

# CURRENTS

OF THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER

National Association of Social Workers



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## *In the Aftermath of the Election of Donald Trump*

### **Chapter's Advocacy and Legislative Agenda Moving Forward**

Executive Director  
Dr. Robert Schachter

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### **Homeless Services Launch Social Worker Initiative to Work with Children and Families in Shelters**

Jahmani Hylton, LMSW  
Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Family Services  
with the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS)

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Brian Romero, LMSW  
Chair, SOGIE Collective, NASW-NYC Board of Directors,  
Member-at-Large

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## *In the Aftermath of the Election of Donald Trump*

# **Chapter's Advocacy and Legislative Agenda Moving Forward**

Robert S. Schachter, DSW  
Executive Director NASW- NYC

- Evolving Positions and Organizing in Response to the Election
- Creating a Social Work Investment Initiative in the State
- Moving to End Licensing Exemptions

*Editor's note: Bob will be retiring on January 13, 2017. [Click here](#) for his retirement announcement.*

Social workers in New York City and across the country shared a common reaction to the election of Donald Trump as the next President of the United States. Given his repeated positions during the election, such as deporting millions of immigrants and the potential for human rights abuses that can come as a result of such a massive undertaking, there is good reason to be.

Similarly, his more recent choices for Attorney General, Health and Human Services, Treasury, as well as for intelligence and foreign affairs can lead us to expect the worst.

Two days after the election, Chapter President Candida Brooks-Harrison and I issued a statement to the membership putting the election in context, expressing concern about what a Trump Presidency will mean, as well as recognizing the impact the shocking result can have on one's emotional well-being, both among social workers and the larger community. [Click here to access the statement.](#)

In a discussion at the Board of Director's meeting on December 7th, the Chapter's leadership discussed the ways in which the Chapter will be engaging membership around these developments. Already, a number of Chapter committees have held meetings on the implications of Trump's Presidency, with more meetings to come.

Also, the Chapter plans to be a presence at the Women's March on Washington to be held on January 21st, the day after the inauguration. Members will be notified right before Christmas of the availability of seats on the buses that the Chapter has chartered.

Overall, the Chapter will be looking at Trump's initiatives through the lens of race, diversity and intersectionality, including the impact on clients, communities, human service programs, and on ourselves.

### **Governor's Office, the Legislature, Agencies and the Profession Attempting to End Licensing Exemptions.**

In the last legislative session, the New York State legislature and the Governor's office attempted to end the licensing exemptions for agencies but could not reach agreement on how to do so. As a result, exemptions for agencies were extended through July 1, 2018. Given that the licensing statute was passed into law in 2002, agency exemptions have been in place for many years. Exemptions were first intended to end in 2010, then extended to 2013 and then to 2016.

Despite the failure to end exemptions for agencies, discussions on the issue are on-going. In June, 2016, the Governor's office issued a document that listed functions believed to not require licensed professionals, including general counseling and the development and implementation of service plans. While general counseling and service planning (as distinct from treatment planning which involves a diagnosis and therefore a LCSW) may often require a high level of skill to adequately assess the needs of clients with complex needs, the discrete activities involved are listed in the original licensing statute as exempt functions.

Leaders in NASW, the Association of Deans of the Schools of Social Work and the Clinical Society spent the summer months discussing the Governor's document and conferred with social workers who run agencies in domestic violence, homeless services, refugee services, and child welfare. These social workers shared that while it would be ideal to employ licensed social workers in many direct service positions, the possibility of that happening would be formidable and mandating licensed social workers for these positions would be impossible to comply with. Very limited funding for programs, the shortage of professionals and the high level of turnover are some of the factors that would make it problematic to require licensed staff for all general counseling and service planning functions.

### **Four Proposals for Investing in Social Work**

Given this reality, leaders in the professional organizations that have been working together on licensing issues agreed to support the proposition that non-licensed staff could do general counseling and service planning provided that they are supervised by a licensed social worker. Based on this, NASW-NYC and NASW-NYS are proposing that the Governor and legislature invest \$18 million to enable agencies to hire licensed social work supervisors.

In addition, to help not-for-profit human service providers be more attractive to recruiting and retaining licensed social workers, NASW-NYC and NASW-NYS are proposing an expansion of the social work loan forgiveness program by an additional \$4 million. It is currently at \$1.75 million. The program began in 2005 after NASW advocated for its creation.

Supporting agencies to employ licensed supervisors and to provide more opportunities for social workers to get loan forgiveness should go a long way to enabling these agencies to no longer need an exemption from the licensing law.

A third investment proposal addresses the fact that there is no data on the availability or shortage of licensed social workers in New York State. NASW is proposing that the State Office for the Professions conduct a brief survey of all licensed social workers when they apply or renew their license in order to determine such things as where social workers are working, the sectors they are in, whether they are engaged in such functions as case management, clinical practice, supervision, or management. Additionally, a workforce survey could determine the number of bi-lingual social workers and the languages they speak, as well as the representation of social workers by race, age and gender. Including salary information would also be helpful in determining differences by sector and whether shortages correspond to such differences in pay.

Once data is available and shortages documented, additional investment initiatives would be undertaken. NASW is proposing an investment of \$500,000 for such a workforce study to be carried out.

