



NCSSW

National Certified School Social Worker

School Social Work Association of America

National Certified School Social Worker™

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) is a non-profit, professional membership organization that offers National Certification for School Social Workers™ (NCSSW™). National certification does not replace entry-level certification required by most state departments of education to enter the field. Instead, it is advanced certification that indicates that a school social worker has mastered competencies described in the National School Social Work Practice Model.

The SSWAA School Social Work Practice Model describes the skills and services needed for the delivery of high-quality social work services in schools. The model is designed to promote consistency, to guide graduate education, credentialing, and professional practice, as well as the evaluation of services. The model further empowers school social workers with a coherent framework to guide advocacy efforts and service delivery decisions. Adherence to the model is essential to qualify for national certification.

National Certified School Social Worker™ (NCSSW™) is awarded through SSWAA to identify school social work professionals who have voluntarily sought and obtained an advanced certification that demonstrates mastery of competencies of the SSWAA National School Social Work Practice Model.



National Certified School Social Worker™ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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1 National Certified School Social Worker™

1. ***How will candidates benefit from national certification?*** National Certification should be recognized as the common standard for advanced school social work service provision. While each state has its own licensure tests and standards, the SSWAA National Certification will demonstrate an advanced level of understanding and expertise in School Social Work, equivalent to the National Board Certification for Teachers, School Counselors, and School Psychologists.
2. ***How is National Certified School Social Worker™ different from my state social work license or state school social work license/certification?*** National Certified School Social Worker™ is an advanced certification that is both post-MSW and requires four (4) years of experience in the field as a school social worker or school social work Educator. This is not an entry level certification such as the one required in the candidate's state for social work practice or to become a school social worker.
3. ***How is National Certified School Social Worker™ different from NASW's Certified School Social Work Specialist (C-SSWS)?*** The C-SSWS was developed to fill the gap for states whose state Department of Education does not offer licensure or certification for school social workers. It was created as an entry-level certification requiring two years of supervised experience as a school social worker. SSWAA's National Certified School Social Worker™ is an advanced certification for school social workers with four years post-Masters experience in the field.
4. ***Why get certified?*** School social workers have an opportunity to help shape the future of the field. Advanced certification for school social workers will make us more visible, viable and valued in an education setting where national advanced certification is recognized and rewarded. You have the opportunity to be the first in your district, or in your state, to demonstrate your advanced skills by earning a nationally recognized certificate and to use that certification to bring the profession of school social work to the level of other national certification programs, in contract negotiations and equitable compensation.



2 Application Process

5. **How much does SSWAA National Certification cost?** \$250 is the cost to become an NCSSW Candidate. With your NCSSW Candidacy you will have a one (1) year timeframe to complete all competencies required for certification.
6. **Do I have to be a member of SSWAA?** Yes, to become a candidate for national certification you need to be a member at the full or premiere level. For SSWAA membership prices and information go to <https://www.sswaa.org/sswaa-membership> . To maintain your national certification, you will need to maintain your membership each year.
7. **What are the requirements for application to be a candidate for national certification?**
Candidates must have:
 1. Have an MSW from a CSWE accredited social work program.
 2. At least 4 years post-MSW experience as a School Social Worker or SSW educator in higher education
 3. Current active licensure or certification required in the state for a school social work position. Licensure as a Master's Level Social Worker will be considered in lieu of DOE licensure in state's in which there is no requirement for school social workers. This licensure will be considered in conjunction with the years of experience requirement.
 4. Active SSWAA membership at the Full or Premiere level
8. **How do candidates apply for national certification?** Go to <https://www.sswaa.org/national-certification> scroll down the page and click on "Apply Register Today".
 1. **Fill out the registration form** and log in as necessary (Please note you must have an active membership to apply. If you are not a member join SSWAA first as a Full or Premiere member then return to this page). Select "pay by invoice" and submit.
 - i. **What do I need for the Application:**
 - **Employer Verification** (note: sample employment verification form is available)
 - **Current Resume**
 - **Copy of your licenses/certifications**
 - **Brief Bio (400 characters or less)**
 - **Professional headshot**
 - **Cover letter**
 - ii. **Watch for a confirmation email** which will contain a link to the application form.
 - iii. Once your application has been reviewed and approved you will receive an email regarding approval and will be asked to pay the registration fee via invoice (Please refer to the notice below regarding NCSSW Cohorts Timeline).
 - iv. **NOTICE REGARDING NCSSW COURSE COHORTS** ****Effective February 8, 2024, NCSSW has transitioned to a Cohort model. While you may register for NCSSW at any time during the year, we kindly request that payment be made only after receiving approval and an emailed payment invoice (Please refer to NCSSW Cohorts Timeline).**



