

SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

Their role in addressing violence against
children and other child protection concerns

Key findings and recommendations of our technical note

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TECHNICAL NOTE

SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS IN SCHOOLS: THEIR ROLE IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND OTHER CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS



Download the technical note at:
www.socialserviceworkforce.org

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE?

GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE DEFINITION

The social service workforce is an inclusive concept referring to a broad range of

governmental and **nongovernmental**

professionals and **paraprofessionals**

who work with **children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities** to ensure healthy development and well-being.

Global Social Service Workforce Alliance.
2019. SSW Definition.



They provide **preventive, responsive and promotive** services, and operate at **macro, mezzo and micro** levels.

The range of titles and roles :

- social workers,
- social educators,
- social pedagogues,
- child and youth care workers,
- community development workers
- community liaison officers
- community workers,
- social welfare officers,
- social/cultural animators,
- case managers
- para / auxiliary social workers

1. SCHOOLS ARE CRITICAL SPACES TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND OTHER CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

- Schools provide opportunity and space to address a wide set of child protection challenges.
- Children spend a lot of time each day in school, so it's where child protection concerns can often be identified and addressed.
- School-based child protection concerns do not occur in isolation from their societal context.
- A 'whole school approach' to child protection, prevents violence and enhances students' overall well-being engagement in school.
- For the most marginalized students, schools can provide crucial support services that they would otherwise struggle to access.



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2. STATES ARE OBLIGATED TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

- Schools have a responsibility to respond to child protection needs.
- International legal norms and standards clearly articulate the indivisibility of children's rights in education and child protection.
- A child's right to protection applies in all settings, including schools.



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3. PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING CHILD PROTECTION IN SCHOOLS ALSO HELPS ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

- Child protection principles and approaches are consistent with the education goals in the SDGs
- Child protection in schools reduces barriers to learning, and meeting students' basic physical and psychosocial needs, leading to better learning outcomes & overall well-being.



4. CHILDREN ARE BETTER PROTECTED IN SCHOOLS – WITH CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES, INTEGRATED WITH WIDER CP SYSTEMS

- Ministries of education should budget and plan for child protection, and child participation, in education strategies.
- Collaborative, team-based approaches with shared goals among teachers, school administrators, social service workers and community members are critical to achieve safe and positive learning environments, and for effective coordination of services and interventions.



5. TRAINED AND SUPPORTED SCHOOL STAFF CAN ADDRESS CP ISSUES, BUT WITH LIMITED TIME AND CAPACITY.

- In many countries, teachers and school administrators lack the skills, time, support and mandate to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse or violence, to record concerns, to make referrals or work with external agencies.
- SSW in schools can address CP issues as they arise and connect interventions at school with the wider child protection system and services.
- Education authorities should also recruit, train, support and monitor teachers to ensure successful child protection responses.



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6. THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

- The key role of the social service workforce needs to be recognized by ministries of education.
- Ministries of **education** need to work together with ministries of **social welfare** to ensure the integration of the workforce within education structures.
- They need to be clear on the scope of services that SSW in schools can provide.
- Realistic job descriptions, working conditions, capacity developments, support and supervision are essential for effective social service workforce practice in schools.



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6. INTEGRATION OF SSW INTO SCHOOLS (continued)

- The focus of the SSW in schools will depend on professional training, age of students served, school district size and prevalent child protection concerns.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the SSW will depend on the availability and quality of wider child protection services and the quality of the referral system itself.
- SSW can be school-based, or linked to one or a cluster of schools, with regular visits to each – which model is best, depends on context and resources.



7. SSW PROVIDE PROMOTIVE, PREVENTIVE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES - A MULTI-TIERED CP SYSTEM THAT INCLUDES SCHOOLS

- Such multi-tier approaches to service delivery can effectively address significant needs of student populations.
- A full continuum of services, from creating an environment of preventive support to providing specialized response, is essential to cover all needs.



8. EFFECTIVE CHILD PROTECTION IN SCHOOLS IS UNDERPINNED BY MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND A HOLISTIC APPROACH

- Effective child protection in schools relies on multi-stakeholder engagement built on trusting relationships at all levels.....
- and on holistic approaches with an ecological perspective which sees and engages with the student in the context of their family, school and community.



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9. FOR SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS TO ENGAGE WITH FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES & OTHER AGENCIES, THEY NEED ROBUST REFERRAL & OUTREACH MECHANISMS

- It is essential for schools and the services within wider child protection systems to understand and cooperate with each other, to foster safe and successful learning environments.
- Social service workers can play a critical job facilitating effective coordination of services and interventions, including referrals and follow-up.
- Schools should engage families and communities as meaningful partners.



10. ADVOCATE FOR THE EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE SSW IN SCHOOLS

- Most countries lack programmes involving SSW in schools.
- There is a need to advocate for the social service workforce to be built into the planning and resourcing of schools – including through training, and defining the standards and mandates for their work in schools, supported by professional associations.
- Capacity building for teachers, school administrators and social service workers should cover all their roles in child protection including identification, referrals, coordination, monitoring and response.



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- Download our new technical brief on SSW in schools, and watch out for our forthcoming paper on SSW in health facilities, at <https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/alliance-developed-resources>
- If you have examples to share of effective deployment of social service workers in schools or health facilities please contact us at contact@socialserviceworkforce.org

or note this when filling out [the survey](#) that will appear when you close the webinar
- A recording of this webinar will be available on the Alliance website

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