

## 2011 Advocacy Survey Report

### Highlights

- Fifty-four percent of respondents rated *Compensation* as the most important professional issue. It has been identified as the top professional issue for five consecutive years.
- Respondents expressed strong support for increasing available *Pathways for Obtaining the LCSW*.
- *Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse* issues were ranked as the top social justice issues for the fifth consecutive year.
- Respondents expressed strong support for *Mandatory Continuing Education* for social work licensure.
- *Economic Concerns* regarding broad societal monetary priorities as it relates to funding for organizations serving vulnerable populations was expressed with more frequency in the 2011 survey than in past surveys.

The National Association of Social Workers New York State Chapter (NASW-NYS) is committed to working within the legislative arena to promote policies and legislation that (1) support social work practice, (2) enhance the lives of the people we serve, and (3) promote social and economic justice. In order to do so, the Chapter relies on membership communication. The annual Advocacy Survey provides members with the opportunity to easily communicate areas related to the profession which they consider to be most important and allows the broad needs of the profession to be represented in the Chapter's annual legislative priorities. The Chapter's Advocacy and Government Relations Committee, comprised of members representing the Chapter's 10 regional divisions, reviews the results of the survey, which assists them in developing the legislative priorities that guide the Chapter's advocacy activities throughout the coming year.

In July 2011, NASW-NYS offered the Advocacy Survey digitally through an online web link. The link was made accessible through direct member e-mail notifications and members were prompted to participate through online social networks and the Chapter's website. Over the course of the month, 411 respondents participated in the online survey by accessing the issued link and submitting their responses. The survey included quantitative and qualitative questions which collected information pertaining to membership, workforce settings, job tasks, client populations, social justice policy, professional, and social work licensing issues.

### Sample Representativeness & Division Distribution

After accounting and adjusting for non-member survey participation, a total sample of 366 NASW members was collected, representing a 3.6% membership response rate and an approximate 1% increase in responses over the 2010 survey. Thirty-four percent of this year's respondents indicated they had also participated in last year's survey.

Demographic data collected identified the mean respondent age of 54; with an 80% female and 20% male response rate. When asked to identify ethnic/racial origin, the majority of participants indicated they are Caucasian/White (91%), followed by those who identified as African American/Black (3.4%), Hispanic/Latino (1.2%), Puerto Rican (1%), and 3.2% comprised of other categories.

The vast majority of respondents indicated they possess a master's degree in social work (88%). When asked to specify credentials, nearly half of respondents indicated they possess an LCSW-R, while a disproportionately large number of respondents chose not to answer the question (34%). Other credentials reported included school social work certification (11%), ACSW certification (4%), alcoholism and substance abuse counselor certification

(3%), and board certified diplomat in clinical social work (3%). When asked about the number of years of experience in social work, 55% of respondents indicated that they had 20 years of experience or more.

Though membership participation remained relatively congruent to membership distribution in each of the 10 regional divisions, some of the division distributions were slightly under or over represented in the survey, most notably the Nassau, Northeast, Central and the Southern Tier Divisions (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Divisional Distribution of Respondents

Divisions	Proportion of Respondents	Proportion of Membership
Suffolk	15%	18%
Nassau	10%	18%
Hudson Valley	14%	15%
Northeast	10%	07%
Mohawk Valley	02%	03%
Central	08%	05%
Southern Tier	09%	05%
Genesee Valley	07%	07%
Western	08%	06%
Westchester	16%	16%
Total	99%	100%

\*Note: Proportion of respondents total does not equal 100% due to negligible survey participation by NASW-NYC members.

### Workforce Settings & Tasks

Private practice and mental health-outpatient were identified by the respondents as the two largest work settings, with the majority performing clinical/direct practice and administrative management as their primary job task (See Figure 2). Participants identified client populations served. The top populations served include people with mental illness (45%), families (27%), populations with substance abuse issues (22%), low income individuals and families (21%), children (19%), teens (16%), geriatric (16%), and people with disabilities (14%). Nineteen percent specified “*other*.” While the job task data is largely consistent with that of the NASW-NYS general membership data, the work setting data varies significantly, which has much higher representation in private practice, and social service agencies. The wide variance of scores and high percentage of respondents indicating “*other*” further accentuates the diversity within the social work profession.

Figure 2: Primary Work Setting & Task of Survey Respondents

Work Setting	Percent	Job Task	Percent
Private Practice-Solo	21.4%	Clinical/Direct Practice	46.5%
Mental Health-Outpatient	18.3%	Administrative/Management	16.8%
College/University	7.8%	Case Management	8.7%
School Social Work	5.6%	Teaching	5.9%
Health-Outpatient	5.3%	Supervision	1.6%
Social Service Agency	4.3%	Research	1.2%
Health-Inpatient	2.5%	Advocacy/Lobbying	0.9%
Mental Health-Inpatient	2.2%	Community Organizing	0.6%
Residential Facility	1.6%	Training (Agency-Based)	0.6%
Business/Industry	0.9%	Retired	4.7%
Public Assistance/Welfare	0.6%	Unemployed	6.2%
Correctional/Detention Facility	0.3%	Other	6.2%
Retired	5.0%		
Unemployed	6.5%		
Other	17.8%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.1%</b>		<b>*99.9%</b>

\*Note: total does not equal 100% due to rounding error.