A fourth investment initiative addresses the issue of many social workers' not passing the licensing exam. While exams are intended to weed out practitioners who do not meet a certain standard of practice related competence, there has been a long standing concern within NASW and the broader human services community that the licensing exam is not simply testing for competence but has confounding elements such as the wording of questions that can catch unsuspecting and less test-wise test takers. This has been attested to by many of the best trainers in test preparation.

An investment of \$250,000 a year is being proposed to provide free test prep training to social workers who have failed the exam and need to take it over. Given the high cost of re-taking the exam, this support could remove a barrier to being able to become licensed for social workers.

### **Other Critical Initiatives**

Beyond the four areas of social work investments, there are additional initiatives that NASW is actively lobbying for.

The first is to open a new grand parenting period for the LMSW. This is something the Chapter has supported for many years and, if adopted, would help agencies that are employing MSWs who do not have the license to come into compliance with licensing requirements and help eliminate the need for exemptions. This would be a one time opportunity for obtaining the LMSW without the exam for MSWs who have been working at least two years. One of the limits of obtaining the LMSW through this approach, according to the Office of the Professions, is that an LMSW who did not take the exam would not be eligible in the future to obtain the LCSW.

### **Making Conversion Therapy Illegal in NY**

NASW will also be lobbying in the upcoming legislative session to support efforts to make conversion therapy illegal in New York. According to National NASW's 2015 statement on the issue, "conversion therapy relates to seeking to change a person's sexual orientation, including, but not limited to, efforts to change behaviors, gender identity, or gender expressions, or to reduce or eliminate sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward a person of the same gender." It is an intervention intended to "repair" or "convert" a person in order to reduce or eliminate a person's sexual desire for a member of his or her own gender. NASW considers such interventions to be unethical. For NASW's statement, go to <http://www.socialworkblog.org/practice-and-professional-development/2015/06/nasw-updates-position-statement-on-sexual-orientation-change-efforts-soce/>

### **Raise the Age in our Criminal Justice System**

NASW is playing a leading role in the State legislature to raise the age of criminal responsibility. New York and North Carolina are the only two states in the Nation that still processes all 16 and 17 year old kids as adults in criminal court and place them in adult jails and prisons.

### **Require a "Racial Impact" Analysis of New Policies**

New policies in the state require a financial impact and environmental impact analyses before adoption. NASW is now proposing that an analysis of racial disproportionality be done when developing new legislation, policies and programs in New York.

NASW members will be kept apprised of developments on both the national and local front in upcoming issues of the newsletter and through emails to members.



*It's Still a Thing?!*

## **NASW-NYC's Stance Against Conversion Therapy**

*The battle is not over, not even close*

Brian Romero, LMSW (he/him/his)

Chair, SOGIE Collective, NASW-NYC Board of Directors, Member-at-Large

Recently, while at the NYC Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, I was chairing a committee meeting of social workers, when the subject of conversion therapy came up. A colleague turned to me bewildered and asked "that's still a thing?!" The meeting continued but I could not shake off her expression. It was a genuine question, and in fact, her question is something I have wondered for several years. How is conversion therapy still a thing?!

Conversion therapy, sometimes known as 'reparative therapy,' is a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression (Human Rights Campaign). Since the inception of this practice, it has served as a despicable symbol of the reality that helping professionals, including social workers, can and do, in fact, cause harm if left unchecked.

The National Association of Social Workers released a position statement in May 2015 on sexual orientation and change efforts (SOCE). The statement declares "SOCE can negatively affect one's mental health and...the practice of SOCE violates the very tenets of the social work profession as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics including maintaining competence, fighting discrimination, and avoiding misrepresentation" (NASW, 2015). It is important to state that NASW joins other professional associations in opposing SOCE, including the American Psychological Association, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and others. The NYC Chapter, as a local unit of NASW National, also vehemently opposes conversion therapy.

A personal account of someone who underwent conversion therapy described its horrors as practice. TC shared, "the first step — which usually lasted six months — [is] where they 'deconstruct us as a person' using aversion therapy, shock therapy, harassment and occasional physical abuse. Their goal was to get us to hate ourselves for being LGBTQ. The second step of the program...removed us of everything that made us a unique person...and instead made us a walking, talking, robot. We were no longer people at the end of the program" (Huffington Post). Other forms of conversion therapy have also included hypnosis, cognitive and behavioral therapies, and even psychotropic medication.

In 2009, the American Psychological Association completed a report which highlighted risks for those who underwent conversion therapy, including: "depression, helplessness, hopelessness, social withdrawal, suicidality, substance abuse, decreased self-esteem, increased self-hatred, feelings of anger, loss of friends and potential romantic partners, problems in emotional intimacy, a feeling of being dehumanized, and a loss of faith" (National Center for Lesbian Rights).

When the research is combined with anecdotes of immense pain from those who have undergone conversion therapy, one thing becomes very clear: conversion therapy must be banned as a practice, and social workers must lead the effort.

