



## 2017 SOCIAL WORK MONTH THEME & RATIONALE

### **Social workers stand up for millions of people each day.**

They stand up by comforting people who are experiencing devastating illnesses and mental health crises, ensuring they get the best care while on the road to recovery. They stand up and support our brave military personnel, veterans and their families. They work in communities and with national, state and local government to provide services and pass legislation to stand with and help the most vulnerable.

Child, family and school social workers stand up by protecting children who have been abused or neglected, helping children find new families through adoption, and ensuring young people reach their full academic and personal potential.

### **SOCIAL WORK PORTRAYALS ARE IMPROVING BUT MORE WORK MUST BE DONE**

Thanks to public education campaigns over the past decade from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and other organizations, more people recognize the way social workers stand up for others.

This is reflected in the news and on television shows and in film. The *Atlantic Magazine* and *U.S. News and World Report* recently did profiles of social workers and the benefits of the social work profession. And director and screenwriter Oren Moverman used

advice from social workers when he depicted a kind but firm social worker who helps people who are homeless in the powerful 2015 film *Time Out of Mind*.

Yet many people still misunderstand exactly what a social worker is and the positive contributions social workers make in our society. For instance, NASW in 2016 asked Harvard Medical School's Health Publications to correct a definition of social workers that seriously downplayed the role social workers play in providing mental health services in our nation.

Some reporters continue to write negative articles about a "social worker" making a mistake. However, on closer examination, the identified person in the story is often not a social worker by education, training or licensure.

Other reporters will casually describe a local volunteer or community activist as a social worker. Although this is flattering, it ignores the fact that social workers obtain extensive education, training and credentialing so they can proudly carry the social work title.

And some states have licensing laws that do not include title protection for social workers. In these states anyone can self-identify as a social worker – they just can't call themselves licensed social workers. It is important consumers know there is a difference.

## **SOCIAL WORKERS STAND UP! CAMPAIGN WILL HIGHLIGHT VALUE OF PROFESSION**

Stressing the need for consumers to recognize and use the services of social workers is important.

Social workers are trained to look at situations in a holistic way. They help people increase their ability to solve problems, to cope with stressors and to get needed resources. Social workers bring individuals together with other people and their communities to find solutions for problems that continue to plague our society, including hunger, lack of affordable housing, and equal rights for all. And social workers make organizations responsible to people through sound social policy.

NASW will launch the “**Social Workers Stand Up!**” campaign during Social Work Month 2017 in March to educate the public about contributions of social workers and why the professional title of social worker is so important.

The aim of this campaign is to improve the image and respect of the social work profession by educating the public, media and elected officials about social work.

We want to give social workers and their allies guidance and tools they can use to address unfair representations of social workers in the media. We will also provide information people can use to enact laws and legislation that advance the social work profession.

### **2017 CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **The “Social Workers Stand Up!” campaign will include:**

» **Social Work Month Online Toolkit:** This toolkit will include advice to social workers and their allies on how to respond to unfair depictions of social workers in the media, including TV shows, films and news articles. Social workers will also be given advice on smaller, personal things they can do to promote the

profession, such as including social worker on their business cards or volunteering to talk at schools.

» **Media Campaign Tour:** NASW will launch a national media campaign tour during Social Work Month that will include radio and TV interviews and newspaper columns. The tour will be used to inform the public about the importance of social work and why the title of social work should be respected.

» **Promotional Fundraising Campaign:** NASW will launch a fundraising tool so it can continue its successful public education campaign. The funds will be used for video public service announcements on the value that social workers bring to society and what makes social work distinct from other professions.

» **Advocacy:** Social workers and their allies will be given information on state efforts to pass or improve social work title protection laws and regulations and what they can do to get involved. This database will be included in the Social Work Month Online Toolkit. The toolkit will also list legislative victories that will be examples to others.

» **Media Award Contest:** NASW will once again award TV shows, films, news and magazine articles and other media that accurately portray the social work profession.

» **Merchandise:** Social Work Month merchandise will be used to promote the “**Social Workers Stand Up!**” campaign. Jim Coleman LTD is our official vendor.

» **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.

**For more information on the 2017 Social Work Month “Social Workers Stand Up!” Campaign contact NASW Public Relations Manager Greg Wright at [gwright.nasw@socialworkers.org](mailto:gwright.nasw@socialworkers.org).**