### Issues of Importance Ranked

Survey respondents were asked to rank several issues on a scale of importance in two separate categories relating to social justice and the social work profession. The scale ranged from 1-6 with 1 being most important and 6 being the least important. Each issue was detailed with current policy items affecting social workers and consumers throughout New York State. A mean rank was obtained for each issue. A lower mean rank (closer to 1) indicates a higher priority issue.

When asked to rank the importance of social justice policy issues, the top ranking issue was *Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse* with a mean rank of 2.33. This issue included issues such as *universal health care, institutional and community-based services for mental illness, mental health parity, and treatment access* (See Figure 3). This item was also the mode, and has been ranked as a top priority for the past five years.

Figure 3: Social Justice Policy Issue Ranked

Issues	Mean Rank
Health, Mental Health & Substance Abuse	2.33
Economic Security	3.28
Children & Family Issues	3.40
Aging Issues	3.75
Human & Civil Rights	4.12
Woman's Issues	4.14

Respondents ranked *Compensation* as the highest priority regarding social work professional issues; a category including *reimbursement rates, salary, and benefits* (See Figure 4). This item was also the mode, and was ranked as a top priority for the fourth consecutive year.

Figure 4: Professional Issues Ranked

Issue	Mean Rank
Compensation	2.20
Title Protection	3.26
Higher Educational Standards	3.34
Consumer Protection	3.53
Expanding/Preserving Scope of Practice	3.73
Professional Image	4.24

Respondents were given the opportunity to submit open ended answers for other issues which they believed deserve greater NASW-NYS focus. Recipients were asked to indicate “*other specific social policy or social justice issues,*” and “*other professional issues.*” Figure 5 ranks the trending variables in order of frequency, with economic concerns regarding broad societal monetary priorities ranking as the most frequent (16%), and issues related increased expectations of productivity (e.g. documentation, caseloads), low salaries and burnout ranking second (8%).

Figure 5: Other Professional and Social Justice Issues Ranked

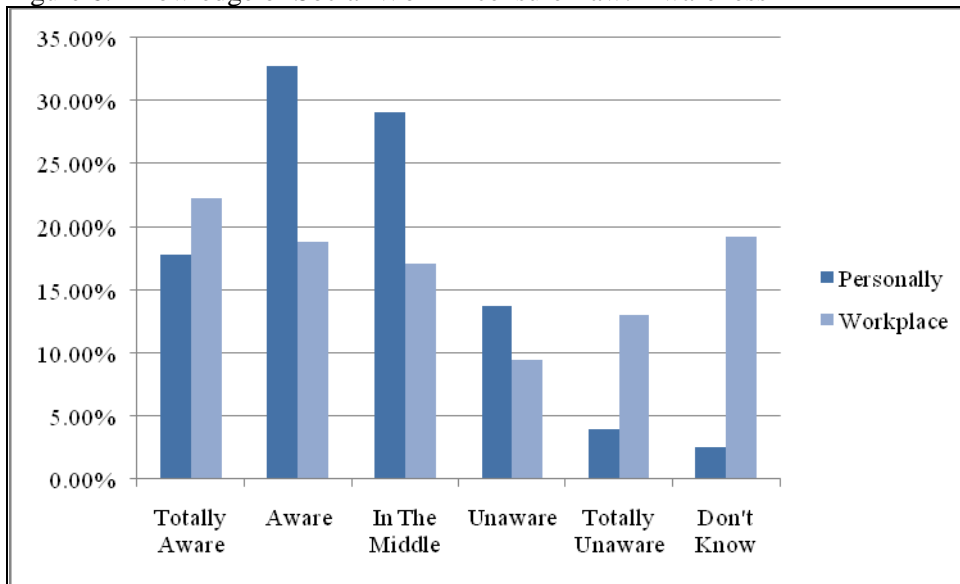
Other Issue	Rank
Economic Concerns	1
Increased Social Work Caseloads	2
Need for Increased Reimbursement	3
Need for Loan Forgiveness Programs	4
Address Institutional Racism	5
Health Care Reform	6

**Licensure**

Social Work Licensure implementation efforts remained a top legislative priority of NASW-NYS throughout the implementation of the past legislative agenda and prior. As comments on the survey have indicated, many members remain confused in relation to licensing standards and requirements. Many comments did not reflect membership understanding of the recent legislative and regulatory changes that have gone into effect.