In New York State, efforts have been undertaken to ban conversion therapy altogether and have been met with great resistance in the New York State legislature. In 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an Executive Order, which prohibited Medicaid and Medicare from reimbursing practitioners of conversion therapy from charging insurances for their provision to youth. While this has hindered it some, it does not replace a legislative ban on conversion therapy — the battle is not over, not even close. Conversion therapy continues to be practiced today, in our very state and city, by private practitioners. Most recently, the Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expres-

sion (SOGIE) Collective became aware of two conferences, both of which were organized by social workers, to promote and educate others about the practice of conversion therapy.

Currently, with the combined resources of both the NYC and NYS Chapters of NASW, our mutual state lobbyist is working in Albany to have conversion therapy banned. The SOGIE Collective has made this issue a priority for the group as well. To this end, we will be meeting with Senator Brad Hoylman, primary sponsor of Senate Bill S121, to further strategize and plan how we can support the efforts to push the passage of this bill. The proposed legislation would designate the practice of conversion therapy as professional misconduct to practitioners who engage in sexual orientation change efforts (i.e. conversion therapy). The SOGIE Collective intends on supporting the push for this legislation and any community organizing efforts to make the ban a reality.

More personally, I must be frank about what this means to me, as a human being and a social worker. When you speak to New Yorkers many can provide a point in their life when they felt their life changed forever. Some say this was 9/11. For me, it was June 12th, 2016. It was 5:00 am when I awoke to the alert of a news article on my cellphone. Forty-nine people had been shot and murdered at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Of those who were killed, the majority were LGBTQ and ninety percent were of Hispanic descent, particularly Puerto Rican. They could have been any queer young person in this country. It could have been me. Suspicions were reported that the murderer was in fact himself someone closeted. He could have also been many queer people in this city. I could have been him.

For those who have had to repress their identities because they belong to marginalized and oppressed communities, the journey to live your truth is confusing and scary, even dangerous. Conversion therapy does not help members of the LGBTQ community; it sends the message that we are "other" and therefore unlovable. It is practices such as conversion therapy that further perpetuate the internalization of homophobia and transphobia and result in the various symptomology that was mentioned earlier. But there is nothing wrong with us. There is nothing wrong with loving the way we love. What is wrong is that society continues, under the mechanisms of systemic racism, heteropatriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia, to attempt to tell us that our lives do not matter. This is not true. Many of us entered the profession of social work because we want to help others, we want to see a change in the world, perhaps, we wanted to spare others pain that we had ourselves suffered. Social workers are healers. We are change agents, and as a colleague said recently, we don't run from the fire, but towards it.

It is in that vein that this article is written as well. This is not solely for the purpose to inform and educate but is meant to serve as a Call to Action.

If you are a social worker along the spectrums of sexual and gender minorities or an ally, if you care about healing and renounce harm, join us. No single issue has ever been successfully pushed without a coalition of stakeholders who together resisted systems and mechanisms of oppression. We call on LGBTQ organizations, agency executives, community organizers, the schools of social work, and liberal and radical social workers. Organize and lobby with us. Let's do it for Orlando, for equity, for a more just profession, for those who have come before us, and those who will come after us, for a more just city and tomorrow. We need you, we are with you, and together we will win.

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## NASW- NYC Lobbies on Raise the Age

Olanike Oyeyemi, LMSW  
Associate Director, NASW-NYC

NASW– NYC and the social work profession have a deep rooted history in fighting for social justice and ensuring that human rights are protected for all. NASW – NYC has been a key player, an advocate, and major lobbyist for Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility in New York State legislatively. NASW- NYC also continues to support the Raise the Age Campaign whose goal is to have New York State join other states that have already changed the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years of age.

The aim of Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility is to increase the public’s knowledge around the law that allows for adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17 years to be prosecuted as adults and placed in the adult criminal justice system. Currently, New York State and North Carolina remain the only two states in the country that still statutorily define age 15 as the cut –off for juvenile jurisdiction regardless of the alleged offense, everyone age 16 and older alleged to have committed a crime is processed in the adult justice system. NASW- NYC continues to support the movement to Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility in NY State from age 16 to age 18 for the following reasons:

- NASW Code of Ethics calls on social workers to challenge social injustice and pursue social change on behalf of oppressed individuals and groups of people.
- Prosecuting children as adults violates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- NASW- NYC’s priority includes placing a focused lens on race and racism, and fighting for equity. Statistics reveal that a higher number of youth arrested and tried as adults are disproportionately children of color.
- 16 and 17 years old children are not safe in adult jails and prisons. While in adult jails, they are at greater risk for sexual victimization and physical violence.
- Youths in adult jails are 36 times more likely to commit suicide, than in juvenile facilities.
- The adolescent brain is not fully developed until age 25, meaning that, there is a chance to intervene with the right service, change behavior and provide better life outcomes for these adolescents, if treated in the juvenile justice system rather than the adult justice system.

Some legislators agree that change is needed and have prioritized this issue. Governor Andrew Cuomo for example, made this a top priority in his speech at his State of the State Address in January 2014 stressing that “Our juvenile justice laws are outdated.” He added that “ It’s not right or fair for 16 and 17- year olds to be tried as adults” (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/transcript-governor-cuomos-2014-state-state-address>). He subsequently created The Commission on Youth, Public Safety & Justice which developed recommendations on how to comprehensively Raise the Age of Criminal responsibility in New York. As an interim step, Gov. Cuomo also issued an Executive Order directing the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, in collaboration with the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), to implement a plan to remove most minors from adult prisons in NY State, to a separate facility for youth.

