Evolving Roles in School Social Work Practice

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Today’s Agenda

- The Job Description for SSW in 2032
- SSW roles: Survey and History, 1906-2012
- 5 Current and Emerging Roles for SSW and the Louisiana Experience
Recent Research

Published in early 2010 by Oxford: This book models the EBP process to increase the use of evidence-informed practices across all 3 tiers of intervention (with a special focus on SEL-based interventions).
Top SSW Referrals

- Social Skills training
- Effective “Tier 2” Interventions
- AD/HD issues
- Anxiety problems
- Noncompliance
- Bullying problems
- Parents Divorcing
- Increasing Parent Involvement
- Helping with transition to adulthood
- Behavior Intervention Plans (Kelly, Raines, Stone, & Frey, 2010)
“What is it you do?”

- Consultation
- Direct service (individual, group, family)
- Prevention programming
- Classroom groups
- Policy development
Overview of Our SSW Role

• “What exactly do you do?”
• Operating in a “host setting”
• Frey & Dupper’s framework
• A potential job description for SSW in 2032…
Present and Future SSW Roles

1) School social workers as School First-Responders
2) School Social Workers as Referral Experts and Resource Coordinators
3) School social workers as Three-Tier Intervention Experts
4) School social workers as Organizational Consultants
5) School social workers as Evidence-Informed Practitioners
SSW History 1906-2006

- Visiting Teachers, largely community-based
- Clinical model becomes dominant
- Casework gives way in some states to IEP work
- Frey and Dupper’s (2005) Clinical Quadrant Model
- To IEP or not IEP?
- In the office, community, or in the classroom?
- Where do families and teachers fit in?
Past national survey research shows a stable SSW identity emerging, one focused on individual student clinical work but one that also longs to be more involved in making larger whole-school and systemic change (Allen-Meares, 1994; Costin, 1969).

Limited emphasis on delivering evidence-informed Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions in schools (Astor et al., 1998; Kelly, 2008)
Louisiana SSW Experience

“In Louisiana, school social work roles fall under 4 broad categories:

• Supervision
• Macro-practice
• Evaluation/Coordination
• Micro-practice

(LSU Office of Social Services Research and Development, 2011)”
Louisiana SSW Experience

Survey data (LSU, 2011) notes that in LA:
• Average 4 schools per SSW
• Many SSW (75%) provide indirect services and a majority (58%) deliver assessment and evaluation services
• 69% report providing largely direct service, most often to students referred for behavior problems
• >30% delivering community-based linkages and/or Professional Development Training
School Social Work 2008

1) Practice Modalities (What interventions do SSW rely on?)

2) Service Population and Utilization Patterns (How do SSW spend their time and who do they serve?)

3) Respondent Characteristics (Who are SSW nationwide: demographics, licensure)
2008 National SSW Survey Project

• Project started in Fall 2007: No national data providing an overview on SSW practice since the early 1990s
• Project team: MK, Stephanie Berzin (Boston College), Andy Frey (Louisville), Michelle Alvarez (Minnesota State), Gary Shaffer (UNC-Chapel Hill), and Kimberly O’ Brien (BC)
• Partnership with SSWAA and 30 SSW state associations, as well as 18 other state education organizations (full cooperation secured by January 2008)
• Expert panel of 23 national and state SSW leaders (academia, SSWAA, state associations, Loyola FSPP) helped revise the survey instrument in Fall 2008
• Survey delivered online, data collected between February 28th-May 31st, 2008
• 4 articles published to date based on the survey data, 2 in Children & Schools, one in Journal of School Health, and one in School Mental Health
## Results: SSW Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;70%</td>
<td>Have State School Social Work License or Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Have MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</td>
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Results: Work Setting

- 89% practice in public schools
- 16% grant funded or contract position
- 78% work in states that require state social work license

Grade level
- 44% elementary
- 21% high school
- 18% middle school/junior high

Number of schools
- 39% practice at one school
- 30% practice at 2 or 3 schools
- 31% practice 4 or more schools
Results: Work Setting

Community Size

- Rural: 28%
- Urban: 46%
- Suburban: 26%

Caseload

- 30% majority of students have IEP
- 24% all or most of caseload receives government welfare services
- 7% all or most of the children they serve receive outside counseling or therapeutic services
Results: How SSW spend their time

- Discrepancy exists in actual and ideal time spent on primary versus secondary/tertiary prevention.
- Serving too many students accounts for 65% of this actual/ideal discrepancy.
- Additionally, 30% of SSW time is spent on administrative tasks.
Training/Consultation

Where School Social Workers go for help

- Trainings/Workshops 65%
- Peer Consultation 59%
- Online EBP Databases 24%
- **Supervision 21%**
- Scholarly Journals/Books 17%
Discussion

- SSW population demographics remain largely unchanged since earlier studies (Allen-Meares, 1994; Costin, 1969)
- Students face complex issues, but few are served by outside mental health services: SSW are often the **only** provider
- Paradigm shift for attention to prevention has not yet been echoed in practice: high caseloads, student complexities, and administrative paperwork demands largely explain the ideal/actual discrepancy noted by respondents
- Majority of time in individual and group counseling
Discussion

- Emphasis on family engagement as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention, but further study is needed to understand how family engagement is operationalized across school social work practice contexts.
- SSW play a limited role in school leadership through participation in school committees, developing prevention activities, or improving school culture.
- Limited reliance on use of research, journals, and books to improve practice.
- Workshops and peers rate much higher, but unclear how evidence-based those resources are.
Present and Future SSW Roles

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Questions?....
Selected References


