

National Association of Social Workers, Florida Chapter

2024 Legislative Priorities

The National Association of Social Workers, Florida Chapter (NASW-FL) is part of the world's largest organization of professional social workers and represents approximately 4,200 professional social workers in Florida. NASW-FL considers its agenda based on the Florida Legislation each session, along with alignment to our Code of Ethics and Social Work Speaks.

Social Work Workforce: High caseloads, insufficient comparative salaries, and restrictive licensing laws are barriers with the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Chapter seeks to strengthen the workforce through:

- Increasing hiring practices in high-need areas such as Florida schools, child welfare agencies, and mental health facilities including community health centers, hospitals, and veteran services.
- Supporting the Social Work Compact will help provide greater mobility and flexibility. We also will advocate for alternative pathways to licensure to support equity and representation in our workforce.
- Preparing our future workforce by collaborating with stakeholders to identify sustainable financial options to support our social work student's education, in the classroom and through their field placement experience.

Health Care and Mental/Behavioral Health: Social work interventions and enhanced care coordination have proven to reduce hospital readmissions, improve client adherence to their plan of care, and better participation in medical appointments.

The Chapter supports legislation or rules that remove barriers to affordable and accessible care through:

- Ensuring all consumers have equitable and affordable access to insurance coverage for mental health and substance use services.
- Protecting accessibility by supporting autonomy in decision-making by patients and their providers on their best course of care, e.g., reproductive and gender-affirming care.
- Expanding services that combat the epidemic of mental health crises within our school-age children, veterans, homeless, and survivors of trauma.

2024 Legislative Priorities

Equitable Opportunities and Justice: The social work profession aims to achieve equitable access to resources and legal protection by advocating for Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for marginalized communities.

The Chapter opposes all legislation that jeopardizes individuals' or communities' rights, access to services, and general well-being. NASW-FL supports efforts to address these issues through:

- Addressing disparities in healthcare, housing, and income, particularly concerning Communities of Color and the LGBTQ+ community.
- Defending academic freedom and the incorporation of curriculums that discusses the accurate teaching of African American history and theoretical frameworks that incorporate different lived experiences regardless of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, or political ideology.
- Advancing disability rights by finding solutions to increase accessibility, independence, and access to needed support services. All while supporting programs that empower persons with disabilities.

Criminal and Immigration Justice: The social work profession supports justice, due process, and the humane treatment of a person regardless of their criminal background or immigration status.

The Chapter supports the promotion of humane treatment through:

- Applying the common-ground approach of deploying social workers to address non-criminal and non-violent mental health related police calls to prioritize treatment over incarceration.
- Reforming the legal system to include training in de-escalation and Mental Health First Aid, reforming sentencing guidelines, and incorporating anti-bias practices during arrests and legal proceedings.
- Supporting incarcerated individuals by advocating support for offenders with disabilities and opposing inhumane practices, such as solitary confinement and inadequate access to health and sanitary products.
- Upholding the legal right of any person to seek asylum and creating a pathway to employment while advocating for policies that provide access and opportunities for our immigrant communities so that they can thrive.

Sharon Gandarilla-Javier, Ph.D., LMSW, MA • President
Dawn Brown, MSW • Executive Director
Christina Cazanave, MSW • Legislative Chair

1931 Dellwood Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32303
1-800-352-6279 / (850) 224-2400 / www.naswfl.org / info.naswfl@socialworkers.org