

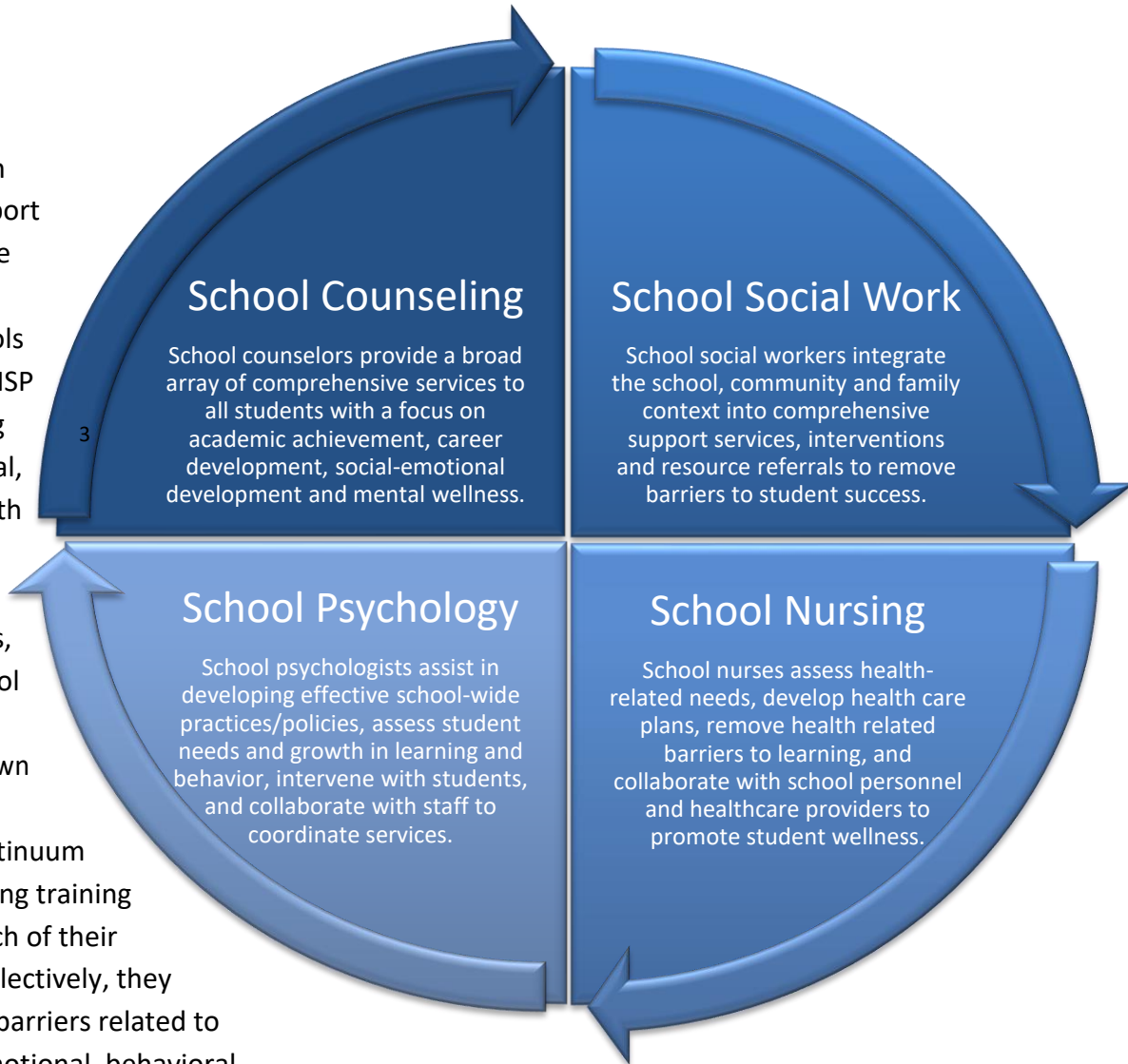


# Specialized Instructional Support Personnel in North Carolina

## Providing for the Well-Being of the Whole Child

### Who are Specialized Instructional Support Personnel?

The licensed Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) included in this document are the support personnel who are available to serve all students within North Carolina public schools who employ them. These SISP are affiliated with providing school-based physical, social, emotional and mental health prevention, intervention, transition and follow-up services - school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses. These SISP, also known as student support services, provide a collaborative continuum of services while also bringing training and expertise unique to each of their professional disciplines. Collectively, they enhance skills and address barriers related to academic, career, social-emotional, behavioral, and mental and physical health needs of PK-12 students so that all students can learn, thrive, and grow. Although each provider plays a specialized role to meet the needs of students, some supports may overlap to cultivate the overall well-being of the whole child.



