Message from our President

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On April 14, 2015 Illinois Association of School Social Workers joined with National Association of Social Workers to host the 2015 Advocacy Day. This day provides an opportunity for social work students from more than 13 different schools of social work to be educated on issues confronting the State of Illinois and develop some practical skills and knowledge on how to engage their legislators in conversations about the issues that are important to them as constituents.

The day opened with a welcome from Candy Gray, Illinois NASW Chapter President and me, representing IASSW. Following a legislative overview from Joel Rubin, NASW Executive Director, and the presentation of the legislator of the year award from NASW to Senator Daniel Biss, there was a panel discussion about some of the most critical issues confronting the State of Illinois. The panel presenters were George Sheldon, the Acting Director, Department of Children and Family Services; Kimberly Drew, Policy Advocate, Heartland Alliance; Emily Miller, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Voices for Illinois Children and Elizabeth Clarke, Founder of the Juvenile Justice Initiative.

There were over 125 school social work students, bachelor and master’s level, who attended the IASSW breakout session that followed the panel discussion. Carol Sebian, Rosemary O’Connor, Phil Koehl, Michael Langendorf, Sandie Kopels, Mary Bragg, Phil Milsk and I contributed to the discussion of issues that IASSW wanted to students to highlight. Initially, Phil Milsk discussed the process and discussions that have occurred with HB 3123 (School Counselor bill). When there is a final decision on the language of this bill, I will send an email to explain what impact IASSW has been able to influence on the language of this bill.
I came across this fantastic website article on the latest dangerous apps for youth. I work in a middle school and many, many of my students are using these apps. I am also a mom so this information was useful at home and at work. I hope you find this information very valuable.

In 2013, a twelve-year-old girl was lured away from her home by a 21 year-old-man. Once they met, he took her to a motel and took advantage of her. How did this little girl meet this terrible stranger?

Through an app called Whisper on her handheld device (yep, the one her parents bought her). And Whisper is only one of many dangerous apps, apps that every parent should be aware of.

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Kik - A free app-based alternative texting service that allows texts/pictures to be sent without being logged in the phone history. (Similar apps: Viber, WhatsApp, TextNow)

Why It’s Dangerous – Makes it easier for your child to talk to strangers without your knowledge since it bypasses the wireless providers’ short message services (SMS). Children also think they can “sext” without parents finding out. In addition, strangers can send your child a “friend request.”

Contributed by: Keli Swierczek

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We asked everyone to tell their legislators to oppose SB 1640. That bill advocated the abolition of the ratio of special education to regular education students in regular education classrooms. IASSW additionally encouraged students and members to oppose budget cuts that restricted eligibility for Early Intervention and the reductions in grants and financial supports for community mental health.

The IASSW group gathered for lunch with two representatives from the Illinois State Board of Education, Andy Euhliss and Mark Conyer. They shared that over the past ten years there has been a reduction of staff from approximately 1,000 to 260 workers. To say that the ISBE offices are over-worked and understaffed is ludicrous. It is not surprising that it is very difficult to get anyone to respond when calling the Illinois State Board of Education.

I had a great conversation with Senator Julie Morrison, the IASSW legislator of the year. She is very supportive of our positions, but did point out that Governor Rauner holds the executive office in the state and that many decisions and legislative initiatives await decisions and direction from the Governor’s Office. Unfortunately, I did not have any students with me when I met with Senator Morrison because she was interested to discussing legislative processes with them. But that interaction reinforced the importance of establishing that personal relationship with your legislator. There are many who want to be our allies in Springfield and those relationships need to be cultivated. I also had the opportunity to observe two committee meetings and meet several other legislative liaisons during the afternoon.

I encourage you to take the day off from work and participate in Advocacy Day. Establishing an appointment time with your legislator doesn’t guarantee a face to face meeting, but their staff will record your presence at their office and suggest when and where you might meet with them a little later in the day.

Contributed by: Tom Tebbe
IASSW President
On March 13 Region 16 sponsored School Social Work Best Practices. The workshop was held at United Methodist Children’s Home in Mt. Vernon. There were 56 persons in attendance, included School Social Workers, Private Practice Clinicians, Registered Nurses and staff from the local SAFE program.

Chris Diesen, LCSW and Regional Representative for Region 16 presented three hours of Ethics in the morning session. The title of her presentation was Ethics and Technology Considerations for Mental Health Practitioners. A review of technology was shared and how it currently impacts clients and mental health practitioners. Ethical issues in relation to technology were addressed, more specifically in relationship to social media. Social media policies are necessary as a way to protect ourselves professional. A great resource that can be used as a guide for a social media policy is from the work of Dr. Keely Kolmes and can be found on her website: dkkolmes.com

Following lunch, Lindsay Adams, LCSW and NASW Region Representative for Southern Illinois Region, spoke about Emotional MDR (EMDR). Mrs. Adams is a Certified Counselor of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy and is working toward her Supervisor Certificate. She explained the phases of EMDR and how the client processes through each. The 8 phases are:

1) Client history/treatment planning
2) Preparation
3) Assessment
4) Desensitization
5) Installation
6) Body Scan
7) Closure
8) Reevaluation

Mrs. Adams and a co-therapist then briefly demonstrated the EMDR technique. She reports improved for the client can be evident as quickly as the first session.

