

# Wisconsin School Social Workers Association

January 2018 Newsletter

## A Message From Our President, Nichole Grube

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! I hope the start of 2018 has been off to a good start for you! As you can see from the latter part of this newsletter and previous emails, the Legislative and Licensing committee's have been very busy! Some of you have reached out to share your thoughts, stories and ideas related to current proposals and bills in legislation, please continue to do that. We want to hear from you!!

I wanted to welcome Jacob Hanifi and Carrie McCarthy as the newest members to our board. We have a few new Regional Representatives to welcome: Nicole Cain (MPS), Gina Aguglia (Madison), and Sarah Cater (Northwest, taking over for Deanna Ndebele). Finally, we are pleased to welcome Margaret Kubek, who will serve as a new liaison for UW-Green Bay. Thank-you in advance for your time and work to support WSSWA and all of our members!

A few items from our Board meeting in October that I wanted to share with you: You may notice that we have made separate emails for [President](#), [Treasurer](#), [Conference chair](#), [Secretary](#), and [Legislative chair](#) so that you can email them directly for efficiency to get you linked to right person for your questions, etc.

As our board has continued to grow with new members and others moving on to retirement, we have decided to start to do some work this summer to capture history of WSSWA. We would like to show a timeline of our association. If you come across anything that you think would be helpful to put our story together, please share it.

Some of you may have heard, but in case you didn't Nic Dibble (former DPI school social work consultant) was nominated for the SSWAA Randy A. Fisher Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of WSSWA and DPI. A very well deserved recognition for all of the hard work Nic has done to support and advocate for school social work positions throughout Wisconsin! I am sure many of you would agree with this nomination!

As I wrap up my message I wanted to share with you the book I have started to read: [The Happiness Advantage](#) by Shawn Achor. The older I get, I find myself looking for ways to stay positive throughout the day that can be long and emotionally draining. We are working in a profession that we will give endlessly to others and I want to continue to do it in such a way that is in a positive manner. Some of you may have seen his [TedTalk](#). It resonated with me so I thought I would share the link with you.

Thanks for all of the work you do!!

Respectfully,  
Nichole Grube

## WSSWA Board Members

**President:**  
Nichole Grube

**President-elect:**  
*Vacant*

**Secretary:**  
Karen Zimmerman

**Treasurer:**  
Alexandra Schirmacher

**Board Members:**  
Jackie Jackson  
Leticia Kubisiak  
Susan Baumann-Duren  
Murrene Payton  
Amie Mitchell  
Naomi Adams  
Brienne Nillissen Mah  
Dani Robb  
Angela Baerwolf  
Kelly Ohme  
Carrie McCarthy  
Jacob Hanifi

**UWM Milwaukee  
Liaison/Liaison to the  
Regional Reps:**  
Tim Schwaller

**UW Madison Full-time  
Program Liaison:**  
Katie Larsen-Klodd

**UW Madison Part-time  
Program Liaison:**  
Jenny Braunginn

**UW Green Bay Liaison:**  
Margaret Kubek

**DPI State Consultant:**  
Julie Incitti

\*See WSSWA website for  
contact information

## FALL 2017 CONFERENCE

We are very fortunate to host yet another successful fall conference. We had a total of 57 evaluations completed. Thank you to all of you that responded as this is how we hear your feedback and use to plan for next year's conference. These are the ratings we received for overall conference: poor -1, fair-0, good-6, very good- 25, Excellent-25. Here is a snapshot of feedback given:

What did you like best about the conference?

- Keynote was very informative
- Round tables were very interesting and informative
- Variety of topics
- Connecting with colleagues
- Enhances pride in our profession
- Meeting with regions
- Early ending to conference
- Mental health topics were great!
- Enjoyed the chance to meet SSWs from across the state

What could be improved?

- More presenters share PP ahead of time
- Easier hotel checkout
- Space
- Technology accommodations/issues
- Snack/food options
- Split up roundtables into more rooms-still difficulty to hear.
- Maybe new venue-expand to other areas in the state

We will review in more detail at our next board meeting, which will be held on February 24th in Madison. If you have additional suggestions, please feel free to send them to Nichole Grube, president or Jackie Jackson, conference committee chair.

