



**International Federation of Social Workers
2014 Report of the North American Region
Member Countries: Canada and the United States of America
2012-2014 Program Years**

Overview of Regional Structure

The IFSW North America Region is made up of Canada and the United States of America and the social work associations from those countries, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA). This report details events of NASW-USA followed by events of CASW. North America is represented by the regional president for North America, Dr. Jeane Anastas (USA), and the regional representative, Morel Caissie (Canada).

CASW and NASW-USA have worked together cooperatively in an effort to strengthen the profession in the region. The framework of the collaboration continues to operate under a Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding between CASW and NASW-USA, signed on July 11, 2012, at the IFSW Conference in Sweden, also included is a provision whereby the two organizations agreed to rotate the IFSW North American President, and the IFSW Member at large positions, every two years. Morel Caissie, CASW President, will assume responsibility as IFSW North American President in July 2014.

Both organizations have a dual mission of protecting the profession of social work and seeking to ensure social justice. The political climate in both countries has posed challenges to the understanding and support of the social safety net, which social workers are mainly responsible for maintaining. As a result, CASW and NASW-USA have been working on communication campaigns including publications, social media efforts, and outreach aimed at helping the public and decision makers to understand the profession and ultimately strengthening and securing its future. Both organizations have been engaged in addressing the de-professionalization of social work and also recognize the importance of research on evidence-based and best practices and are actively engaged in collaborating and disseminating such research. CASW and NASW-USA have also spent a great deal of time addressing recruitment and retention issues for the profession.

CASW and NASW-USA continually monitor and address issues of regulation, including licensure and the ongoing evolution of their respective *Code of Ethics*. They are also working with the social work education organizations in support of comprehensive and relevant education programs.

The IFSW North American region has been actively engaged in addressing some of society's most pressing problems such as the economic recession, the increasing challenges related to poverty, and the unemployment crisis. Professional social workers in both countries have not only been tasked with caring for more and more clients, but are asked to do so with fewer resources and support. CASW and NASW-USA have both maintained active advocacy and political action outreach components to address these issues.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS—USA DEVELOPMENTS

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.

NASW is represented on the Board of Directors for the North American and Caribbean Region of the International Council on Social Welfare. A reception in honor of Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director, ICSW was held on June 4th at the Embassy of Jamaica. Attendees included representatives of the National Committees for Canada, Jamaica and the United States. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) was represented by Julia Watkins, Treasurer. Gary Bailey, President of the International Federation of Social Workers, and past president of NASW-USA and the NASW Foundation was also in attendance and provided remarks to the attendees.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Hope Conference: NASW-USA hosted a national practice conference, *Restoring Hope: The Power of Social Work*, July 22-25, 2012 in Washington, DC. The conference featured internationally renowned speakers including Nobel Peace Prize winner and social worker Leymah Gbowee from Liberia. In addition, several sessions included international content such as human trafficking, social work capacity building, international youth advocacy, mental health across cultures, and international service learning projects. Fred Phelps, Executive Director of CASW joined NASW-USA at the conference and provided a presentation on Rebranding Canada. *Social Work: Courage, Hope & Leadership* planned for July 23-26, 2014 will convene 2000 social workers to discuss important social work and social welfare issues.

The Feminization of Poverty: Revisited Symposium: held in March 2013 convened leading women advocates, health care, professionals, economist, policy analysts, government officials and other decision makers to explore the progress made since the term “feminization of poverty”

was coined in 1978 by a social worker. To change the differential impact that poverty and inequality have on women and girls in the United States and internationally it is essential that social workers collaborate with women leaders in other disciplines. Dr. Theresa Kajjage, Director of Kajjage Consultants in African Family Health, Faculty Emeritus at the Institute of Social Work traveled from Tanzania to serve as a speaker at the symposium.

World Social Work Day: NASW-USA continues to proudly support Social Work Day at the United Nations both with a financial contribution and the attendance of several NASW leaders and staff. NASW President, Dr. Jeane Anastas offered remarks this year regarding NASW-USAs and IFSWs International Activities. NASW-USA also asked members to support World Social Work Day through social media efforts.

Social Work Month: The theme of Social Work Month 2014 (March) adopted by NASW-USA is “All People Matter.” The theme is promoted by the national association and its 55 local chapters with a special logo and numerous public announcements.

50th Anniversary of the War on Poverty: Marking this important anniversary, NASW-USA partnered with the Council on Social Work Education, and the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy and co-sponsored by the National Child Abuse Coalition and National Foster Care Coalition, in conjunction with the Congressional Social Work Coalition, a briefing on Capitol Hill to inform lawmakers and Congressional staff on the strong correlation between poverty and child abuse and neglect.

Social Work Policy Institute: The NASW Social Work Policy Institute (SWPI) conducted a symposium on *Enhancing the Well Being of America’s Veterans and their Families: A Call to Action for a National Veterans Policy* think tank. The report released from the symposium outlined specific recommendations.

