

**From:** [Smith, Randy](#)  
**To:** [Meshelemiah, Jacquelyn](#); [Richardson, Theresa](#)  
**Cc:** [Sutherland, Sue](#); [Smith, Randy](#); [Griffiths, Rob](#); [Reed, Katie](#); [Miriti, Maria](#); [Duffy, Lisa](#); [Hunt, Ryan](#); [Jenkins, David](#)  
**Subject:** Proposal to establish a category 3a Certificate in School Social Work  
**Date:** Friday, June 12, 2026 2:54:14 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Jacquelyn and Theresa:

The proposal from the College of Social Work to establish a category 3a Certificate in School Social Work was approved by the Council on Academic Affairs at its meeting on June 11, 2026. Thank you for attending the meeting to respond to questions/comments.

No additional level of internal review/approval is necessary. This action will be included in the Council's next [Annual Activities Report](#) to the University Senate (July 2026).

The Office of the University Registrar will work with you on any implementation issues.

Please keep a copy of this message for your file on the proposal and I will do the same for the file in the Office of Academic Affairs.

If you have any questions please contact the Chair of the Council, Professor Sue Sutherland (.43), or me.

I wish you success with this important program development.

Randy



**W. Randy Smith, Ph.D.**

Vice Provost for Academic Programs

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TO: Randy Smith, Vice Provost for Academic Programs

FROM: Graduate School Curriculum Services

DATE: 3/24/2026

RE: Proposal to Establish a 3 A Certificate in School Social Work in The College of Social Work

The College of Social Work is proposing a 3 A Stand-Alone Certificate in School Social Work.

The proposal was received by the Graduate School on 11/25/2025. The combined GS/CAA subcommittee first reviewed the proposal on 12/10/2025 and requested revisions. Revisions were received on 3/10/2026. It is supported for review by the Council on Academic Affairs.



March 6, 2026

Dr. Maria Miriti, Associate Dean for Academic Excellence  
The Ohio State University Graduate School  
250 University Hall  
230 N. Oval Mall  
Columbus, OH 43210

Dear Dr. Miriti,

Thank you for the Graduate School subcommittee's thoughtful review of the proposed School Social Work Graduate Certificate Programs. In response to the feedback provided, the College of Social Work has revised the proposals and resubmitted the materials for consideration. The revisions address the requested clarifications and structural changes and are summarized below.

First, the revised proposals now clearly distinguish the eligibility requirements and completion expectations for pre-master's and post-master's students. The Category 3a Stand-Alone Certificate is intended for individuals who already hold a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and are seeking professional development, continuing education, or a mid-career transition into school-based practice. Completion of the certificate requires successful completion of the four required courses (12 credit hours) and demonstration of school-based practice experience through either one year of employment in a school or school-adjacent setting following the MSW or completion of a field practicum in a school setting.

For the Category 3b Embedded Certificate, eligibility is limited to students admitted to the Ohio State MSW program. Students complete the four required courses as part of their MSW curriculum and must also complete their required MSW field practicum (SWK 7189), which includes a minimum of 672 clock hours in a school setting. The certificate is awarded concurrently with the MSW degree upon completion of all program requirements.

Second, consistent with the subcommittee's recommendation, the program has been separated into two distinct proposals to clearly reflect the two student pathways. The Category 3a Stand-Alone Certificate serves post-master's professionals seeking preparation aligned with Ohio Department of Education and Workforce licensure requirements, while the Category 3b Embedded Certificate is designed for MSW students and awarded concurrently with the master's degree.

Finally, the proposals have been updated to reflect a revision to the policy course requirement within the certificate curriculum. The required course has been updated from SWK 7630 to SWK 7632: Child and Youth Serving Systems: Policy, Practice and Advocacy. This change is reflected in the Coursework section and Table 1 in both proposals.

The College of Social Work appreciates the Graduate School's guidance, which has strengthened the clarity and structure of these proposals. We respectfully resubmit the revised materials for review by the Graduate School and the Council on Academic Affairs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Jenkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent and the last name "Jenkins" following in a similar style.