<i>NCSSW Cohorts Timeline (Effective Feb 8, 2024)</i>		
Applications Accepted	Applications Approval Date	Cohort Start Date
January 1 - March 31	April 1	April 1
April 1 – May 31	June 1	June 1
June 1 – September 30	October 1	October 1
October 1 – December 31	January 1	January 1

3 National Certification Process

9. ***How long do I have to complete the national certification portfolio process?*** You have one year upon approval in the course to complete the process. If you have any questions about your start date, email pdlearning@sswaa.org to confirm that date.
10. ***How many competency statements with supporting artifacts do I need to submit?*** Nine competencies are required with supportive artifacts, to match the nine competencies associated with the [National School Social Work Practice Model](#)
11. ***Which version of the National School Social Work Practice Model will I be using for this process?*** The National Model will be updated as needed. Candidates will focus on the model that is in use by SSWAA at the time they become a candidate for national certification.
12. ***How long does it take to complete one competency statement?*** This depends on whether the candidate has already implemented activities that demonstrate skills measured in the performance indicators or if they need to implement them prior to writing the reflection statement and submitting artifacts. This also depends on the time the candidate can commit to identifying artifacts and writing the statement. In general, candidates shared that it takes about 10 hours to write one competency statement.
13. ***Do the nine competencies have to be completed in order?*** No, candidates may submit their reflection and artifacts in any order.
14. ***How soon are competency statements and artifacts rated following submission?*** Reviewers have committed to providing candidates feedback within two weeks of submission.
15. ***Do I need to submit all nine of the competency statements and artifacts before receiving feedback from reviewers?*** No, candidates may submit one reflection statement with artifacts at a time, await feedback, then submit another reflection statement with artifacts and/or submit as many as they want at one time.
16. ***What happens at the one-year point if a candidate does not complete the national certification process?*** Prior to the year’s end, the candidate can submit a request to continue, explaining why they were unable to meet the one-year deadline. The SSWAA Committee will review the request and make a determination as to whether or not to allow an extension. If an extension is approved, the candidate will pay a \$50 fee to continue for another year. If the request is denied,



an appeals process is available. This would require sending a letter to the SSWAA Professional Development Committee who makes a recommendation to the SSWAA Board.

4 National Certification Course

17. ***Will I interact with my colleagues during this course?*** Interaction with NCSSW Candidate peers is optional. There is an opportunity to post on the discussion board to share tips or ask for tips from other candidates. There is also a Facebook page for candidates to interact. Information about the Facebook page is included in an email candidates receive after being accepted to the process.
18. ***What support is available to candidates during the national certification process?*** The raters are available to support you through 1:1 meetings, small group meetings of interested candidates, or in other ways you deem would be helpful in the process. Reach out to PDlearning@sswaa.org for support!

5 National Certification Renewal

19. ***How often does the SSWAA National Certification need to be renewed?*** National School Social Work Certification™ lasts for 3 years and will need to prior to the end of Year 3. Instructions for recertifying are provided at <https://www.sswaa.org/national-certification>.
20. ***What does a National Certified School Social Worker™ need to do to maintain certification?*** A National Certified School Social Worker™ needs to maintain membership in SSWAA at the full or premiere level and maintain a state social work/school social work license or certification. If the state school social work or social work license/certification(s) do not require earning CEUs each year, the NCSSW will need to track the earning of 10 CEUs per year (30 CEUs total) for the recertification process.
21. ***What do I need to do to renew the certification?*** To renew certification, National Certified School Social Workers will need to pay a \$100 renewal fee and submit two (2) competency statements and artifacts to demonstrate mastery of two of the nine competencies in the years since certification.