Membership Development:

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA) serves more than 130,000 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 membership has declined over the last ten years, from an October 2004 total of 152,883 to the December 2013 low of 128,447. The core of full-paying regular members has seen the greatest decline of 22%. In 2012, the membership requirement changed for a signature product—professional liability insurance—which dramatically increased the downward trend in full regular members in 2012-13 and added to an already challenging environment.

However, economic conditions are rebounding and professional associations are regaining ground in member recruitment and retention, as evidenced by an upward trend in membership in 2011-12 just prior to the change in the insurance offering. The recent challenges represent an opportunity for significant change, as NASW-USA prioritized the needs of the member as the

driver in NASW's strategic direction, and recommits to an integrated chapter/national relationship. NASW-USA can build a stronger, more integrated, and more uniquely relevant membership proposition that speaks to the committed social work profession.

Professional Consultancies:

NASW Foundation Director, Bob Arnold and NASW Manager of the Department of Social Justice and Human Rights, Mel Wilson traveled to Tanzania, in October 2013, to participate in the Tanzanian Association of Social Workers (TASWO) Annual General Meeting. NASW has had an ongoing relationship with TASWO for the last four years as part of the grant-funded Social Work Twinning Partnership. NASW has partnered with TASWO to help strengthen the social work welfare and workforce in Tanzania.

In addition, Klass Fleischmann, director of marketing, public relations and communications for the Netherlands Association of Social Workers (NVMW), visited NASW's headquarters in 2013 to learn more about NASW's marketing and communications strategies, as well as exchange ideas with NASW on programs effective in the Netherlands.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Workforce Challenges: Social workers in the United States, like our international colleagues, face daunting workforce challenges such as low-compensation, high caseloads, insurmountable education debt, and safety concerns that compromise their ability to provide their clients with service and care. NASW worked to promote the Social Work Reinvestment Act (SWRA). This act will analyze these workforce shortage challenges and will determine the best course of action to address them. SWRA was reintroduced in the US House of Representatives and Senate during this period.

Public Policy Issues: NASW-USA partnered with more than 100 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.

Policy Statements: NASW-USA revised and submitted to NASW's Delegate Assembly for comment and approval policy statements on topics that included: gender, ethnic, and workplace discrimination; affirmative action; homelessness; women's issues; women in social work profession; public child welfare, and healthcare.

Legislative Activities: Activities included the support of the Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women's Act (2013), Passage of the Protect our Kids Act (2013), and Support of Supreme Court's Same-Sex Marriage Rulings (2013).

UN Convention Rights of the Child (CRC): NASW-USA has been involve in the Campaign for U.S. ratification for the CRC, which is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

NASW-USA HIV/AIDS Spectrum, Mental Health Training and Education of Social Workers Project: The project has offered education, training, and technical assistance to health and behavioral health care providers on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the mental health and wellness of individuals, families and communities affected by HIV/AIDS. The project works in collaboration with federal and state agencies, universities, community-based organizations, NASW chapters and other professional associations. The project has reached over 18,000 providers in the United States and worldwide through in-person skill-building workshops. Internet-based programming offered through NASW WedEd courses have ensured that an additional 20,000 social workers from 38 countries better understand HIV/AIDS as a global health pandemic.

Memorandums of Understanding: During this period, NASW-USA entered into several additional Memorandums of Understanding which included the Indian Society of Professional Social Work and a Proclamation to the Armenian Association of Social Work (AASW) on the occasion of the AASW 2012 National Conference.



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS – CANADIAN DEVELOPMENTS

LINKS TO OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

CASW works closely with the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) as well as the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR). The three have come together to form a national Inter-sectorial Committee. The purpose of the Inter-sectorial Collaboration Initiative is to promote communication, connection and collaboration among the three sectors (education, practice and regulation) of the social work profession in Canada.

CASW is a member of 27 national coalitions who have as an important part of their missions to advocate for social justice and improve the health and well-being of Canadians. Over the last few years CASW has worked closely with a number of partner organizations in lobbying for more leadership and accountability on the part of the federal government in developing and implementing national standards for health and social service delivery. To this end, in 2013-14, CASW joined a new coalition, the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21). This coalition is a national network of non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and academic researchers who share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians. CASW also remains active in the Health Action Lobby (HEAL), an alliance of 35 national health organizations, focussing our efforts on developing consensus positions on the role of the federal government in health and healthcare. As well, in terms of promoting a leadership role in mental health, CASW continues to engage actively in the

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH). Another initiative of note in this past year was CASW's involvement in an alliance of 11 national organizations that worked together to minimize the negative impact of Bill C-14, the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

CASW partnered with CASWE in organizing the Joint National Social Work Conference 2014. The Conference was part of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences. The annual Congress in its 83rd year is Canada's largest gathering of scholars across disciplines. Organized by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, it brings together academics, researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners to share findings, refine ideas, and build partnerships that will help shape a better and stronger Canada. Congress 2014 ran for eight days and hosted over 70 scholarly associations with over 6,700 registered delegates. The program was open to attendees from all walks of life, academics and practitioners from a wide variety of professions.

