OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL STRUCTURE AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION:

The IFSW North America Region is made up of Canada and the United States of America and the social work associations of these countries, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). North America is represented on the Executive Committee of IFSW by the regional president for North America, Dr. Kathryn Conley Wehrmann, (USA) and the regional member-at-large, Jan Christianson-Wood (Canada).

Both organizations have a dual mission of protecting the profession of social work and seeking to ensure social justice. The political climates in Canada and the United States offer new opportunities for social workers to support the dignity of all people while monitoring the implementation of promises to improve the wellbeing of all people and to remain engaged in international peace and human rights activities.

CASW and NASW continue to produce publications for social workers and the public with an increasing emphasis on staying active and visible on social media to provide timely responses to current issues. These efforts help the public and all stakeholders to understand the profession of social work, how policy decisions will impact social justice, and how our national social work organizations strengthen the profession for the future. CASW and NASW both continue to actively address the impact of the de-professionalization of social work. We also acknowledge the importance of research on evidence-based and best practices and are active in collaborating and disseminating such research.

CASW oversees the evolution of the national social work Code of Ethics. We also work with social work education organizations in support of comprehensive and relevant education programs. For more than 55 years, the NASW Code of Ethics has set forth the values, principles, and standards to guide social workers’ conduct. Dawn Hobdy, Director of the NASW Office of Ethics and Professional Review, is spearheading the revision of the Statement of Ethical Principles for IFSW and is serving as the Ethic Commissioner.
Social workers in the IFSW North American Region are engaged in addressing some of society’s most pressing problems such as the changing economic climate, increased challenges due to poverty and the significant reduction in wages that sustain and support families, and the unemployment crisis. Professional social workers in both countries have been tasked with caring for more and more clients with fewer resources and support. CASW and NASW maintain active advocacy and political action components to address these issues.

**CASW LINKS TO OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

CASW remains connected to the Intersectoral Committee established to promote communication, connection and collaboration among the three sectors (education, association, and regulation) of the social work profession in Canada. A Memorandum of Understanding details the priorities of this collaboration. CASW is a member of over 30 national coalitions which advocate for social justice and to improve the health and well-being of Canadians. Most notably, CASW holds leadership roles in three major national coalitions advancing strategies to influence the federal government in the delivery of health and social services.

CASW has chaired the Public Affairs Committee of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH), which advocates for improved mental health access and services while actively pursuing the reduction of stigma around mental illness. CASW spearheaded consultations with CAMIMH in developing a consensus statement on expectations for the federal government’s recent Health and Social Accord with the provinces and territories. With CAMIMH, CASW also is the Chair of its Champions of Mental Health and Faces of Mental Illness initiatives for 2016-2018 to honour those citizens advancing the agenda of mental health and mental illness in Canada.

CASW is an active member of the Health Action Lobby (HEAL), an alliance of 41 national health organizations, focusing efforts around developing consensus positions on the role of the federal government in health and healthcare.

CASW also developed a co-sponsorship arrangement with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) in the lead up the 2015 federal election to make senior Canadians (over 65 years) an election priority. The *Demand a Plan* initiative continues and is a public campaign to encourage the development of a national strategy on seniors’ care, asking Canadians to actively support the call for a National Seniors Strategy. CASW continues to monitor movement in this direction.

**NASW LINKS TO OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

NASW-USA has a long standing relationship with IASSW, ICSW, IASSW, and the United Nations Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations. NASW-USA is also a
member of InterAction and on the steering committee of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (“Global Alliance”). NASW is represented on the Board of Directors for the North American and Caribbean Region of the International Council on Social Welfare.

NASW-USA partnered with more than 100 organizations and the 40+ sister U.S. social work organizations to promote causes important to social workers and worked to shape public policies that directly affect the lives and well-being of their clients and communities. NASW writes briefs and letters, testifies in hearings, advises on regulatory languages and participates in coalitions that seek to protect and expand the rights of all individuals and families who live in the United States. Issues include: health care reform; immigration; maternal, infant and early childhood health; needy families.

Partner organizations include: the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP), the (Social Work) Leadership Roundtable, National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine - IOM), the Commission for Case Management Certification, and the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA).

**CASW REGIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

Highlights of this past year have been many, with the foremost being the return to CASW of the Alberta College of Social Workers due to the leadership of their Council and membership. The efforts of two CASW past presidents, Darlene MacDonald and Morel Cassie, in conjunction with support from our federation partners resulted in a concurrent revitalization of CASW and a funding formula realignment.

