Month “Social Workers Are Essential” Campaign contact NASW Public Relations Manager Greg Wright at [gwright.nasw@socialworkers.org](mailto:gwright.nasw@socialworkers.org).**