

School Social Work and Safety

Concern regarding school safety and the prevention of school violence has permeated every school in the United States. School Social Work services focus on improving the mental and behavioral health care of students. They provide critical assessment and interventions to address the complex needs of students with mental health concerns in order to help prevent future tragedies by being a liaison between the home, school, and community. School Social Workers can work with students, individually or in group settings, to develop their social skills, which improves their interactions with peers, teachers, family, and the community. School Social Workers can encourage student involvement in after-school and community activities and encourage parents to participate in school meetings and conferences to develop the home-school-community partnership. Through collaboration with students, school personnel, parents, and community partners, School Social Workers can positively impact the development of the whole child and advocate for students' academic, social and emotional growth.

The U.S. Department of Education identified five characteristics of safe schools (1998):

- Students whose families are involved in their growth in and outside of school are more likely to experience school success and less likely to become involved in antisocial activities.
- A positive relationship with an adult who is available to provide support when needed is one of the most critical factors in preventing school violence.
- Effective schools communicate to students and the greater community that all students are valued and respected.
- It is important that students feel safe when expressing their needs, fears, and anxieties to school staff and other adults.
- Students who do not receive the support they need are less likely to behave in socially desirable ways.

Students are more likely to feel safe when they see a positive partnership among family, school, and community. School Social Workers promote that positive relationship as the home-school-community liaison.

(<http://www.learningfirst.org/issues/safeschools>)