

## *In- Support LD 2002*

**Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee,**

I'm Wendy Anders, Sweetser's Senior Director of Community Services. I'm here along with my colleagues in support of LD 2002.

School-based therapists partner with school hired counselors and school social workers to form a continuum of care to support students' mental health needs. Each role has its own specific purpose and when working together the team provides a comprehensive support network for the child and family.

Most schools use a 3 tier system for intervention with students with mental health, behavioral or learning needs. This demonstrates that there is a need for each type of role in a school environment. It's not duplicative.

**Tier I: Guidance** – available to all students.

**Tier II: School Social Workers** – available to any student based on identified need.

**Tier III: School-based therapy** (with outside provider on campus) – students are referred by school for more in-depth, complex long-term issues for student and families.

I'd like to break down the differences and how this team together, best supports children and their families.

**School hired Counselors** (sometimes referred to as guidance counselors) are available to all students. They might provide some classroom instruction on social skills and social issues, teach coping skills for mood regulation and behaviors. They also meet individually or in small groups with students to problem solve friendship issues and for conflict resolution. Many guidance counselors are not necessarily certified to do therapy and most social workers are not certified to fill the school counseling roles.

**School hired Social Workers** that are hired for the general population and school milieu might be available to any student based on identified needs to address de-escalations of behaviors, mood regulation, behavior management, teach coping skills to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning. It is often school specific and short term.

**School hired IEP Social Workers** are usually hired for a very specific population of IEP identified students and they work with those identified students only to address barriers to academic learning.

These school hired roles might have some family contact. This is usually by phone or meetings at school during school hours. The school hired personnel usually work the traditional 42 week school calendar and schedule with school vacations and summers off.

**School-based therapy services** are clinical outpatient therapy services provided within the school setting to ensure accessibility to those who might not be able to access services in the community. Therapists work with individual students and their families in their schools, homes and within the community year round. This means after school hours, vacation weeks and summers. When organizations like Sweetser contract to partner with schools then we take the schools lead on which students we work with. When the school personnel assess that a student and/or family require more services than the school can offer then the school personnel will obtain permission from the parent/guardian to refer the student and family to organizations like Sweetser who have school therapists that are co-located within the school.

I hope that help illustrate both the differences but also the added value of having providers like Sweetser contract with a school district. Happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
**Wendy Anders**  
**Senior Director of Community Services**