6 SSWAA and National Certification

22. ***What is SSWAA doing to create value around certification?*** The SSWAA Legislative Committee along with the Standards and Practice committee are developing a toolkit to help both state school social work associations and individual school social workers promote the value of national certification for the profession to their district and state legislators. Watch for the availability of that toolkit.
23. ***What can state associations do to create value around certification?*** While SSWAA is developing a toolkit for state associations, it will be up to the state associations to engage their members in moving forward amendments to state legislation/regulations to recognize SSWAA National certification as equivalent to NASP, ASCA and NBPTS national certification.



24. ***What can I do to create value around certification?*** While SSWAA is developing a toolkit for individual members, it will be up to the individuals to engage their school district in moving forward amendments to policies to recognize SSWAA National certification as equivalent to NASP, ASCA and NBPTS national certifications.

7 How Does National Certification for School Social Workers™ Compare to Other Professions?

	National Certified School Social Worker™ (NCSSW)	Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP)	National Certified School Counselor (NCSC)	National Board-Certified Teacher
Credentialing Body	School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)	National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)	National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
History of Credential	SSWAA is a non-profit, professional membership organization that offers National Certification (NCSSW) specific to School Social Workers. National Certification does not replace entry-level certification require by state departments of education to enter the field. Instead, it is an <i>ADVANCED</i> certification that indicates mastery in competencies described by the National School Social Work Practice Model.	NASP is an independent, for-profit professional organization who created the NCSP for the purpose of credentialing school psychologists who meet rigorous nationally recognized standards of graduate preparation, ethical and professional practice, and continuing professional development.	NBCC is an independent, not-for-profit credentialing body, which was incorporated for the purpose of setting up and monitoring a national certification system, to identify counselors who have voluntarily sought out and obtained certification, and to maintain a registry of all NCSCs.	NBPTS is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nongovernmental organization created to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, and creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards.
“The Why?” Behind Becoming Nationally Certified	NCSSW is centered around a comprehensive portfolio process for <i>ADVANCED</i> school social work practitioners, including the nine (9) competencies associated with the National School Social Work Model. The School Social Work Practice Model describes the evidence-based, rigorous, peer-reviewed, and essential skills and services needed for high-quality social work services in schools. The model	NCSP aims to promote excellence in the field of school psychology by acknowledging school psychologists who meet rigorous nationally recognized standards of graduate preparation, ethical practice, and competency. This certification is focused on advancing graduate practices to prepare and promote best practices in service to children and youth, provides uniform	NCSC is a specialty credential which recognizes counselors who possess a minimum of a master’s degree in counseling with coursework in school counseling and have passed their national application and examination process. NCSCs have a strong commitment to the school counseling profession and to providing high quality services to students, parents, teachers,	NBPTS is a certification for teaching professionals that defines and recognizes highly accomplished practice. Teachers who achieve NBPTS have met high standards through study, evaluation, self-assessment, and peer review. The process of applying for an earning a NBPTS includes a focus on strengthening practice, promoting student success,



