I. Goal of School Social Work Services

School social workers are trained mental health professionals with a master’s degree in social work from a university accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education, 8VAC20-22-660; 34 CFR 300 .34(c)(14)). In conjunction with the Office of Student Services, school social workers contribute to the development of a healthy, safe, and caring environment by increasing the understanding of the social/emotional strengths and needs of students as they relate to individual and/or family mental health factors, individual learning differences, community, or cultural factors that may be impacting a student’s academic performance.

The primary goal of all school social work is to support the educational mission of Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) by providing a research-based continuum of service delivery in the following areas: (1) direct services to students; (2) related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); (3) services to school personnel; and (4) serving as a school-community liaison for staff, students, and parents.

A. Direct Services - Use evidence-based intervention strategies, through individual and group counseling, to build students’ individual strengths offering students maximum opportunity to participate in the planning and direction of their own learning experience while increasing the understanding of the role that family, mental health issues, community, and cultural factors have on a student’s availability for learning.

B. Related Services Under IDEA - In providing individual special education counseling as a related service and as members of interdisciplinary teams, (8VAC20-81-110), social workers conduct assessments of student needs that are individualized and provide information that is directly useful for designing interventions that address behaviors of concern, as well as, supporting activities to overcome institutional barriers and gaps in services.

C. School-Community Liaison - Community outreach, collaboration, and partnership link schools, families, and students with community resources and support for basic needs and mental health.

D. Services to Parents and Families - By serving as a liaison between home and schools, school social workers assist parents in navigating through complex community and private mental health systems to seek help for their children.
E. Services to School Personnel - Provide consultation to facilitate an understanding of factors in the home, local education agency, and the community that affect students’ educational experiences. Serve as consultants on matters related to discipline, attendance, confidentiality, race, ethnicity and language, mental health, behavior management, crisis intervention, and child abuse and neglect. They develop training programs for parents, teachers, and other local education agency personnel addressing prevention, intervention, and remediation factors that affect students’ success in school.

F. Multicultural Understanding and Competence - Develop heightened self-awareness, knowledge, and practice skills that ensure students and their families are provided services within the context of multicultural understanding and competence that enhance families’ support of students’ learning experiences.

II. Components of School Social Work Services

Provide a multi-tiered continuum of services for students, from school-based to more intensive community wraparound services. Social workers collaborate with parents, teachers, and other individuals, to promote the academic and social/emotional development of all students through the following programs, policies, and regulations:

A. Federal regulations implementing IDEA define social work services in schools as a related service in special education. These services include:

1. Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability (8VAC20-81-70);
2. Group and individual counseling with the child and family;
3. 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;
4. Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to be available for learning; and
5. Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies for the child.

B. In accordance with § 221.1-272.1 of the Virginia Code, when a student appears to be at risk for suicide, all licensed educational professionals hold the responsibility of reporting the student to a qualified school professional. The school social worker, a qualified school professional, shall be responsible for assessing the student at risk for suicide and following all procedures outlined in the PWCS Suicide Prevention Guidelines. They also educate students on suicide prevention in the classroom using the evidenced-based program Signs of Suicide.
C. Regulation 718-1, “Students Experiencing Homelessness” - The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001 (§ 11432, reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Title IX, Part A), helps ensure full and equal educational access to homeless children and youth who are defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. School social workers are available to provide case management and facilitate community support for these students and their families.

D. Regulation 724-1, “Attendance and Excuses,” and Regulation 728-1 “Release of Students from Compulsory School Attendance” - The legal release of a student whose primary school problem is truancy should be sought only after other alternatives have been attempted and found ineffective. Alternatives to be considered include the following: Working with counselors, psychologists, school social workers, special education staff, and attendance officers.

E. Regulation 771-1, “Child Abuse and Child Abuse Reporting Procedures” - Virginia Code § 63.2-1509 – Section A.5, defines a mandated reporter and their responsibilities as a person, who in their professional or official capacity have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child. School social workers are available to provide case management and facilitate community support for these students and their families while working collaboratively with Prince William County Department of Social Services.

F. Regulation 777-1, “Threat Assessment Procedures” - The school staff trained to assess the initial threat shall include, but is not limited to: principal or designee, school security, psychologist, social worker, counselor, and school resource officer. School social workers are available to serve on the threat assessment team and facilitate community mental health support if needed.

G. Regulation 651-2, “Confidentiality of Student-Disclosed Information” - The school social worker provides adequate safeguards to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of information per PWCS policies and regulations as well as maintains accurate records and documentation. School social workers adhere to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics and abide by current federal and state laws in regard to persons with disabilities, child welfare, mental health, confidentiality, and student and parent rights.
H. In accordance with Virginia General Assembly HB 2282 and Virginia Code §22.1-207.1:1, regarding human trafficking – There is a mandate to educate school staff and students on human trafficking. School social workers provide education and triage services for victims.

I. Provide support to students experiencing mental health emergencies or require ongoing mental health support to promote academic success per Regulation 761-2, “Mental Health Procedures.”

J. Trained in the evidence-based school crisis intervention program PREPARE and serve on the School Division’s Critical Incident Team to support and debrief students, staff, and schools experiencing significant crisis situations.

K. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351; Social Security Act, Title IV), Regulation 714-1, “Foster Care: Educational Stability, Registration, and Enrollment of Students,” requires state child welfare agencies to coordinate efforts to improve educational stability and outcomes for every student in the following areas: (1) school placement determination; and (2) subsequent actions including meals and transportation. The Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) and the Local Education Agency (LEA)-(School Division) are required to work collaboratively to ensure that the conditions of the Fostering Connections Act are met. School social workers facilitate the process.

L. Comply with Regulations 651-2, “Confidentiality of Student-Disclosed Information,” and Regulation 790-2, “Disclosure/Access to Student Educational Records.” Records of personal/social counseling shall be kept separate from a student’s educational records and shall not be disclosed to third parties without prior parental consent, or as otherwise provided by law. The school social workers provide adequate safeguards to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of information per PWCS policies and regulations as well as maintain accurate records and documentation. They adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and abide by current federal and state laws in regard to persons with disabilities, child welfare, mental health, and confidentiality.
III. Staffing

School social workers are itinerant staff, assigned to two schools within school clusters surrounding each high school. Assignments are based on the eligibility coverage schedule and referral data.

IV. Accessing School Social Work Services

Parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff members refer the student to the school social worker, or the student can self-refer.

V. Outcomes

Progress monitoring and outcomes are tracked for all student, family, and program interventions and services.

The Associate Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.