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**IDEA 2004 : a mandate for social work services : are these services included in the IEPs of students with nonverbal learning disorder?**

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Patricia Sherman Carrin  
IDEA 2004, a Mandate  
Defining Social Work Services:  
Are These Services Included in  
The IEPs of Students with Nonverbal  
Learning Disorder?

### **ABSTRACT**

This study was undertaken to investigate the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD), who performs these services when they are incorporated into the IEP and are the services provided in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), (Public Law PL 108-446) and the mandate for “related services” defining Social Work services Sec.300.34. It was hypothesized, that implementing social work services in accordance with the mandate for “related service” as stated IDEA 2004, would improve the ability of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder to perform in school.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the use of an online survey. Completed surveys from 49 Masters level Special Education public school teachers regarding their perceptions of the degree to which Social Workers play a role in the Special Education process related to students with NLD and the extent to which social work services are implemented consistent with guidelines for IEP management were analyzed. The findings of this study indicated a significant, positive strong correlation related to the frequency with which Social Workers attend IEP meetings for students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder and how often social work services are identified for this population of students.

**IDEA 2004, A MANDATE DEFINING SOCIAL WORK SERVICES:  
ARE THESE SERVICES INCLUDED IN THE IEP'S OF  
STUDENTS WITH NONVERBAL LEARNING DISORDER?**

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2012

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To my son Michael, you have taught me the most important lessons I have learned about NLD and with your courage you motivate me every day to continue this work.

“Pride is keeping your head up; while others have theirs bowed,  
Courage is what makes you do it.”

*The Power of One*, Bryce Courtenay

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

With more children being diagnosed with learning disorders each year we need to further examine if and how children with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD) are provided services by clinical social workers through special education programs. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with NLD. Further, this study examined the specific social work services being delivered for this group of special education students and who performs these services when they are incorporated into the IEP. The overarching research question for this descriptive methods study was, “Are social work services incorporated into the IEP for students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder; and if so, by whom are they provided?” In order to examine this question this study investigated the intersection of the profile of students with NLD, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA 2004, and the extent to which social workers have a role in the special education process and are providing services from the perspective of special education teachers.

NLD, a neurodevelopmental disorder is little known, often misunderstood and especially problematic when it comes to planning and providing an effective special education program. This disorder has a significant impact on one’s perception and on their ability to accurately interpret the environment. Students with NLD generally have very strong verbal skills but they struggle to process information, interpret nonverbal communications, have great difficulty “reading the room” and are often the victims of bullies. Because 65% of all communication is

nonverbal overtime this causes harm socially and emotionally and leads to anxiety issues. As with most children and it is imperative that students with NLD are well adjusted and feel supported in order to learn. One thing that is most helpful to students with NLD is the appropriate school services. Students with this profile need the services of someone who understands the environmental factors and can assist them in navigating the ever changing school environment. The skill and training of school social workers is well matched to the student with this profile and their families. Social workers can serve as advocates on their behalf and in the role of collaborators with other special education and service professionals. IDEA 2004, Public Law PL 108-446, Sec. 300.34; is a mandate for “related service”. This mandate defines a foundation for social work services that are to be provided for special education students with disabilities. This study investigates whether school social worker service is being implemented in the special education process in accordance with the law.

The history of protections and services for students with disabilities began when the landmark legislation was passed in 1975 and Public Law 94-142; the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed. The amended law in 1990 became the Individuals with Disabilities Act that required each school system to provide an appropriate education program for all disabled children, including those with behavioral and emotional disorders, in the least restrictive setting possible. Although this historic legislation has solidified the position of services in schools, it is becoming apparent that there is a need for a more comprehensive and well rounded approach to providing services for special education students. This study found that there was a strong correlation between a social workers involvement on the IEP team and the recommendation for services on the IEP of students with NLD. Furthermore, the results of

this study found that special education professionals felt overwhelming that students with NLD were very challenged in educational settings.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD). Thus, this chapter examines the literature related to NLD, the special education laws and guidelines, and the role Social Workers can play in the implementation of services for this population. The specific education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004, and the “related services” mandate outlines specific social work services. I will review the current knowledge and research related to NLD and the ways in which its symptoms affect individuals from the perspective of the disciplines that diagnose, treat and prescribe interventions.

This chapter will include a review of the procedures that are protections designed to ensure students with disabilities adequate educational services. Further, I will review recommendations and educational interventions for students with NLD with regard to special education professionals. Additionally, the key and prescribed roles school social workers and other mental health professionals in the special education system play in implementing services for this population of students will be discussed. And finally, the literature relevant to the intersection of school social work, professional standards and legal mandates will be examined. Currently there is a dearth of information in the existing literature regarding social work services specifically related to providing interventions for students with Nonverbal Learning disorder.

## **Nonverbal Learning Disorder**

Learning disorders are not uncommon among children, as many as 10 % of school aged children have difficulty with educational achievement or behavior in school (Little, 1993). Despite the prevalence of most learning disorders, Nonverbal Learning Disorder, a right-hemisphere dysfunction, occurs only 1% of the time, making it little known and frequently misunderstood ( Little, 1999 ). Although categorized as a “learning” disability due to its pervasive nature and impact on the ability to interpret social situations, it has also been described as a “living disability” (Osman, 1982).

### **The NLD profile**

Nonverbal Learning Disorder known as NLD, or NVLD can be described as a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that hampers a student’s ability to perceive, express and understand nonverbal information (Palombo, 2006). The student with NLD has a unique and complex neuropsychological profile that necessitates an understanding of executive function, meta cognition, visual spatial, fine motor deficits ( Ris, 2008) which together cause a significant impact on learning in the classroom. This disorder also has a negative impact on the level of functioning of students because it diminishes their ability for social interactions, impairs their perceptions and capacity to interpret, organize and make sense of what is going on in the environment. As established by in the literature by Rourke (1989) the syndrome of Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD) can also be described as a set of specific assets and deficits grouped into three major areas: neuropsychological deficits, academic deficits, and social-emotional/adaptational deficits. When this pattern of assets and deficits is expressed in each or all of the areas, a unique learning profile is formed that can be a challenge for school systems and the professionals who work in them ( Telzrow & Bonar, 2002).

