SSW Guidelines Committee

Amy Austhof, School Social Worker
Dana Beech, School Social Worker
Cathy Hoffman, School Social Worker
Tracey Jordan, School Social Worker
Nancyann Lufkin, School Social Worker
Arren Rose, School Social Work Intern
Renee Thelen, Planner/Monitor
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This document was developed to provide a set of guidelines and criteria to assist the reader in understanding the various roles and responsibilities of the school social worker and also to assist teams in making appropriate recommendations for students exhibiting social, emotional, or behavioral needs. This document also serves to assist teams in clarifying procedural and eligibility issues in order to assure compliance with current special education laws, consistency among school districts within the county, and the implementation of current best practices. More specifically, these guidelines have been developed to:

- Ensure high-quality professional services and sound practices
- Assist school districts in developing, improving, and directing school social work services
- Provide assistance to school administrators and boards of education that are establishing new school social work programs
- Provide a basis for evaluation of school social work services by school districts
- Provide pupil personnel services staff with information to guide them in coordinating school social work services with those of other disciplines

These guidelines are offered as a resource for professionals who are developing and implementing appropriate school social work services for students of Ionia County. They were developed using the following resources: the Michigan Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education (September, 2013), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal Regulations (July 2010), Practice Guidelines for Delivery of School Social Work Services by the Connecticut State Department of Education (2013), Student Services Providers Recommended Practices & Procedures Manual by the Illinois State Board of Education (2007), Ionia County ISD Occupational Therapy Guidelines for Determining Evaluation, Eligibility, & Level of Service (January, 2012), as well as the recommendations of the Michigan Association of School Social Workers.
There are a number of federal and state guidelines that govern the provision of school social work services. First and foremost, in order to be eligible to receive school social work services as a service on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) the student must have been identified as a child with a disability in accordance with IDEA §300.8 and MARSE R 340.1702.

§ 300.8 Child with a disability. (a) General. (1) Child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with §§ 300.304 through 300.311 as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services...

R 340.1702 “Student with a disability” defined. Rule 2. “Student with a disability” means a person who has been evaluated according to the individuals with disabilities education act and these rules, and is determined by an individualized education program team, an individualized family service plan team, or an administrative law judge to have 1 or more of the impairments specified in this part that necessitates special education or related services, or both...

The determination of special education eligibility is a complicated process with many of the eligibility categories consisting of both inclusionary and exclusionary factors that must be considered. Perhaps the simplest, but most overlooked, aspect of special education eligibility is determining whether or not the student has a need for special education. A child may have a diagnosed condition and not qualify for special education. A child will be eligible for special education only if the disability adversely affects the student’s educational performance to the degree that special education and/or related services are necessary for this student. Interventions in general education, which may include special or supplemental materials, modification of instructional techniques, positive behavior supports, or other support services provided within the general education environment, may suffice to meet the student’s needs. This could also include accommodations made under Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act, 1973. Therefore when determining special education eligibility, evaluation teams must provide documentation that the student’s disability results in adverse impact. To address this issue, documentation of school-based interventions which have been unsuccessful should be included in the final evaluation report. These interventions may have occurred prior to completing the REED, or throughout the evaluation process. These interventions may have been implemented through Instructional Consultation Teams, or other district intervention programs.
Once a student has been identified as eligible for special education, the IEP team must identify the necessary programs and services to meet the student’s needs. One possible related service is school social work which is further defined in IDEA.