The over-all theme of the 2014 Congress , "Borders without Boundaries" invited reflection on the links between the academy and the community, as well as the potential of the academy to challenge, redefine and reconfigure borders and boundaries through trans-disciplinary research, engagement, imagination and service.

The theme chosen for the Joint Conference for Social Work *Borders without Boundaries: Navigating the New Frontiers of the Social Work Profession* builds on the Congress theme. CASW and CASWE developed a conference program with a wide variety of keynote speakers, plenary and concurrent sessions over a four day period. One of the plenary sessions entitled *Pillars of Social Work- A Dialogue* brought together representatives from the Regulators, the Educators and the Practitioners. The panel session provided a venue for all three pillars of the profession to positively discuss the future of social work. The Conference organizers were also pleased to have Dr. Gary Bailey, President of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) as a guest speaker for the plenary session organized by the International affairs committee.

Social Work Month: *Social Workers Promoting Equity for a Stronger Canada* was the theme chosen for National Social Work Month 2014 in Canada. The theme reflected the growing concern at the rising social, economic and health inequities in Canada and was consistent with the World Social Work day Theme of March 18, 2014 ``*Social and Economic Crisis - Social Work Solutions*``. The theme responded to the Canadian federal government's accelerated legislative and funding changes which have been undermining the welfare state and producing growing income inequality in Canada. The members of the CASW federation called for a

national poverty reduction plan to ensure equitable access to programs and services for all Canadians. Social issues identified as needing particular attention included housing, poverty and child care.

Celebrations were organized in every province and territory at the chapter level of the respective social work associations as they promoted the social work profession through various media, poster campaigns and local conferences.

CASW also offers a national educational Webcast during Social Work Month to enable hundreds of social workers across Canada to learn and discuss together topics of interest to the social work community.

Social Work Month is also an opportunity for CASW to recognize social workers who exceed the normal expectations and make outstanding contributions to social welfare and to the social work profession in Canada. To that end CASW issues Distinguished Service Awards on a yearly basis to a social worker from each of the partner organizations within the Federation. CASW also has a National Award for Outstanding Service given every two years. This particular Award is given for outstanding social work practice at the local, provincial, national or international level, including direct services, service on behalf of the profession, advocacy, social policy, social development, education and research. Both these awards promote the visibility of social work by recognizing social workers who are champions for a profession that contributes to the well-being of individuals, families and society in general.

Activities with Members: CASW holds bi-annual joint meetings of the CASW federation and the CASW Board of Directors. The CASW Board meets four times per year. Each of the interest committees meets by teleconference at least four times per year. In addition the Editorial Board for the Social Work Journal and various ad-hoc committees meet throughout the year as needed. CASW emphasizes communications with members through the CASW website as well as through various publications such as *The Bulletin*, The monthly Reporter and the Canadian Social Work Journal. All social workers in Canada can also subscribe to a daily media monitoring service for those who wish to receive by e-mail a listing of up-to-date stories in the media related to social work and social justice issues, on the provincial, national or international scenes.

Human Rights Campaign: The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) commissioned two major projects aimed at promoting and protecting social and economic rights by influencing the legislative and administrative processes: ‘Canada Social Transfer project: accountability matters’ (2012) and ‘The Canada Social Transfer and the Social Determinants of Health’ (2013). CASW has reported on these two projects as part of the Global Observatory for North America.

CASW and CASWE issued a joint Statement Supporting the Aspirations of Indigenous Peoples and specifically the Idle No More movement of indigenous peoples. This was in response to legislative changes which privilege economic development and resource development, while compromising social needs and wellbeing of aboriginal peoples in Canada. CASW and CASWE fully support equity of funding for child and family services in Aboriginal communities as compared to other Canadian communities. This is currently not the lived reality for Aboriginal communities as evidenced by the latest National Household Survey that found nearly half of children under 14 in foster care in Canada are Aboriginal.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCSC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) have been fighting a legal battle with the Government of Canada over the last seven years, to have the voices of Aboriginal children and their families heard by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT). On February 25, 2013, the CHRT finally began hearing evidence to determine if Canada's provision of Aboriginal child and family services are flawed, inequitable and therefore discriminatory toward Aboriginal children and families. CASW and CASWE-ACFTS unequivocally supports the position of the FNCFCSC that argues on-reserve children are left with less programming and less quality services, and placed into foster care more often than off-reserve children due to funding gaps on the reserves.

