

*The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.*

Jane Addams

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## **NASW, Tennessee Chapter 2016 Legislative Issues**

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NASW, Tennessee Chapter has approved the following advocacy agenda for 2016. NASW-TN invites you to monitor the Chapter website at [www.naswtn.com](http://www.naswtn.com) to keep informed on ways to be involved in supporting these important issues. NASW members are encouraged to email [kfranklin@naswtn.com](mailto:kfranklin@naswtn.com) to be added to the list of persons receiving regular legislative updates. For additional information please contact the Chapter Office and make plans to join your colleagues at the NASW-TN Social Work Day on the Hill on Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> in Nashville.

### **Active Priority Issues**

- **Educate key decision-makers about how social workers are forging solutions out of challenges –** Social Workers across Tennessee have dedicated their careers to confronting some of the most challenging issues facing individuals, families, communities and society and forging solutions that help people reach their full potential and make our state and nation a better place to live. We will help key state decision-makers understand how social workers have helped forge solutions out of challenges. We will also monitor and work on laws that maintain appropriate recognition of social work professionals.

The Tennessee Chapter joins with NASW at a national level in asking our Representatives and Senators in the US Congress to support the Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015. This act is designed to increase beneficiary access to clinical social worker services and to advance a credible and achievable Medicare agenda for NASW and our membership.

- **Implementation of the Insure Tennessee Plan and Affordable Care Act** - We believe it is crucial that the state decide to expand the Medicaid program to provide coverage of people with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty line. We support Governor Haslam's Insure Tennessee plan that would provide coverage for more than 200,000 Tennesseans, including Tennessee's veterans, working poor, and others who are uninsurable. NASW-TN recognizes the Insure Tennessee proposal would bring a variety of crucial individual and financial benefits to Tennessee and its residents.

The Affordable Care Act is rapidly changing the delivery and financing of health care in the United States. The law's major provisions went into effect in January 2014, making health coverage available to many Tennesseans. NASW supports implementation of outreach efforts to inform Tennesseans about available ACA coverage.

- **Preserving Tennessee's Social Infrastructure –** Low income and elderly Tennesseans, and others who rely on our state's infrastructure of social supports have cause for concern. So do advocates and organizations who work on their behalf. This infrastructure, made up largely of public/private partnerships and federal/state and local partnerships, was strengthened and refined over the last 3 or 4 decades with bipartisan leadership of governors, legislators and citizens. NASW-TN will work with others to preserve Tennessee's important social infrastructure.

- **Inclusion** – NASW supports an inclusive society in which racial, ethnic, social, sexual orientation, and gender differences and identities are valued and respected. NASW-TN opposes legislation that discriminates on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.
- **Families First** – NASW-TN has been actively involved in advocacy efforts related to the Families First program since its inception under a federal waiver in 1997. NASW-TN continues to support a Families First program that addresses barriers and enables vulnerable families to achieve long-term stability.

## **Partnership Issues**

*(NASW-TN will work with other organizations in monitoring these issues. Our legislative work on these issues may increase if we need to play a strategic role in these areas.)*

### **Adoption and Foster Care**

NASW believes that every child has a right to a permanent, continuous, and nurturing relationship with a parenting person or people who convey to the child an enduring sense of love and care. We believe public social policy on adoption and foster care should be evidenced-based and focus on the best interests of the child. NASW-TN will work with others to educate legislators about evidenced-based practice in the area of foster care and adoption and oppose legislation that restricts Tennessee’s children from living in loving, nurturing relationships with single or unmarried caregivers.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

Social workers know that trauma during childhood can have critical implications throughout the lifespan. NASW-TN applauds the Governor and First Lady’s launch in November 2015 of a three-year initiative to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on Tennessee communities. We look forward to supporting efforts to raise community awareness about the affects of adverse childhood experiences and to develop strategies that will effectively prevent or counter ACEs.

### **Child Care and Early Childhood Education**

NASW recognizes that all young children deserve excellent early care and education and those high quality early experiences make a difference in children’s lifelong academic and social success. The Tennessee Chapter of NASW will continue to work with other groups to support continuation of current funding for Pre-K classrooms. We also recognize the important role family and environmental factors play in educational development and advocate the involvement of social work professionals in early education programs.

### **Department of Children’s Services**

The Tennessee Chapter recognizes the important work of the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services. NASW-TN will work with them to support the professionalism of the child welfare workforce and on initiatives to improve the lives and protection of Tennessee’s children.