The final speakers were Detective Scott Smith and his partner, Kevin. They are both Detectives with the Mt. Vernon Police Department, and work primarily in Drug Enforcement. They shared information regarding the issues of Methamphetamine, Crack Cocaine and Heroin in the area. They shared many visual props and were very entertaining in their presentation. Prior to the presentation, they had been cleaning up a meth dump site. They discussed how drugs impact families, and what signs and smells we should be aware of as we work with students and families.

Overall, the day was very informative and we received positive feedback regarding the choice of speakers and the geographic location of the workshop.

Contributed by: Sheila Ashby

Region 16 Representative
On Saturday, April 18, two Illinois School Social Workers were given awards at the 18th Annual School Social Work Association of America Conference. Dr. Michael Kelly was presented with the Gary Lee Shaffer Award for academic contributions to the field of school social work. Dr. Kelly was a practitioner in the western suburbs before joining the faculty of Loyola University in Chicago. He has published and contributed to more than 100 articles and has co-authored several books particularly in the area of evidenced based practices.

Stacey Colgan, the IASSW School Social Worker of Year, was also the recipient of the SSWAA School Social Worker of the Year award. Stacey talked about her transition from business to social work to school social work as her career evolved. The endorsements from her school colleagues spoke of her enthusiasm, her creativity and her responsiveness to student, parent and teacher issues. The quality of Stacey’s interventions and the creation of a SEL model in which all of the staff participate in her school are some of the attributes that made Stacey a worthy recipient.

Having two school social workers from Illinois honored on a national level is a great tribute to the vitality of school social work as profession within the state of Illinois.

Contributed by Tom Tebbe
IASSW President
School Social Workers!

Please consider nominating an outstanding School Social Worker, Citizen, or Legislator for recognition at the next Annual IASSW Conference. Is it not too soon to complete a nomination form (found on the IASSW website) and gather letters of support to submit with the nomination.

Consider nominating that special school social worker who has over the years started new programs, incorporated innovative techniques into their practice, and has gone above and beyond an already overwhelming job description. That person should be nominated for recognition. We all have an interest in maintaining the highest standards, and nominating and recognizing the best among us will celebrate those standards.

Consider that special parent, community leader, agency worker, volunteer, teacher, or administrator who has enhanced the lives of Illinois school children. That person would appreciate your support and acknowledgement.

Consider a dedicated legislator who has supported the views and positions of IASSW and is partnering with us to effect policy that best serves the needs of school children in Illinois. He or she deserves our public thanks.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence!

Criteria

School Social Worker of the Year

An outstanding School Social Worker actively practicing, supervising, or teaching in the field of school social work who:

1. Integrates knowledge and experience to provide quality services to students.
2. Demonstrates creativity/innovation in their particular school social work position.
3. Contributes to public knowledge and awareness of school social work.
4. Is an active member of IASSW in good standing.

Citizen of the Year

A public citizen or non-school social worker who has contributed to the enhancement of school social work services through personal support and public action.

Legislator of the Year

A current Illinois state or federal legislator whose work over the past years has benefited our school children, the educational system, and/or strengthened the profession of school social work.

Michelle L. Washington

Awards Committee Chair
Spot light: Regional Representative: Ellie Zoerink

This month I would like to recognize a retiring board member and long time regional rep from region 8- Western IL---Ellie Zoerink. Ellie has achieved the IASSW School Social Worker of the Year Award and has been our long standing Midwest School Social Work Council representative from Illinois. She has held the treasurer position on the Midwest board and spent hours getting to their meetings from Kentucky to Iowa and Michigan to Indiana and Wisconsin (and others). She has supervised interns, held many positions in her community from bell ringer to chair on committees that affect students and their families. She has been the president of her union, serving coworkers with her dedication and professionalism. She has been our IASSW finance chair, conference treasurer, conference committee chair and so much more. She has willingly given of her time, expertise and friendly personality. She will be sorely missed from the IASSW board and from her educational cooperative. Join me in saying ---Ellie enjoy your hard earned retirement, time with your family and maybe just a little bit of free time!

Contributed by Rise’ Davis
IASSW Vice-President

Very good article from Social Work Today on adolescent grief.

www.socialworktoday.com/archive/030415p20.shtml

This is Michael Langendorf with State Representative Kelly Cassidy on Lobby Day!