§ 300.34 Related services. (a) General. Related services...also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training...(c) Individual related services terms defined. The terms used in this definition are defined as follows...(14) Social work services in schools includes—(i) Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability; (ii) Group and individual counseling with the child and family; (iii) Working in partnership with parents and others on those problems in a child’s living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child’s adjustment in school; (iv) Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and (v) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

While these federal and state guidelines provide the legal foundation for the provision of school social work services, there are additional questions that often arise in meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. The remaining sections of this document will provide further clarification on the work of school social workers in Ionia County.
School social workers are licensed mental health practitioners and professionals. As members of the educational team, school social workers promote and support students’ academic and social success by providing specialized services that may include:

- Assessment of student needs through observation, interviews, and evaluations
- Individual, group, and school-wide interventions using research-based practices in an ecological framework
- Instruction regarding social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties
- Crisis prevention and intervention
- Work with students in both general education and special education settings
- Advocacy for students, parents, and the school district
- Education and training for parents and guardians
- Information and referral
- Professional case management
- Collaboration and consultation with community agencies, organizations, and other professionals
- Staff and policy development

School social workers help students to:

- Identify and eliminate barriers to academic success
- Improve interpersonal relationships
- Cope with difficult and crisis situations
- Develop self-esteem, self-regulation, and age appropriate social skills
- Learn problem-solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills

School social workers help educators by:

- Developing and implementing plans to enhance students’ school success
- Providing ongoing emotional and behavioral support to students
- Communicating information about how factors such as family, culture, socioeconomic status, physical and mental health may affect students’ performance
- Coordinating community resources to meet students’ needs
- Identifying and eliminating barriers to educational success

*Adapted from Michigan Association of School Social Workers brochure*
ICISD Position on School Social Work Services via the IEP
ICISD school social workers provide special education services that support students in their education process. Therapy staff are vital members of an educational team. This document supports collaborative teaming and integrated work. No single Individual Education Program (IEP) Team member provides services in isolation from other service providers. A collaborative model implies that school social work services are an integral part of the student’s daily life, and therefore is carried out not only by school social workers, but also by various members of the IEP team, in naturally occurring settings. The collaborative approach encompasses both direct and consultative services.

The IEP Team’s goal is to ensure that the student receives educational benefit from his/her school experiences. School social workers are concerned with aspects of development that enhance educational performance including a student’s social, emotional, and behavioral development. School social workers implement treatment to help the students improve, develop, maintain, restore, or adapt when the ability to function in the learning environment is adversely impaired. In order to receive school social work services via an IEP, a student must be found eligible for a qualifying disability which interferes with the student's ability to benefit from education. The student's school based therapy needs should directly relate to and support the student’s academic program, as the therapies facilitate maximum independent functioning within the educational environment.

The following are key considerations for the delivery of school social work services in the school setting:

- Services are provided to enable the student to benefit from his/her educational program
  - Strategies should be integrated into the classroom and school environment
  - Interventions should support skills needed by the student to prepare him/her for further education, employment, and independent living
- Services are provided in the student’s daily educational routine
  - Skills are taught across all educational settings
  - Therapeutic activities occur throughout the school day and are routinely implemented by instructional staff
  - Skills should be taught in naturally occurring environments
  - Skills should be generalized across different school settings, not isolated solely with the therapist in a separate area or in only one classroom
- Services are provided through a team approach
  - Team members share information, strategies, and techniques to assure continuity of services
  - Educational strategies and interventions are developed and implemented jointly by team members, including the student when appropriate
• Services may vary over time
  o Student therapy needs may differ in intensity and in focus during the student’s school years
  o Student needs may indicate that school social work services are not needed for the entire school year
  o Any fluctuations in service times are reflected in the IEP and should be based on the immediate educational needs at any point in time during the student’s course of study
  o If the student no longer requires school social work services to benefit from special education, then services are discontinued through the IEP process

School Social Work & Private Counseling
School social work services in the educational setting differ from those in private counseling and other medical settings both in scope and intent. In the school setting, school social work is part of a broad program based on students’ achievement and functional performance in the educational setting. The provision of therapy and outcome is based on the impact the disability has on educational performance, rather than on the disability itself. A student may have needs that do not significantly interfere with educational performance and then school based social work services would not be warranted. A student may require private counseling services to address these needs. In these situations, the family can pursue community resources to meet these needs. The school social worker may be an appropriate resource to connect the family with these community resources.

