



**International Federation of Social Workers  
2018 Report of the North American Region  
Member Countries: Canada and the United States of America  
2017-2018 Program Years**



**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 vice president, 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* and also works with social work education organizations in support of comprehensive and relevant education programs. A review of the 2005 Code of Ethics, Practice Guidelines and Standards of Practice is in the final planning stage with national consultations to commence in late 2018. 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, spearheaded the revision of the Statement of Ethical Principles for IFSW and served as the Ethics 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-USA maintain active advocacy and political action components to address these issues.

### **CASW LINKS TO OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

CASW remains connected to the national social work 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. A full list of our coalition memberships is found at [www.casw-acts.ca](http://www.casw-acts.ca)

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, focussing 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.

The relationship between NASW in the United States and CASW in Canada allows the North American Region of IFSW to remain vital with regular and open communication between our

two organizations. On matters of international importance CASW and NASW communicate and consult while maintaining our independence as national organizations.

### **NASW LINKS TO OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

NASW-USA has a long-standing relationship with IASSW, ICSW, 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-USA 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, the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA), Eldercare Workforce Alliance, Leadership Council of Aging Organization, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Criminal Justice Coalition, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the Mental Health Liaison Group among others.

### **CASW REGIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

Highlights of the past two years have been many, with the foremost being the return to CASW in April 2016 of the Alberta College of Social Workers due to the leadership of their Council and membership. The efforts of CASW past president, Morel Cassie, in conjunction with support from the CASW Board of Directors and 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 conservatism to one with a more centrist approach to social issues and social justice. This allowed CASW to increase activism on a national level and raise our visibility 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 where 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 2018 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, was sent to our Federation partners and available on our national website. Preliminary conversations 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-USA REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ongoing NASW-CASW Collaboration - 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 Executive Meeting- Basil, Switzerland July 2017 - Kathy Wehrmann, Jan Christianson-Wood, Angelo McClain and Dawn Hobdy attended the Executive Committee meeting. Dawn Hobdy reported on the work done by the Ethics Commission.

Asia-Pacific Joint IFSW Regional Social Work Conference, Shenzhen., P.R. China, September 2017- Angelo McClain was a keynote speaker at the regional conference. He discussed the meaning behind NASW's National Professional Social Work Month theme "Social Workers Stand Up!"

North American Region "Mini Meeting" – October 2017: NASW-USA and CASW held a conference call to discuss regional issues, the Global Agenda and Regional Observatory, World Social Work Day, professional development, and other matters.

Global Agenda – Global Observatory Data Collection: The committee includes representatives from CASW and NASW-USA and provided input on the survey instrument and assisted in dissemination in order to collect data for the next Global Observatory. CASW and NASW-USA have worked hard to ensure that the data collection process included the proper input and perspectives from practitioners and not only academics. CASW and NASW-USA provided a regional report on association activities and initiatives “Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability” during 2016-2018 to be included in the Global Observatory report to be distributed at the 2018 Social Work & Social Development Conference being held in July in Dublin, Ireland.

IFSW Executive Meeting- New York City – NASW-USA hosted the IFSW Executive Meeting at the NASW-USA New York Chapter prior to Social Work Day at the United Nations, March 2018.

World Social Work Day / 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations, New York City, March 2018 NASW-USA continues to sponsor and participated in Social Work Day at the UN. NASW-USA President Kathy Wehrmann and CASW President Jan Christianson-Wood attended as well as NASW-USA CEO, Angelo McClain, and staff, along with many NASW members. The theme was “*SDGs, Climate Change and Social Work Practice*”, the third theme of the Global Agenda. Key participants included NASW-USA members Robin Mama (Co-Chair of SW Day for IFSW), Michael Cronin (IFSW Main Representative to the UN in NY). NASW-USA Creative Art Manager, Martha Rothblum, designed this year’s IFSW World Social Work Day poster.

North America Region Meeting, New York City, March 2018 - The North America Region met prior to Social Work Day at the United Nations. The meeting included Jan Christianson-Wood, President, CASW & IFSW North America Regional Vice President, Kathy Conley Wehrmann, President, NASW-USA & IFSW North America Regional President; Ruth Stark Global World President, Angelo McClain, NASW-USA CEO; Dawn Hobdy, Director Ethics and Professional Review, Bob Arnold, Director, NASW Foundation and Susan Rubin, Assistant Director, NASW Foundation. The group discussed ways to strengthen regional communications and collaboration, updates from IFSW, preparation for the 2018 SWSD Meeting and the IFSW 2020 Conference planned for Calgary, Canada.