David Jenkins  
Dean and Professor



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

## **School Social Work Certificate Program Proposal**

### **Certificate Category: 3a Stand-Alone Certificate**

#### **A. Background and Purpose**

Each year, the College of Social Work supports approximately 80 to 100 Master's-level students who choose to specialize in a School Social Work pathway. These students complete a rigorous curriculum that includes specialized coursework and a field placement in a school setting, preparing them to meet the requirements for graduation and to obtain the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Pupil Services License as a School Social Worker. This credential positions them as highly qualified professionals, eligible for employment in any public school district or charter school across the state of Ohio.

At the same time, schools across Ohio and the nation face a critical behavioral health workforce shortage, with unprecedented demand for professionals who can address the youth mental health crisis. School districts are urgently seeking licensed social workers or social workers in partnering agencies to provide direct services, crisis response, and preventative programming. This shortage creates unique opportunities for practicing social workers in other fields to make mid-career transitions into school settings, leveraging their existing licensure and clinical experience to support children and adolescents in educational environments.

Beyond traditional practice, there are also growing opportunities for leadership roles within districts, such as Directors of Student Wellness and Belonging or Whole Child Supports. These administrators often oversee multidisciplinary teams of counselors, social workers, and related staff, shaping schoolwide approaches to mental health, equity, and school climate. Preparing social workers for these emerging leadership pathways further strengthens the role of the College of Social Work in addressing systemic workforce needs.

The proposed 3a certificate program described here will create a continuing education pathway for current school social workers who must complete 30 hours of CEUs every renewal cycle. Alumni and practicing professionals will have access to OSU's specialized, graduate-level courses focused on supporting youth in schools, child and adolescent development, trauma-informed care, and systems-level approaches to mental health. This approach not only helps retain the existing workforce but also ensures that Ohio's school social workers remain on the cutting edge of practice and policy.

Ultimately, the School Social Work Certificate Program seeks to expand the pipeline of qualified school-based social workers by preparing mid-career MSW professionals seeking to transition into this critical workforce, preparing leaders for emerging wellness-focused roles, and strengthening the ongoing professional development of practitioners already serving in schools.

## **B. Program of Study, Admissions, and Length of Program Compared to Similar Programs**

Admission to the 3a School Social Work Certificate Program is open to:

- Individuals who already hold an MSW and are returning to complete the certificate for professional development, continuing education, or career transition.

Applicants must also meet general Graduate School requirements for admission and demonstrate prior professional preparation or interest in school-based practice, child and adolescent mental health, or related areas.

**Why OSU?** According to the U.S. News & World Report (2024), The Ohio State University College of Social Work is ranked #12 in the nation. Importantly, there is no measurable competition at OSU or other universities in Ohio for a program of this scale. The College of Social Work's current School Social Work licensure program (what we call this now but want to formalize) is the largest in the state, far surpassing the only two other licensure programs—at the University of Cincinnati and Case Western Reserve University, each of which enrolls fewer than 10 students annually. This places OSU in a unique position to serve as the statewide leader in preparing the next generation of school social workers.

Our School Social Work Certificate Program would require the successful completion of 12 graduate credit hours. This length is consistent with other professional graduate certificates in education and social work, which typically range from 12 to 15 credit hours. For example:

- University of Cincinnati – Graduate Certificate in School-Based Mental Health (12 credit hours)
- University of Michigan – Graduate Certificate in Child Welfare (12 credit hours)
- Kent State University – Trauma-Informed Educational Practices Certificate (12 credit hours)
- Ohio State University – Graduate Certificate in Aging and Public Health (12 credit hours)

This alignment demonstrates that the proposed program mirrors national and statewide norms in certificate length and scope, while remaining flexible for both current graduate students and practicing professionals seeking additional credentials.

