



School Social Work Association of America Reopening Statement

School Reopening Priorities and Guidance during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Version 2.0 for the 2021-2022 School Year

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Last summer SSWAA published school reopening guidance acknowledging the challenges we faced navigating the two public health crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the traumatic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Aubry and others. Since that publication, we have collectively celebrated the deployment of COVID-19 vaccinations, watched inequitable access of the vaccine exclude communities of color across our country and developing nations around the globe, endured the anxiety of Derek Chauvin's trial for the murder of George Floyd, and supported our students and our schools virtual, hybrid, and in-person learning models. As we face a new school year we cannot underscore the challenges we will face supporting our students, staff, and school communities to reconnect relationships, re-establish routines, and re-orient to rituals that honor and hold all of our students and families experiences while fostering healing. Yet the surging COVID-19 delta variant, mixed responses to recently released guidance from the Centers for Disease Control regarding masking expectations, and an outcry against critical race theory--seeking to undermine the necessary careful reexamination of our history--compound the traumatic events we have already endured.

As school social workers, we are tasked with the responsibility of not only helping our students and families manage these crises, but also the staff with whom we work. Given the ongoing urgency and fluid nature of these times, with the increasing and disparaging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as long standing unaddressed racial inequities have been felt across the United States, how we think and respond to the overarching economic, psychological and racial disparities is critical. Similar to our last publication, we remain in unresolved crises. However, as we prepare for the 21/22 school year there has been a temporary [influx of educational funding](#) to begin addressing the concerns associated with these crises.

It is critical that school social workers continue to acknowledge and voice how collectively our students, staff, leaders, schools, communities and ourselves are operating in a persistent state of crisis. The chronic nature of this crisis calls for school social workers to maintain a laser focus on prioritizing physical, emotional, and social safety for students. This includes continual assessment and alignment of services and supports that promote the overall wellbeing and safety of students and the school community; optimizes opportunities to identify and cultivate the services, supports, and family engagement necessary for our students, families, schools and communities; and empowerment to promote the self-care necessary for the resilience to endure and emerge from these challenging times stronger.

The three main priorities in reopening remain steadfast: Safety, Services, and Self-Care.

We invite you to review the resources and supports that were curated in our [original reopening statement](#) to reground yourself in the commitment to these priorities and to support your Safety,

Services and Self-Care initiatives. In addition, we highlight these new guiding documents from the U.S. Department of Education regarding COVID-19 and proudly announce our position statement addressing critical race theory.

U.S. Department of Education (2021) COVID Handbook Series

- [Volume 1: Strategies for Safely Reopening Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)
- [Volume 2: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs](#)
- [Volume 3: Strategies for Safe Operation and Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education Students](#)

Furthermore, on **September 16, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (EDT)**, SSWAA has created a **FREE** webinar for all members to earn 1 CEU titled ***“Back to School: Tips for Re-entry Success”***. A panel presentation consisting of speakers from the CDC, the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, and the Human Rights Campaign will offer guidelines for school return, tips for supporting students who are grieving in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial violence impacting their communities, and tools for supporting LGBTQIA+ students in the coming weeks. Our panel presentation will wrap up with an overview of tools and resources provided by SSWAA to assist you throughout the school year.

Additional webinars this fall include a variety of experts who will address best practices in meeting the needs of our students, staff, and communities as we continue to navigate these difficult times. Simply visit SSWAA’s website for detailed descriptions of these webinars and register today!

- September 9, 2021 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (EDT) ***It's About More Than Showing Up: Improving Attendance through School Connectedness***
- October 28, 2021 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (EDT) ***Loss and Healing after a Pandemic: Supporting Youth After an Unprecedented Year***
- November 9, 2021 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (EST) ***School Social Worker as Cultural Broker: Supporting Immigrant Youth through Connections***

As always, the SSWAA Board is available to support your needs! Make sure to also visit [SSWAA’s Resources Section](#) on our website as we continue to update and provide new resources to support your practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. We have added a new **Back to School Resources Folder** and continue to add resources in the **COVID 19** and **Racial Equity and Social Justice** folders as well.

In the words of Maya Angelou “Shine On! Let nothing dim the light that shines from within.” Your expertise, unique skills, compassion, and passion are shining a light of healing, empowerment, and resilience this school year and every year! SSWAA recognizes and appreciates the gifts each of you bring to this profession. The communities you serve are enhanced because of you!