

Social Work is Essential

National Social Work Month 2021



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Last March, the world began to shift dramatically with the arrival of a global pandemic -- and shortly thereafter came the changes imposed to help flatten the curve, which have brought their own evolving challenges and uncertainties.

Yet, social workers kept working: evolving your practice to meet new challenges while often placing yourself at risk to protect those made vulnerable by the pandemic.

Now, a year later, vaccines bring a sense of hope -- but with no clear end to the pandemic in sight, *social work is essential*.

Essential to meeting the immediate needs of those carrying the pain of loss.

Essential to those navigating overwhelming uncertainty imposed on peoples' lives.

Essential to addressing the profound systemic racism thrust into the spotlight by the pandemic, and

Essential to advocating to reconcile the economic, health and social inequalities glaringly exposed by not only COVID-19, but efforts to flatten curve as well.

As organizations with the honour of representing social workers in Canada nationally and internationally, we watched with immense pride as our members met ever-changing moments of crisis and uncertainty with strength, empathy, and professional commitment to service.

We acknowledge and appreciate that the pandemic also imposed personal and professional barriers on your lives that did not permit you to maintain your practice, or to complete social work education as planned.

Whether completing your education, developing best practice standards, providing self-care resources, or advocating for economic, health and social justice, our organizations remain unified and committed to supporting you, our members, in meeting the continuing challenges of this global pandemic.

National Social Work Month is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the essential work social workers do, touching the lives of so many around the globe.

This March, we encourage you to reflect on those moments, allowing for the space to process how incredibly difficult this past year has been -- and equally, and how you have been essential to your family, colleagues, community, and clients.

And while social workers bore witness to the immense suffering and hardship of the past year, we walked alongside our clients and communities, learning from one another every step of the way.

In a year of uncertainty, you took to the streets or to hospital's hallways when called. You found quiet moments to be still with those who are grieving or those are struggling. You took a stand against racism, injustice, and oppression. You listened first, and then heeded the calls for better systems and supports.

We know that you went to great lengths to ensure the safety and security of children and their families during a global pandemic. We watched as you helped Canadians leave unsafe or precarious spaces, or as you swiftly found them shelter to self-isolate without fear. You walked beside those suffering alone.

And for all of this, we salute you.

Social workers have been pivotal in the fight against COVID-19, and in the past year, compounding public health crises left healthcare workers in every corner of the world reimagining what their roles amidst an unimaginable global pandemic.

Although this year has been deemed *The Year of the Healthcare Worker*, for us, it is the year of The Social Worker.

This year's message may be one of continued ambiguity for what is next, but like years before, it is a message of hope. Because in the years to come, and as we begin the path of a just recovery, we will see the tireless work of individual social workers who, together, made an extraordinary impact.

We still see you. We still see your commitment to service. Until we may gather again, we will share the countless stories of social workers; stories filled with inspiring and enduring examples of resistance, determination, courage and justice. And in 2021 and beyond, we will stand beside you.

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
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Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR) represents provincial/territorial social work regulatory authorities in Canada.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education – L'Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (CASWE-ACFTS) is a bilingual, Canadian association with a social justice focus that promotes excellence in social work education, practice and scholarly activities. It does this through the enrichment of social work education, the accreditation of social work educational programs in Canada, advocacy, research, publication, consultation and collaboration at both Canadian and international levels.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is the national professional association. CASW promotes and strengthens the profession, supports its members, and advances issues of social justice.