## **C. Coursework**

The required curriculum for The Ohio State University College of Social Work (OSU CSW) School Social Work Certificate Program consists of four 3-credit courses that contain the knowledge and skills deemed necessary to function as a social worker effectively in a school

setting. One course is dual-listed at the undergraduate and graduate level (SWK 5517: Social Work Services in Schools I), and another is a graduate-only level advanced practice course entitled SWK 7517: Social Work Services in Schools II. These classes are taken in sequence and educate students on foundational aspects such as the role of the school social worker, ethics, special education, social-emotional learning, multi-tiered systems of support, and collaboration with school personnel and outside community partners. Additionally, the second school social work course offered only at the graduate level covers more advanced topics such as risk assessments, clinical mental health, crisis interventions, individual and group interventions, and other advanced skills.

The two additional courses are offered exclusively at the graduate level. SWK 7511: Clinical Social Work with Children & Adolescents focuses on crisis assessment and intervention, as well as mental health and substance use issues that impact young people. SWK 7632 Child and Youth Serving Systems: Policy, Practice and Advocacy emphasizes micro- and macro-level practice, with particular attention to policy and advocacy strategies when working with children, youth, and their families. All courses are offered online asynchronously or in-person each semester (Autumn, Summer, and Spring). The only course that requires a prerequisite is SWK 7517, which requires completion of SWK: 5517 (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1. School Social Work Certificate Required Courses**

<b>Required Coursework</b>	<b>Pre-req</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Offerings</b>	<b>Modality</b>
5517 Social Work Services in Schools I	No	3 credit hours	SU, AU, SP	Online and In-Person
7517 Social Work Services in Schools II	Yes, 5517	3 credit hours	SU, AU, SP	Online and In-Person
7511 Clinical Social Work with Children & Adolescents	No	3 credit hours	SU, AU, SP	Online and In-Person
7632 Child and Youth Serving Systems: Policy, Practice and Advocacy	No	3 credit hours	SU, AU, SP	Online and In-Person
Required employment in a school or school adjacent setting for at least one-year post-MSW – OR – Enrollment in field practicum credit hours in a school setting See information below.				

To receive the 3a certificate designation upon completion of the coursework outlined above, students MUST either provide a letter from an administrator attesting to the student being employed in a school or school-adjacent setting for at least one year post-Master's, or the student must enroll in additional field practicum credit hours or complete a field practicum in a school setting. This is a valued part of learning how to work and engage ethically in a school setting and is required of any student who will receive the certificate credential.

All students in the School Social Work Certificate program are expected to strive for competency in the following Council on Social Work Education Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior
2. Advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
3. Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in practice
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice
5. Engage in policy practice
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

#### **D. Goals and Outcomes**

The proposed School Social Work Certificate Program launch is in Autumn 2026. This program is designed to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and credentials necessary to meet pressing workforce demands in schools nationally.

The program seeks to:

- Strengthen professional preparation in school social work by developing knowledge and applied skills related to ethics, practice roles, tasks, functions, and state and federal mandates in educational settings. This will be achieved through both specialized coursework and either one year of employment in a school or school-adjacent agency or a graduate-level field placement in a school setting.
- Advance competence in child and adolescent mental health by ensuring that graduates are familiar with the most common diagnoses, assessment tools, and evidence-based practices that can be applied to support student well-being and respond effectively to crises in schools and school-adjacent agencies.
- Promote culturally responsive practice by fostering sensitivity to the ways social and cultural inequities—related to class, age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, disability, and other dimensions of identity—shape the school environment and the experiences of children, youth, and families.

#### **E. Expected Outcomes**

Upon completion of the certificate, graduates will be eligible to apply to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) for a Pupil Services License in School Social Work. This license is the state-required credential for employment as a school social worker in Ohio. Candidates who hold this certificate and accompanying license will be considered highly qualified and are employable in any public school district or charter school across the state.