Dual Roles
School social workers are often partially funded by local district general education or at-risk funding streams (e.g., Section 31a of the State School Aid Act). It is imperative that the parameters for each role that the school social worker will assume are clearly defined between the school social worker and supervising administrator and that the time allotment for each role is honored by both parties. The different funding sources typically include their own unique student identification procedures and record keeping responsibilities. It is crucial that the supervising administrator clearly outline these responsibilities for the school social worker to ensure compliance with the various state and federal regulations.

When addressing dual roles it is also important to identify tasks that would not fall under the school social worker’s job description. Some examples of tasks that may not be covered by the typical school social worker funding streams might include administering discipline, administrative duties, having the sole responsibility for classroom management, serving as a replacement for outside counseling/therapy, providing child care, etc. If asked to engage in these types of duties on a regular basis, it is recommended that the school social worker and supervising administrator meet to ensure that these duties are appropriate for the assigned role, that they fit with the regulations of the specific funding stream, and that they do not compromise other mandated responsibilities.
School social work provided within the educational setting must be determined to be educationally relevant and necessary for the student to benefit from education before adding these services to an IEP. Recommendations and decisions are made based on input from all IEP team members. School social workers function as part of the multidisciplinary evaluation team for students suspected of being in need of this related service. This involvement should begin with the completion of a Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED). When completing the REED, the IEP team should consider the following under existing data:

- The reason for evaluation related to the student’s social, emotional, and/or behavioral needs and their impact on educational performance
- Summary of observations in various school environments
- Student’s performance on assessments
- Parent input related to the areas of concern

When developing an evaluation plan on the REED to determine a student’s need for school social work services, the IEP team should consider the following:

- Are additional observations by the school social worker needed?
- What evaluation measures (e.g., rating scales) will need to be completed?
- Are student, teacher, or parent interviews needed?
- Are there any other evaluations needed to rule out other possible causes for the area of concern (e.g. speech and language evaluation, adaptive behavior, etc.)

After completing an evaluation the team should consider the following in determining whether school social work services are warranted and in development of the IEP:

- Do evaluation results indicate lagging social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills?
- How do these lagging skills impact educational performance?
- What are the student’s educational needs for which the school social worker can provide unique skills and perspective?
- How will the school social work services improve performance that will contribute to the achievement of the student’s educational goals?
- What can the school social worker provide that is different from other team members?

Once a need for school social work services has been established, the IEP team will need to determine the most appropriate method (e.g. direct vs. consult) and the appropriate intensity of services. The following school social work matrix can be used as a guide to assist IEP teams in making these decisions.
**Figure 1: School Social Work Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier (Level of Service)</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation (e.g. once per quarter)</td>
<td>-Appropriate interactions with at least 1 peer</td>
<td>-Staff, parent, and/or student support for situational circumstances</td>
<td>-Classroom behavior management needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term (working towards dismissal)</td>
<td>-Appropriate interactions with at least 1 peer</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Resource collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x/month</td>
<td>-Mild social skills deficit -Lacks basic skills (e.g. eye contact, reciprocal conversation, proximity, listening, etc.)</td>
<td>-Mild or infrequent inappropriate disruptive emotional reactions</td>
<td>-Inappropriate behaviors -Affects peer relationships and academic progress when strategies are not implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x/month</td>
<td>-Moderate social skills deficit -Lacks basic social skills -Minor or frequent conflicts with peers</td>
<td>-Moderate reactions that require an adult prompt/support for appropriate response</td>
<td>-BIP in place -Occasional discipline referrals -Behavior escalates to point that learning environment is disrupted -Behavior will decrease when learned strategies are implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 x/month</td>
<td>-Severe social deficit -Social isolation/withdrawal -Aggressive relationships with peers/staff -No identified friends -Inability to maintain appropriate relationships</td>
<td>-Frequent and intense emotional reactions to normal situations -Occurring multiple times per day</td>
<td>-Comprehensive evaluation or FBA complete -BIP in place from FBA -Physical altercations, verbal assaults -Multiple suspensions/discipline referrals -Behavior interrupts learning environment and interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Considerations:** HCA, Peer to Peer/LINKS program, assistive technology, classroom setting/environment, additional building resources, specialized programming, etc.

