



## School Social Work Association of America

### SSWAA COVID-19 FAQ Qualifiers

These are unprecedented times for all of us: for our schools, for our communities, for the families we serve. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is a follow-up from our SSWAA Webinar, “COVID-19 Health Crisis: Getting Through This Together, School Social Work in a Changing Landscape” where we will strive to answer the major questions that the COVID-19 crisis are posing to us as we attempt get our bearings and deliver effective and ethical school social work (SSW) services in this new time.

A few starting points, some of them disclaimers and qualifiers before we start the FAQ proper:

1. ***The suggested advice and answers we are providing here are just that, suggestions.*** We are not lawyers here at SSWAA, and we don’t work in your district and know the specific contextual variables that might impact how your district decides to respond to this crisis. While we are seeing some promising practices and strategies emerge, these are meant to be suggestions for you to consider and bring to your district, not mandates.
2. ***The lack of clarity is not a reason to do nothing or to wait for districts and states to provide us guidance.*** School social workers are dedicated and skilled professionals, and from what we’re hearing, at least some of you are being encouraged/told to “stand down” and not provide any services or outreach to your school clients and their families. We understand that districts are still figuring out what their expectations and responses are going to be, and often this is being balanced with other stakeholder demands (e.g. union work rules, parent expectations, SpEd and Medicaid mandates), but in our view it is our ethical obligation to advocate for services and supports to be provided to our schools in this challenging time, and we will try in this FAQ to provide you some of the ideas and tools we’re finding to help you push your districts and states to do right by kids who are not in school right now due to COVID-19. This will not be easy (has our work with our schools ever been, really?) but we are here to help you navigate these challenges and potential barriers as we ALL strive to provide the best possible service to our schools now.
3. ***We don’t know where this will all be in a month (maybe even in a week), and that matters, too.*** The need for us to be conscious of how many aspects of this crisis are still evolving is also on our minds as we write this. Getting to know examples of telehealth protocols and understanding how different apps and online tools are considered to be compliant with federal laws is essential, but it’s also essential that we continue to connect with each other, first with our district and state leaders and local SSW colleagues, and also with our state organizations and fellow SSWAA members. We are providing you spaces to do this via webinars we have done and will be scheduling, as well as the ongoing social platform activity going on at SSWNetwork, where SSWAA

and SSWNetwork are hosting a group dedicated to sharing what people are doing to support their schools.

**As you read through the FAQ that follows, we suggest you also apply a 4-part process to each of the questions as you go about your own planning and preparations to deliver services in this time:**

1. **Check-in with yourself:** practice the self-care necessary to put your professional SSW role on and do the work in this challenging time. We have to do all that we can to support our schools and colleagues, but we are also human and this crisis is impacting all of us in our own lives as well, and we will only be effective to the extent that we're taking care of ourselves as we move through this;
2. **Develop strong and consistent communication** with the relevant school, district, and state leaders with your SSW in-district colleagues so that you're operating with the most up-to-date guidance on how they're advising you to provide SSW services in this time;
3. **Use guidance from SSWAA, federal, and state sources to be an advocate for your students and schools.** In service of being advocates for our students, schools, and our profession, consult and integrate the best available guidance from the federal government (DOE, CDC, Office of SpEd, etc.), state resources, and SSWAA documents to educate (and if necessary, push) your district to do right by our kids and our role as SSW.
4. **Align your plans with our Social Work Code of Ethics.** With the up-to-date guidance you receive from your states and districts (assuming you get some, which is still an assumption based on what we're hearing) run that guidance up against our SW Code of Ethics to see how well the guidance does and doesn't align with our COE, and proceed to consider possible advocacy responses to school, district, and state leaders if you see things in the directives that seem to be problematic. (We attach the NASW COE at the end of this FAQ in the Appendix Section.)

**Most of all, we ask you to be kind to yourself and to remember that your schools have never needed what you provide them more than now, and we stand ready to provide support and community as we all figure out how to come out of this time stronger and more connected.**

**Recommended citation:**

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