



School Social Work Association of America

National Certified School Social Worker™

The School Social Work Association of America is a non-profit, professional membership organization that offers National Certification for School Social Workers. National certification does not replace entry-level certification into the field offered by most state departments of education. 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 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 for qualification 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 National School Social Work Practice Model.

FAQs

National Certified School Social Worker™

- 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 their 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.
- 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 years of experience in the field. This is not an entry level certification such as the one required in the candidate's state.

- 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.

Application Process

- How much does SSWAA National Certification cost? \$250
- 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>
- What are the requirements for application to be a candidate for national certification? Candidates must have:
 - An MSW
 - At least 4 years post-MSW experience as a School Social Worker or SSW educator in higher education
 - Current active licensure or certification required in the state for a school social work position
 - Active SSWAA membership at the Full or Premiere level
- 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".
 - **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, then return to this page). Select "pay by invoice" and submit.
 - **Watch for a confirmation email** which will contain a link to the application form.
 - **Please fill out the application** for national certification-upload the employer verification, your resume, a copy of your licenses/certifications, and a cover letter (note sample employment verification form is available)

- Once your application has been reviewed and approved you will receive an email regarding approval and will be asked to pay the registration fee.
- If my application is denied, can I appeal the decision? Yes, you may appeal the decision by following the SSWAA appeals process.
- Do I need to have a specific license to apply for national certification? Yes, you must hold a social work or school social work license/certification in your state. National Certification certifies advanced practice knowledge and skills in school social work. A master's degree teaches advanced generalist or clinical practice skills (Bolin, 2014). Post-MSW, two years of supervision and required continuing education continue to advance school social work practice skills and often lead to a more advanced licensure. NCSSW requires an additional two years of practice, post-licensure, and continuing education beyond those two years needed for advanced licensure.

National Certification Process

- How long do I have to complete the national certification portfolio process? You have one year after enrolling in the course to complete the process.
- How many reflection statements with supporting artifacts do I need to submit? Nine to match the nine competencies associated with the [National School Social Work Practice Model](#)
- How long does it take to complete a reflection paper? 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.
- Do the nine competencies have to be completed in order? No, candidates may submit their reflection and artifacts in any order.
- How soon are reflection statements and artifacts rated following submission? Reviewers have committed to providing candidates feedback within one week of submission.
- Do I need to submit all nine of the reflection 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.
- What happens at the one-year point if a school social worker does not complete the course in a year? At the year's end, the candidate can submit a request to continue, explaining why they were unable to meet the one-year deadline. The

SSWA Professional Development 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.

National Certification Course

- Will I interact with my peers during this course? Interaction with 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 drop-in session the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 9:00 pm EST (see course shell for more information), candidates are encouraged to attend to ask questions or share ideas.
- Can I earn CEUs for completing work in the national certification course? SSWAA is currently conducting a pilot to determine the number of CEUs that could be awarded but have not made that determination. We are asking participants to track time invested in the process and will determine the number of CEU's awarded based on that data. For further information, feel free to contact Michelle Alvarez m.alvarez@snhu.edu

National Certification Renewal

- How often does the SSWAA National Certification need to be renewed? National School Social Work Certification lasts for 3 years and will need to be renewed at that time.
- 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.
- 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 a reflection and artifacts to demonstrate mastery of two of the nine competencies in the years since certification.

SSWAA and National Certification

- 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.

- 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.
- 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.

References

1. Bolin, Brien L. (2014). Defining advanced generalist social work practice knowledge, skills, and values. *The Advanced Generalist: Social Work Research journal*, 1(1), p 1-5.
https://soar.wichita.edu/bitstream/handle/10057/10684/AGv1%25281%2529Bolin_2014.pdf?sequence=1#:~:text=The%20advanced%20generalist%20social%20worker%20employs%20their%20knowledge%2C%20skills%2C%20and,social%20environments%20that%20shape%20practice

How Does national certification for School Social Workers Compare to other professionals?

	National Certified School Social Worker™	Nationally Certified School Psychologist	National Certified School Counselor	National Board-Certified Teacher
Credentiaing Body	School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)	National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)	National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)	The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
The History	<p>The School Social Work Association of America is a non-profit, professional membership organization that offers national certification for school social workers. National certification does not replace entry-level certification into the field offered by most state departments of education. Instead, it is advanced certification that indicates that a school social worker has mastered competencies described in the National School Social Work Practice model</p>	<p>The NCSP is a credential awarded through the National School Psychology Certification System of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), which is an independent, not 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.</p>	<p>The NCSC is a credential awarded through the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). The NBCC is an independent, not-for-profit credentialing body, which was incorporated in 1982, whose purpose is to establish and monitor a national certification system, to identify for professionals and the public those counselors who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification, and to maintain a register of those counselors.</p>	<p>The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nongovernmental organization. It was created in 1987, with the purpose of advancing 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 and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts.</p>