## WISCONSIN SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR

Jodi Guenther has demonstrated excellence and leadership as a school social worker for the past 18 years in the Shawano School District. Prior to her employment as a school social worker, Jodi worked as a child protection worker for 2 counties and was involved in the development in the first wraparound services for youth coming out of mental health facilities and child caring institutions in Dane County. Throughout her career, Jodi has been a leader in development of programs and services that have impacted youth, schools, community and the profession.

On behalf of WSSWA, it is an honor to present this award to Jodi Guenther for her years of dedication, advocacy, and leadership that have made impacts on the lives of children, families, schools, and community.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES & NEWS

Jack O'Meara, WSSWA Government Relations Representative

### Learnfare Attendance Requirement Included in State Budget

The 2017-19 state budget includes a law change that will permit Learnfare sanctions on the basis of school attendance in addition to enrollment. This means that a child can fail the attendance requirement by being absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days during a semester.

This proposal was first introduced as separate legislation (AB 240) before it was inserted into the state budget. WSSWA registered opposition to AB 240 based on our belief that, rather than help Wisconsin Works participants, it creates another reason to remove them from the programming.

But now that the law has been changed, WSSWA wants to be at the table to make sure it is implemented in a way that does least harm to families. We want to ensure it is more of an incentive, rather than a penalty, to attend school.

**WSSWA Continues to Work on Licensure:** As noted in previous newsletters, WSSWA has been lobbying on proposed changes to licensure for School Social Workers. An early 2017 report from a Department of Public Instruction (DPI)-formed group, the Leadership Group on Staffing Challenges, included a preliminary suggestion for "universal licensure" between DPI and the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) licenses, including for social workers.

In early December, the leadership group issued its proposed changes to licensure. The proposals did not include specific changes to the SSW license, but it did say: "Longer term, develop new preparation programs so that counselors, social workers, and psychologists can also earn dual licenses to work in either a school or community-based setting."

WSSWA has a meeting arranged with Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Thompson for January 2 to discuss how to proceed. Thompson has said previously that he would like to look at areas where the training is "substantially similar."

**New School Social Worker Funding in State Budget:** The state budget includes \$639 million in new funding for public education. The budget provides much bigger increases, on a percentage basis, for the statewide private school choice and the Special Needs Scholarship programs, which give public funding to pay for children to attend private schools.

Of particular interest to WSSWA members is the new \$3 million categorical aid program to pay for School Social Workers. This was part of the more than \$7 million that was appropriated for a school mental health initiative originally developed by State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Evers, with assistance from experts and mental health providers.

The categorical aid program recognizes the vital role that School Social Workers play in addressing mental health needs in our schools and communities. The funding will allow school districts across the state to hire or retain some 80 School Social Workers.

Since passage of the budget, there has been some discussion about the fact that the final statutory language refers to “social workers” as opposed to “school social workers.” WSSWA has communicated to DPI, which will administer the program, that the funding needs to go primarily to School Social Workers. We have noted that the discussion throughout the budget process, including the original DPI proposal, referenced School Social Workers, so that is where the funding should be distributed.

The budget also includes a significant change for most school administrators, teachers, and pupil service personnel who have DPI licenses. Except for initial licenses, licenses will automatically become permanent lifetime licenses. Initial licenses will become provisional three-year licenses.

Finally, the budget includes a provision allowing electronic communication to be used to give a truancy notice to a pupil’s parent or guardian. It allows parents to refuse electronic communication, something that WSSWA requested.

As always, please let me know if you have questions or comments. I can be reached at [atjack@omearapublicaffairs.com](mailto:atjack@omearapublicaffairs.com).