While the issue has gained some support legislatively, a great deal of work is still needed and the fight continues for the passage of this legislation to Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility to 18 years. NASW- NYC’s lobbyist

Karin Carreau continues her lobbying work in advocating for the passage of this legislation in the Senate. NASW-NYC PACE also continues to raise awareness about this issue and published a statement on December 10, 2015. ([https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/naswnyc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Docs/12-09-15\\_Raise\\_the\\_Age\\_State.pdf?hSearchTerms=%22raise+and+age%22](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/naswnyc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Docs/12-09-15_Raise_the_Age_State.pdf?hSearchTerms=%22raise+and+age%22)) .

As a collective body, it is time for us to take action. It is the time for the social work profession, policy advocates, legislators along with youth and families to draw attention to this issue and the need for change. The ultimate goal is to ensure that the legal process responds to all children as children and that their best interest and human rights are protected.



## New York's Youth Can't Wait Another Year: It's Time to Raise the Age

Elizabeth Powers, LMSW,  
Director of Youth Justice, Children's Defense Fund- NY

Adolescents in New York face a tragic double standard. On the one hand, at age sixteen they are too young to sign a contract, rent a car, attend an R-rated movie, or a host of other responsibilities society deems them too young to maturely conduct on their own. And yet, youth in New York are automatically charged as adults in the criminal justice system at that age, meaning, they can be arrested without parental notification, held in an adult jail, and tried in adult courts. This contradiction means that teens in New York can spend five years in an adult correctional facility before they are old enough to purchase alcohol.

Last year in New York State, nearly 30,000 sixteen and seventeen year olds were arrested and automatically prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system. The vast majority of these young people – over 70% - were arrested for misdemeanor offenses. Considered adults, their parents are not notified of their arrest nor are they involved in the questioning of the young person, or consulted prior to incriminating statements being made. If detained, these young people find themselves in adult jails – in New York City, on Rikers Island – where the abusive conditions for adolescents have been well documented<sup>2</sup>. Youth of color are disproportionately impacted by this antiquated policy, with Black and Latino youth representing 70%<sup>1</sup> of youth arrested, and 80% of youth sentenced to incarceration<sup>3</sup>.

While every state has some mechanism by which youth, under the age of adult criminal responsibility can be prosecuted in the adult system for certain offenses, youth in New York are automatically charged as adults at age 16 for every type of offense, regardless of the severity. The vast majority of states set the age of criminal responsibility at age eighteen, and while a handful of states remain at age seventeen, only two states – New York and North Carolina – retain sixteen as the age at which youth are automatically prosecuted as adults in the justice system. Over the past several years multiple states<sup>4</sup> have left New York behind, raising their automatic age of criminal prosecution, most recently, South Carolina<sup>5</sup> and Louisiana<sup>6</sup>. Connecticut<sup>7</sup> and Illinois<sup>8</sup> raised the age several years ago with successful results and have since considered proposals to raise the age further from eighteen to twenty-one<sup>9</sup>. Despite national successes with bi-partisan support, New York remains one of two states where sixteen year olds are automatically considered adults – regardless of the severity of the offense.

Youth are vulnerable to abuse in correctional settings and have elevated risk for suicide. This was made tragically apparent when Kalief Browder, a Bronx teenager arrested at age sixteen and detained three years at Rikers Island, took his own life last year. While the criminal case against Kalief was eventually dropped, the damage of incarceration was intractable, having endured years of solitary confinement and physical abuse. This heartbreak is experienced by families across the state – by Alicia Barraza<sup>10</sup> whose son Ben tragically took his own life after enduring relentless abuse and inadequate mental health services in an adult correctional facility, or the families of young people currently battling excessive solitary confinement in Syracuse<sup>11</sup>.

The Raise the Age – New York Campaign (<http://raisetheageny.com/>) has been advocating for New York to come in line with the rest of the country and comprehensively raise the age of criminal responsibility so that youth impacted by the justice system are afforded age appropriate responses and interventions to meet their needs and decrease their chances of returning to the justice system in the future. Led by advocates from around the state, including Children's Defense Fund – New York, the Campaign has over 100 organizations supporting the effort – including the National Association of Social Workers. Advocates statewide have elevated a wide range of voices

supportive of raising the age including impacted youth and families; youth service providers, the faith community, and law enforcement. Despite an increased call to action from a diversity of perspectives, the legislature has yet to act.

Youth treated as adults in the justice system are not only exposed to harm, they are more likely to recidivate in the future. Studies have shown that youth charged as adults are more likely to be rearrested sooner and for more serious offense than young people treated in the juvenile justice system<sup>12</sup>. Once they return home, many adolescents face the burden of having a criminal conviction. The scope of impact is far reaching including potentially jeopardizing a young person's ability to obtain housing, employment, higher education, certain professional licenses and can impact their immigration status<sup>13</sup>.