### **Economy and Unemployment**

Many Tennessee Counties have seen unemployment rates decline to less than 5% but some of our rural counties still have unemployment rates approaching 10%. NASW-TN supports the continuation of federal and state programs that help Tennesseans in vulnerable situations due to the economy and unemployment. We also remain committed to partnering with other advocacy groups to protect low income and vulnerable Tennesseans from predatory lending practices.

### **Health Care**

The Tennessee Chapter of NASW recognizes the importance of health care coverage for all Tennesseans including our most vulnerable. We will advocate with others for fiscally responsible programs that ensure persons receive needed and appropriate medical care. In addition to implementation of the ACA and Medicaid expansion we recognize the important role of:

- TennCare in providing health care coverage for our state’s children and vulnerable Tennesseans,
- Federally qualified and faith based health centers in providing primary care, and
- The Coordinated School Health Program in improving student health outcomes and supporting the connection between good health practices, academic achievement, and lifetime wellness.

### **Human Trafficking**

Human Trafficking is the second-fastest growing criminal industry in the United States, just behind Drug Trafficking. NASW-TN commends the response of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and Tennessee General Assembly in addressing this issue in collaboration with local government and nonprofits. We continue to support on-going public awareness and action to address human trafficking and slavery in Tennessee.

### **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**

NASW-TN will work with the Tennessee Coalition for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and its members to ensure appropriate mental health and substance abuse services are available for Tennessee residents. Our collaborative work with consumer and professional groups through the Coalition strengthens our ability to ensure services are available to all individuals, regardless of age, and maximized at a funding level that assures quality care to those in need.

### **People With Disabilities**

NASW-TN will work collaboratively with the Tennessee Disability Coalition. Disability Rights Tennessee and other disability groups on budget and policy issues that ensure the right of people with disabilities to participate fully and equitably in society, with appropriate supports to meet individual needs.

### **Refugee and Immigrant Issues**

At a national and Chapter level NASW supports immigration and refugee policies that uphold and support equity and human rights, while protecting national security. As professional social workers we are committed to helping our lawmakers and others understand how immigrants and refugees contribute to our communities so that public policies are designed in an environment of mutual respect.

### **Reproductive Rights**

NASW-TN will track legislation related to reproductive rights and update members when key actions are being considered.

### **Revenue to Provide Crucial Services**

Tennessee's tax system provides crucial revenue for services in Tennessee communities. We support efforts to ensure the availability of long-term revenue needed to enhance Tennessee's progress.

### **Safety**

Family violence, school violence, child abuse and gun violence are unfortunately part of our society. Tennessee's social workers intervene and respond to these and other situations regularly. We urge Tennessee's legislative leaders to turn to social workers for crucial information, including information on evidenced based practices, as you develop policies to address violence in our families and communities.

### **School Social Work**

Healthy children and stable families are at the core of a strong community, but often families are threatened by the challenges of poverty, substance abuse, violence, mental illness, and homelessness. Not only do these challenges affect a community's success, they could limit a student's ability to learn. School social workers address these and other barriers that interfere with student achievement. NASW-TN will continue to educate legislators regarding the important efforts of school social workers and their role in helping students succeed.

### **Seniors**

NASW-TN recognizes the crucial efforts of social workers in serving Tennessee's growing senior population. We support dignified, humane, effective and client-based services for seniors that are consistent with social work values.

### **Service Members and Veterans**

NASW is committed to supporting the health and well-being of our nation's service members, veterans, and their families. We will work with others to ensure benefits are available that recognize the important contributions and needs of these residents.

### **Web Resources for Tennessee Families**

NASW-TN has partnered with the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS) for many years to ensure web resources are available to assist Tennessee families. We will continue to work jointly with TALS to help public officials understand how social services and legal information can jointly assist their constituents. NASW-TN also commends the work of the Children's Cabinet in implementing kidcentraltn.com.

## **Additional Monitoring & Information Dissemination Issues**

### **Death Penalty**

NASW advocates the abolition of the death penalty as this punishment is at variance with social work values. NASW-TN is committed to monitoring this issue and keeping our members informed of developments in Tennessee's death penalty system.

### **Management Data**

The Tennessee Chapter of NASW knows the utilization of good data can improve public policy management decisions. We support the development of strong data systems for evaluating and improving the delivery of services to our most vulnerable populations.

### **Transportation**

NASW-TN will monitor efforts to increase funding for mass transit and other transportation options that increase accessibility for low income and vulnerable populations.