In November 2015, Canada had a change of government from social conservativism to one with a more moderate approach to social issues and social justice. This allowed CASW to become more active on a national level and more visible in advocacy and the pursuit of social justice. However, we maintain a watching brief to assess the progress and promises made by the new government since its election.

CASW’s advocacy ‘wins’ in the past months have been encouraging for our profession. The passage of federal legislation to allow physicians to provide medical assistance in dying (MaiD) without criminal penalties included associated health professions in the draft legislation. We successfully advocated strongly that social workers be specifically included in their role as valued members of interdisciplinary decision making teams in hospital settings. These teams have developed across Canada although access is primarily in large urban areas.

With the election of a government more accessible to social workers, our visit to the federal government in October 2016 allowed open dialogue with elected Members of Parliament and Ministers of Government on issues of common interest including CASW’s efforts to have our draft of a Social Care Act introduced in a framework similar to the federal healthcare act. This
would put in place a series of guiding principles on how current and future federal social investments to the provinces and territories be allocated and spent. Other topics we were able to address in meetings with government included reconciliation with Indigenous people and communities, a basic income for seniors, a plan for national child care, and increases in mental health funding for children, youth and adults. More recently CASW has addressed to government our concerns about high suicide rates among returning and retiring members of our Armed Forces. Other communications focused on increasing homelessness and a growing inability of working families to afford housing that is safe and sufficient for their needs. CASW also communicated with government via a national position paper on the social work perspective on social investment in Canada. This was part of our approach to government on social finance.

Another area in which there has been a "win" in our approaches is to government has been a renewed interest in a minimum income for citizens. This includes recent trial projects in one of Canada's most populous provinces. A project undertaken in a mining company several decades ago is an area of interest to researchers although the data analysis was not completed due to a lack of funds. Anecdotal research indicates that relatively small increases in income made impacts that participants remembered decades later. CASW published its own paper on this topic, advocating for a minimum income program that would not penalize people already on other forms of social assistance or pensions.

Over 13 years ago, CASW undertook a project focussed on the professional and emotional needs of social workers working for child welfare (child protection) systems. This is an area of work with high turnover and varying wage levels across Canada and is of particular concern to Indigenous Canadians. Legislation varies across the country in the threshold level for providing voluntary services and mandated/involuntary services. Gaps in communication between jurisdictions have created situations were children have been placed at risk, remained at risk or died as a result of failures to ensure services continued. CASW has contracted for research on the needs of social workers and proposed directions for future advocacy. The survey is on our national website and is accessible to any social worker who works or has worked in child welfare in Canada.

National Social Work Month in March 2017 provided continuing professional education opportunities for social workers across the country at no cost. The webinar format works well for our far-flung population and webinars remain accessible on the national website. Most webinars were prepared and presented by social workers in active practice or by academics with expertise in the subject area.

As a national organization, CASW is active in coalitions focussed on social justice issues. In recent years, CASW has been involved in coalitions focussed on mental health, the social determinants of health and health action lobbies. We were invited by the Canadian Medical Association to work with them on projects focussing on federal issues of social justice and health. We also work with national coalitions for mental health services and to remind the stigma experienced by Canadians with mental illness.
Our membership and participation in the International Federation of Social Workers is a valued part of our activities in support of the profession. We undertake to keep Canadian social workers aware of international events and developing trends impacting social justice and the welfare of persons. One area in which CASW participates is the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. The current theme’s survey on promoting environmental and community sustainability, is nearing completion and will be sent to our Federation partners and available on our national website. We will encourage our partners to ask for participation from practitioners. Preliminary conversations have suggested that social workers may not consider this a separate area or emphasis of practice, rather as part of practice areas such as health, social welfare, disaster response, homelessness or reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. With climate change impacting Canada in ways that are undeniable, participation by social work organizations and social workers across our country will be valued. Extreme weather changes in Canada have a particular impact on Indigenous peoples and on native animal populations. One that has been noticeably and significantly impacted is the polar bear. Populations are dropping, fertility and reproductive success is decreasing and food sources and habitat are shrinking for this iconic Canadian animal. This in turn impacts the traditional and modern economies of northern Indigenous people.