As established by Palombo (2006), Rourke (1989), and Thompson (1997), a child with Nonverbal Learning Disorder struggles to adapt to the myriad changes in everyday environments including home, school and the community. One key cause of this challenge to adjust is the inability to discern nonverbal social cues that allow these individuals to organize social and emotional information into a meaningful whole (Rothenberg, 1998). Palombo (2006) views NLD and its impact through the lens of three major domains, knowledge, neurobehavioral, social and interpersonal, and focuses on subtypes within the diagnosis that further define the types of interventions that are specific to each subtype. This author also focuses on the social deficits in the intrapersonal area. The area affected is considered on the basis of the concept of mind-sharing -i.e., the ability of one person to both know and feel what another person is experiencing. Because individuals can lack a capacity for mind-sharing, children and adolescents affected by the syndrome often fail not only a social and emotional connection with others but also experience lack of cohesion in their own sense of self (Palombo, 2006).

In addition to the diagnostic and treatment categories mental health professionals utilize to diagnosis and treat NLD, the educational system has its own unique system for categorizing a Nonverbal learning disorder and providing interventions ( Davis & Broitman, 2011). NLD is not identified as one of the thirteen disability designations specifically on the IEP document but generally is placed under the category Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The definition according to IDEA a Specific Learning disorder is one that is present in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (IDEA 2004)

**Schools and Services.** One area in which school often systems struggle is trying to meet the needs of various populations of students with disabilities. In an effort to implement the requirements of IEP document services and interventions for students are often “bundled” and students with overlapping disabilities are combined in groups. These small groups also often include students with disabilities seen as similar, rather than provide the support specific a student's needs. Volkmar (1998) writes that many professionals remediate the social and perceptual difficulties face on a daily basis grouped with students with NLD for services with students on the Autism Spectrum. Although there are overlaps in NLD and Aspergers, there are several differences in the remediation and services to meet the needs of these two disabilities (1998, Volkmar). There are limited numbers of empirical studies and data specific to NLD in the literature. However, one Danish empirical study intended to distinguish NLD from Aspergers syndrome. This study compared 10 subjects with Aspergers and NLD, but was inconclusive. The only other existing study did not include a comparison of Executive Function deficits of NLD and Aspergers (Filh, 2008).

In addition to academic deficits, interpersonal and behavioral problems may be evident. These can be seen in the student’s inability to interpret nonverbal aspects of environment, to adapt to novel situations and with social interactions. It is unclear if the educator’s challenges are related to providing the specific types of support, or a lack of information and resources to address the complexity of implementing an appropriate program. (Thompson, 1998) One area of strength that students with NLD generally have is advanced verbal skills, this sometimes can cause one to expect more of them than they can deliver. To this end one of the most potent pitfalls is when educators make decisions to minimize this disability and not provide the support

needed ( Stein & Krishnan, 2007). In this scenario the psychological and emotional impact can be devastating to students.

School social workers can play an instrumental role in supporting the emotional needs of students with NLD. They also can play a role in educating educators about the negative impacts on a students learning and self esteem when the students has difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues in the environment. Although the development of a supportive plan for students with NLD appears to be a challenge in educational settings, the diagnosis and the prescribed interventions for remediation are clearly stated in the literature ( Thompson, 1997). A bigger challenge appears to be determining where the disconnect or gap between that information and the implementation services in school settings lies.

The inability to interpret the environment has many negative effects related to functioning in educational setting where social, academic, and emotional spheres are engaged. Due the pervasive nature of these deficits, the proper support and interventions are imperative to ensure the opportunity to function educational settings (Thompson, 1998). A school setting in particular poses a primary challenge in that it is rapidly changing and much is communicated in the moment and nonverbally. Children with NLD do not have the ability to glean meaning from communicated through nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice, facial expressions and body language and commonly misunderstand social cues.

A significant number of studies regarding NLD come from neuropsychology, the field where the diagnosis originates. As with any neurobehavioral disorder, not all children with NLD will have the same set of assets and deficits or the same levels of symptom severity; this should be noted as interventions for this diagnosis can never be of the “one size fits all” type. (Rourke & Tsatsanis, 1996). Overall, a range of biopsychosocial factors can critically impact the degree to

which the disorder manifests, academically, socially and emotionally. The literature from this areas states a primary challenge related to understanding this complex disorder, and this lack of understanding may speak to the gap in knowledge educators have related to learning and the field of neuroscience.

In reviewing the literature on Nonverbal Learning Disorder, the primary fields that have areas have contributed to the body of information related to NLD are education, neuroscience and psychology. I have drawn from researchers and practitioners who present several models for identification, assessment and intervention of NLD. Although each of these fields theorizes about the most effective way to assess and intervene with students with NLD, the most common conceptual framework elucidates that school based practitioners should have an understanding of the constellation of symptoms that are comprised in NLD in order to be skilled applying and implementing the appropriate interventions (Yalof & McGrath, 2010).

One of the areas of primary challenge is providing the specific type of support needed to remediate environmental (social) challenges these student experiences on a daily basis.

Although NLD is often thought of as similar to Aspergers, a diagnosis often more familiar to educators, there are several differences due to the neurological pattern found in the NLD profile. In addition to academic deficits, interpersonal and behavioral problems may be evident. These can be seen in the student's inability to interpret nonverbal aspects of environment, to adapt to novel situations and with social interactions. (Stewart, 2002). One area of strength that students with NLD generally have is advanced verbal skills, this sometimes can cause one to expect more of them than they can deliver. (Tanguay, 2002). To this end one of the most potent pitfalls is when educators make decisions to minimize this disability and not provide the support needed (Stein & Krishnan, 2007). In this scenario the psychological and emotional impact can be

devastating to students. School social workers can play an instrumental role in supporting the emotional needs of students with NLD.

