

A MANDATE FOR ACTION:



RECRUITMENT. RETENTION. RESEARCH. REINVESTMENT.

The Issue

The United States is experiencing unprecedented human, social service, and health care requirements. These requirements now transcend social and economic strata, affect the old and the young, and place tremendous burdens on those in the middle. These trends are taking place at a time when equally complex challenges and demands are being placed on our nation's social workers.

Professional social workers ensure full participation of all members of society by working with millions of individuals and families in every community to combat a range of social problems that limit our nation's health and potential.

Unfortunately, current social work professional shortages, impending retirements, lack of incentives to attract and retain social workers, and insufficient data on the efficacy of social service strategies all threaten the very fabric that distinguishes our nation from all others and our collective efforts related to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The Social Work Reinvestment Initiative is a collaborative effort comprised of leading social work organizations and other stakeholders committed to securing federal and state investments related to recruitment, training, retention, and research that strengthens the profession and the communities it serves.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that employment of social workers is expected to increase faster than average (18 to 26 percent) for all occupations through 2014.

What is at risk?

Nearly one million children are victims of child abuse and neglect every year. Child welfare social workers give these children hope and support for a safer tomorrow.

Thousands of returning soldiers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other issues. Social workers help ease their transitions back into productive family and community life.

The school dropout rate in some communities tops 50%. School social workers help struggling students and their families overcome a range of problems that limit their future success.

More than 50 million people provide care for a chronically ill, disabled or aging family member every year. Social workers help these families manage their roles, responsibilities and resources.

One in four adults has experienced a diagnosable mental disorder. Social workers provide the majority of mental health counseling services in the United States—and are often the only providers in rural areas.

Policymakers and other leaders require data to understand and fund what works best in social service programs. Social work researchers provide essential frontline analysis of critical social issues.

What Can We Do To Make a Difference?

Work with Congress and the White House to ensure the enactment of the *Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act* and related measures that promote recruitment, retention, research and reinvestment in the profession of social work.

SOCIAL WORK REINVESTMENT FACTS



RECRUITMENT

Workforce Challenges

- Prospective social work students often choose other professions with higher salaries.
- Social workers start their careers later; many are second career professionals.
- Most baby boomer social workers will retire in the next 10-12 years.
- Not enough seasoned social workers choose gerontology practice.
- High student debt and low salaries make public service careers less desirable.
- Social work faculty vacancies are on the rise.
- Only 250 social work PhDs graduate every year.

Legislative Solutions

- Social Work Reinvestment Act 2008
- S.64 Strengthen Social Work Training Act
- Title IV-E Training and Programs for Child Welfare Workforce Improvement
- National and State Loan Forgiveness Legislation

RETENTION

Workforce Challenges

- Practice barriers are increasing while workforce supports are decreasing.
- Unaddressed workplace safety issues are common. Social workers have been killed.
- Non-competitive salaries create an 11% pay disparity with comparable positions.
- Administrative burdens impede social service delivery in multiple sectors.
- Reimbursements are limited in high demand, high need practice areas.
- Fewer social service managers hold social work degrees.

Legislative Solutions

- Social Work Reinvestment Act 2008
- S. 1212 Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act
- H.R. 2165 Teri Zenner Social Worker Safety Act
- State Social Work Title Protection Legislation
- State Licensing Laws
- State Scope of Practice and Reimbursement Measures
- State Authority to Diagnose and Privileged Communication Legislation

RESEARCH

Workforce Challenges

- NIH currently devotes less than 1% of its funding to social work research.
- Social work employers often fill professional jobs with untrained workers in high need practice areas.
- National and local standards for social service delivery are inconsistent.
- Public funds for prevention programs have been cut while rehabilitation and correctional costs continue to soar.

Legislative Solutions

- Social Work Reinvestment Act 2008
- S. 106 National Center for Social Work Research Act

REINVESTMENT

The *Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act* is an effort to review the current workforce shortage challenges, determine how those challenges affect the many communities that social workers serve, and better understand the overwhelming need for reinvestment in the profession of social work. A Social Work Reinvestment Commission of influential thought leaders will commence to develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of America's social workers to serve their clients with expertise and care. Grants will also be awarded to demonstrate need in the areas of workforce improvement, research, education, training, and community based programs of excellence. Finally, this legislation urges the President to recognize March as Social Work Awareness Month.

"Maximizing human potential across the lifespan."