Social Workers regularly encounter clients dealing with the life-long barriers imposed by criminal convictions and the traumas associated with incarceration – particularly for vulnerable populations such as youth. We understand the importance of age appropriate interventions that address the needs of youth and families. We see in our work the intersections of race, poverty, and oppression, and how all of these interplay with the justice system to impact the lives of our clients and also see how smart policies can fundamentally change the experience of individuals, families, and communities. Raising the age at which we determine youth should be automatically treated as adults is one such policy change – it can drastically impact the lives of thousands of youths in New York, their families, and their communities. Youth are not adults and it's time that our laws come in line with that reality.

This January marks the start of another legislative session and the next opportunity for New York Lawmakers to drastically alter the lives of young people impacted by the justice system. New York State has the opportunity to prevent future tragedies as well as improve the lives of young people and communities. New York cannot continue to treat youth as adults – exposing them to trauma, neglecting their needs as adolescents, and decreasing their chances for future success. As social workers, it is our imperative to confront injustice. I urge you to do your part to make New York more equitable for the youth. Visit [www.raisetheagency.com](http://www.raisetheagency.com) to send a letter to your elected officials today, join the Campaign to Raise the Age, and be the voice of change for youth in New York.

[Click Here for the list of References](#)



## Giving Young Men of Color Impacted by Community Violence Tools to Succeed

*Expanding their understanding of their emotional experience, including anger*

Kenton Kirby, LMSW, Director of Trauma Support Services  
NASW- NYC Board of Directors, Member-at-Large

I began my professional career working in foster care where I was overworked, overwhelmed and underpaid. I became frustrated and worried that I made the wrong decision for myself to get involved in this work. Several times during that first year, I contemplated a career change, because the odds were stacked heavily against me as a caseworker. I was also aware of how the odds were stacked even more heavily on the children and families impacted by the foster care system. While working in this system, I met two young boys who helped shape my career and ultimately, my values.

They were two brothers living in a foster home; it was not their first. Their constant shifting from one home to another was reduced by many to a simple behavioral problem: they were “acting out”. I saw two brothers wrestling for control of some aspect of their lives. Witnessing these boys’ struggle with the uncontrollable factors around them led to my lifelong commitment to give a voice to young men of color.

I saw the ways in which systems could have a negative impact on the lives of young men of color. Over the course of my time working in social work, I have held those two boys’ story as my foundation to keep my clients’ experiences at the center of my work.

Keeping my clients as the primary focus has driven me to get involved in innovative initiatives that work specifically with vulnerable young black and brown men. Both the current political climate as well as social media, which has been a transformative tool to organize against inequality, have shined a light on an issue I believe has been historically misinterpreted.

In my current role as Director of Trauma Support Services at the Crown Heights Community Mediation Center, I run Make It Happen, a program engaging young men of color between the ages of 16 and 24 who have been directly or indirectly impacted by community violence. In our work with these young men, we seek to understand how their definition of masculinity is intertwined with their own trauma history. Through group and individual therapy, our purpose is to expand the young men’s understanding of their emotional experience; they typically display anger as their baseline emotion.

We believe that helping our young men develop a deeper understanding of their feelings will enable them to hold the trauma they have experienced more effectively. The world our young men have to navigate day to day can be unfair to them and by giving them tools to navigate that unfair world around them is how we try to keep our young men safe.

Building trust is another vital part of Make It Happen. In order to change our participants’ perception of mental health services, it is important for us to acknowledge the historic oppression of people of color at the hands of service providers.

The Make It Happen program will continue to bring client-focused services to the young men we work with daily. We will continue to lift our clients’ voices to the surface so their needs can be met. I wish I could thank those two young boys for setting the foundation within me all those years ago to continue on with this work.



## Homeless Services Launch Social Worker Initiative to Work with Children and Families in Shelters

Jahmani Hylton, LMSW

Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Family Services with the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS)

- Strengthening overall permanency outcomes for families with children in shelter.
- Enhancing the delivery and coordination of mental health and related services to families with children in shelter.
- Improving linkages to mental health and community based services.

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Over twenty years of research have documented the relationship between housing instability and health and mental health problems<sup>1</sup>.

Of critical concern is the impact maternal mental health, trauma and environmental stress can have on children's cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Nationally, homeless children experience mental health problems at a rate two to four times higher than low-income children who are housed<sup>2</sup>.

A study of women in shelters in New York State found that over 80% had experienced trauma and almost half reported depression, while one-quarter of the children met criteria for mental health disorders<sup>3</sup>.

In New York City, approximately 35% of individuals residing in shelters (including both families with children and single adults) suffer from serious mental illness, more than one-third reported serious emotional or physical health problems in their household in the five years prior to shelter entry, and approximately one-third of families entering shelters reported domestic violence as the reason for entering shelter<sup>6</sup>.

Homelessness and shelter placement can also isolate families from traditional sources of support, such as other family members, neighborhood connections and institutions within their home communities. Living in a shelter also places stress on individual family members and can cause conflict within the family relationship.

Families in shelter have multiple service needs and are frequently involved with a number of systems and providers, including the Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services; the Department of Education; the Administration for Children's Services; and medical and mental health treatment providers. These systems can be challenging for families to navigate without appropriate supports.

