**Dear Legislator,**

As a professional, you understand that in order to meet the academic needs of students you must also consider how their social and emotional needs impact their ability to learn. You are also aware that in times of economic restraint it can be difficult to determine what resources are necessary and practical. When considering the funding needs for education, health and mental health services, we implore you to help our Kansas schools to meet the needs of their students by adequately supporting programs that provide our students with not only a means of educational success but also access to support staff whose purpose is to address the social and emotional needs of students.

We would like to be sure you understand how the availability of School Social Workers are a viable choice within the education system and how they promote the healthy emotional growth and resiliency of students; especially during these times when there has been so much violence.

**School Social Workers (SSWs) are:**

**1. Qualified,** **Recognized and Licensed by the BSRB as mental health professionals who are accomplished in the following skill sets:**

a. Conducting comprehensive assessments of biological, psychological and sociological variables that affect the development and behavior of individuals and systems of all sizes.

b. Articulating diagnostic impressions with a range of client systems and problems.

c. Developing and implementing intervention plans based on assessments.

d. Culturally appropriate practice and consideration of client strengths.

e. Analyzing the impact of social policies on client systems, workers, and agencies, particularly as they relate to inhibiting or advancing social and economic justice.

f. Engaging in practice within organizations and service delivery systems and participating in necessary organizational and system change.

g. Evaluating the effectiveness of their clinical practice interventions by applying evaluation strategies to client outcomes, and subsequently using the feedback from those strategies to modify case plans on an ongoing basis.

**2. A practical choice.** Because of their skill set, School Social Workers are able to fulfill a variety of specialized positions **serving in prevention, mental health, behavior intervention, special education and post secondary transition planning.**

**School Social Work is a specialized area of practice within the social work profession. School Social Workers utilize the above identified skill set and, in addition to individual students and groups, apply it to school-specific systems such as student interventions teams, special education (IEP) teams, Multi-Tiered System of Support, PBS, etc.**

* School Social Workers, individually or as members of a multidisciplinary team, systematically observe, collect data and assess the strengths and needs of the students within their family, school and community environments.
* School Social Workers have the capability to provide a multitude of services to both General Education and Special Education Students. Within these services, School Social Workers can meet a variety of needs that help students improve their emotional well being, social skills, and overall interactions with peers, adults, and others within their lives, as well as many other life skills.
* School Social Workers are a critical resource in preventing student drop-out. Their training in program development and implementation is an invaluable resource to schools in facilitating well-coordinated methods of attendance support that involve the entire school community (i.e. staff, students, parents, and community resources).

We understand that in these difficult economic times, your decisions as a legislator are not easy to make. Thank you for allowing us to remind you of why your School Social Workers are a viable choice and how important it is to fund educational systems for our Kansas students and to promote the healthy emotional growth and resiliency of students in an educational setting.

Sincerely,

Cheri L. Koochel, LMSW

Kansas School Social Worker Association President