

Tom Tynan
Evanston Northwestern Healthcare
Director, Medical Social Work
(847) 570-2032
fax: (847) 733-5149
ttnan@enh.org

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From: NASW PAC Illinois mail to: naswpacillinois@lb.bcentral.com

Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2004 3:41 PM

To: List Member

Subject: NASW National Government Relations Action Alert

February 12, 2004

> NASW Government Relations Action Alert

Do Not Let President Bush Eliminate the

> Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program!

> "Studies show that high-quality counseling can prevent students from turning to violence, drug or alcohol abuse as well as improve grades and reduce classroom disruptions." * Secretary of Education Rod Paige announcing last year's ESSCP grantees (June 2003).

THE ISSUE AT HAND

For the third year in a row, President Bush is attempting to eliminate the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP) by providing zero dollars for the program in his FY05 budget request. Despite last year's budget request, Congress allocated a modest \$33.8 million for the program. This year, it will once again be an uphill battle to maintain, much less increase, funding for the program. If ESSCP is eliminated, students will lose the counseling and mental health services they desperately need, and school personnel will lose their jobs. The program currently provides grants to school districts in 32 states and the District of Columbia.

NASW is joining other organizations, such as the School Social Work Association of America, to request that Congress fund this program at \$75 million in FY05. This would enable the Department of Education to increase the number of school districts that receive these grants, and also allow secondary schools to compete for them. Due to a funding trigger in the No Child Left Behind Act, secondary schools are not eligible for these grants until ESSCP has a minimum funding level of \$40 million.

ACTION NEEDED

It is important that all U.S. senators and U.S. representatives hear that their constituents are displeased with President Bush's attempt to eliminate the ESSCP. In addition, it is important that you ask them to support an appropriation of \$75 million for ESSCP in FY05.

You may contact your senators and representative by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-225-3121 and asking for a particular member's office. You can also locate their phone numbers through their Web sites by visiting www.senate.gov or www.house.gov

Sample Script

"My name is _____, as a constituent, social worker, and member of the National Association of Social Workers, I am calling to voice my concern about President Bush's FY05 budget request which eliminates funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. This is the only federal program devoted to supporting counseling programs in our local schools. I would also like to ask that the Senator/Representative support an appropriation of \$75 million for ESSCP in FY05 so the program can be opened up to secondary schools, as well."

To e-mail or fax a letter to your representative and senators through NASW's Congress Web, please view

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/grassroots/congressweb.asp>

When possible, please edit the form letter to better reflect how you or your school district has benefited from this program.

BACKGROUND

The ESSCP, formerly known as the Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Program, is a discretionary grant program that provides grants to school districts to establish or expand comprehensive counseling programs and mental health services through qualified school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors.

> The FY04 applications for the ESSCP are now available through the Department of Education. For more information, please refer to:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/updates/020904.asp>

For more

information, please contact Ann Bradford, NASW senior government relations associate, at abradford@naswdc.org or (202) 336-8237.