In November 2015, New York City (the City) announced ThriveNYC, A Mental Health Roadmap for All, an unprecedented strategy and set of initiatives by NYC to approach mental health as a comprehensive public health challenge involving many City agencies, including the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). For more information on ThriveNYC, see: <https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/>. ThriveNYC outlines 54 initiatives, 23 of them new, to support the mental health well-being of New Yorkers.

In order to improve access to mental health services in Family with Children shelters, to improve family functioning, and to assist families with children in shelter as they navigate multiple systems and cope with the stressors and anxiety that are induced by homelessness, DHS has launched the Social Worker in Shelter initiative; a plan to place Licensed Masters' of Social Work (LMSW) in shelters for families with children. These staff will serve as Client Care Coordinators.

Through the use of Client Care Coordinators, DHS seeks to:

1. Enhance the delivery and coordination of mental health and related services to families with children in shelter.
2. Promote and model best practices for shelter social service provider staff.
3. Improve linkages to mental health and community based services.
4. Increase the ability of shelter social service staff to address mental health issues in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner that incorporates strength-based, family-driven and youth/child-guided care.
5. Strengthen overall permanency outcomes for families with children in shelter.

Ultimately, Client Care Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring families are in receipt of optimal mental health and related care and service coordination.

Finally, the addition of Social Workers to Family with Children shelters marks a systemic change in the manner in which families are assisted while residing in shelter.

If interested in joining us as agents of change and intrepid stewards in this new initiative, please submit your cover letter and resume to [SRecruitment@dhs.nyc.gov](mailto:SRecruitment@dhs.nyc.gov).

#### References

- 1 See e.g. Grant, Gracy, Goldsmith, et al. (2013). Twenty-five years of child and family homelessness: Where are we now? *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(Suppl 2), e1-e10, and Suglia, Duarte, and Sandel (2011). Housing quality, housing instability, and maternal mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 88(6), 1105-1116.
- 2 Bassuk, Richard, and Tsertsvadze (2015). The prevalence of mental illness in homeless children: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 54(2), 86-96.e2.
- 3 Hayes, M., Zonneville, M., & Bassuk, E. (2013). The SHIFT Study final report: Service and housing interventions for families in transition. Newton, MA: National Center on Family Homelessness
- 4 Thrive NYC: A Mental Health Roadmap for All
- 5 Smith, Flores, Lin and Markovic (2005). Understanding family homelessness in New York City. Vera Institute of Justice.
- 6 New York City Department of Homeless Services data.



## School Social Workers Produce Positive Outcomes for Student Teen Parents and their Infants

Zamyra Abdel Hady, LCSW, M.Ed  
LYFE Program

- Helping the student teen parents to ‘dream’ a better future for themselves and their children.
- Making it possible for student teen parents to stay on track to graduate from high school or complete high school equivalency diplomas.

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*Editor's Note: This article contains the author's personal views only, and is not the view of the NYC Department of Education (DOE). Photo credit to Evelyn Avila*

Living for the Young Family through Education (LYFE) is a NYC Department of Education program that provides free Early Childhood Education to children of student-parents; between 8 weeks and 3 years of age.

LYFE makes it possible for student parents to stay on track to graduate from high school or complete high school equivalency diplomas. In addition, LYFE supports student parents' transition into parenthood by providing high-quality supportive counseling, advocacy services and academic guidance by a group of licensed social workers.

The LYFE Program has over 30 licensed social workers that implement student engagement practices such as facilitating weekly, individual and group sessions, connecting student parents to quality referral services, as well as collaborating with school/community partners. LYFE social workers are advocates for the student parents and their families.

LYFE Social workers help the student parents to ‘dream’ a better future for themselves and their children. We provide student parents with the tools to transition from LYFE, prepared to sustain healthy families, and attain post-secondary success.

Student parents are faced with numerous issues from homelessness to domestic violence, to gender identity conflicts. These teens and their children's needs are wide-ranging and often are too complicated for the student-parents to maneuver. The student parent is often unable to negotiate the various systems in play in their lives. The LYFE social workers are unwavering in their commitment to the student parents, and, therefore, work relentlessly with them to ensure they attain their goals by collaboratively removing barriers, considering all possible options, and empowering students with the tools necessary to strive toward achieving all that they desire.

The licensed social workers employed by the NYC Department of Education are faced with many struggles on a daily basis and the LYFE Program licensed social workers are no exception. We have faced many challenges since the LYFE Program was re-branded several years ago.

LYFE social workers, as we are proud to identify ourselves, experienced a crisis and confronted ethical dilemmas that many social workers confront on a daily basis. Working in a program that was re-branded, expecting that we would continue to determine the parameters of our roles as professionals often do, could not have been any further from the truth. As social workers in an educational organization our roles were re-defined and expectations were created by people who had a different vision for the program.

As social workers we have an ethical obligation to our 'clients', but also, we must navigate the demands of the agency we represent. This is an ongoing struggle to strike that balance in our professional identity that will prove most beneficial to all stakeholders. Do we consider our roles as agents for change? If so, how does this change manifest in our daily professional interactions? The inner conflict for us becomes a daily struggle as we must examine our practice and reflect on the expectations imbedded in the expectations of our employer.

