Why Be A Member?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated that there is strength in unity, collaboration, and participation. NASW Maryland demonstrates our strength through those same characteristics which are driven by our membership. Membership is important because it is the foundation of our organization. Some social workers may not see the value of an NASW membership while others believe membership in your professional organization is outdated. As we look back at 2020, it has proven this reasoning to be inaccurate. NASW Maryland advocates, supports, and educates for all social workers, but our membership is what provides us space in larger conversations about:

- COVID 19 relief,
- Salary Increases,
- Racial and Social Justice,
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,
- Medicare/Medicaid Compensation,
- Expansion and Permanence of teletherapy, and
- Police Reform (among others)

In 2020, NASW Maryland played a key role in advocating and organizing discussions around race in social work (with Community Conversations Part I and II); campaigning for Marylanders to vote (with Why Voting Matters and #marylandsocialworkervote); and disseminating urgent information related to safety guidelines for COVID 19 and social work practice (on the NASW-MD website); licensing news, and continuing ed offerings including the Virtual 2020 Clinical & Macro Social Work Conference (with The Maryland Social Worker and weekly E-news).

We are not sitting ducks—we are flying together, seeking growth for our communities and our profession. Like social workers in general, NASW Maryland is a change agent. Our membership helps the chapter push forward to break barriers and advocate loudly because there is strength in numbers. The more we unify in our legislative agenda, collaborate in our thoughts and ideas for the future of social work, and participate in chapter committees and advocacy plans, the more we are present and able to see the change we work toward.

Membership is important in many ways:

- In academia, an association membership is often required for full time professors or counselors.
- In hospitals, a membership helps you navigate ethical dilemmas that others may label as “the norm.”
- In private practice, a membership leads to referrals, trainings, and a community with other clinicians in your area.
- Membership helps you retain confidence so you are able to negotiate a salary fitting for your credentials and education instead of accepting what is first offered.
• Membership can lead to job opportunities.
• Brings awareness of current events, research, and practices that are helpful in interviews and networking
• Membership also provides opportunities for self-care
• Membership always allows you to take advantage of continuing education conferences and workshops (and at a reduced rate).

There are advanced credentials offered through NASW that can assist in building resumes and obtaining new opportunities. NASW is not just an association, it is a community, and membership is not necessary for the sustainability of the social work profession, but it is necessary for the continued growth of social workers in areas such as legislation, policy, community, business, and healthcare.

Membership is not just about the $236 yearly dues (less than $20 a month), it is about investing in your profession.

• You invest in the work done behind the scenes of the student loan assistance programs that help many social workers manage their loan payments each month.
• You invest in the work that created a new license category so a social worker doesn’t have to pay for supervision throughout their entire career.
• You invest in the work that ensured social workers are able to continue offering services in substance abuse and addiction.
• You invest in the work that allows LCSW-Cs to be reimbursed by health insurances.
• You invest in progress. Without progress, we stagnate. NASW has steadily progressed for 65 years.

The younger generation and current professionals should strongly consider a membership to NASW so we may continue to progress for years to come. Coretta Scott King said, “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” NASW MD is a huge part of the Maryland social work community and it is our hope that social workers around the state become active members in 2021.

I urge all Maryland Social Workers to join the NASW Maryland chapter to sign up and become a part of something bigger than one client, one community, one business, or one specialty. Join NASW and become a part of a network of over 120,000 members with power in its history, its work, and its future. We need you!