They also can play a role in educating educators about the negative impacts on a students learning and self esteem when the students has difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues in the environment. Although the development of a supportive plan for students with NLD appears to be a challenge in educational settings, the diagnosis and the prescribed interventions for remediation are clearly stated in the literature (Thompson, 1997). A bigger challenge appears to be determining where the disconnect or gap between that information and the implementation services in school settings lies.

This proposed study intends to identify elements which make up the gap by taking a closer look at this issue in school settings. Through this process will it will be critical to involve school social workers, who possess the clinical skills and an overall understanding of the impact of environmental factors on students. (Palombo, 1996). Their insights as members of the educational team can assist in determining what the relevant issues are with regards to “where the gap is between knowledge and intervention for students with NLD”.

## **Special Education Law**

### **Brief History of Special Education Legislation.**

Prior to the 1970's, special education as we know it today did not exist. Most children with a disability were denied access to a public education and were either home schooled, did not receive any education at all, or worse yet were institutionalized. The foundation of today's special education law was passed in 1975. This was Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EHA). This law introduced the concepts of a Free Appropriate Public Education for children 3 to 21 years old. The law also stated that students

were entitled to be educated in the least restrictive environment and promised to provide for the education of all children with disabilities through federal funding. In 1986, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments Public Law 99-457 was passed. This law implemented early intervention and mandated services from birth.

In 1997, Public Law 105-17 was enacted: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997. This reauthorization of IDEA provided the initiative for transition services. It required a transition plan to be a part of every IEP no later than the child's sixteenth birthday. Some of the other important issues were addressed in this reauthorization and include the following: every IEP must include a student's present levels of performance, measurable goals, statement of services, and statement of a student's accommodations or modifications; regular education teachers must be involved in the IEP. The law we follow today, Public Law 108-446, was reauthorized in 2004: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. When Congress enacted this law they made significant changes, most important among them is the requirement that special education include related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living 1400 (d)(1)(A).

Special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are available only for eligible children and youth, those identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and as being in need of special education and related services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) Public Law 108-446 is the federal special education law. This law defines specific regulations that ensure that students with disabilities receive the services they need to achieve their educational goals for a "Free and Appropriate Education" (F.A.P.E., 2011). This



law defines how public agencies should provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

As established in 2004, the reauthorization of IDEA, known as IDEIA, includes Special Education guidelines that enumerate the specifics of “related services” ([www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org), 2012). These guidelines specifically state that “related services” are necessary to assist a child with a disability so that he or she can best benefit from special education. This mandate also pertains to the role of school Social Workers who may recommend services for students in Special Education as part of the PPT team and help to decide the way in which those Social Work services provided for students within the IEP document. Although the intent of these laws is to provide for all eligible students with disabilities a free, appropriate and public education in the least restrictive environment, there are challenges to delivering appropriate services due to a myriad of barriers including a lack of professional staff to provide services, and the fact that the IEP team often has an inadequate understanding of the laws and specific mandates related to social work services and the roles of social workers involved in the process.(Wright, 2008).

These guidelines it is specifically state that “related services” are necessary to assist a child with a disability to best benefit from special education. In the 2004 reauthorization of the law IDEIA also reiterates the idea that evaluations are NOT just linked to academic performance. The new law explicitly recognizes that the child's developmental needs must be assessed, including academic, social and emotional needs. Evaluators must look at all areas of functioning, not predominantly academics. For those students and families who may benefit from social work services, parent counseling and training are among those services. (Tanguay, 2002). This is especially pertinent because of the complex array of social, emotional and

academic needs of the child and the requirement of the parents to navigate many systems.

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

An IEP is defined as a written plan defining the program that is designed to meet the unique needs of one child. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public school districts to develop an individualized plan for every child who qualifies as having one of the thirteen disabilities identified by IDEA as a qualifying condition for special education. The special education evaluation determines if a student is eligible for services and if so, what programs are appropriate. The IEP may include goals that deal with areas ranging from academics, social skills, to behavior; accommodations such as extra time to travel between classes or additional breaks during testing; and any services like social work or special transportation that the school provides the student. Additionally, social-emotional needs are to be addressed in the IEPs of these children and the new law explicitly recognizes that the child's developmental needs must be assessed. Evaluators must look at all areas of functioning, not predominantly academics, ( [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)) but consider social and emotional areas.

Once a student is deemed eligible under IDEA, special education services are determined by a team of professionals and implemented through a written document known as an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is a written statement that covers each facet of a student's education.

### **Post Secondary Transition**

For a student with a disability preparation for the transition to adulthood is an integral part of special education and their individualized educational program IEP. Transition planning by law begins no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually each year after. The IEP

transition page must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. The plan is developed and supported by a team that includes special education staff and school professionals, community resource providers, parents and the student, devoted to this to prepare students to move from the world of school to the world of adulthood. The 2004 amendments to the Post Secondary Transition clarify that transition is an ongoing “process” for a student with a disability is not merely a written plan for transition. Parents should request that the student's IEP, when appropriate, include a statement of inter-agency responsibilities and any needed linkages to outside agencies. ( [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org))

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA 2004, also reiterates the idea that evaluations are NOT just linked to academic performance. To meet the needs of these students and their families a holistic approach including the creation of an “inclusive treatment” team is necessary (Broitman & Davis, 2011). This requirement is well matched to the specific training and skill set social workers possess (Kelly, 2008) and if aligned the outcome is an opportunity to foster social, emotional and academic success for students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder. For those students and families who may benefit from Social work services, parent counseling and training are among those services. This is especially pertinent because of the complex array of social, emotional and academic needs of the child and the requirement of the parents to navigate many systems.

## **Social Work**

School social work practice occurs in an ever-changing educational landscape of regulations, policies and shifts in responses to mental health needs. When the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) 2004 was reauthorized there were major implications for school social workers. The “related services” mandate required the assistance for a child with a disability be provided so he or she could best benefit from special education.

