



September 2019

## Legislative: Advancing the Profession



**Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533):** This legislation will provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. It is all the more important given proposed payment cuts by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) beginning in CY 2020 (see *Regulation* section, below, for more details). Currently, 12 national organizations have endorsed the legislation. If you have not already done so, please [email your lawmakers](#) now to urge them to cosponsor.

**The Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act (S. 851/H.R. 1309):** This legislation would require organizations that employ healthcare and social service workers to have a workplace violence prevention plan in place. There are currently 213 cosponsors of the House bill and it is pending a full House vote. Please [email your lawmakers](#) now to urge them to cosponsor.

## Legislative: Social Justice

**The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 (VAWA) (H.R. 1585):** The House of Representatives passed [H.R. 1585](#) in April, with significant bipartisan support. Now, it is time for the Senate to take action on a substantially similar bill which maintains vital protections for vulnerable survivors while making essential enhancements to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence created a [tool kit](#) to assist advocates in taking action. Questions can be directed to Rita A. Webb, MS, NASW Senior Policy Associate at [rwebb.nasw@socialworkers.org](mailto:rwebb.nasw@socialworkers.org). Please contact your Senators using the [tool kit](#) to ask them to support VAWA.

### **Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act**

([H.R. 3918](#) /[S. 2113](#)): NASW continues to be deeply concerned about the care and treatment of children who have migrated with or without their families from the Northern Triangle countries in Central America and who are seeking asylum. This legislation would end family separations, strengthen protections for children and families, and provide standards to ensure that government funds are not used to traumatize or harm asylum seekers. Please [contact your lawmakers](#) and encourage them to cosponsor this bill.



**Background Check Expansion Act (S.42):** NASW is working with coalition partners, including Brady, to encourage cosponsors on S. 42, the Background Check Expansion Act. S. 42 establishes new background check requirements for firearm transfers between private parties (i.e., unlicensed individuals). Specifically, it prohibits a firearm transfer between private parties unless a licensed gun dealer, manufacturer, or importer first takes possession of the firearm to conduct a background check. Studies indicate that approximately 25% of all gun sales in the United States may occur without a background check. S. 42 would close the loophole and require background checks for private gun sales across the country. The House approved H.R. 8 in February; it is time for the Senate to take up this legislation. Please contact your Senators to urge them to co-sponsor this urgently needed bill.

## **Judicial**

**Flores Settlement Agreement Successfully Defended:** On September 27, U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee issued a permanent injunction against the entirety of regulations introduced in August by the Trump Administration which would have gutted the Flores Settlement Agreement. This Agreement set limits on the length of time and conditions under which children can be incarcerated in immigration detention. The regulations could have resulted in the imprisonment of migrant children and their families for long periods of time while they are being processed for possible asylum. Among other things, the court held that the Trump Administration "cannot simply ignore the dictates of the consent decree merely because they no longer agree with its approach as a matter of policy." NASW joined an amicus brief filed by Arent Fox LLP in this matter, which was cited by the court in its decision.

## **Regulatory**

**Medicare Proposed Payment Cuts:** CMS has proposed sharp reductions in reimbursement for clinical social workers (CSWs) who are Medicare providers. The proposed cuts are 4% for CY 2020, or 7% for CY 2021. NASW has submitted [comments](#) to CMS on the proposed rule and

expressed its strong opposition to the cuts. The public comment period concluded September 27. NASW will continue to work to address this regulatory challenge.

**Federal Advisory Councils on Family Caregiving Launched:** The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has announced appointments to two new advisory councils addressing family caregiving. One council was established by the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (P.L. 115-119), which NASW supported, and includes social worker James Murtha of Michigan. The other council focuses on grandparents raising grandchildren and includes social worker Sarah Hedden of New York. The work of each council began in late August, and some meetings will be live streamed. Visit the [ACL Web site](#) for additional information.



**Health Care Rights Law (Section 1557) Proposed Rule:** NASW submitted [comments](#) on this [proposed rule](#) by the Department of Health and Human Services which undermines ACA non-discrimination protections based on transgender status and sex stereotyping and would severely threaten LGBT patients' access to all forms of health care. The proposed rule would create confusion among patients and providers about their rights and obligations, encourage hospitals to deny care to LGBT people, and enable insurance companies to deny transgender people coverage for health care services that they cover for non-transgender people.

## Executive

**PREVENTS Veteran Suicide Prevention Initiative:** NASW has been invited to participate in the PREVENTS initiative to address the crisis of veteran's suicide. The initiative was launched in March by executive order of the President and will conclude next March 2020 when the effort task force delivers a "national public health roadmap" to the President articulating a plan for preventing/eliminating veteran suicide. The task force also will deliver by next March a legislative proposal outlining grants to local communities to increase coordination and integration of services and supports to promote veteran well-being. This includes elements such as housing and other social determinants. Addressing the role of substance use disorders in suicide will also be a focus. Over the coming months, we look forward to providing the social work perspective for the roadmap and taking other actions to support this initiative.

## Collaboration

**National Academies Study on Social Needs in Health Care Released:** The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine on September 25 released [Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Health Care: Moving Upstream to Improve the Nation's Health](#). NASW issued a [press release](#) about the report. The goal of this effort is to ensure that the nation's health care system attends to the many non-medical factors that are important in promoting healthy people and

populations. These factors, or social determinants of health, include employment, education, and access to health services, among others. Noting that social workers are “specialists” in social care, the study recommends, among other things, enlarged scopes of practice and adequate reimbursement for these social care workers. NASW played a key role in conceptualizing and funding the study. NASW member Robyn Golden, LCSW, Associate Vice President, Population Health and Aging, Rush University Medical Center, served on the interprofessional committee of national experts that conducted this consensus study.

**Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF):** The American Bar Association (ABA) was successful in its lawsuit against the Department of Education to restore loan payment credits under PSLF to ABA and other public interest organization employees. Individuals who were previously denied PSLF may want to [reapply for the program](#).



**Recording from Elder Justice Summit Available:** The captioned recording of the Fifth Global Summit on Elder Abuse, held on June 11, is now available. NASW was a partner in the event, which was convened by the National Adult Protective Services Association, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. Access the recording to learn about recent progress in preventing and addressing elder financial exploitation and how technology can help prevent elder abuse.

## NASW Resources

**NASW Webinar Climate, Health, & Social Work Practice:** On Wednesday, October 2 from 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM (Eastern Time), The Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health and the National Association of Social Workers will present this webinar about the health effects of climate change as they relate to social work practice. The presentation will address the physical and mental health consequences of climate change, as well as the impact of extreme weather events on communities, with a particular focus on disaster response in Puerto Rico.

- [Webinar \(without CEs\)](#)
- [Webinar with 1 Social Work CE \(pending approval\)](#)

**Get Involved!** We encourage you to join [NASW's Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on legislative, regulatory and other activity at the Federal level. We also have a variety of valuable [resources](#) on our web page to guide members in connecting with their lawmakers.

*For questions about the Washington Update or to suggest content that you would like us to consider for inclusion in a future communication, please contact Dina Kastner, Senior Field Organizer, at [dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org](mailto:dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org).*

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers representing the interests of over 700,000 social workers nationwide. We promote, develop and protect the practice of social work and social workers

and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy.  
Become a member of NASW.



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