

## **2016 Legislative Agenda**

### **Legislative Priorities for 2016**

1. Support access to quality early care and education programs for children ages 0-4.
2. Support the right to vote for individuals with a felony record living in the community.
3. Increase affordable housing and mixed income housing available to low and middle income Minnesotans.
4. Invest in basic economic stability for the lowest income families through a 100 dollar per month increase in MFIP cash assistance.
5. Support access to services for clients by ensuring that diagnoses given by licensed social workers are accepted in the public school system.

Other areas of advocacy for the 2016 year include support for racial equity, support for the needs of immigrants and refugees seeking safety and opportunity in Minnesota, and improvement in access to the Board of Social Work for social workers.

### **Legislative Positions**

#### **Civil Rights**

NASW-MN supports civil rights for all people. NASW-MN opposes public policies that discriminate against people by race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability. In addition, NASW-MN supports an equitable social welfare policy that does not discriminate against status as a citizen, refugee, or documented/un-documented immigrant. NASW-MN supports the right to vote for individuals with a felony living in the community and racial equity in all city, county, and state institutions.

#### **Professional Regulation**

NASW-MN supports legal regulation of social work practice that is effective in protecting the public and respects the financial and practice realities of social workers in Minnesota. We support the creation and implementation of legislation which guarantees that all new employees of any agency charged with protecting Minnesota's most vulnerable populations are licensed as social workers. We believe that trained and licensed social workers possess the assessment and intervention skills needed in order to achieve the best outcomes for vulnerable adults and children. We must guarantee that social work professionals are those sanctioned to respond to the public through the elimination of the County exemption from the social work licensing law. To this end we also believe that licensing fees should be kept as low as possible without impairing the mission of the Board of Social Work.

#### **Child Welfare**

NASW-MN believe that every child deserves to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. We support a strong child welfare system that invests in early childhood education as well as effective child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention programs. NASW-MN supports more state-level fiscal responsibility in addressing child welfare, including the reduction of client case-loads. NASW-MN urges the state of Minnesota to adequately fund child welfare services so that the funds are available to hire sufficient staff to investigate and open cases of abuse and neglect rather than refer them to family assessment. Community agencies which provide family assessment services often provide fewer services, less oversight, and minimal consequences to families for not participating. NASW-MN also supports public policy that would lead to ending racial disparities within the child welfare system.

## **Economic Security**

The U.S. and Minnesota economy is at an extremely critical juncture. Economic security is of paramount importance for more and more people. Accordingly, NASW -MN re-emphasizes its advocacy for a social support system that provides an adequately resourced safety net and creates opportunities for Minnesota families to move out of poverty and achieve economic self-sufficiency. A comprehensive economic security system for all community members promotes work with a living wage and includes a network of supports that enable access to employment through both job training and retraining, safe and affordable housing (including prevention of homelessness), sufficient and nutritious food, accessible and affordable health care, quality child care and other basic needs that support Minnesota families' physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. NASW-MN supports increased access to quality early learning programs for 0-4 year olds through the expansion of early learning scholarships. NASW-MN supports an increase in affordable housing and mixed income housing available to low and middle income Minnesotans.

## **Tax and Fiscal Policy**

NASW-MN believes that there must be sufficient revenue to pay for basic human services; and that inflation should be a factor in determining the state's economic forecast of both revenue and expense calculations. NASW-MN believes that the solutions to the state of Minnesota budget challenges must not focus merely on funding cuts and deferring responsibilities to the counties, cities, and other local entities. When current revenue streams do not provide for those services, then state revenue should also be increased to meet the state's responsibility. We will support tax credits and other tax policies that support low income families. NASW-MN also believes that tax policy should be based on a progressive system.

## **Health Care**

NASW-MN believes health care and dental coverage should be universal, affordable, accessible and comprehensive. NASW-MN supports policies that move toward universal coverage, including prescription drug coverage and the expansion of public health and preventative services. NASW-MN supports the adoption of the Minnesota Health Care Act, which replaces the current insurance/HMO payment model with a single payer, universal coverage system.

## **Mental Health**

NASW-MN will work to promote full parity within the health care system for mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. NASW-MN believes that all mental health professionals need to be fairly and equitably compensated to ensure that public clients have access to appropriate mental health services, including services provided by licensed social workers. NASW-MN supports increasing state responsibility in the funding of mental health services, specifically allocations for increasing the capacity of community mental health services. NASW-MN supports funding increases for transitional housing to reduce chronic homelessness which disproportionately affects the mentally ill and disenfranchised populations. NASW-MN supports the Mental Health Workforce Steering Committee recommendations which enhance social work as a profession in mental health settings and an increase in recruitment and retention of mental health professionals from diverse communities through access to affordable and quality supervision, increased reimbursement rates, and relief from student loan burden.



**The National Association of Social Work (NASW) is the world's largest organization of professional social workers. The Minnesota Chapter [NASW-MN] is committed to working within the legislative arena to promote policies and legislation that support professional regulation of social work practice, enhance the lives of people we serve, and promote equal opportunities to all Minnesota residents. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. The profession does not condone, facilitate, or collaborate with discrimination of any form, including ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political affiliation, religion, or mental, physical or developmental disability. NASW-MN promotes awareness, education and political advocacy within a range of concerns including health care, mental health, civil rights, child welfare, tax policy and economic security, to enhance the social functioning of individuals, families and communities. During the 2016 Legislative Session, NASW-MN will continue to:**

- Track legislation
- Advocate for social policy reform or policy maintenance
- Work with identified coalition partners
- Meet with key legislative leaders
- Organize Social Work Day at the Capitol
- Communicate with NASW-MN members via 'action alerts' and technical assistance