



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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MEMO

TO: Governor's Task Force on Police Accountability and Transparency
FROM: Stephen A. Wanczyk-Karp, Executive Director
RE: Section 16 of PA 20-1 AAC Police Accountability
DATE: September 3, 2021

The National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter thanks the Improving Police Interaction with Disability Community Sub-Committee for its draft recommendations on the utilization of licensed clinical social workers by police departments. We encourage the full Task Force to adopt the draft recommendations of the Sub-Committee in regards to social workers.

The main purpose of this memorandum is to make a recommendation to the Task Force as to an important addition to Section 16 of Public Act 20-1 An Act Concerning Police Accountability. This section calls for a behavioral health assessment of all police officers no less than every five years. As the law reads the assessment is to be performed by a board-certified psychiatrist or psychologist with experience diagnosing and treating post trauma stress disorder (PTSD).

NASW/CT requests that the Task Force include in its final recommendations that Section 16 be expanded to include Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW). Clinical social workers in Connecticut were first certified by the Department of Public Health (DPH) in 1985 and since 1995 DPH has licensed clinical social workers. The LCSW scope of practice reads as follows: *"Clinical social work" means the application, by persons trained in social work, of established principles of psychosocial development, behavior, psychopathology, unconscious motivation, interpersonal relationships and **environmental stress** to the evaluation, assessment, **diagnosis and treatment** of biopsychosocial dysfunction, disability and impairment, including mental, emotional, behavioral, developmental and addictive disorders, of individuals, couples, families or groups. Clinical social work includes, but is not limited to, counseling, psychotherapy, behavior modification and mental health consultation;* (emphasis added).

Here are the key reasons for recommending the addition of LCSWs as authorized mental health providers under PA 20-1:

1. LCSWs are trained in and licensed for diagnosis and treatment. LCSWs are recognized as behavioral health providers by all major private insurers, Medicare, Tri-Care, Medicaid and the Veterans Administration Health Care System.
2. As of 2020, according to the CT DPH, there were 7,486 LCSWs with a CT license. Compare this to 2,180 licensed psychologist and approximately 900 practicing psychiatrists based on statistic from Telepsychiatry CT, which includes Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist (DPH statistics do not break out Psychiatrists from other Physicians). Adding in the requirement to be experienced in trauma and PTSD, the availability of approved providers is most likely insufficient for the task of evaluating each police officer at least every 5 years.
3. From a cost perspective, police departments will find it less costly to contract with a LCSW. This is particularly important for financially stretched police departments and large departments.
4. The Task Force's Sub-Committee on Improving Police Interaction with Disability Community has draft recommendations for utilization of social workers. This clearly shows the recognition given to LCSWs, thus there is logic to having a Task Force recommendation in regards to Section 16.
5. Practically every police department works with clinical social workers, whether it is an embedded employee, a contractual arrangement with community service providers or through the Mobile Crisis Response Team. Given this collaborative work, many social workers are familiar with police work and the environment within which police function. Such an understanding will be to the benefit police departments when procuring a mental health provider to perform behavioral health evaluations.

It is the hope of our Association that the Task Force will include in its final recommendations the addition of LCSWs into Section 16 of PA 20-1. This positive revision of statute will require legislative approval. A recommendation by the Task Force will greatly assist in convincing legislators to the advantages of including LCSWs as providers for the required behavioral health assessments.

If the Task Force seeks further information or has questions I will gladly engage in discussion.

Thank you for consideration of this request.