While licensure requirements vary across states, the training provided in this certificate may also strengthen graduates' qualifications in other states, depending on local credentialing processes. Regardless of state-specific licensure rules, all students completing the program will gain advanced training in best practices for addressing the youth mental health crisis and in leveraging schools as a central hub for mental health support and wellness. Our advisors will

work with out-of-state students to audit their state requirements and help them identify potential electives needed and/or support their petitions to allow our coursework to meet their requirements (e.g., provide syllabi or other needs).

## **F. Opportunities for Graduates**

Graduates of the program will:

- Meet the state's formal licensure requirements, a prerequisite for school-based social work positions in Ohio. This may also set them up for job opportunities in other states, making them highly competitive against other professionals that do not hold this certificate applying for positions in schools.
- Be positioned as competitive applicants in a field facing significant workforce shortages, ensuring strong employment prospects.
- Gain specialized training that supports potential advancement into leadership roles (e.g., Directors of Student Wellness and Belonging), which are increasingly common in districts overseeing counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals.

## **G. Measuring Program Benefits**

The primary outcome will be the successful ability to apply for and receive the ODEW Pupil Services License as a School Social Worker by the graduate, positioning them for hiring in Ohio. Beyond licensure, the program will also be evaluated through a set of systematic measures to ensure continuous improvement and demonstrate impact on graduates and the broader workforce. We believe an assessment plan can include indirect and direct measures:

- Indirect Measures:
  - Number of applications to the program
  - Quality of applicant pool (e.g., cumulative GPA, diversity characteristics)
  - Admission rates (% admitted, % matriculated)
  - Student surveys (e.g., program satisfaction during enrollment)
  - Student evaluations of instruction (course satisfaction)
  - Retention and graduation rates
  - Cumulative student GPAs and average time-to-certificate
  - Alumni surveys (e.g., employment outcomes, applicability of certificate, use of certificate competencies in practice)
- Direct Measure:
  - An assessment survey taken at the end of SWK 7517 (after completing the two School Social Work courses) to evaluate program objectives and school social work-specific competencies.

Program benefit could also be measured by:

- Employment rates in school social work positions within one year of certificate completion.
- Employer feedback on the preparedness and effectiveness of certificate graduates.
- The number of certificate graduates advancing into leadership or supervisory roles in schools or school-based behavioral health services.

## H. Expected Growth and Policy Considerations

The School Social Work Certificate Program is projected to experience continued enrollment growth. Approximately 15 years ago, the College of Social Work enrolled around 25 students in the School Social Work Track. In the last five years, cohorts have ranged from 65 students to 108 students. As the number of students has expanded, the College has strategically invested in staffing by hiring a 0.5 FTE program coordinator to oversee the track, as well as two contracted employees to serve as field liaisons and co-instructors for students in school placements.

The College of Social Work has sufficient resources to sustain this growth, including dedicated faculty, administrative support, and field placement staff. Currently, the program benefits from:

- Three faculty members engaged in school social work research and teaching.
- A 0.5 FTE program coordinator who also teaches School Social Work-specific courses.
- Three community lecturers who deliver coursework.
- Three contracted staff who provide field liaison support and co-instruction for students in school placements.

The College maintains a robust field placement network with approximately 100 school social work placement sites across Ohio, many of which accept multiple students each year. In addition, students may be placed in one of 33 affiliated school sites in other states. Many states may permit transferability of Ohio's Pupil Services License with the submission of appropriate documentation, typically including course syllabi, field placement descriptions, and verification of school social work-specific competencies/courses.

The College of Social Work actively monitors enrollment trends and workforce demands to ensure that staffing, curriculum, and field placement resources remain aligned with the needs of students and the broader profession. A clear example of this responsiveness is the development of SWK 5517, a course created in direct response to a major policy shift in Ohio aimed at expanding the pipeline of school-based behavioral health professionals.