On the International scene Canada is not perceived as a country where poverty is rampant. It is noteworthy however that a UNICEF report lists Canada in 24th place out of 35 developed countries, in terms of the incidence of child poverty. (Canada's child poverty rate is reported at 13.3%, whereas in Iceland, in first place, the rate is reported at 4.7%. CASW is a strong supporter of *Dignity For All- A Campaign for Poverty-free Canada*. Along with the *Canada Without Poverty Advocacy Network*, this on-going campaign is calling for a comprehensive, integrated federal plan for poverty elimination that will become a pan-Canadian blueprint for reducing and eventually eliminating poverty. The plan will require transparency and accountability by the federal government, with links to provincial and territorial poverty action plans. Throughout the past year, the CWP Advocacy Network has joined forces with various initiatives across Canada to support a national housing strategy, and a poverty elimination Act. The CWP Network is pleased that after many years of advocacy before the Federal Government, that an all-party anti-poverty caucus of Federal members of parliament was formed in 2012. This bi-partisan Caucus has a mandate to bring together parliamentarians, organizations, community leaders, and other key stakeholders to find concrete solutions to end poverty.

Membership Development: There are an estimated fifty thousand (50,000) social workers in Canada. The majority are members of provincial or territorial regulatory bodies and/or social work associations. Less than twenty percent (20%) are affiliate members of CASW. In order to increase the capacity of the National Association to promote the profession as well as to effectively advocate for social justice, both on the national and international scenes, CASW has

put a great deal of effort in membership recruitment . As part of these initiatives and as outlined in the CASW strategic plan, there have been on-going efforts to reach out to the provincial associations who are not members of the CASW Federation as well efforts to recruit individual members.

A fairly recent and positive development for the social work profession in Canada is that in 2009, the Social Regulatory Bodies in Canada have come together to form the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR). Current membership includes the 10 provincial social work regulatory authorities responsible for regulating over 35,000 registered social workers across Canada. The Mission of the CCSWR is to be the privileged voice, both nationally and internationally, on social work regulatory matters in Canada. In addition, all these Provincial Regulatory Bodies have joined the 51 State Boards in the United States as members of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). Both CCSWR and ASWB have as their mission to strengthen protection of the public by providing support and services to the social work regulatory community and to advance safe, competent and ethical practices.

Regional Issues: CASW has social workers from each province and territory sitting on key interest committees as they serve as advisors and content experts in various fields of practice or sectors of interest: aboriginal issues; children's issues; health; private practice; and social policy:

1. The aboriginal interest committee participated with CASW and CASWE in developing joint statements on a number of issues concerning social and economic inequalities.
2. The Social Policy Interest Group (SPIG) developed a major paper on social, economic and health equity that was released in May 2014. This was a follow-up to papers published in 2012 and 2013 on Accountability for the Social Transfer and the Link to the Social Determinants of Health.
3. The Private Practice Interest Group (PPIG) has been developing on-line resources intended to support social workers to begin, maintain and promote their practice. The PPIG also conducted a research project on the inclusion of social work within the services covered through extended health benefit programs in conjunction with a Masters of Social Work research team at the Carleton School of Social Work. This research project has formed the roadmap for content development of on-line resources that CASW will deliver in 2014-15.
4. The Children's Interest committee (CIC) developed guidelines regarding *Social Media Use and Social Work Practice*. The CIC also developed a policy statement for CASW and our federation partners entitled *No Child Left Behind*. This policy

calls for more uniformity in legislation throughout the provincial and territorial jurisdictions to ensure access to child protection services up to the age of eighteen(18) at a minimum , in line with the definition of a child as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).

5. The Health interest committee participated in the development of media releases and policy statements on a number of issues relating to the Canada Health Transfer.

FUTURE VISION FOR THE REGION

As noted in the overview of the region, due to our common objectives, mutual dedication to the advancement of the social work profession, and acceptance of similar social work ethics and values, the National Association of Social Workers-USA (NASW-USA) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to a collaborative relationship. By signing the MOU, the two organizations have committed to working jointly to advance social work both in North America and internationally, exchanging resources, collaborating to form joint statements on issues affecting the profession and the people served by it, and providing consultation, support, and feedback to one another. In addition, the two organizations will rotate the International Federation of Social Workers (ISFW) North American President and ISFW Member at Large positions every two years.

In addition, recommendations as noted in the report prepared for the Global Implementation Committee include:

1. Formalize the Regional Educational Association (NACASSW).
2. Establish a regional Global Agenda implantation committee. The committee will be tasked with developing and implementing strategies for engaging colleagues and allies across the region.
3. Utilize IASSW, IFSW and ICSW grants to support activities related to implantation of the Global Agenda commitments.
4. Establish an online community for colleagues in the region. The system will facilitate information sharing, networking and collaboration in teaching research and practice. It will enable members to share their work, exchange ideas and also identify potential partners for future collaboration.