Instead of finding easy solutions, we were faced with more questions and concerns. Am I willing to change? I think that it is easier to accept change when it does not require much of us. As a result, I became more reactive than proactive and, even at some point disengaged in the communication process. I felt disenfranchised and misunderstood. I felt ignored in re-shaping the future of the LYFE Program as our professional input was not solicited or considered. Even though efforts were made by the administrators to engage us in the process, we did not feel valued as partners.

Where do you go with your feelings and concerns?

I was fortunate enough to attend a staff development opportunity run by Jaye Murray, LCSW and Executive Director of the NYCDOE Counseling Support Programs. In a room full of licensed social workers from different programs and settings within the NYCDOE, I discovered that my feelings and concerns were universal. This was an eye opener for me, but the most powerful interaction of that full day event was Ms. Murray's response to all the numerous complaints: "What are you going to do about it?" or "How do you propose we deal with it/fix it?" These two questions became the day's mantra and for me, an internalized voice of encouragement.

Ms. Murray suggested a novel idea: "If you want a change, become a leader, become part of the leadership that creates the change." I thought to myself: that simple, really?

I left that staff development day empowered, re-focused and inspired. I decided to do two things from that day forward:

- Inspire every single person that I come across from colleague to student, from neighbor to family member, everyone.
- Take responsibility for the change I want to see and take on a leadership role. Subsequently, I became a UFT Chapter Leader-LYFE Program.

This change within resulted in my collaborative engagement in open dialogue with Dr. Ahmed, the Principal of LYFE Program. A working arrangement is emerging and creating many opportunities for all UFT Members in the LYFE Program.

In particular, Dr. Ahmed has been receptive to the professional needs of the LYFE Social Workers, and knowledgeable about what it is like to be a social worker in the largest public school system in the United States of America – the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). She has provided staff development opportunities for social workers to earn 12 free continuing education credits (CEU's) per academic year. She has provided diverse staff development opportunities as a result of input from the LYFE Social Workers' Staff Development Committee.

I must say the LYFE Program social workers are in a much better place than when I began my work in LYFE. There is much more to be done and accomplished but I am confident that we are building a strong community and we are true partners in this sea of change.

Social workers are agents of change as well as advocates for our clients. We must lead by example; we must be able to do for ourselves what we do for and demand of others. If we advocate for our client's change; we must be open to the constant challenge of change ourselves. And above all, let's be the leaders we want to follow, and let's inspire each other to create the world we want to be in, one person at a time.

## NASW-NYC hosts Annual Meeting on October 20, 2016

# The National Election, Social Work in the City & The Impact of Systemic Racism on Health and Mental Health

Joe Barker, MSW  
Program Manager for Membership and Fund Development

With over 500 New York City Social Workers registered for the NASW-NYC's Annual Meeting, we are pleased to report a successful evening of awards, guest speakers, and networking. Every year, we look forward to our Annual Meeting, where Social Workers come together from all their various positions, and learn what their membership can do for them. For our 2016 Annual Meeting we were honored to have the awardees and our Keynote Speaker, the Honorable Dr. Mary Bassett, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.



Keynote Speaker Dr. Mary Bassett



NASW-NYC Executive Director Dr. Robert Schachter, Onaje Muid, Lifetime Achievement award recipient Dr. Frances Brisbane, and NASW-NYC Chapter President Candida Brooks-Harrison

Dr. Mary Bassett began her presentation by expressing her appreciation for Social Workers and the leadership of NASW-NYC in many of her efforts as Commissioner. She then spoke about her department and the revolutionary practice of incorporating racial equity into every aspect of its work. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has worked to tackle racism in the programs that it oversees. Dr. Bassett encouraged everyone to register, to vote, and to not give up - "This is not the time to get tired, we have an opportunity to make a difference..."

The *Lifetime Achievement Award* is not an award we acknowledge each year. It is only awarded when we recognize an individual Social Worker who has worked tirelessly and has utilized the entirety of our values and ethics in that work. In this way, Dr. Frances Brisbane was selected, not just for serving three decades as Dean of Stony Brook School of Social Work, or her newest position as the Vice President of Diversity, though these are admirable. Dr. Brisbane was honored because in each role she took, she executed it with compassion, integrity, and with a focus on human relationships.



James R. Dumpson Chapter Service Award recipient, Sandy Bernabei



Candida Brooks-Harrison, Dr. Robert Schachter, and Social Work Image Award recipients, Brooklyn Defender Services (Social Work Team)



Social Work Image Award recipient, Claudette Duff, and NASW-NYC Board Member Marcie Gitlin



Social Work Image Award recipient Alicia Montero, and NASW-NYC Board Member Brian Romero

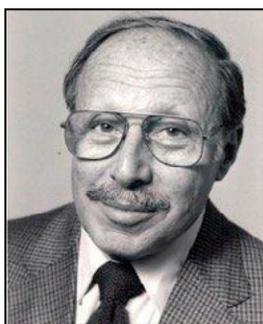
The *Dr. James R. Dumpson Chapter Service Award* recognizes a person who has tirelessly worked on behalf of the chapter and the membership, to defend our values and to progress our work. This year the award was presented to Sandy Bernabei, our immediate past president.

