

## **School Social Workers Help Students Stay in School**

School social workers play a vital role in supporting students at risk of dropping out of school. School Social Workers recognize that the decision to drop out of school may have serious life-long implications. School social workers are dedicated to assisting students to be successful in school and to reach high school graduation. Federal, state, and local resources must be used to address the serious barriers to high school graduation that face students on a daily basis. Barriers to graduation may be systemic, environmental, familial, cultural, physical, or emotional.

School social workers are specially trained and qualified to identify students at risk and to intervene to assist students to remain in school. School social workers may assist families and students in addressing concerns including substance abuse, undiagnosed disabilities, cultural diversity issues within the school, abuse and neglect, physical and mental health issues, and school violence. School social workers are also the critical link for families and students to community support services.

School social workers are dedicated to improving school systems and alleviating the systemic barriers to learning and graduation. The following changes, among others, in the school environment must occur that would assist at-risk students to remain in school:

- social and life skills training;
- counseling and mentoring programs;
- alternative routes to earning high school credits;
- career and technical skills training;
- community collaboration;
- understanding the broad range of learning styles;
- community service experiences;
- strong professional development for all school staff,
- smaller class and school size; and,
- transition planning

Early identification of students at risk and concerted efforts to correct systemic barriers to graduation will help more students to be successful in school and beyond.