**Special Risk Factors to Consider:** History of trauma, housing issues, frequent moves, death in the family, attendance/truancy, academics, parental involvement, environmental factors, medical issues, outside services, etc.
Just as important as the decision to add school social work services to an IEP is the decision of when it is appropriate to dismiss those services. It is important to note that dismissal of services can occur at any time via an IEP or IEP Amendment. Following are considerations for dismissal:

- Completion of all social/emotional/behavioral goals on the IEP with no additional barriers to learning identified
- Lack of benefit from services documented by SSW and/or lack of student participation
- Dual support is being provided within other services of special education
- Social/emotional/behavioral related issues no longer interfere with academic performance

An IEP team may also determine that a student no longer needs direct services but that consultative support is appropriate. Consultation is documented in the IEP as a related service. The school social work consultation should be focused on helping special education providers address goals and objectives on the IEP.

Whether the school social work service is consult or direct it is important that appropriate documentation take place. To document service delivery, the school social worker should keep a log of the dates and times of any consultative or direct services. Also, any addition or removal of services or changes in the frequency, duration, or type (e.g. direct to consult) of service delivery must be clearly documented via an IEP or amendment.
There is a great deal of emphasis on the importance of early intervention in the school environment. Many of our students’ academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs can be met through the implementation of targeted research based interventions in the general education setting. Through regular data collection, intervention teams are able to determine the effectiveness of these interventions and make adjustments to the intervention when needed in order to provide the optimal conditions for student growth. Interventions provided in this manner are generally described as Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Before delving further into the school social worker’s role in this type of intervention, it is important that the reader have a better understanding of the concept of RtI. The literature provides a variety of definitions of RtI, which all contain similar components. According to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), Response to Intervention includes:

1) Early identification of students not achieving at benchmark
2) High quality instruction and interventions matched to student need
3) Frequent monitoring of student progress to make decisions about instruction or goals
4) Use of child response data to make educational decisions, including professional development, curriculum, and individual intervention decisions.

Recently a similar concept called Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) has emerged. In September of 2011, the Michigan Department of Education released a document entitled, “Response to Intervention: A Multi-Tiered System of Supports”. According to this document, RtI-MTSS must contain the following eleven elements:

1) Implementation of effective instruction for all learners
2) Early intervention
3) A multi-tiered model of instruction and intervention
4) Collaborative problem-solving model
5) Research-based Core Curriculum
6) Implementation of evidence-based instruction & intervention
7) Monitoring student progress to inform instruction
8) Use of data to make instructional decisions
9) Use of assessments for 3 purposes: universal screening, diagnostics, and progress monitoring
10) Fidelity with implementation
11) Engagement with parents and the community

The Ionia County Intermediate School District has implemented Instructional Consultation Teams (ICT), which is a research-based process that fits well with the hallmark components of both RtI and MTSS. The ICT process is a collaborative problem-solving approach with a goal to enhance, improve, and increase student and staff performance. In this process teachers seek early intervention for their students by requesting assistance from the team as soon as an academic or behavioral concern is
observed. From there, instructional assessments are completed and individual interventions and goals are developed. The use of research based interventions ensures an instructional match within the general education setting. Data is collected on a regular basis to evaluate progress toward individual student goals. This data is used to determine the effectiveness of the interventions, guide further instructional decisions, and also may be used as one component of a comprehensive evaluation for special education eligibility.

Regardless of which framework is used for early intervention services, school social workers can play a key role in providing early intervention to students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs as well as to families and staff who are also trying to meet these needs. These services exist on a continuum and could include things such as: acting as a consultant for district or school wide programming, consulting with individual teachers on class-wide or student level concerns (could be done through ICT), connecting families with outside resources to meet a specific need, providing immediate support to a student in crisis, and engaging in trial intervention with a student over a period of weeks.

