

Social Work Frequently Asked Questions

How does a student qualify for Social Work?

It is the IEP team that makes the decision based on gathered data and information. Data could include formal/informal observations, student/parent interviews, collateral information from outside providers, behavior rating scales, behavior trackers, etc. There isn't a specific set of criteria (scoring) to be eligible. Essentially, the team would determine the need based on whether the student would be able to meet their special education goals without it. If social work services are deemed necessary, a social work goal will be included in the IEP, along with the setting, frequency, and duration of the service. Services are added, modified, and dismissed by way of amendment.

What services do Special Education school social workers provide?

School social workers are trained and licensed mental health professionals, who have a Master's degree in Social Work. School social workers seek to be change agents in the schools they work in by partnering with administrators, staff, and students around the areas of social/emotional functioning, behavior, and mental health. School social workers provide a variety of services for students who are on an IEP, as well as supportive services to staff. Social workers address system and environmental factors that could be contributing to negative academic outcomes for the student. Social workers help students learn and practice healthy coping skills such as: executive functioning skills, interpersonal skills, impulse control, self-regulation, and self-advocacy. These professionals typically work full-time in an office within a school but may need to travel to serve multiple schools in the area.

What steps are made to ensure that there is continuity of care between schools?

Social workers meet regularly for continuing education and consultation. Social workers communicate with each other and/or school staff when a student on their caseload is changing schools. Social workers have ongoing communication to help students and staff prepare for transitions.

What is the difference between school social work, clinical therapy, and counseling?

School-based social work services: School Social workers are trained and licensed mental health professionals. They can assist with behavioral concerns, social/emotional issues, classroom support, and crisis management. School social workers partner with the student's IEP team to address student's needs and develop IEP goals to support and promote the students' academic success. Social workers in the school setting do not provide therapy. These professionals typically work full-time in an office within a school but may need to travel to serve multiple schools in the area.

Clinical Therapy: Mental health professionals who work with individuals to help identify, examine, and treat mental health and emotional issues or disorders. USD #475 does have therapists in the school setting.

Counseling services: School counselors assist students in making academic and career plans, help overcome barriers to success, and may work one-on-one with a student who is experiencing personal issues. The types of services range from providing resources to students and addressing short-term challenges to providing whole class social emotional character development lessons. Services may vary depending on the school building.