One of the primary shifts within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 was to include “related services” required to assist a child with a disability to best benefit from special education. The definitions in this mandate provide school social workers a list of foundational services to be provided to students with disabilities but it is not One of the social work services and roles that was mandated in the reauthorization of the law is providing staff with training related to specific disabilities. In accordance with the mandate social workers are charged with providing staff with resources and information regarding the student's disability. Another important aspect of this mandates is providing family support and counseling in order to assist them in navigating the special education system and to help them access the services needed by their children. Despite, the fact that social work services are a mandated “related service” to be provided as part of a student's Individual Education Program, social workers are often unfamiliar with this legal mandate and the rights afforded families of children with disabilities (Altshuler & Kopels, 2000).

## **Special Education and Related Service Mandate**

It is the IEP team’s responsibility to review all of the evaluation information, to identify any related services the child needs, and to include them in the IEP. Goals are written for a related service just as they are for other special education services. The IEP must also specify

with respect to each service, when the service will begin, how often it will be provided and for what amount of time and where it will be provided.

IDEA requires that a child be assessed in all areas related to his or her suspected disability. This evaluation must be sufficiently comprehensive so as to identify all of the child's special education and "related service" needs, whether or not those needs are commonly linked to the disability category in which he or she has been classified. Contributions and recommendations from social workers can inform the team as it considers services the child needs and who will provide them. This is especially pertinent to student who may have needs closely related to the purview of social work that may not be typically assessed or recognized by regular or special education staff.

Additionally, the related service mandate identifies a responsibility of social workers is to assist families and individuals in advocacy work. Families of disabled children are often challenged as they must advocate on behalf of their children with school professionals to provide adequate services, which at times leads to considerable dispute with the system (Wright, 2008 ). Social workers are trained to communicate between systems and can intervene with a disabled student who may have diminished ability to engage or interpret in getting their needs met. These students greatly benefit from self advocacy support which may enhance their opportunity to participate in social and classroom aspects of learning. (Galway & Metsala, 2011). School social work services can offer support and remedy many of these struggles by helping students to cope in times of crisis, provide mental health services including helping a student to become resilient and help build personal and social competence. School social work services are intended to assist both children and their families in working through the problems that may be making school adjustment difficult for the child (Openshaw, 2008).

## **Critical roles for social workers in IDEA implementation**

For decades social workers have advocated for educational reform to serve their clients effectively. Social workers have the skills and training that are indispensable in special education service delivery. They have an important understanding of the role of adequate education in preparing young people to become responsible and, productive adults. Education is critical to the preparation of students especially those with disabilities.

School social workers in particular have an immense opportunity to have an impact on service implementation which poses both challenges and opportunities for school social workers. School social workers should remain mindful of the prospective effect of legislative provisions on their daily practice and exercise opportunities to positively influence these effects. Social workers can be instrumental in meeting the challenges of educating children with disabilities by maximizing new opportunities for participation in the IEP process and providing information and support to families to assist in navigating this complex process. As stated in the introduction to the 2012 NASW School Social Work Standards:

"The school social work profession has consistently focused on coordinating the efforts of schools, families, and communities toward helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence by using its unique perspective of viewing the person in his or her environment.

School social workers seek to ensure equitable education opportunities; ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom; and promote respect and dignity for all students."

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Formulation**

The major question that was addressed in this research project was, “Are social work services incorporated into the IEP for students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder; and if so, by whom are they provided?” Further this study asks if social work services are implemented in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004 and if not, what barriers may exist to adhering to this regulation.

### **Research Design**

A quantitative research design, utilizing a survey for data collection was selected to examine the research questions. The purpose of this proposed quantitative study is to examine the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD) from the perspectives of school special educators. The data collection instrument used is an anonymous online survey using the Survey Monkey website. The participants in this study comprised a non-probability sample of individuals, who are Special education professionals. This population was chosen because Special Education professionals are the case managers for students who are serviced within the Special Education system.

### **Sample**

The sample in this study included 88 Special Education professionals in the U.S. with a Masters degree or higher, and who have worked with students in grades 1-12 and who regularly participates in IEP meetings, have worked full time for at least three years in a public school, and

participated in the planning and development of IEPs for at least two students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder. Participants all had access to a computer, the internet, were able to navigate a web-based survey and were literate in English. A snowball sampling technique was utilized in order to generate the sample.

### **Data Collection**

This researcher began the data collection process by contacting Special Education Professionals through email. Further, a 'snowball' method was utilized in which the researcher asked contacted persons to share the survey process with other special educators. The email included information about the study, including risks and benefits associated with participation, and details related to the purpose and justification for the study (Appendix B). The researcher provided a link in the email recruitment letter to the Survey Monkey website. Participants who volunteered to be in the study completed anonymous self-administered survey on the Survey Monkey website. Once a participant answered the screening questions and met criteria for this study they were eligible to complete the anonymous confidential self-administered survey on the Survey Monkey website.

If it was found that the participant was not able to participate, they were thanked for their efforts and asked to exit the survey. Participants who completed the survey were asked to read and electronically acknowledge that they read and understand the informed consent document (Appendix C). The informed consent document explained to the potential participant the risks and benefits of the study and that participants could withdraw from the research project at any time prior to the submission of the data. Furthermore the potential participant was informed that they have the right to not answer any question they chose. Next the participant began the survey (Appendix D). Definitions for Nonverbal Learning Disorder, Transition Services in IEP and the



IDEA 2004 law and mandate for related service, defining social work services are provided for clarification on the survey above the questions. Demographic data included the level of education, state where the participant was employed, the school setting, urban, suburban or rural and the grades in which they work were collected. After the participants completed the survey, the information was downloaded from Survey Monkey.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from the online survey using the Survey Monkey website was utilized for analysis in this study. The results of the surveys were exported to Microsoft Excel and using Excel's statistical tools. Data from a total of 88 individuals was imported and set up in an SPSS file. Of the total number of surveys 49 were determined completed and useable for analysis. Frequencies for all variables and descriptive statistics for ratio level variables were analyzed. Analysis of the mixed-method survey consisted of: descriptive statistics for all demographic, checklists, yes/no and likert scale questions and qualitative analysis of open ended responses to questions. In order to examine the correlation between responses of the qualitative survey questions a Spearman's rho was utilized. Marjorie Postal, Smith's statistical consultant, provided the analysis support for these statistics.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains the findings from data collected to examine the question “Are social work services incorporated into the IEPs of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder; and if so, by whom are they provided?” Further, this survey investigated what specific social work services are being delivered for this group of special education students and who performs these services when they are incorporated into the IEP. The data in this study is both quantitative and qualitative and was collected through the use of an online survey. The survey was completed by Special Education teachers, with a Masters degree or higher in Special Education, who regularly attend IEP meetings, been employed full time in a public school for at least three years and who have worked with a minimum of two students with NLD.