In order to better understand the degree of knowledge of social work licensure, two items were included in the survey which measured respondents' perception with regard to the licensure law, both personally and within their work setting. Figure 6 captures the perceived level of understanding, with the ranked level of personal knowledge largely *aware* and *in the middle* and with the workplace knowledge largely falling under the *totally aware* and *don't know* categories.

Figure 6: Knowledge of Social Work Licensure Law: Awareness

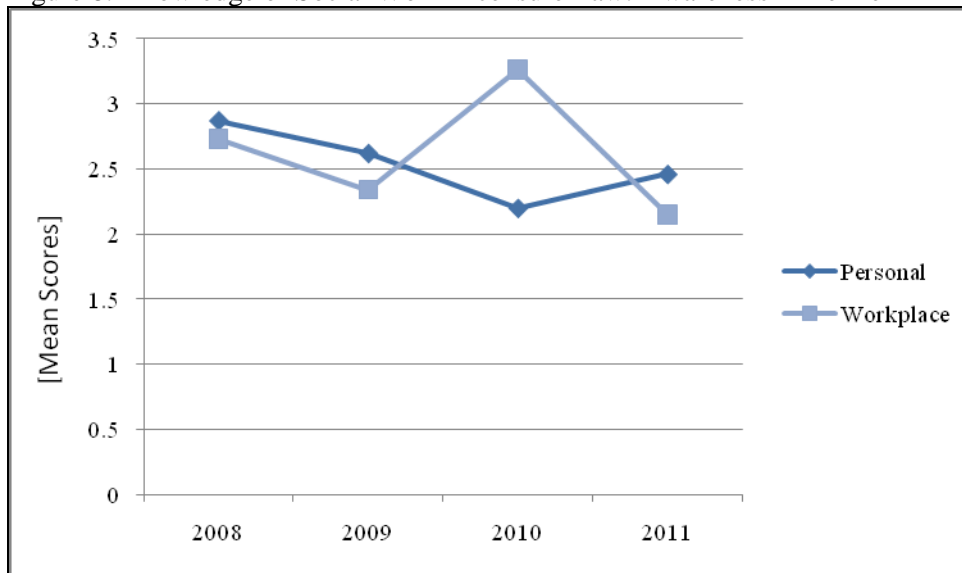


When the mean scores of perceived knowledge of the licensure law is compared with that of previous years, (see Figures 7 & 8) the most significant finding is that perceived personal awareness has decreased while perceived workforce awareness has increased. The percentage of people in the middle has not changed significantly. In addition, when asked if current social work licensing laws and standards should be changed, 32% of respondents answered *yes*, 32% answered *no*, and 36% answered *unsure*.

Figure 7: Knowledge of Social Work Licensure Law: Awareness Timeline

Knowledge of Social Work Licensure	2008	2009	2010	2011
Personal	2.87	2.62	2.20	2.46
Workplace	2.73	2.34	3.26	2.15

Figure 8: Knowledge of Social Work Licensure Law: Awareness Timeline 2



\*Note: The lower the mean score, the greater the perceived awareness.

Respondents who answered affirmatively to the question “*Do you think that current social work licensing laws/standards should be changed?*” were asked to specify what changes should be made. Figure 9 ranks the trending variables in order of frequency, with increased pathways to obtain the LCSW ranking as the most frequent (11%), mandatory continuing education requirements for licensure ranking second (7%), and increased reciprocity ranking third (5%).

Figure 9: Suggested Licensure Changes

Suggestions	Rank
Increased Pathways to Obtain LCSW	1
Mandatory Continuing Education	2
Increased Licensure Reciprocity Between States	3

### Conclusion

With a membership response rate of 3.6%, it is difficult to determine whether the variate data found in the sample is likely to be found in that of the general membership population. Because the rate of response is so low, it is more than likely that this survey contains missing data which would be crucial to providing information for analysis in order to accurately depict the opinions and preferences of the 10,200 diverse NASW-NYS members across the state. In contrast to this thinking, many of the survey measurements have been repeated from previous years and consistently yield similar scores. Sixty-six percent of the respondents indicated they did not take last year’s survey. The replication of results by different members throughout the years suggests some degree of accuracy. Furthermore, much of the descriptive statistics directly match the Chapter’s existing membership data, further suggesting some degree of accuracy, though no conclusion can be drawn by these suggestions and a greater response rate is need to draw accurate conclusions.

Regardless, the survey results highlight repeating concerns voiced throughout the years, particularly with regard to *health, mental health and substance abuse* as well as and social work *compensation*. The qualitative response option captured the greater depths of concerns, and helped to highlight pertinent issues dear to membership including many licensure, professional and social justice issues. The expansive list of concerns reflects the dynamics and diverse nature of the profession as a whole, and serves as a

testament of the interests of NASW-NYS membership, in order to be channeled into action via the Chapter's legislative priorities.

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