Each year, we also present our *Social Work Image Award*, an award recognizing unique work being done in the field. This year we honored Claudette Duff, Alicia Montero, and the Social Work Team of Brooklyn Defender Services.

We also welcomed the NASW-NYC Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE) to present two scholarships; The *David Roth Scholarship* was offered to Lauren Mifsud, and the *Miriam Dinerman Scholarship* to Anne Elizabeth Walden-Newman.

We look forward to next year's Annual Meeting, and we invite you to save October 19th, 2017 as the date.

For [pictures](#) and [video](#) snap shots of the 2016 Annual Meeting please visit our website.



## In Memoriam

Robert Salmon, Prominent and Prolific Social Work Scholar Dies After Long Illness.

Robert Salmon, DSW, died peacefully in May after a long illness. A nationally recognized leader in the area of group work practice, prominent and prolific social work scholar, and renowned academic administrator, Bob found time to serve as an officer of the New York City Chapter of NASW, Sunnyside Community Services, and the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups. Entering academia, after an exceptionally successful practice career with the Child Study Association of America and Camp Wel-Met, Bob joined the faculty of the Hunter College (now Silberman) School of Social Work in 1972; where he served until his retirement in 2010.

In 1976, he was selected by the Dean, Harold Lewis, to become the School's Associate Dean. Bob served this post with great distinction for 14 years, as well as being the Acting Dean of the School on three occasions during that period. A prolific author of books, articles and chapters, Bob was an accomplished scholar. He was widely considered to be an authority both on group work and social administration. He was treasured both by his students and colleagues and respected by all who had the great privilege of working with him.

## WINTER CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Please click on the titles to register for each workshop.

### **Beyond Bullying: Exploring the Pivotal Role of Shame in Acts of Bullying and Violence**

January 12, 2017, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Jonathan Fast, PhD, MSW  
2 CE Contact Hours

### **Making Hard Life Decisions at Difficult Times - Hospital to Home and End of Life Decision Making**

January 24, 2017, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Eileen Zenker, LCSW, CCM  
2 CE Contact Hours

### **LGBT Community: What We All Need to Know**

February 16, 2017, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Nicole Avallone, LCSW  
2 CE Contact Hours

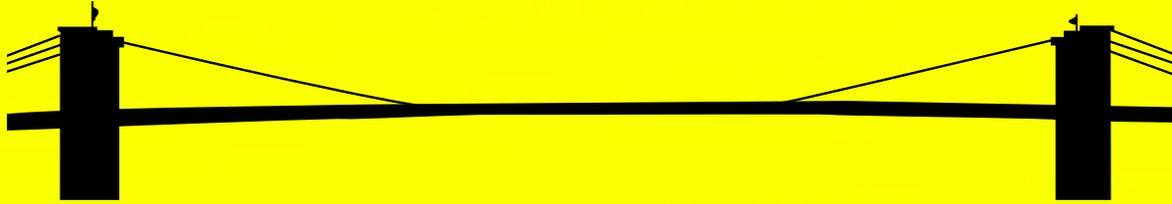
### **Advancing Self-Care in the Workplace & Managing Work Stress**

March 6, 2017, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Wendy Bassett, LCSW  
2 CE Contact Hours

### **Racial and Ethnic Health Inequities Policy: Racial Concepts, Discourse, and Social Change**

March 27, 2017, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Todd Vanidestine, PhD, MSW, MHR  
2 CE Contact Hours

2 Hour Workshop:  
NASW Member - \$45  
Non-Member - \$90



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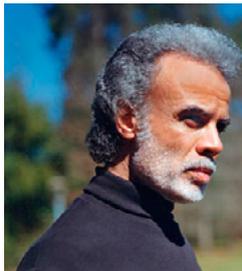
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### Featured Discussion



**Joy Reid**, host of “The Reid Report” on MSNBC, is an award winning journalist and a political commentator who will give the keynote address on the impact of the November 8th Presidential Election on the future of American society. She will discuss the implications of the election for the social work profession and the communities we serve, in regards to: social and racial justice, voting and elections, income inequality, employment, education, drug policy and incarceration, women’s health, housing, health, and mental health.



**Dr. Harry Aponte**, LCSW, LMFT, will discuss how social workers can apply the Person-of-the-Therapist Model with a Race, Diversity, and Intersectionality lens. Dr. Aponte’s lecture will expound on how social workers are able to understand and feel with their clients and in their personal struggles, highlighting how we can relate with our clients despite differences in race, diversity and socioeconomic status.

*NASW New York City Chapter is recognized by the New York State Education Department’s State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #0027*

**Call for Workshop Proposals to Present at  
NASW-NYC 49th Annual Addictions Institute  
Wednesday, June 21, 2017  
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**Deadline for submissions for prospective presenters is December 31, 2016.**

**Potential Workshops:**

- The impact of poverty, incarceration and trauma in communities of color
- Policy changes
- Evidence-based practices
- LGBTQ Services
- Harm Reduction
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Micro (neuroscience)
- Macro (environmental)
- Child Welfare
- Behavioral Health
- Veterans
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**"Psychopharmacology for  
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*Heather Golden, LCSW*

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