*For information on SISP other than those included in this document, please visit their respective web pages on the NCDPI website at [www.dpi.nc.gov](http://www.dpi.nc.gov).*

# Specialized Instructional Support Personnel in North Carolina

*See accompanying implementation and evaluation Administrator Guides for more details on each professional discipline.*

## SCHOOL COUNSELORS

### Unique Role in School

Support all students to be successful with a focus on academic achievement, career development, social-emotional development and mental wellness. School counselors are uniquely trained to provide a broad array of prevention and early intervention educational, counseling, and support services to all students.

### Training

Minimum of a master's degree in school counseling

OR

Master's degree in another area of counseling plus the additional school counselor-specific required courses.

Licensed by the Department of Public Instruction

### Academic Support

Provide classroom and group lessons and individual and small group counseling, advising and direct support to remove a variety of barriers to learning to help all students develop skills and behaviors critical to academic and personal success. Collaborate, consult and provide data for teachers, families, and administration to support classroom success.

## SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

### Unique Role in School

Provide focused outreach for identified students in areas of social-emotional and mental and physical health needs. School social workers are uniquely trained to integrate the school, community and family context into comprehensive support services, interventions, and resource referrals to remove barriers to student success.

### Training

Minimum of a bachelor's degree in social work with the addition of required school social work-specific courses.

Licensed by the Department of Public Instruction

### Academic Support

Provide schoolwide, small group and individual support to identified students to reduce barriers to learning using interventions to improve overall student functioning. Collaborate and consult with teachers, families, administration, and community service providers to address barriers to learning.

## SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

### Unique Role in School

Assist school leaders in selecting/developing school-wide practice/policies to support all students. In-depth training to provide assessment (academic and behavioral) and data analysis at the individual and group level. Evaluation/identification of intensive learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities.

### Training

Minimum of an Advanced degree in school psychology

Licensed by the Department of Public Instruction

### Academic Support

Develop/implement student progress monitoring plans and provide data analysis/growth trajectories at both the individual and group level to support the academic growth of students. Provide individualized evaluation services, reporting and interpretation of the instructional implications of evaluation results to parents/school staff.

## SCHOOL NURSES

### Unique Role in School

Assess health-related needs, provide for health care plans, and collaborate with school personnel and healthcare providers to promote student physical and mental wellness.

### Training

Minimum of a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN)

Licensed by the NC Board of Nursing.

Certification by the National Board for Certification of School Nurses

### Academic Support

Assess needs, complete, and oversee health care plans, and provide related instruction, support, and oversight to staff, students and families to address student health-related needs that can present barriers to learning and wellness. Assist administration with preventing and responding to communicable disease outbreaks.

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## SCHOOL COUNSELORS

### Career Support

Provide career awareness, exploration, and preparation opportunities to assist all students through the K-12 career and college planning and readiness process. Utilize classroom lessons, small group counseling, and individual planning to assist students to form postsecondary and career goals, build a plan to meet goals, foster skill-building, assess student abilities and interests, and access post-secondary options.

### Social-Emotional, Behavioral & Mental Health Support

Utilize a specialized, broad focus impacting all students schoolwide. Provide classroom lessons and small group and individual counseling and planning to develop student skills and behaviors needed for social-emotional growth, resilience, and wellness. Provide short-term counseling and crisis assessment and intervention. May also refer students to specialized professionals for intensive needs and long-term counseling.

### Recommended Provider-to-Student Ratio

1:250  
Consider that school counselors work with every student in the school.

## SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

### Career Support

Provide schoolwide, small group, individual and family support focused on skill-building to foster resiliency and job preparedness. Provide students and parents with community linkages and resources to support successful school and work transitions.

### Social-Emotional, Behavioral & Mental Health Support

Provide specialized small group and individual social-emotional, mental health and behavioral interventions. Conduct risk and threat assessment and provide a continuum of crisis management supports. Maximize school-based and community resources to meet student and family needs. May also refer students to receive further specialized support.

### Recommended Provider-to-Student Ratio

1:250  
Consider that school social workers work with small groups, individuals and families who have been identified in need of more direct support, and often serve more than one school.

## SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

### Career Support

Assess student abilities and social skills to assist in career planning and postsecondary services. Provide strategies to support career and college readiness. Work with IEP teams to develop individualized transition plans for students with disabilities.

### Social-Emotional, Behavioral & Mental Health Support

Assist in identifying system/school-wide proactive social-emotional/behavioral health practices and systemic response protocols (risk and threat assessment). Assess, identify, and provide targeted behavioral health services to individuals/groups of identified students to develop skills and behaviors critical to academic success. May also refer students to receive further specialized support.

### Recommended Provider-to-Individual Ratio

1:500  
Consider that school psychologists work with individuals and small groups, conduct extensive assessments and data analysis, and often serve more than one school.

## SCHOOL NURSES

### Career Support

Promote healthy behaviors that support active post-secondary lifestyles and assist students with personal health care management needed to enable them to pursue post-secondary career and educational options.

### Social-Emotional, Behavioral & Mental Health Support

Screen for potential emotional and mental health concerns. Instructs students on positive behaviors and skills that support wellness. Refer students to receive further specialized support.

### Recommended Provider-to-Individual Ratio

Minimum 1 nurse per school  
Consider that school nurses work with small groups, individuals and families who have been identified in need of more direct support, and support school personnel in health care compliance.

*See accompanying implementation and evaluation Administrator Guides for more details on each professional discipline.*

# SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

A K-12 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION SUPPORT TOOL



## School Counseling

As vital members of the education team, school counselors play an essential specialized role in promoting a school culture that helps to achieve the school's mission of successfully educating the whole child to be a lifelong learner and career and college ready. School counselors design, deliver and assess data-driven school counseling programs that are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature to improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes through evidence-based practices. School counselors help all students

- apply academic achievement strategies
- manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills
- strengthen mental wellness and
- explore and plan for postsecondary options such as higher education, military, and work force

School counselors accomplish this through a variety of activities delivered similarly to the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model with core school counseling services for every student, supplemental small group and individual services for some students and limited individual intensive services for select students. Some examples include:

- developmentally appropriate classroom and school-wide guidance curriculum activities focused on emotional intelligence and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and personal success
- career awareness, exploration, and readiness activities
- student academic planning and goal setting
- short-term small group and individual counseling (including crisis intervention) to improve personal skills, address barriers to learning, and support mental wellness
- referrals for long-term support
- collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, other SISPs, and community for student success
- data analysis to identify student needs and plan appropriate counseling services.

[Research studies](#) show positive associations between comprehensive school counseling and improved student outcomes.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

The *North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards*, [Policy EVAL-026](#), support effective best practices in school counseling with the intention of -

- guiding the professional development of school counselors,
- providing focus for schools and districts as they support, monitor, and evaluate school counselors, and
- assisting higher education programs in developing the content and requirements for school counselor education curricula.

*North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards* are also aligned with research- and evidence-based practices provided in the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*.

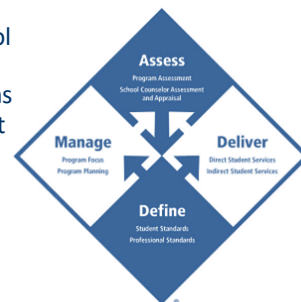
One has to complete an approved school counseling master's degree program in a regionally accredited college or university in order to be a licensed school counselor in North Carolina. Current school counseling graduate master's programs are typically 48 to 60 semester hours. School Counselors are licensed K-12 by the NC Department of Public Instruction. Many are also eligible to apply for licensure with the NC Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors to practice counseling in other settings. Those with a master's degree in another area of counseling must also complete courses required for school counseling specialization to be licensed as a school counselor.

### EVALUATION

The evaluation process ([NCEES](#)) for evaluating school counselor implementation of the *North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards* is similar to that of other licensed school personnel. The evaluation rubric is based on the professional school counseling standards and designed to encourage professional growth. For school counselor roles that cannot be observed due to confidentiality, school administrators may consider requesting related artifacts such as process or outcome data or materials used in activities. Tools to assist administrators with school counselor evaluation can be found on [the School Counseling Standards and Evaluation web page](#).

### APPROPRIATE ROLES

For school counselors to be successful on their evaluation and to have the most positive impact on student outcomes, it is vital that they spend the majority of their time in appropriate school counselor roles and that they and the school administrators have common expectations for their work. These appropriate school counselor roles are defined in the *North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards* and in NC. G.S. 115C-316.1.



