

## **2009-2010 Legislative Advocacy Agenda**

The New York State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NYS) is comprised of 11,000 members throughout the State of New York. Nationally, NASW is the largest professional organization of social workers with 150,000 members in 56 Chapters across the world. Social workers are professionals who hold bachelors, masters or doctoral degrees in social work. Social workers practice in the fields of health, mental health, child welfare, public welfare, vocational rehabilitation, aging, family services, education, criminal justice, and industry. They are administrators, clinicians, policy analysts, researchers, educators, community organizers, and elected officials.

NASW is committed to working within the legislative arena to promote policies and legislation that support social work practice, enhance the lives of the people we serve, and promote social and economic justice. Professional social workers contribute a unique perspective to the social policy debate, one that includes the relationship between public policies and the people affected by them.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the New York State Chapter of NASW is to promote and advocate throughout New York State for:

- The strength, unity, identity and status of the social work profession,
- The enhancement of social work practice, and
- Policies, services and programs that promote social and economic justice.

### **Social Work Mobilization for New York State**

NASW-NYS is concerned about a range of issues that affect the quality of life for people in New York State, the ability of social workers to provide quality services, and the allocation of public funds for these services. NASW-NYS supports the development and maintenance of services and the allocation of public funds to meet the basic human needs of all New Yorkers and the maintenance of critical human rights protections needed to assure their equitable treatment.

### **Professional Issues/Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

NASW-NYS maintains the importance of promoting the role of social workers in serving vulnerable populations. In fulfilling this role, NASW-NYS is also committed to assuring that the work of professional social workers is respected, protected, and adequately compensated. We maintain that client services are enhanced by the protection of

professional standards. Therefore, we promote policies that encourage fair and consistent performance and productivity standards, including maintaining appropriate client/staff ratios and the inclusion of social workers on interdisciplinary teams in all facets of employment. Furthermore, we support legislation and policies that reduce the burdensome and time consuming paperwork required of social workers serving those in need.

- Advocate for the recognition and competitive compensation of social workers by all forms of payment, including state agencies and health insurance. Ensure the effective practice of social work at all levels through the appropriate protection, regulation, licensing implementation and continuing education for social workers.
- Advocate for social workers in leadership and key policy decision-making positions in health, human services and government agencies and organizations.
- Ensure implementation and continuation of a loan forgiveness program for all licensed social workers, for all types of student loans.

### **Socio-Economic Stability**

NASW-NYS is committed to ensuring that every New Yorker has access to the resources and services necessary to maintain at least a minimum standard of living, through the following:

- Legislation to allow education, including college education, to fulfill the work requirements for individuals receiving public assistance.
- Advocate for greater access and an increase in the welfare grant and childcare funding while promoting a living wage.
- Increase access to affordable housing and home ownership.
- Oppose cuts to Medicaid and Medicare for children, families and older adults.
- Advocate for a comprehensive and effective child welfare system that provides supports to families and children that will enable them to live in a safe and healthy environment.

### **Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

NASW-NYS advocates for a health care system that provides access to health and mental health care for all New Yorkers, without discrimination or financial barriers.

- Support initiatives to ensure affordable, quality access to health care coverage for all New Yorkers.
- Support full parity for mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention services.
- Support adequate funding for HIV/AIDS services and initiatives.

- Protect a woman's right to exercise reproductive choice and support access to emergency contraception.
- Advocate for the reform of the Rockefeller Drug Laws to provide treatment instead of incarceration for non-violent drug offenders.
- Promote appropriate services to mentally ill individuals incarcerated in the New York State Corrections system.
- Advocate and promote appropriate services for people with disabilities.
- Support the implementation of evidence-based treatment, for quality service delivery.
- Advocate to ensure that the increased health, mental health, substance abuse and social service needs of veterans and their families are addressed.

### **Children, Older Adults and Family Issues**

NASW-NYS supports measures that promote the safety and well-being of New York's citizens at all life stages.

- Promote state and federal policies, which result in a comprehensive continuum of care and a range of service options for older New Yorkers, including housing, and the necessary support service that will enable them to safely age-in-place in the least restrictive environment.
- Advocate for the role of social workers as the pre-eminently qualified professionals to implement case management and other functions required as a result of the implementation of the Single Point of Access system, Medicaid waiver programs, and developing care-coordination models that will evolve in New York State over the coming years.
- Advocate for best practices and adequate resources to assist Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Adult Homes, and Home Care Services in providing quality care and ensuring quality of life to older adults.
- Ensure a school environment free of discrimination and harassment by continuing to support the Dignity for All Students Act.
- Increase funding for services and awareness of family violence.
- Promote legislation that enhances the safety and well-being of children, vulnerable adults, and other persons residing in or receiving services from New York State's institutions of care.
- Advocate and promote full funding and support for the education of all NYS children, from birth to age twenty-one (21).

## **Human and Civil Rights**

NASW-NYS promotes the public awareness, rights, respect and safety of all New Yorkers regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, citizenship status, place of residence, veterans status, disability or socioeconomic status, through education and advocacy.

- Eliminate discriminatory practices with regard to any of the aforementioned.
- NASW-NYS supports the allocation of funds for faith based initiatives to organizations that protect the spiritual and religious choice of service recipients, and continue to employ duly qualified personnel.
- Support the abolition of the death penalty in New York State.
- Advocate for marriage and civil rights for same-sex couples.

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