### **WSSWA Legislative Committee Information**

Our Legislative Committee continues to work hard to advocate and support our School Social Workers. Here is some information that they would like you to know:

The Department of Public Instruction will conduct five hearings in January to accept public testimony on proposed changes to educator licensing rules (PI 34). In addition to the hearings, a public comment period is open until Jan. 31 with written comments on the proposed permanent rules given the same consideration as public testimony. The hearing dates, times, and locations are as follows:

**January 16, 4 to 6 p.m.** — St. Norbert College, Mulva Library, Room 101, 400 Third Street, De Pere

**January 17, 2:30 to 4 p.m.** — DPI Headquarters, GEF 3, Room P41, 125 South Webster Street, Madison

**January 19, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.** — Milwaukee Public Schools, Auditorium, 5225 West Vliet Street, Milwaukee

**January 25, 3 to 5 p.m.** — CESA 10, Conference Center, 725 West Park Avenue, Chippewa Falls

**January 29, 4 to 6 p.m.** — University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Centennial Hall, 3212 Centennial Hall, La Crosse.

Additional information is available on the Department of Public Instruction News Room website <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2017/five-hearings-scheduled-proposed-educator-licensing-rules>.

Please direct comments or questions about this news item to Tom McCarthy, (608) 266-3559, [Thomas.McCarthy@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Thomas.McCarthy@dpi.wi.gov).

### **Want to stay up to date on the Legislative News?**

Visit the [WSSWA website](#) and click on the News & Legislation drop down. You can find all of our updates on what is happening in the Legislature there.

### **What Professional Literature are you currently reading? We want to share it with our members!**

Email [mitchellamie15@gmail.com](mailto:mitchellamie15@gmail.com) the title and brief summary of the literature, what was your take-away, why do you recommend to other professionals.

# Regional Updates

Milwaukee Public Schools  
December 2017

MPS SSWs are showcasing their true leadership abilities and talents on many levels in their schools/programs, at the district level and on a state/national level through a variety of opportunities and initiatives.

At the local school level, SSWs play a key role in leading Tier 2 and 3 teams as well as being strong implementers of interventions. They continue to expand their consultation role by facilitating professional development for their school staff on topics such as trauma, SEL and restorative practices. SSWs have increased their focus on data-driven decision making which influences direct practice and outcomes.

At the district-level, new and on-going leadership opportunities are in place. Examples of this leadership include:

- Leading/coaching Tier 3 supports,
- Guiding the district Attendance Intervention Plan and assisting schools to develop systems which positively impact their absenteeism rates,
- Overseeing the district service learning/community service requirements,
- Managing the McKinney-Vento work for over 4,000 students per year, including grant writing and oversight,
- Coordinating the School Community Partnership for Mental Health where community mental health partners provide clinical services in school in close partnership with the school-based SSW and school psychologist within the PBIS framework.
- Developing professional development on topics such as trauma, SEL, mindfulness, restorative practices, etc. In addition, SSWs have been instrumental in assisting to create the district Risk Assessment process, attendance policies/procedures, child abuse and neglect procedures.
- Collaborating and supporting trauma-sensitive transitions for students/families' who experience violence as a co-located member of the Sojourner Family Peace Center

At the state level, MPS continues to be represented on the WSSWA Board. Several staff have created and conducted professional development for conferences, including Building the Hearts of Successful Schools, Midwest PBIS Network, and WSSWA.

At the national level, several staff have written for and are implementing large, system-wide grants. This has provided an opportunity to share the work through national conferences such as the National PBIS Leadership Forum.

Other noteworthy items include our now full-implementation of the Pupil Services Evaluation Model (EE's equivalent), support of the district-wide crisis team, leading work on the district strategic plan and other initiatives.

In the never-ending education reform movement, our focus is on the proven foundation of social work with a forward eye on how and when we need to make changes. There is always a balancing act of keeping true to our profession yet remaining relevant, visible and current, knowing that change is inevitable.

**Southeast Region:** If you are interested in being a regional rep for the Southeast Region please contact our Board President, Nichole!

**A special thank you to the Board committee that planned our Fall 2017 SSW Conference and also to our sponsors that help support our conference.**

**Cornerstone:** Leading private practice owned clinics in southeastern Wisconsin with 9 locations and over 140 therapists we can meet all mental health and substance abuse counseling needs.



**Rogers:** Rogers Behavioral Health is a leader in providing personal, evidence-based mental health and addiction treatment for children, adolescents and adults. We offer several levels of care in 6 locations across the state of Wisconsin.



School Social Work  
Association of America



George  
Williams  
College  
of Aurora University

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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