



School Social Work Association of America
Resolution Statement

PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS AND SCHOOL

School Social Workers and other school service providers have training and experience critical to the identification and ongoing treatment of students with diagnosable mental health concerns. These students often struggle in the academic environment and experience many barriers to learning. Their parents often seek assistance from trained school personnel to help sort through these complicated and confounding concerns. School Social Workers are an important component of student study teams in schools, and assist parents and educators in developing interventions that may make further evaluation unnecessary. However, when accommodations and interventions do not result in alleviation of academic, behavioral, or social concerns, additional evaluation is not only warranted but imperative to helping meet the needs of the student.

SSWAA is concerned that certain policy makers and legislators unintentionally accept as fact inaccurate perceptions regarding students who may benefit from evaluation and treatment with appropriate medication. These inaccurate perceptions have fostered a belief that there is widespread exclusion of students from school if parents refuse treatment with medication. While in isolated cases parents may have been coerced into agreeing to medicate their children, there are no hard data to support that this is a normal practice in the vast majority of schools across the nation. SSWAA believes that the Child Medication Safety Act, HR 1170 (2003), will have a chilling effect on School Social Workers' ability to assist parents in accessing appropriate treatment and services for their children. This and other significant unintended consequences may prove to be detrimental in meeting the diverse mental health needs of students and families.

School Social Workers provide critical support to students and families concerned with their children's struggles in and, far too often, out of school. School Social Workers assist families in deciding to pursue and secure the evaluation and treatment of students who may require additional mental health services. Untreated mental health concerns have resulted in: school failure, retention, drop out, criminal activity, violent behavior and suicide. Medications, when used and monitored appropriately, can be a critical element in the treatment of mental health disorders.

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Approved by the SSWAA Board of Directors on July 20, 2003
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