The ASCA National Model diamond is a registered trademark of the American School Counselor Association.

### Recommended School Counselor-to-Student Ratio 1:250

#### NC G.S. 115C-316.1

[NC General Statute 115C-316.1 - Duties of School Counselors](#) - requires traditional public school counselors to deliver comprehensive school counseling programs and spend 80% of their time delivering a variety of direct school counseling services. It further states that school counselor services do not include coordination of standardized testing. This general statute reflects and supports the *North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards* which seek to support student and school success through comprehensive school counseling programs.

You can find the NCDPI School Counseling web pages at [nchealthyschools.org](http://nchealthyschools.org)

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Dr. Kisha Bryant**  
Consultant for School Counseling  
[Kisha.Bryant@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Kisha.Bryant@dpi.nc.gov)  
Phone: (984) 236-2820

**Ellen Essick**  
NC Healthy Schools Section Chief  
[ellen.essick@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:ellen.essick@dpi.nc.gov)  
Phone: (984) 236-2818

# SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

A K-12 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL NURSING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION SUPPORT TOOL



## SCHOOL NURSING

As vital members of the education team, school nurses play an essential role in promoting a culture that supports the school's mission of successfully educating the whole child while removing health related barriers to learning. School nurses play a prominent role in planning and providing health promotion, early intervention, and care coordination services. School nurses deliver comprehensive health services in a systematic, planned approach that includes:

- Promoting healthy school environments
- Providing health education training to students and staff
- Developing and implementing school health policies
- Addressing individual student health needs
- Managing student chronic health conditions

School nurses accomplish this through a variety of activities delivered in a manner that is consistent with the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model in tailoring interventions to the level of student need. Health prevention and promotion strategies are available for all students and faculty, individual health services are provided for some students, and targeted individual intensive nursing services are planned for students with poorly controlled chronic health conditions that could result in increased absenteeism and poor academic outcomes.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

The American Nurses Association (ANA), in collaboration with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) produced "School Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice," 3rd Edition. These school nursing standards set expectations for nursing care provided to students in schools. Standards represent agreed-upon levels of quality in practice and reflect the values and priorities of the profession. The standards of practice are written within the framework of the nursing process and include data collection (assessment), nursing diagnosis, planning, intervention, and evaluation. They are consistent with the North Carolina Board of Nursing requirements and regulations for practice.

The North Carolina Board of Nursing (NCBON) defines the scope of practice of a registered nurse in North Carolina. The scope of practice should be used as a guide to ensure that the nurse is providing care to students within the margins of the law and rules. [NC Nurse Practice Act](#)

The credentialing standard for school nursing in North Carolina, set by the State Board of Education, is licensure as a registered nurse (RN), and national school nurse certification within three years of date of hire. The National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN) is the only current credentialing agency. There are a small number of nurses who are historically credentialed through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

### EVALUATION

The School Nurse evaluation process (NCEES) is similar to that of other licensed school personnel. The Rubric for Evaluating School Nurses is based on the Framework for 21st Century Learning and the North Carolina Professional School Nursing Standards, as adapted from School Nurse Scope and Standards of Practice. The instrument is designed to promote effective leadership, quality nursing practice, and student learning while leading to improved instructional response for students with health care needs. The school health services program supervisor, lead school nurse or other designee should conduct the portions of the evaluation related to nursing practice. It should be noted that the North Carolina Board of Nursing (See Components of Nursing Practice for The Registered Nurse and Nursing Practice Act in Appendix A.) requires that school nurses be practice evaluated by a licensed registered nurse. Therefore, the principal's designee for this purpose must hold such a credential to serve as an evaluator. Additional information may be found here: [School Nurse Evaluation Process](#).

### APPROPRIATE ROLES

For school nurses to be successful and to have the most positive impact on students' outcomes, it is vital that they spend the majority of their time in appropriate school nursing activities that require a nursing license. School administrators and school nurses must have common expectations for their work as described in a current job description.

### Recommended School Nurse Staffing: 1 per school

**16 NCAC 6D.0402 - [Special Healthcare Services](#)** - requires each LEA to make available a registered nurse for assessment, care planning, and ongoing evaluation of students with special health care needs in the school setting.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, ([IDEIA](#))** – mandates children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education. A free and appropriate public education includes special education and related services. The act recognizes nursing as a related service for students with disabilities.