#### **Data Collection**

Data collected from the questions utilized in this survey elicited information regarding special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which social work services play a role in the Special Education process as it relates to students with NLD. The survey began with four screening questions, four demographic questions and definitions of terms that were provided for the purpose of clarity and included: Nonverbal Learning Disorder, Transition Services and the Special Education law and mandate for “related service” defining social work services under IDEA 2004.

Quantitative survey questions asked participants if they were familiar with IDEA and

mandated “related services” and had received training in the implementation of IDEA 2004. Other questions asked about the frequency of social workers involvement in IEP meetings, the frequency to which social work services are identified in IEPs for students with NLD and if they are specified in accordance with IDEA. A survey question regarding how often social work services are identified on the Transition Planning services page of the IEP for students with NLD was included in the survey. The survey also asked Special Education teachers to rate to what degree they felt students with NLD may be challenged in school and the importance of social work services for students with NLD.

Qualitative data collected from this survey included responses to three open ended questions that asked: “If Social work services are identified in the IEP for students with NLD, who carries them out?”, “If Social Work services are provided for students with NLD that are not described in the IDEA guidelines, please describe what those services are” and lastly, “If social work services are not routinely included in the IEP of students with NLD what are the barriers?” The qualitative findings reflect commonalities across the majority respondents regarding social work services.

A major finding of this study is the significant positive correlation between the frequency to which social workers are involved in IEP meetings and the frequency to which are social work services are recommended. A Spearman’s rho correlation was utilized to analyze the data to determine if there and association between how often Social Workers attend IEP meetings and how often social work services are identified. A significant, positive strong correlation was found ( $\rho=.843$ ,  $p=.000$ , two-tailed). Another noteworthy finding was a strong positive correlation between of the importance of social work services and the success of students with NLD. It was hypothesized, based on prior literature; that implementing social work services in

accordance with the mandate for “related service” as stated IDEA 2004, would greatly support the ability of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder to perform in school and those services would significantly enhance the educational experience.

The data from the survey in this chapter are presented in the following sequence: demographic data of participants, quantitative and qualitative findings, data analysis. See attachment A Study Survey.

### **Demographics**

Eighty-eight individuals completed the survey. Of those eighty-eight, 49, or 56%, of the respondents met inclusion criteria and completed the survey correctly. Of the 49 participants who completed the survey, 44 (97.8%) reported having a Masters degree in Special Education and 1 (2.2%) participant reported an Ed D in Special Education. Participants in this study were asked to check off the grade level in which they worked; all participants reported working with students in grades 1-12, with some participants checking off more than one grade, making it difficult to report grade level statistics. In spite of some checking multiple grades the majority of the 50 participants who responded to this study worked with high school students in grades 9-12, followed by intermediate grades 8-5 and lastly elementary grades 1-4. Of the 49 respondents in this study 47 reported the type of setting where the school was located. An urban setting was the response of 8 (16%) participants, 33 (66%) in a suburban setting, 6 (12%) in a rural setting. Participants in this study were asked to report the state in which they were employed: fifty (50) participants reported the state as follows: Alaska 1(2%), Connecticut 43(86%), Massachusetts 1(2%), Texas 1(2%), Vermont 1(2%) and 3(6%) did not identify the state.

Out of the total number of Special Education teachers who participated in this study, 50 (95.7% ) stated they were familiar with The Individuals with Disabilities Education

Improvement Act of 2004, (Public Law) Sec. 300.34 that describes “related services” and defines social work services. The data collected in response to the question asking if Special Education teachers had received training in the implementation of this regulation revealed 31( 67%) of special education teachers received training and 15 (30%) stated they had not had received training in the implementation of the regulation.

### **Quantitative Data**

Responses from survey questions regarding Special Education teachers’ perceptions regarding the extent to which social workers play a role in the IEP process; determination and implementation of services indicate that Social Workers often attend IEP meetings. When asked how often Social Workers attended IEP meetings, 27 (58.7%) of Special Education teachers reported that Social Workers are involved in IEP meetings frequently to very frequently, 12 (26.0%) of the respondents indicated social workers are involved in IEP meetings occasionally and 7 (14%) reported social workers are involved rarely or never. Data collected from the survey question, ” How often are Social Work services identified for students with NLD who receive special education services?” reflected that 22 (48%) of Special Education teachers report Social Work services are very frequently or frequently identified. The data further indicated that 15 (33%) report services are identified occasionally and the data indicates 9 (18%) felt that Social Work services are rarely or never identified.

The data collected from the question, “when Social Work services are included in the IEP of students with NLD, do the services provided include those which are specified in IDEA 2004 defined as social work “related services” indicated that 40 (80%) Special Education teachers answered “yes” indicating that when services are identified they are alignment with those specified under IDEA, 5(10%) responded “no” that they were not those services specified under

IDEA and 5(10%) did not answer the question.

Data collected from the question, “How often are Social Work services identified on the Transition Planning services page of the IEP for special education students with NLD?” The response by 19 (43%) of Special Education teachers indicated Social Work services are identified very frequently or frequently, 9(21%) responded Social work services are identified occasionally on the Transition Planning services page and 16 (37%) felt rarely or never are social work services provided on the Transition Services page of the IEP for students with NLD. When Special Education teachers were asked to rate the degree they feel to which students with NLD who have IEPs are challenged 33(75%) indicated students with NLD are moderately to extremely challenged, 11(22%) reported somewhat to not challenged. Data collected when asked to rate the perception of the importance of social work services to the overall success of a student with NLD who has and IEP, 50 (100%) responded moderately to very important.