**NASW REGIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**Ongoing NASW-CASW Collaboration:** Darrell Wheeler, Kathryn Wehrmann, Angelo McClain and NASW staff continue to work with IFSW President Ruth Stark, IFSW Secretary Rory Truell, and the CASW President and Executive Director on IFSW matters, opportunities for joint projects, other topics important for NASW and CASW, and social work globally.

**IFSW/NASW Collaboration Meeting – October 2016:** Held an in-person International/IFSW Planning meeting with IFSW Global President, Ruth Stark and NASW leaders and staff to discuss ways to further NASW and IFSW collaboration. NASW International Committee chair and IFSW UN Representative, Robin Mama, had a key role.

**North American Region “Mini Meeting” – October 2016:** As part of Ruth Stark’s visit to Washington, DC, NASW and CASW (Jan Christianson-Wood and Fred Phelps) held a teleconference to discuss regional issues, the Global Agenda and Regional Observatory, World Social Work Day, professional development, and other matters.

**IFSW European Conference 2017:** NASW was represented at the European Conference in May by NASW’s Deputy Director of Program.

**Chinese Association of Social Workers Visit to NASW –** In March 2017, NASW hosted the Chinese Association of Social Workers (CASW) delegation consisting of 25 senior service managers from all over China. The delegation was in the US to learn about the development of social services and the professionalization of social work in the US. They were especially interested in the history and the services that NASW offers our members, as well the potential opportunities for future collaboration in developing Chinese social work. The Vice President of
CASW participated and met with Angelo McClain, who will be travelling to China in September at the invitation of the Chinese Association.

Global Agenda – Global Observatory Data Collection: The committee includes representatives from CASW and NASW and is currently reviewing the survey instrument designed to collect data for the next Global Observatory. CASW and NASW have worked hard to ensure that the data collection process includes the proper input and perspectives from practitioners and not only academics.

World Social Work Day / 34th Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations (NY, USA): NASW-USA continues to sponsored and participate in Social Work Day at the UN. Several NASW leaders, including NASW CEO, Dr. Angelo McClain, and staff, along with many NASW members, participated. The theme was “Promoting Community & Environmental Sustainability”, the third theme of the Global Agenda. Suzanne Dworak-Peck, NASW Social Work Pioneer® and IFSW Ambassador provided greetings from IFSW. Key participants included Robin Mama (Co-Chair of SW Day for IFSW), Michael Cronin (IFSW Main Representative to the UN in NY) and Annamaria Campanini (President IASSW). Angelo McClain, NASW staff, and many NASW members also participated. NASW Creative Art Manager, Martha Rothblum, designed this year’s IFSW World Social Work Day poster.


Social Work HEALS – NASW-USA is in the third year of a five-year New York Community Trust grant focused on supporting health care social work and integrated health care. This is a joint project with the Council on Social Work Education.

Supervisory Leaders in Aging – NASW-USA is in the final year of the 3-year Hartford Foundation grant. NASW is working with the four participating chapters on plans to sustain the program beyond the grant funding which ends in December 2017 and to expand it to additional Chapters.

Public Education Campaign Activities

- Public Service Announcements - The NASW Foundation is offering a video public service announcement series that NASW staff and chapters and the wider social work community can use to help the public better understand the services that social workers provide. The 90-second videos tell the stories of clients who have been helped by social workers. They focus on three areas – older adults, LGBTQ youth and single parents.

- Public Education Campaign – NASW and NASW Foundation are creating a video series that focuses on the importance of mental wellness, emphasizes
that mental wellness is essential to good health, and highlights the critical role that social work plays in the health care. The campaign will reach an estimated 84 million people through CNN, MSNBC, Disney Channel, Public TV, and other media outlets.

The Future of Social Work in Health: NASW is participating in an effort to get a National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine Consensus Study on Health and Social Care that focuses on the role of social work in improving the nation’s health.

NASW Social Work Pioneers® Event: Held 12th Annual NASW Social Work Pioneers® Event in Washington, DC in October 2016. The theme was “The Conversation Starts with Me and Us: Spirituality, Racism and Poverty.” More than 100 attendees from around the country participated. Ruth Stark participated and presented an overview of IFSW activities. NASW Social Work Pioneers® are accomplished social workers who serve as role models for the profession. IFSW Lifetime Ambassador Suzanne Dworak-Peck also participated and helped to host Ruth.

Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice: NASW-USA worked with three sister organizations including the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), Association of Clinical Social Workers (ACSW), and Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) to develop new standards for the use of technology in social work practice. 

NASW Code of Ethics Review Task Force: In 2015, NASW established the NASW Code of Ethics Task Force to review various aspects of the current NASW Code of Ethics, focusing on ethical responsibilities when using various forms and types of technology. These responsibilities include informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, conflicts of interest, competence and record keeping. The Task Force was also charge to make recommendations regarding the current language in the Code that might be inconsistent with any proposed changes or additions related to technology issues. The changes/updates will be proposed to the NASW Delegate Assembly in August 2017.

NASW Ethics Virtual Roundtable: In April 2017, NASW convened a virtual roundtable to explore the ethical implications of today’s political climate. Dawn Hobdy was the moderator.

NASW Membership Development:

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA) serves nearly 120,000 members through its 55 chapters and national headquarters. However, like many other large associations, NASW-USA must continue to demonstrate its value in order to retain members, or social workers will turn to other local specialized, or more affordable groups, or forego professional membership altogether.

NASW-USA has launched new Chapter/National membership recruitment and retention initiative in partnership with the 55 NASW Chapters. Analysis shows that member retention (and not recruitment) is NASW’s membership growth challenge. NASW will better retain members if membership provides “must have” resources and benefits that give members compelling reasons to renew for multiple years. NASW is implementing additional retention efforts from the National office, to ensure current members are aware of, and engage in, the ongoing activities on their behalf, including active advocacy efforts, and the addition of new benefits. The redesigned NASW website, new online communities, new practice support, and new video and webinar content all offer opportunities to engage and retain current members.

NASW Member Engagement Through Social Media (May 2017 data):
  o NASW LinkedIn group members: 68,993
  o NASW Facebook followers: 126,751
  o NASW Twitter followers: 37,345

Public Policy and Advocacy: During the past year, NASW-USA took an active role on political issues. The NASW Action Center on the NASW website provides information on pending legislation that NASW supports, opposes or monitors. Members are provided with specific information about the bills and ways to take action.

The following is an overview of some of the pending legislation, as well as activities that NASW-USA has supported:

The Election of Donald J. Trump has significantly increased NASW’s public policy and government relations work. Activities include:
  • Issued a statement on the election
  • Utilized social media
  • Communicated regularly with NASW members and social workers
  • Met with Congressional social work champions
  • Reached out to New Members of Congress
  • Engaged bipartisan members of Congress

Legislative Activities: NASW has continued to work on numerous bills, including:
  • Improving Access to Mental Health Act
  • Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act
  • Opposing Repeal of the Affordable Care Act

Million Women March – NASW organized hundreds of social workers for the January 2017 Women’s March on Washington. The March was an opportunity to show that women’s rights are human rights and that women, their partners, and their children advocate for policies that affirm the value of women in society. NASW then-President Elect Kathryn Wehrmann
participated in the March.

Policy Practice Summit: In April, NASW organized and hosted a summit, “Maximizing Social Work’s Policy Impact in a Changing Political Environment” in collaboration with the Council on Social Work Education. The event was sponsored by the Coalition for Policy Education and Practice in Social Work.

Social Work Month 2017: The theme “Social Workers Stand Up” was promoted by NASW, partner organizations, NASW’s 55 state chapters, and internationally with a special logo and numerous public announcements. The NASW Social Work Month Twitterstorm reached 1.1 million users.

Social Work Day on the Hill 2017: In March, NASW and sister social work organizations co-sponsored a policy forum, reception, student advocacy day, and other related activities.

Grand Challenges for Social Work: NASW-USA is working with other social work organizations on the Grand Challenges for Social Work. The American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW) is coordinating the activities related to the 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work activities. Angelo McClain serves on the committee. The Grand Challenges represent an agenda over the next decade that focuses on improving individual and family well-being, strengthening the social fabric, and helping create a more just society. The 12 Grand Challenges, as well as news and information about the initiative, are at www.grandchallengesforsocialwork.org.

In closing, CASW and NASW acknowledge the leadership and participation in IFSW of our past presidents, Morel Cassie and Darrell Wheeler. Our awareness of international issues has increased because of their involvement on the IFSW Executive Committee. We look to their examples to guide our ongoing involvement with IFSW and look forward to growing the influence and impact of the North American Region.

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President, North American Region, IFSW

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