You can find the NCDHHS School Nursing web pages at [NC School Nursing Support](#).

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Jenifer Simone, MSN, RN, NCSN  
State School Health Nurse Consultant  
NC Department of Public Health  
Phone: 919-218-1095  
[Jenifer.Simone@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Jenifer.Simone@dhhs.nc.gov)

Ellen Essick, Ph.D.  
Section Chief, NC Healthy Schools  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
[Ellen.Essick@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Ellen.Essick@dpi.nc.gov)  
Phone: (984)236-2818

# SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

A K-12 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION SUPPORT TOOL



# School Psychology

School psychology is a specialized area within the field of psychology that includes advanced training in mental health, data analysis and interpretation as related to academic and behavioral functioning at both the group- and individual student level. As vital members of a school's education team, school psychologists apply strategies for positive academic and behavioral outcomes for children within the context of the academic learning environment. School psychologists often assist in developing **system level improvements** intended to reach all students in addition to providing **direct, targeted academic and behavioral health services** to identified students/student groups in need of additional support. School psychologists are trained to deliver services at both the system- and student-level to ensure that all students have access to services, based on need. The proportion of time that school psychologists engage in each area of service is dependent on contextual factors, including the needs of the school, students, families, and community served. Additionally, due to their training in IDEA evaluation and identification, shortages in providers may result in school psychologists having to prioritize certain services types over others to meet federal and state special education requirements. Within a comprehensive model of service delivery, school psychological services include: System level services include:

- Lead teams in designing and implementing school-wide universal screening systems and using data to guide core (academic and behavioral) instruction and to help identify students at-risk
- Lead efforts to implement school-wide progress monitoring practices (routine checks of student proficiency to verify growth)
- Collaborate with family members and other professionals who support students at all levels
- Assist school teams in selecting evidence-based interventions and progress monitoring tools matched to student need (including crisis prevention/response protocols)
- Support regular progress monitoring and data reviews, including reviews of treatment integrity
- Consult with school staff to boost understanding and interpretation of progress data to determine if students are making adequate progress and whether intervention changes are needed

Student level services include:

- Develop/deliver small-group interventions to support students' social skills and behavioral health
- Conduct functional behavioral and academic assessments; develop individual support plans for students
- Lead teams that frequently review/interpret data to determine whether individual students should be referred for an evaluation
- Provide individualized IDEA evaluation services, including reporting and interpreting the instructional implications of evaluation results to parents and school staff
- Provide individualized counseling for students with intensive behavioral health needs

## PRACTICE MODEL/PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

Provision of a multi-tiered continuum of prevention and intervention services that are evidence-based, data-driven, and culturally responsive is consistent with the [Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services](#), also known as the NASP Practice Model. It is through this model of practice that the NC Professional School Psychology Standards are derived. The *North Carolina Professional School Psychology Standards*, [Policy EVAL-025](#), serve as a guide for school psychologists as they continually improve their effectiveness. It is imperative for school psychologists to provide services as part of a comprehensive, multidisciplinary team with complementary knowledge, skills, and experiences. The NC School Psychology standards were developed to:

- Guide the development of skills and knowledge inherent to the school psychology profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Provide the focus for schools and districts as they employ, support, monitor, and evaluate their school psychologists; and
- Assist higher education programs in aligning content and requirements of school psychology education curricula with expectations for practice.

One must complete an approved school psychology training program at the advanced level to be a licensed school psychologist in NC. School psychologists are licensed through the NC Department of Public Instruction. Many are also eligible to apply for licensure with the NC Psychology Board to practice psychology in other settings. Those with degrees in another area of psychology must also complete courses required for school psychology specialization to be licensed as a school psychologist.

## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND GROWTH PLANNING

The evaluation process ([NCEES](#)) for evaluating school psychologist implementation of the North Carolina Professional School Psychology Standards is similar to that of other licensed school personnel. The evaluation rubric is based on the professional school psychology standards and designed to encourage professional growth. Tools to assist administrators with school psychologist evaluation can be found on the [NCEES Information and Resource page](#).