### **Qualitative**

The first qualitative survey question asked “When social work services are identified in the IEP’s of students with NLD, who carries them out?” The data indicated the largest number of responses to this question was very frequently Social Workers carry out the services and frequently School Psychologists carry out Social work services. Less commonly it was reported that Special Education staff carry out Social Work service. Individual responses to this question were; either Social Work services are contracted out of town, usually services for students with NLD are carried through school psychologist and speech language social skills group, guidance counselors, team of education staff, outside agencies like department of social services and department of developmental services. Individual responses also noted that Pupil Services Director divides the caseloads between the School Psychologist and the Social Worker.

The qualitative data collected from participants in this study in response to the survey question, “ If Social Work services are not routinely included in the IEP of students with NLD what are the barriers ?” indicate very frequently it is because Social Work services are not recommended by the team and frequently due to the limited availability of a Social Worker. The data also indicates occasionally a barrier is due to no staff to conduct the Social services assessment. Other responses were; “it is not a service familiar to the team”, “sometimes it is just not thought of as a service but is good for the ones who have received this!”, the budget cut the school Social Worker so she works at both schools and we need her full time in our school”, “NO Social Worker in our school”, “Funding”, “Parent or student refuses Social Work service”.

The qualitative data generated from the question, “If social work services are provided for students with NLD that are not described in the IDEA 2004 guidelines, please describe what those services are”, indicates most frequently other services are not individualized to the needs of the student and delivered through the use of groups such as Social Skills groups, transition groups, divorce groups, play therapy groups. Data indicates that services delivered through groups are provided weekly or every other week, and in High School it was noted they are limited due to the time constraints. Data regarding individualized services provided that are not defined in IDEA 2004 included; consultation with teachers or related specialist, school coping, “teacher pleasing skills”, social and emotional guidance and development, independent living and this data reflected they were provided less often. One striking response noted “not sure what social services are, most would be behavioral and suggestions for families, done on teachers own personal time”.

## **Major Findings**

A major finding of this study is the significant positive correlation between the frequency to which social workers are involved in IEP meetings and the frequency to which social work services are recommended. A Spearman's rho correlation was utilized to analyze the data to determine if there is an association between how often Social Workers are involved in IEP meetings and how often social work services are identified. A significant, positive strong correlation was found ( $\rho=.843$ ,  $p=.000$ , two-tailed). Another noteworthy finding was a strong positive correlation between the importance of social work services and the success of students with NLD.

It was hypothesized, based on prior literature; the ability of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder to perform in school is appreciably dependent on appropriate supports. The findings from this study indicate the importance of social workers presence in the IEP process relative to the implementation of social services for students with NLD.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

This chapter compares this study's findings with the current literature related to the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD), what the specific social work services are that are being delivered for this group of special education students, and who performs these services when they are incorporated into the IEP. Thus, this chapter will discuss the intersection between the literature with findings from this study regarding NLD, the special education laws and guidelines, and the extent to which social workers could participate in the implementation of services for this population. The strengths and limitations inherent in the study, and implications for social work practice and future research are also discussed.

#### **Significant Findings and the Relationship to Previous Literature**

The questions utilized in this survey were designed to elicit information regarding special education teachers' perceptions of the extent to which social work services play a role in the Special Education process as it relates to students with NLD. Therefore the responses provided are from the perspective of special education teachers who are generally the case managers and very involved in the IEP process and most familiar with "related services". The literature reviewed did not contain any studies regarding special education teachers and the perceptions they have about social work.

## Major Findings

This study produced two major findings. One major finding of this study was the significant positive correlation between the frequency to which social workers are involved in IEP meetings and the frequency to which social services are recommended. The finding indicated a strong association between how often social workers attend IEP meetings and how often social work services are identified. It is clear from the results of this question that the role and extent to which social workers are involved in the IEP meeting process appears to have an impact on whether or not students receive social work services and the related necessary supports and interventions. IDEA - related service mandates define one of the primary tasks of a school social worker as advocating and providing services for students and explaining and discussing their needs with other school professionals. The results of this study indicate social workers are involved in the meeting when the IEP is developed 60 % of the time but does not indicate whether they are part of the child study team who decide who to “call to the table” to make decisions regarding what will be included in the IEP. This is a critical difference that may prohibit more social work involvement.

Another notable finding was the strong correlation between the importance of social work services to the success of students with NLD. Although there are no previous studies specifically looking at implementation of social work services for NLD, there is a sizeable body of literature describing the profile, needs and prescribed interventions for students with NLD.

One interesting finding was related to the question, “ If social work services are identified who carries them out? The response indicates that school psychologists carry out the social work services identified in the IEP frequently and others such as special education teachers also carry out social work services for students although less often. This was surprising given the fact that

social work services are provided under the auspices of a federal law, and the professional training and certification of school social work. In her study looking at the overlapping roles of school psychologists, social workers and counselors, Agresta, (2004) found that these roles are perceived as similar and are carried out in a similar fashion in school settings. Findings from the current study suggest that it would be helpful to have further studies to examine and define the differences and similarities.

Another major finding of this study was a positive correlation between the frequency with which social workers are involved in IEP meetings and the frequency with which social work services are recommended. Although the literature is devoid of studies specific to the frequency with which social workers are involved in IEP meetings for students with NLD, the literature does state a major role for school social workers who attend.

Another noteworthy finding was a strong positive correlation between the importance of social work services and the success of students with NLD. This researcher hypothesized, based on prior literature, that implementing social work services in accordance with the mandate for “related service” as stated IDEA 2004, would greatly support the needs of these students which are well identified in the literature and well matched to the definitions of social work services.