	<p>promotes consistency to guide graduate education, credentialing, and professional practice. This model further empowers school social workers with a coherent framework to guide advocacy efforts, continue to enhance the field through professional development focused on service delivery decisions, and provision of ethical practice.</p>	<p>national standards of measure, encourages continuing professional growth and development, and enhances the professional opportunities for credentialing.</p>	<p>and communities. This certification recognizes a counselor as having knowledge on the mental health needs of school children and adolescents, demonstration of an ongoing commitment to high quality services, and advocates for salary increases in school systems across the U.S.</p>	<p>building leadership, helping to expand influence and expertise with regard to curricular decisions and policies, helps advance careers, provides portability, offers higher salary potential, enhances education, and meets most states' definition of "highly qualified teacher" under the NCLB.</p>
<p>Certification Process</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold at least a master's degree in social work (MSW) from a CSWE Accredited college of social work. 2. <i>ADVANCED</i> practice knowledge through a minimum of 4-years post-MSW experiences as a School Social Worker or School Social Work Educator in Higher Education. 3. Current, active licensure/certification in their state with a School Social Work position. 4. Complete the rigorous portfolio process demonstrating mastery in the nine (9) competencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a minimum of 60-graduate semester hours in an organized program of study officially titled "School Psychology". 2. Complete a supervised practicum and a culminating 1,200 clock-hour supervised internship with a minimum of 600 hours in a school setting. 3. Obtain a passing score on the Praxis national School Psych Exam. 4. Meet all coursework requirements for NASP approved/accredited programs. (All other candidates must provide a portfolio documenting knowledge and skills across all domains of professional 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold at least a master's degree in counseling consisting of at least 48-semester hours of graduate-level credit, with specific required coursework across the 9 content areas. 2. Complete a minimum of 100 hours of post-graduate school counseling supervision. 3. Obtain endorsement from a professional colleague who holds a master's degree or higher in a mental health field. 4. Complete 3,000 hours of post-grad counseling work experience over a 2-year period. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold a bachelor's degree. 2. Complete 3-years of full-time teaching/ counseling experience. 3. Possess a valid state teaching or counseling license for the 3-years teaching experience, or have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state (in states that don't require licensure). 4. Complete assessment of all required certificate areas with all 4 components met. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Component 1- Content Knowledge b. Component 2- Differentiation of Instruction



	<p>associated with the National School Social Work Model.</p> <p>5. Showcase <i>ADVANCED</i> practice knowledge through earning “evident” on all competencies to earn a national certification.</p> <p>6. Maintain ongoing, annual continuing education units through professional development.</p>	<p>practice, defined in the NASP Practice Model.)</p>	<p>5. Obtain a passing score on the NCE or NCMHCE exam.</p> <p>6. Several requirements can be waived for graduates from CACREP-accredited programs.</p>	<p>c. Component 3- Teaching Practice and Learning Environment</p> <p>d. Component 4- Effective and Reflective Practitioner</p>
<p>Cost (Initial Certification)</p>	<p>-\$250 for initial certification.</p> <p>-Candidates have one-year to complete the NCSSW process.</p>	<p>-Initial certification fees range from \$110-\$360, depending on membership status, and whether applicant graduated from NASP approved/accredited program.</p> <p>-Additionally requires fee for the examination.</p>	<p>-Application Fees for Certification range from \$250-\$375, depending on credential and examination registration.</p> <p>-Additionally requires fee for the examination.</p>	<p>-\$75 registration initial fees can for each assessment cycle plus \$475 for each of the four components (total \$1,900).</p> <p>-Retake attempts require an additional fee (\$475 per attempt for components).</p>
<p>Renewal Process & Fees</p>	<p>-NCSSW 3-year Renewal fee \$100</p> <p>- Continue to hold membership in the SSWAA and maintenance of state licensure/certification throughout all 3-years.</p> <p>-Maintain annual Continuing Education Units (CEs) for</p>	<p>-NCSP 3-year renewal fee \$99-\$199 (depending on member or non-member).</p> <p>-Engage in activities designed to maintain, expand, and extend professional training and skills.</p>	<p>-Annual maintenance \$30 during each 5-year recertification period.</p> <p>- 125 contact clock hours from 10 approved content areas of continuing education over the 5-year period.</p>	<p>-NBCT achieved prior to 2017 includes validity of certification for 5-year renewal window.</p> <p>-NBCT achieved after 2017 includes validity of 4-year renewal cycle.</p> <p>-Renewal includes submission through</p>



	<p>on-going professional development, minimum of 30 CE's required for 3-year renewal.</p> <p>-Submit 2 competencies with artifacts to professional portfolio to demonstrate mastery of a minimum of 2 of the 9 competencies in the years since initial certification.</p>	<p>- 75 contact hours of continuing professional development (CPD) activities. [10 of the 75 must come from NASP- or APA-approved providers. Must also accrue 3 hours of CPD regarding ethical practice in school psych]</p>		<p>either the Profile of Professional Growth (PPG) or Maintenance of Certification (MOC).</p> <p>-Must hold current valid teaching license in state working, continue to demonstrate Pre-k-12 teaching experience.</p> <p>-Renewal fee is \$1,250 for each attempt.</p>
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8 Research

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