Historically, school social workers were required to hold an MSW, complete designated coursework and a school-based field placement and obtain the Pupil Services License as a School Social Worker - a standard that continues to represent best practice and the preferred credential for hiring. However, as the behavioral health needs of K-12 students have escalated, particularly in rural and under-resourced districts, the Ohio Social Work and Marriage and Family Therapist Board and ODEW broadened eligibility requirements to allow schools to hire Licensed Social Workers (LSWs), a credential attainable at either the bachelor's or master's level. This shift significantly widened the applicant pool of professionals who can serve in schools and underscored the urgent demand for expanded training opportunities.

In response, the College designed SWK 5517 to be accessible to both undergraduate and graduate students, ensuring that all social work majors receive exposure to school social work content and are prepared to enter this growing area of practice. This curricular innovation not only addresses immediate workforce shortages but also positions OSU graduates as leaders in

responding to the youth mental health crisis by leveraging schools as essential hubs of care and support.

Building on this momentum, the 3a School Social Work Certificate Program extends these efforts further by providing a formal pathway for alumni, and MSW-prepared professionals matriculating to Ohio to earn the credential necessary to pursue licensure and employment in schools. In doing so, the program strengthens Ohio's capacity to meet the behavioral health needs of children, youth, and families while also offering scalable solutions to a national workforce challenge.

## I. Appendix on Growing Demands and Needs in Schools

Over the past several years, the mental health needs of children and youth have increased dramatically in both frequency and severity. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, contributing to increased isolation, loss of engagement, and heightened risk factors. The following statistics highlight the critical state of child and adolescent mental health and underscore the urgent need for a stronger behavioral health workforce in schools.

Data from *Education Week* (2022)

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of children diagnosed with anxiety increased by 29%, while diagnoses of depression increased by 27%.
- Between 2019 and 2020, there was a 21% increase in children with behavior or conduct problems as reported by parents/caregivers, reflecting educators' concerns about social skills, self-control, and emotional maturity.
- Mental health emergency visits among children increased significantly during the pandemic:
  - 24% increase for ages 5–11 and 31% increase for ages 12–17 (March–October 2020).
  - More than 50% spike in suspected suicide attempt visits among girls ages 12–17 in early 2021 compared to the same period in 2019.
- Suicide rates among children ages 5–11 rose by an average of 15% annually between 2013 and 2020, even though schools often provide less support for mental health at the elementary and middle school levels.

Data from the *Office of the Surgeon General* (2021)

- Even before COVID-19, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor outcomes for youth, with 1 in 5 children ages 3–17 reporting a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder.
- Of the 7.7 million children with treatable mental health disorders in 2016, about half did not receive adequate treatment.
- From 2009 to 2019:
  - High school students reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness increased by 40%.
  - Those seriously considering suicide increased by 36%.
  - Those who created a suicide plan increased by 44%.
- Between 2011 and 2015, youth psychiatric emergency department visits for depression, anxiety, and behavioral challenges rose by 28%.
- Between 2007 and 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10–24 increased by 57%.
- Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) could reduce adult depression by 44% and improve long-term health outcomes, education, and economic prospects (Brogan, 2022).

Data from the *CDC and U.S. Department of Health & Human Services* (2022–2023)

Specific populations of youth are at particularly high risk of mental health challenges, often experiencing compounding risk factors:

- Youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD): More vulnerable to disruptions in school routines and transitions.
- Racial and ethnic minority youth:
  - Suicide rates among Black youth ages 10–19 surpassed those of White youth for the first time in 2022.
  - Since 2018, the suicide rate for Black youth has increased 54%, compared to a 17% decrease for White youth.
  - From 2007 to 2020, the suicide rate among Black adolescents ages 10–17 rose by 144%.
- LGBTQ+ youth: Require access to supportive, school-based mental health services, particularly when home environments are unsupportive.
- Immigrant youth: Face barriers including language access, limited technology, and cultural stigma around mental health.
- Runaway and homeless youth: Often struggle with service access and continuity of care.

\*This appendix underscores the urgency of preparing school-based social workers and related professionals to address youth mental health needs, positioning schools as critical hubs for prevention, intervention, and ongoing support