<p>Why Behind Becoming Nationally Certified</p>	<p>National certification for school social workers centers around the nine (9) competencies associated with the National School Social Work Model. Certification requires a comprehensive portfolio process. The 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</p>	<p>The NCSP credential 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. Specially, national certification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advances graduate preparation and practice standards to promote best practices in service to children and youth ● Provides uniform national standards to measure professional qualifications ● Encourages continuing professional growth and development ● Enhances professional opportunities for credentialed school psychologists ● Facilitates state certification through reciprocity with states that accept the NCSP 	<p>The National Certified School Counselor (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 who have passed a challenging 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 and communities. Some advantages of this certification include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identification as master’s level counseling practitioners who work in school settings ● Recognition by other mental health professionals as experts on the mental health needs of today’s school children and adolescents ● Demonstration of an ongoing commitment to high quality school counseling services through continuing education ● Salary increases in an increasing number of states and school systems across the country. 	<p>NBPTS Certification is a way for the teaching profession to define and recognize highly accomplished practice. Teachers who achieve National Board Certification have met high standards through study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review. The process of applying for and earning National Board Certification through the NBCT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthens practice. ● Helps students succeed. ● Builds leadership skills. ● Helps expand influence and expertise with regard to curricular decisions and policies. ● Helps advance careers. ● Provides portability. ● Offers higher salary potential. <p>Enhances education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meets most states' definition of "highly qualified teacher" under NCLB.

	for qualification for national certification.			
Certification Process	<p>Candidates enroll in a course to complete the portfolio process demonstrating their mastery of the 9 competencies in the National School Social Work Model. The portfolio is reviewed by experts in the field and detailed feedback is provided. Candidates must earn “evident” on all competencies to earn national certification. Candidates have 1 year after enrolling in the course to complete the process.</p>	<p>To qualify, candidates must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours (i.e., specialist-level) in an organized program of study officially titled “School Psychology”. 2. Complete a supervised practica 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 Psychologist Examination administered by the Educational Testing Service. Graduates of NASP approved/accredited programs have met all coursework requirements for 	<p>To qualify, candidates must complete the following: Education: Master’s degree in counseling consisting of at least 48 semester hours of graduate-level credit, with specific required coursework across 9 content areas Supervision: at least 100 hours of post-graduate school counseling supervision. Professional Endorsement: obtain endorsement from a professional colleague who holds a master’s degree or higher in a mental health field Work Experience: 3,000 hours of post-graduate counseling work experience over a two-year period. Examination: passing score on the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) Several requirements are waived for graduates from CACREP-accredited programs.</p>	<p>To qualify, candidates must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold a bachelor’s degree. ● Have completed three full years of teaching/counseling experience. ● Possess a valid state teaching or counseling license for that period of time, or, if teaching where a license is not required, have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state. In all 25 certificate areas, candidates are required to complete an assessment comprising four components. Component 1 - Content Knowledge Component 2 - Differentiation in

		<p>the NCSP. All other applicants must provide a portfolio documenting knowledge and skills across all domains of professional practice, defined in the NASP Practice Model.</p>		<p>Instruction Component 3 - Teaching Practice and Learning Environment Component 4 - Effective and Reflective Practitioner</p>
Cost	<p>The cost is \$250 for the initial certification. Candidates have one year to complete the process.</p>	<p>Initial certification fees range depending on membership status and whether the applicant graduated from a NASP approved or accredited program. NASP-approved/accredited program graduate fees for initial certification are \$60 (student, 1st year, leave of absence), \$85 (2nd year in practice), \$110 (full member); \$210 (nonmember). Fees for graduates from non-approved programs are \$160, \$210, \$260, and \$360 respectively for the categories listed above. There is also an examination fee payable to ETS.</p>	<p>Application fee of \$295. The NCSC application and examination fee may vary depending upon postmark date and exam status. Please check the website for the most up to date information. There is also an Examination fee.</p>	<p>\$75 registration fee for each assessment cycle, and \$475 for each of the four component (total \$1900) Retake attempts require an additional fee (\$475 per attempt for components 2-3) Component 1 retake: \$125 per exercise and/or the Selected Response section</p>

<p>Renewal Process</p>	<p>To renew certification, National Certified School Social Workers will need to pay a \$100 renewal fee and submit a reflection and artifacts to demonstrate mastery of two of the nine competencies in the years since certification.</p>	<p>NCSPs must engage in activities designed to maintain, expand, and extend their professional training and skills. Specifically, each NCSP must be renewed every three years with 75 contact hours of continuing professional development (CPD) activities. 10 of the 75 CPD hours must come from NASP- or APA-approved providers. NCSPs must also accrue 3 hours of CPD regarding ethical practice and/or the legal regulation of school psychology. The renewal fees are \$99 for NASP Members, or \$199 for nonmembers.</p>	<p>Nationally Certified School Counselors are required to provide documentation of completion of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual maintenance of \$30.00 during each 5- year certification period 2. 125 contact clock hours from the 10 approved content areas of continuing education over the five-year period. 	<p>NBCT achieved before 2017 is valid for a period of 10 years. Certifications after 2017 are valid for a period of 5 years. The National Board has revised its policy from renewal to Maintenance of Certification (MOC). Renewal applicants must currently hold a valid teaching license in the state in which they are working and must demonstrate their Pre-k–12 teaching experience. Renewal submission is called the Profile of Professional Growth (PPG). This can begin as early as your first year of certification and consists of a single submission composed of three interrelated components and a reflection. The total fee for certificate renewal is \$1,250.00 for each attempt.</p>
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