The findings from this study indicated social work services are identified in 48 % of the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder. This was important to note as the literature describes the critical importance of social-emotional interventions for students with NLD and the need to assist them in interpreting their environment. Further, the literature states that it is critical to intervene and provide interpretations of these needs to school staff and families. If social work services are only

provided half of the time they are needed who supports this population of students otherwise and how?

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited by time constraints and a dearth of literature related to NLD and social work. Further, the sample was relatively small, and did not represent a true cross section of schools across the country. A strength of this study was gaining the insights of special education teachers who have experience with students with NLD, because they are their perceptions of the extent to which social workers are involved. The case managers would identify the need for social workers to attend the IEP meeting and thus indicate the need for social work service.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

Information collected from this study may inform the direction of future research on the extent to which social work services are identified and incorporated to the programs of special education services and how students with NLD might be effectively serviced in schools. Moreover, the information gathered in this study may be used to increase the available knowledge base for special education professionals working with students and their families and allow clinicians to be better able to understand their clients' experiences and better able to develop intervention strategies that will incite positive outcomes for students and families. Although there is a void in the literature related to this study's question there is no doubt that social workers are advocates for children with disabilities. This role is clearly explicated by NASW ethical guidelines and specifically defined in NASW school social work standard 11 that states, "a social worker shall engage in advocacy that seeks to ensure that all students have equal access to education and services to enhance their academic program" NASW (2012). School

social workers must fulfill in their work by following the code of ethics as put forth by the NASW and the NASW School Social Work Standard social workers are bound role of as advocates for students with disabilities is clearly stated in the 11 shall engage in advocacy that seeks to ensure that all students have equal access to education and services to enhance their academic progress.

Social Workers have a critical role in the implementation of the IDEA. For decades social workers have advocated for educational reform to serve their clients effectively. Social workers have the skills and training that are indispensable in special education service delivery. They understand the role of adequate education in preparing young people to become responsible and, productive adults. Education is critical to preparation for meaningful employment and civic responsibility.

Social workers in general and school social workers in particular have an enormous opportunity to have an impact on the implementation of IDEA. The implementation of IDEA posed both challenges and opportunities for school social workers. School social workers should remain mindful of the effect of legislative provisions on their daily practice and exercise opportunities to positively influence these effects. Social workers can be instrumental in meeting the challenges of educating children with disabilities by maximizing new opportunities for participation in the IEP process assessing and providing services advocating for personnel training and supervision.

The history of protections and services for students with disabilities began when the landmark legislation was passed in 1975 and Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed. The amended law in 1990 became the Individuals with Disabilities Act, reauthorized an now known as IDEA 2004 which required each school system

to provide an appropriate education program for all disabled children, including those with behavioral and emotional disorders, in the least restrictive setting possible. This legislation solidified the position of mental health services in schools. However, as research and practice continues, it becomes apparent that there is a need for a more comprehensive and well rounded approach to mental health services, especially as they relate to special education students. Social workers are trained and prepared to meet this need.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has highlighted the need for further research into this population of students and how social work service may be provided to them. The existing research in this area is limited. Considerations for future research could include a larger scale study to further identify how to best provide social work service for student with NLD in a school setting in order to support their social and emotional needs and how to provide other educational professionals a greater understanding of the characteristics of students with NLD. Other future studies could examine not only the extent to which social workers are involved in the IEP process and what barriers are prohibiting their involvement, but also at what point in the special education process is the role of social work missing. Research examining the adherence to the related services mandate by all special education professionals and administrators would provide insight to their perceived value of this law. Finally, how other members of the treatment team integrate the comprehensive approach to treatment and intervention by social workers should be studied.

### **Conclusion**

Based on this study it appears one important barrier to the greater inclusion of social work in special education was seen in the responses to questions in the survey which indicated

that the role of social workers in schools is murky. In order for social workers to improve involvement and provide a more comprehensive approach in the special education process, it is critical that school social workers identify themselves as members of the special educational team. Social workers need to raise awareness of the similarities and differences with others who provide clinical skills interventions and to identify the valuable skills they bring to the table. Social work service in school settings may also be more clearly defined if social workers provide resources and information to other educational professionals regarding their role and mandates to which they must adhere. School social workers also would be well served to understand the interplay between larger policies and school practices and the student's experiences and engage in that process. Their insights as members of the educational team, provide an overall understanding of the impact of environmental factors and can assist in determining what the relevant issues are with regards intervention for students with NLD.

This study clearly indicates students with NLD and their families have a critical need for social work services and are well served when social workers provide treatment and intervention. The overwhelming response to the question regarding “how challenged students with NLD are in the school setting,” was that they are very challenged in school, indicating a clear need for social work service. Families and students who struggle with NLD have a primary concern to ensure the appropriate services needed to help them become independent and productive to the maximum extent possible will be provided. It is imperative that social workers improve their standing on the special education team who together identify service providers who understand how particular students are affected by their environments and decide who will provide intervention and support across systems.

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Appendix A

Human Subjects Review Board Approval Letter



School for Social Work  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 21, 2012

Patricia Carrin

Dear Patti,

Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee and you can proceed. I wish you the best of luck with a very interesting set of questions!

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Forms:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

**Maintaining Data:** You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David L. Burton', with a horizontal line underneath.

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.  
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Elaine Kersten, Research Advisor

## Appendix B

### Human Subjects Review Recruitment Letter

Dear Special Education Teacher,

My name is Patricia Carrin and I am a graduate student in the MSW program at Smith College for Social Work in Northampton, Massachusetts. I am asking for your participation in an online survey to explore the extent to which social work services are incorporated into Individualized Education Program (IEPs) of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD). This is an anonymous study, which means Survey Monkey will not collect or send me any information that could identify you. Your perspective, thoughts and experiences are valued and may serve to clarify the role of social work services for students with this profile. Moreover your participation in this survey may serve to improve future educational programming for students with NLD. Please answer the following questions to pre screen for eligibility.

Do you have a Masters Degree or higher in Special Education?

Do you regularly attend IEP meetings?

Have you been employed as a full time special education teacher in a public school in the United States for at least three (3) years?