Social Work Month - 2018- NASW celebrated social work month 2018 with the theme *Social Workers: Leaders, Advocates, Champions* which calls for actions that align with social work’s values. Activities included social work podcasts, television/video public service announcements, social media thunderclaps, media awards, an online social work month tool kit, and social work day on Capitol Hill activities.

#### Public Education Campaign Activities

- Public Service Announcements - NASW and the NASW Foundation participated in a video production to produce educational videos for national television stations and in other media outlets nationally. The Informed Health and Mental Health Mini-Documentary videos have already been televised nationally and additional airings are planned. The videos reached over 45% of

US homes, a market of over 52 million.

- NASW released two 30-second video public service announcements in March. The *Social Workers, Leaders, Advocates, Champions* and *Social Workers Stand Up* PSAs attracted more than 4,300 and 3,900 YouTube views, respectively, and were distributed nationally by TV Access and PSA distribution service.

NASW-USA Virtual Career Fair- March 2018- Career fair provided an opportunity for members to interview and network with top social work employers via Skype and instant messaging.

Japanese Delegation – NASW-USA hosted a delegation of Japanese social work professors in May 2018. The delegation was interested in ideas to strengthen the role of the Japanese Association of Social Workers and the Japanese Association of Social Work Educators in promoting the interest and involvement of the Japanese social work community in international fields and affairs both in education, research and practice.

NASW-USA National Conference 2018: NASW-USA- will host the 2018 National Conference, *Shaping Tomorrow Together*, in June in Washington, DC. Over 2,000 social workers and social work thought leaders are expected to attend the four-day event. The conference will provide opportunities for professional development, continuing education, networking, and thought-provoking conversations tackling the most pressing issues facing the social work profession across the world.

Social Work Disaster Assistance Fund – the NASW Foundation activated the Social Work Disaster Assistance Fund to aid those impacted by the hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The fund has provided assistance to those affected by disasters such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Indonesian Tsunami, the devastating earthquakes in Haiti in 2010 and Japan in 2011, the Ebola crisis and the Louisiana flooding in 2016. Donations to the fund go directly to social workers and/or social welfare organizations who can provide assistance to those who have suffered loss and are in need of financial or other assistance due to a disaster. Over \$30,000 was raised.

Social Work HEALS – NASW-USA is in the fourth 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, through a grant funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation, trained social workers in aging settings to enhance gerontological and supervisory skills and leadership capacity in 4 NASW Chapters.

The Future of Social Work in Health- NASW-USA is participating in efforts 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 13<sup>th</sup> Annual NASW Social Work Pioneers® Event in Washington, DC in October 2017. The theme was social workers and Their Roles in An Ever-Changing Environment. More than 100 attendees from around the country participated. Ambassador Wendy Sherman, former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, US

Department of State and NASW Social Work Pioneer® spoke on the topic “Our Nation Where Do We Go From Here?”

NASW-USA Code of Ethics Review Task Force: In 2015, NASW-USA 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 charged 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 were adopted by the SW Delegate Assembly in August 2017.

#### 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-USA Member Engagement Through Social Media

- o NASW-USA LinkedIn group members: 531
- o NASW-USA Facebook followers: 141,000
- o NASW-USA Twitter followers: 42,200
- o NASW-USA Instagram followers : 1,227

Public Policy and Advocacy: During the past year, NASW- USA continued to take an active role on political issues. The NASW-USA Action Center on the NASW-USA website provides information on pending legislation that NASW-USA 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:



Key Policy Issues: NASW-USA has continued to work on numerous bills and policy issues. Although a great part of the association's energy is spent on these issues. NASW-USA's work on Capitol Hill is not limited to these areas, but is driven by the agenda that members of Congress set for themselves. Issues include:

- Affordable Care Act Integration
- Child Welfare
- Medicare Reimbursement
- Older Americans Act
- Social Worker Safety
- Student Loan Forgiveness
- Social Work Reinvestment Act

Social Justice Priorities include:

- Voting Rights
- Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice
- Immigration Reform
- Economic Justice/Equity

The NASW-USA *Social Workers as Social & Political Activists Webinar Series* provided members with additional information on ways to become more active on key policy and social justice issues. The most recent webinar "*Recognizing and Eliminating Barriers to Voter Registration and Participation*" was hosted in March 2018.

Grand Challenges for Social Work: NASW-USA continues to work 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](http://www.grandchallengesforsocialwork.org).

The past year has provided us with the opportunity to work towards strengthening our regional communication collaboration. We look forward to working together to build a stronger North American Region.

Kathryn Conley Wehrmann, PhD, MSW, LCSW  
President, NASW – USA  
President, North American Region, IFSW

Jan Christianson-Wood, MSW, RSW  
President, CASW  
Vice President, North American Region, IFSW