



School Social Work Association of America Position Paper

Supporting Students, Families, and the Educational Community during the Trial of Former Police Officer Derek Chauvin

April 2021

The eyes of the world are once again focused on Minnesota as the trial begins for the former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin charged in the death of George Floyd. As the first of multiple trials get under way, there will be extensive media coverage and events along the way that may increase the stress and anxiety experienced by students, educators and broader communities. It is important to recognize the additional stressors that come with these trials. Some of these stressors can be related to: jury selection, potential narratives of the trial proceedings questioning the character of law enforcement and/or George Floyd, jury deliberation time contemplating the case, amplification or silencing of Black Lives Matter and other community activist groups, the jury's determination, and division regarding the outcome of the trials.

SSWAA offers these additional considerations, mapped to our national practice model, for school social workers seeking to create safe and inclusive spaces for students, staff, and school communities over the coming weeks.

Provide evidence-based education, behavior and mental health services

- Understand the intersection of [Race and Trauma in the Classroom](#).
- Advocate for and provide [Clinical School Social Work: Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Students](#).
 - [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools \(CBITS\) & Bounce Back](#)
 - [Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress \(SPARCS\)](#)
 - [Trauma Focused Coping in Schools \(TFC\)](#)

Promote a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching excellence

- Evaluate your readiness to engage and support your students and school communities.
 - [Mentally Preparing for the Derek Chauvin Trial](#)
 - [Personal Self-Assessment of Anti-Bias Behavior](#)
 - [Unconscious Bias: An Educator's Self-Assessment](#)
- Prioritize self-reflection and self-care; as school social workers we must lead by example.
 - [Developing Your Self-Care Plan](#)

- Cultivate safe and supportive spaces for students.
 - [Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism, & Other Difficult Topics with Students](#)
 - [Talking to Young Children About Racism](#)
 - [How to Talk to Kids About Race](#)
 - [Making Space](#)
- Review SSWAA's Racial Equity and Social Justice Resources for Videos, Podcasts, Curriculum, Books and Articles.
 - [Racial Equity and Social Justice Resources](#)

Maximize access to school-based and community-based resources

- Understand that the impact of the trial's proceedings and outcome may impact individuals differently.
- Be responsive to the needs of your students, staff, and school community.
 - Utilize resource and referral practices to ensure students with additional stressors or needs receive the support they need.
 - Ensure communication of internal resources and supports for staff, such as the employee assistance program available in the school district, are advertised and made available.
 - Connect with your community partners to determine overlapping interest and service capacity that can be leveraged.

Traumatic events, whether in the school, community or covered in the media, can have a negative impact on the emotional well-being of our students, our staff, and ourselves. As coverage of the trial begins, we hope reviewing this information and regrounding your work within the national school social work practice model will support you in our most important task, focusing on our students and being responsive to their needs. Our equity journey is ongoing, and we must be advocates for courage, humility and grace for our students, colleagues and ourselves.

Approved by the Board of Directors, April 3, 2021

Suggested Citation:

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