**Recommended School  
Psychologist-to-Student Ratio  
1:500**



You can find the NCDPI School Psychology web pages at:  
[https://ncschoolpsychology.med.unc.edu/NC Health Schools/School Psychology](https://ncschoolpsychology.med.unc.edu/NC%20Health%20Schools/School%20Psychology)

### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Lynn Makor**  
Consultant for Psychological Services  
[lynn.makor@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:lynn.makor@dpi.nc.gov)  
Phone: (984) 236-2555

**Megan Cardin**  
School Psychology Consultant  
[Megan.Cardin@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Megan.Cardin@dpi.nc.gov)  
Phone: (984) 236-2812

# SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

A K-12 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION SUPPORT TOOL



# School Social Work

School Social Work is a specialized area of professional practice in the broad field of social work. School social workers are trained in providing comprehensive supports and services to address barriers impacting the social, emotional, academic and physical needs of all students. Research on the effectiveness of school social work services shows increased student outcomes related to academic achievement, physical and psychological safety, improved mental and behavioral health, improved attendance, and social-emotional competencies, and family and community involvement.

School social workers are expected to possess advanced knowledge and technical skills to guide their practices. The proportion of their time that school social workers engage in each practice varies widely depending on contextual factors, including the needs of the community, school, families, and students served. School Social Workers are the link between the home, school, and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families, and school personnel to promote and support students' academic and social success. Services include:

- Direct services
  - Bio-psychosocial assessment
  - Crisis intervention
  - Family counseling/support
  - Home/school/community liaison
  - Individual and small group counseling
  - Mediation
- Indirect services
  - Advocacy
  - Case management
  - Collaboration
  - Consultation
  - Parent education
  - Staff development

## PRACTICE MODEL

The Practice Model encourages school social workers to (1) provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services; (2) promote a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching excellence; and (3) maximize access to school-based and community-based resources. The proportion of their time that school social workers engage in each practice varies widely depending on contextual factors, including the needs of the community, school, families, and students served.

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

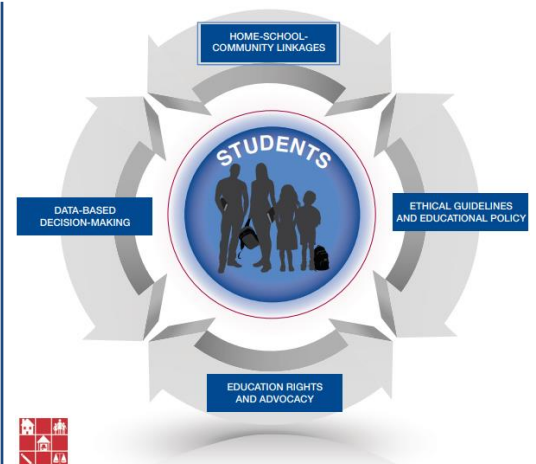
The *North Carolina Professional School Social Work Standards, Policy EVAL-027*, have been developed as a guide for School Social Workers as they continually improve their effectiveness. It is incumbent upon the School Social Worker to provide services as part of a comprehensive multidisciplinary team with complementary knowledge, skills, and experiences. The School Social Worker standards will:

- Guide professional development as School Social Workers move forward in the 21st century so that School Social Workers can attain the skills and knowledge needed;
- Provide the focus for schools and districts as they support, monitor, and evaluate their School Social Workers; and
- Assist higher education programs in the development of content and requirements of School Social Work education curricula.

One has to complete an approved school social work degree program in a regionally accredited college or university in order to be a licensed school social worker in North Carolina. School Social Workers are licensed K-12 by the NC Department of Public Instruction. Many are also eligible to apply for licensure by the North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board to practice social work in other settings. Those with a degree in social work must also complete courses required for school social work specialization to be licensed as a school social worker.

## EVALUATION

The intended purpose of the North Carolina School Social Worker Evaluation Process is to assess the school social worker's performance in relation to the North Carolina Professional School Social Work Standards and to design a plan for professional growth. The principal or designee (hereinafter "evaluator") will conduct the evaluation process in which the school social worker actively participates through the use of self-assessment, reflection, presentation of artifacts, and classroom demonstration(s).



**Recommended School Social Worker-to-Student Ratio 1:250**

You can find the NCDPI School Social Work web pages at [nchealthyschools.org](http://nchealthyschools.org)

### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Pachovia Lovett**

School Social Work Consultant

[Pachovia.Lovett@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Pachovia.Lovett@dpi.nc.gov)

Phone: (984) 236-2821

**Ellen Essick**

NC Healthy Schools Section Chief

[ellen.essick@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:ellen.essick@dpi.nc.gov)