As the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is in the process of re-authorization, the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) supports, as an allowable use of funds, professional development opportunities for School Social Workers. School Social Workers are an essential part of the pupil services team. Students face a multiplicity of difficulties that have adverse effects on their ability to benefit from academic instruction, and this often results in disruption of the learning environment for others in the school. School Social Workers are specifically trained and qualified to help alleviate these barriers to learning and need continuing professional development in order to provide the most appropriate services to all students.

The recently published document Mental Health in Schools: Guidelines, Models, Resources & Policy Considerations (May 2001)* addresses the need for a cohesive continuum of interventions to adequately address barriers to learning. School Social Workers have received comprehensive education and training prior to their entry into the schools. However, this alone is not sufficient to keep members apprised of and trained in models of best practice. SSWAA agrees that appropriate services can only be assured through ongoing professional development for all educational service providers. Therefore, we urge the Congress to include in the re-authorization of ESEA access to professional development funds for all pupil services team members.

*UCLA Policy Leadership Cadre for Mental Health in Schools


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