**Trial Intervention**

As part of early intervening services, and in an effort to maximize the child’s general education resources/supports, trial intervention with the school social worker is a possible route to address a student’s social, emotional, or behavioral needs. In these cases the following steps should be followed:

- After receiving a request for intervention, the school social worker will initiate contact with the requesting party (e.g. teacher, administrator, parent, etc.) to determine if trial intervention is an appropriate route to meet the student’s needs.
- The requesting party will make contact with the parents to inform them of the request for trial intervention and need to secure consent.
- The school social worker will send parents the notification of trial intervention (Appendix A) and consent for trial intervention (Appendix B).
- Once consent is received, the school social worker will gather the necessary information to develop an intervention plan which will include specific goals for the student.
- Trial intervention begins and lasts no more than 6 weeks. The intervention team (school social worker, requesting party, teacher, parents, etc.) will remain in close contact during this time.
- Trial intervention concludes and the school social worker compiles data and shares with team. If concern area is resolved with intervention, then the team should develop a plan to ensure the student’s continued success. If minimal to no progress and/or more concerns are discovered, then the team may need to consider other avenues for supporting the student.
- School social worker completes intervention summary sheet (Appendix C) and sends copies to parents, the requesting party, and places it in the CA60.
Appendix

Notification of Trial Intervention ................................................................. 15
Consent for Trial Intervention ........................................................................ 16
Summary of Trial Intervention......................................................................... 17
Date:

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of ,

I have been contacted regarding some concerns for your child related to: . I am requesting your permission to complete a 6 week trial intervention for your child related to this concern area. The goal of a trial intervention is to provide students, staff, and families with the skills needed to ensure that students have the social and emotional skills needed to successfully participate in their education.

With your permission, I will gather information related to the concern area and recommend an intervention plan that will be specific to your child’s needs. This process may involve conducting classroom observations, file reviews, and/or interviews with parents and staff. You will be informed of the intervention plan and your child’s progress. At the end of the trial intervention period we will review your child’s progress and discuss any recommendations for future supports.

I look forward to working with your child! If you have any questions please contact me at: . Thank you for your interest in and support for your child’s educational needs.

Sincerely,

School Social Worker
Parent Consent for Trial Intervention

Student: 
DOB: 
Grade: 
District: 
Building: 
Teacher: 
Parent/Guardian: 
Address: 
Person making request: 
Date:

The following section to be completed by person making request:

Check area of concern:  [ ] Social  [ ] Emotional  [ ] Behavioral

Explain concerns:

Additional concerns:

School social worker assigned:

The following section to be completed by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s):

Trial intervention is a brief period of school social work involvement to address the student’s immediate needs and work toward a specific goal. In order to develop an appropriate intervention I understand that the school social worker may need to observe my child in class, conduct file reviews, and/or teacher/parent interviews.

Check the appropriate box below, sign, and return this form to your child’s teacher.

[ ] Yes, the school social worker has my permission to complete a trial intervention for up to 6 weeks.
[ ] No, I do not want my child to participate in a trial intervention with the school social worker.

_________________________________________
Parent Signature

_________________________________________
Date

For office use only:

Date(s) sent to parent/guardian:________________________ By whom:________________________

Date consent received by SSW:________________________
Summary of School Social Work
Trial Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>DOB:</th>
<th>Grade:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District:</td>
<td>Building:</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Guardian:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person that initiated request:</td>
<td>Date of summary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School social worker:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Check area of concern:** □ Social □ Emotional □ Behavioral

**Explain concerns:**

**Describe interventions that were developed and implemented:**

**Describe student progress at the end of the trial intervention period:**

**Recommendations**

□ The student made progress with trial intervention and no further action is needed.
□ The student made progress and a plan has been developed to maintain student progress. See attached plan.
□ Additional supports are needed. Recommendations:

__________________________________________
Signature of School Social Worker

__________________________________________
Date

cc: Parents, classroom teacher, CA60