Have you worked on the development of an IEP for at least (2) two students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder?


IF you answered yes to all of the questions above please click on the link below to go to the Survey Monkey website.

Once at the site you will begin the survey by answering four simple screening questions, if you are found eligible to participate you will be asked to read an online consent form. If you agree to volunteer to participate in this study you will sign the consent form electronically and begin the survey which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Because of the data collection method, no names or other identifying information will be collected and therefore cannot be connected to the data.

I would like to thank you for your interest and consideration in this study and for your hard work in support of students with disabilities. If possible, could you also forward this email to other special education teachers you know who may meet the above requirements?

For further information please contact:

Patricia Carrin

  
Smith College Northampton, MA 01063

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

**Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students**

**INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear Participant,

My name is Patricia Carrin, I am a graduate student at Smith College for Social Work MSW program. I am conducting an anonymous online survey study to explore the extent to which social work services are incorporated into the Individualized Education Programs of students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder. Your opinion and perspective is valuable in improving future educational programming for students with NLD. Research will be used for the Smith College School for Social Work MSW Thesis, presentation and publication and for future presentation and publication on the topic.

As a participant in this study it is understood that you are a special education teacher in the U.S. with a Masters degree or higher in Special Education, regularly participate in IEP meetings, have worked full time for at least three years in a public school and have participated in the planning and development of IEPs for at least two students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder.

If you chose to participate in this anonymous study, the online survey site will automatically prevent me from receiving any identifying information. Participating in the survey it will take approximately fifteen minutes of your time. You will be asked to answer a brief demographic questionnaire and short self administered survey in order to share your experience related to the extent to which social work services are incorporated into the IEPs of students with NLD.

The risks from participation in this study are minimal. You may experience unsettled feelings when reflecting on your knowledge of IDEA 2004 or about some of the decisions that are made regarding services for students with NLD. Benefits of participating in this study may be identifying new ways in which to provide more targeted and specific interventions for students with NLD and the identification of new ideas to help other educators in the special education system.

Because of the data collection method, no identifying information will be collected and therefore you cannot be connected to the data. Only my research advisor, the research analyst and I will see the data. The data will be exported to an Excel file and downloaded to a jump drive mechanism that will be stored in a safe, secure place for three (3) years as required by federal regulations. After that time, data will be destroyed. If data is kept after three years, I will destroy them when no longer needed.

Participation is voluntary, you may chose not to answer any question in survey and can withdraw at any point during the survey, prior to completing it by clicking on the "Done" button at the end of the survey, but after that point it will be impossible to identify or remove your answers. Because of the nature of the data collection, it will be impossible to withdraw once you have participated. Once you hit DONE after completing the survey, your data will become a part of the study.

Should you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study, you are encouraged to call the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee(413) 585-7974. Any questions regarding the survey can be directed to me by email ([REDACTED]). Thank you again for your time and willingness to participate.

I am not able to compensate you financially for your participation. Your ideas, thoughts and comments will be valuable in order to assist in developing a more thorough understanding of servicing students with this profile.

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

Patricia Carrin

Appendix D

Survey

**Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students**

**SCREENING QUESTION**

**1. Are you a special education teacher with a Masters degree or higher in Special Education ?**

Yes

No

**Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students**

**SCREENING QUESTION**

**1. As a Special Educator do you regularly attend IEP meetings?**

Yes

No



## Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

### SCREENING QUESTION

1. Have you been employed as a full time special education teacher in a public school in the U.S. for at least (3) three years ?

Yes

No

## Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

### SCREENING QUESTION

1. Have you worked on the development of an IEP for at least (2) students with Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD) ?

Yes

No

## Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

Researchers Contact Information:



**1. BY CHECKING "I AGREE" BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.**

**PLEASE PRINT THIS PAGE AND KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS**

- I AGREE
- I DO NOT AGREE

# Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

**1. The level of Special education training I have is:**

- Masters degree in Special Education
- Ed.D. in Special Education

**2. Please respond to the following statement by checking off one or more.**

**I work with students in the following grade(s).**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

**3. Please check off the type of setting where your school is located:**

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

**4. Please identify the state in which you are employed as a Special Education teacher:**

## Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

### SURVEY DEFINITIONS

#### NONVERBAL LEARNING DISORDER

(NLD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is a specific type of learning disability that affects academic progress as well as social and emotional development.

TRANSITION SERVICES are intended to prepare students to move from the world of school to the world of adulthood. IDEA requires that transition planning start by the time the student reaches age 16. Transition planning takes place as part of developing the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (Public Law PL 108-446 )Sec. 300.34 (c) Individual "related services" terms are defined in this section.

The terms used in the definition of "social work services" in schools are defined as follows:

(14) Social work services in schools include-

(i) Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability;

(ii) Group and individual counseling with the child and family;

(iii) Working in partnership with parents and others on those problems in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child's adjustment in school;

(iv) Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and

(v) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

## Special Educators Survey Regarding Social Work Services for Students

### Survey Questions

**1. Are you familiar with The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, (Public Law PL 108-446 ) Sec. 300.34 that describes "related services" and defines social work services ?**

- Yes  
 No

**2. Have you received training in the implementation of this regulation?**

- Yes  
 No

**3. How often are social workers are involved in IEP meetings?**

- Very frequently  
 Frequently  
 Occasionally  
 Rarely  
 Never

**4. How often are social work services identified for students with NLD who receive special education?**

- Very frequently  
 Frequently  
 Occasionally  
 Rarely  
 Never

**5. When social work services are included in IEPs of students with NLD, do the services provided include those which are specified in IDEA 2004 and defined as social work "related services" ?**

- Yes  
 No

## Appendix E

### Related Service Mandate

IDEA 2004

Related Service Mandate for Social work services in schools (Sec. 300.34(c)(14))

The terms used in the definition of “social work services” in schools are defined as follows:

(14) Social work services in schools include:

- (i) Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability;
- (ii) Group and individual counseling with the child and family;
- (iii) Working in partnership with parents and others on those problems in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child's adjustment in school;
- (iv) Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and
- (v) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.