A Brief Overview of School Social Work Roles and Responsibilities

School social workers are leaders in the educational ecosystem. To support their ongoing advocacy and stewardship, this document outlines a broad picture of roles and responsibilities that school social workers can perform. Amid seven practice domains – detailed below – all efforts are framed with attention to **Leadership, Home-School-Community Collaboration, and Data-Informed Decision Making** (e.g., Multi-Tiered Systems of Support). Each domain will be presented independently; however, all service provision is interrelated, spans macro-to-micro, and comprises ecological, holistic, and youth-centered orientations. While this document provides an all-encompassing view of roles and tasks, it is important to emphasize that no practitioner is doing all of these tasks all of the time. To avoid individualizing responsibility for school-based challenges, we describe school social work roles to provide a foundation to evaluate the field, illuminate barriers to addressing educational access, and offer guidance for administrators, scholars, and school-based leaders. This is one step among many future endeavors to build professional viability, document evidence of effectiveness, and outline a framework for the ongoing evaluation of evidenced-based service delivery, and a pathway toward holistic, youth-centered support.

Academics
- **Access and engagement**: Advocate to ensure students arrive at school ready to learn and have access to after-school programs and tutoring, reducing barriers to academic success and encouraging students to engage in advanced placement classes and extracurricular activities.
- **Consultation and intervention:** Collaborate with students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, and administrators.
- **School-wide support and prevention (Tier I)**: Conduct comprehensive assessments and deliver services addressing identified strengths and challenges.
- **Direct student support:** Provide Tier II and Tier III assessments, as well as the identification of student strengths and challenges.

Behavior
- **Policy and procedure review and analysis:** Apply an ecological and holistic perspective on behavior within the school environment.
- **Consultation and interventions:** Engage key collaborators such as students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, and administrators.
- **School-wide assessments (Tier I):** Provide comprehensive support and the identification of student strengths and challenges.
- **Direct behavioral assessment, support, and intervention**: Intervene at Tier II and III levels to support students with more intensive needs.

Crisis Prevention and Intervention
- **Policy and procedure review and analysis:** Establish clear protocols encouraging collaboration with families, community, and school-based personnel, including community mental health services, crisis response teams, and law enforcement.
- **Assessment:** Evaluate the immediate safety and needs of students, identifying those requiring immediate support and intervention.
- **Direct intervention:** Support students, families, schools, and communities through crisis counseling, de-escalation techniques, safety planning, and resource connection.
- **Postvention:** Provide system collaboration, follow-up, and support with students, families, school, and community collaborators.

Mental Health

- **Policy and procedure review and analysis:** Examine the practice implementation and develop systems of care for students.
- **Collaborative consultation and intervention**: Support students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, and administrators, as well as improving mental health literacy.
- **Community engagement**: Organize and participate in community initiatives and build partnerships to address student mental health needs.
- **School-wide support and prevention (Tier I):** Utilize a holistic view of mental health and conduct school-wide assessments to identify strengths and challenges.
- **Direct mental health intervention and support**: Intervene at Tier II and III levels to support students with more intensive needs.

Safe and Supportive School Climate

- **Positive school environments**: Promote programs and policies supporting the well-being of all members of the school community.
- **Access and engagement:** Ensure access for all students by identifying and addressing barriers that may prevent students from fully participating in school activities and opportunities.
- **Collaboration and advocacy for change**: Work with students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, administrators, and other key collaborators.
- **Teacher and family support:** Provide resources and guidance to educators and families to promote student success and well-being.

Social and Emotional Development

- **Policy and procedure review and analysis**: Support curriculum, practice implementation, and program review-selection-evaluation, as well as ongoing evaluation.
- **Collaborate, consult, and intervene**: Work with students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, and administrators.
- **School-wide support and prevention (Tier I)**: Apply a holistic view of social and emotional factors, school-wide assessment/universal screening, and Tier I implementation while also considering strengths and challenges at the school and staff level, as well as with students.
- **Direct social and emotional intervention and support**: Engage in direct support and facilitation of social and emotional skills and Tier II and III levels interventions.

Special Education

- **Policy and procedure review and analysis**: Examine practice implementation and referral processes while taking a holistic view of special education and considering resources.
- **Collaborative consultation and support**: Engage key collaborators such as students, families, school-based professionals, teachers, and administrators, including engaging them in IEP planning.
- **Access and accommodation:** Support the implementation of the least restrictive environment.
- **Assessment and eligibility determination:** Utilize approaches for special education services using RIOT (review, interview, observe, test) and ICEL (instruction, curriculum, environment, learner) frameworks.
- **Development and implementation of individualized plans:** Support IEPs through monitoring student progress for instructional changes and implementation fidelity.

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