

## AT A GLANCE

Over 20% of all K-12 students experience social, emotional, and behavioral problems that compromise their readiness to learn. Since 2010, the rates of students reporting depression and anxiety have increased by nearly 50% with suicidal behavior also on the rise and beginning as young as age 10. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges. Despite the need, less than half of all K-12 students who need services receive them. In Washington state, K-12 students have even higher rates of mental health disorders than the nation as a whole and have a harder time getting help.

Schools are the most common place in which children and youth receive mental health treatment. However, schools are woefully under-resourced to prevent and treat emotional and behavioral problems. Staffing ratios for school social workers in Washington state are at one-fiftieth the level recommended by the National Association for School Social Workers.

In response, Washington state was recently awarded \$6 million from the U.S. Department of Education to create a pipeline from Washington state's five accredited Masters in Social Work training programs to Washington state's K-12 schools. Called the Workforce for Student Well-being Initiative or WSW, 100 aspiring school social workers will receive conditional scholarships based on their financial need so the cost of getting an education is not a barrier to their getting an advanced degree and then committing to working in a high-need public or tribal school.

## WSW SOCIAL WORKERS WILL:

- Be placed in an advanced practicum placement in a high-need public or tribal school,
- Receive pre-service training inclusive of a 30-hour community of practice experience with peers,
- Attend a professional networking retreat with mentors,
- Receive their Educational Staff Associate certificate, and
- Receive career placement support to take a leadership role in a high-need public school after graduation.

The primary goal of the Workforce for Student Well-being (WSW) Initiative is to help all K-12 students in Washington state to thrive. WSW also advances the careers of skilled social work professionals through training, mentorship, and financial supports by preparing graduate students to work in high-need public and tribal schools supporting K-12 students.

1

### JOIN THE EFFORT

Receive a conditional scholarship at one of Washington state's five accredited schools of social work, for up to \$30,000 to offset Master's degree expenses to serve in a high-need public school. Students must demonstrate a passion for school mental health and complete their advanced practicum placement in a high-need public or tribal school.

2

### SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Learn the skills necessary to serve K-12 students with mental health needs and lead school-wide prevention and social-emotional learning programming in high-need public schools.

3

### ADVANCE YOUR CAREER

Be part of a community of practice focused on evidence-based school mental health and inclusionary practices, network with fellow students and mentors from across the state, and receive support in career placement.

**VISIT:** [wswinitiative.org](https://www.wswinitiative.org)  
**QUESTIONS:** [wswinitiative@uw.edu](mailto:wswinitiative@uw.edu)

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Workforce for Student Well-being Initiative (WSW) will expand the number of master's level social workers providing mental health services in high-need public and tribal schools. Students attending one of the five accredited schools of social work across Washington state, who have a commitment to working in schools, are eligible to apply for conditional scholarships up to \$30,000 to offset their graduate education expenses—in return for serving in a high-need public or tribal school in Washington state. Students are placed in a high-need public or tribal school during their advanced practicum placement, are supported in developing competencies to become school-based social workers who provide mental health services through a year-long community of practice, and attend an annual retreat building a network of like-minded professionals.

## HOW TO GET STARTED?

To apply for a Workforce for Student Well-being (WSW) Initiative Scholarship, graduate students must be affiliated with one of the five accredited master's degree programs in social work in Washington state. Scholarship applicants are selected by the individual universities. You will find program benefits, requirements, FAQs, application requirements, FAQs, application requirements, and timelines at the WSW website, [wswinitiative.org](http://wswinitiative.org).

## OUR PARTNERS

The WSW Initiative is a collaboration among the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the UW School Mental Health Assessment, Research, and Training (SMART) Center, the UW School of Social Work in Seattle, and the state's four other accredited schools of social work. Additional core partners include the Washington Association of School Principals and the Washington Association of School Social Workers.

This collaborative approach will expand the number diversity, and career development of school social workers serving in high-need K-12 public and tribal schools, while increasing the use of evidence-based approaches to school mental health. The partnering high-need public and tribal schools have a minimum of 20% or more of their students eligible for free and reduced lunch. The social work students will participate in a 30-hour community of practice focused on evidence-based practices in youth mental health, school mental health, and a multi-tiered system of school supports. WSW cohort members will attend an annual retreat to build networks with other social workers and mentors in the field of school mental health. Graduate students will also receive their Educational Staff Associate (ESA) certificate as part of the program.

The ultimate benefit of the WSW is to Washington's young people. WSW will help assure that K-12 students have access to trusted adults who are well-trained in schools and who can support their mental health—in a place where they can readily access services.

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### UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

Eastern Washington University School of Social Work  
Seattle University School of Social Work  
University of Washington Seattle School of Social Work  
University of Washington Tacoma School of Social Work  
Walla Walla University School of Social Work

### HIGH-NEED PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS & TRIBAL SCHOOL PARTNERS

Our high-need public school districts and tribal school partners serve as training sites as well as future employers.

Learn more about our high-need public school districts and tribal partners at: [wswinitiative.org](http://wswinitiative.org)