



# Role of Social work in children with differently abled

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## Abstract

A social worker works with parents and others caring for a child with a disability. Social workers will often see you on your own. This is so you can speak freely without your child. Sometimes, social workers organize group sessions for parents of children with disabilities to meet each other and share experiences. They may see you and your family at your house or in a children's disability services centre. As a child gets older the focus of social work may include working directly with the children and young people themselves, both individually and through groups. A disability social worker is a type of healthcare social worker who helps people with physical and mental disabilities cope with the challenges in their daily lives. The problems they face depend on the type of impairment and the severity of their disability. The term "disability" refers to how individuals interact with their environment. Disability social workers assist people in comprehending their diagnosis, and they support them in making lifestyle adjustments to accommodate their disability. Disabled people often need help with transportation or with gaining access to buildings, and some find it difficult to communicate with devices with small screens like cell phones. Disability social workers also make sure their clients have safe and stable housing, and they may also help their clients find employment. Disability social workers can connect disabled individuals with the right support groups to help them manage their disability and live as independently as possible. A disability social worker sometimes works with physicians and other healthcare professionals to explain the effects of the client's disability on that person's emotional and mental health.

## Introduction

Every child has a right of equal access to education, and when it comes to the children with special needs, this right becomes vulnerable, as the necessary support and services to ensure the right of education are not in place. Several legislations and acts have been enacted from time to time in India with respect to children with disabilities. These acts deal with the number of issues and the subsequent mechanism while working with children in need of special care. In India, 1.05% of school going children have a disability, of which 28% are those who have never been to an educational institution (Census, 2011). According to a report by World Bank, 2007, in India Children with special needs are five times more likely to be seen out of school than children belonging to schedule castes (SCs) or Schedule Tribes (STs) (Singal, 2009). Education is vital for the overall growth and development of children with disabilities, as it widens the panoramas and creates new opportunities for them in the society. Besides inclusive education of children having special needs can be of much significance to deal with the issue of marginalization and social exclusion which is very much prevalent in India (The World Bank, n.d.). The concept of special schools in

the country to impart education to children with special needs were dominant till the 1970s until the scheme on Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was introduced in 1974 with an aim to provide inclusive education to children with mild and moderate disabilities in regular mainstream schools. Then in 1986, came the National Policy on Education with a purpose to integrate children having mild disabilities in the mainstream educational institutions and the children with moderate to severe disabilities were to be placed in a special school. To fulfill the aim of inclusion and to further strengthen it, the Government of India came up with the Plan of Action in 1992 for the universal enrolment of children till the year 2000 and also providing education to children with special needs in regular mainstream schools. The plan of action proposed that the children after receiving the basic learning and training in non-curriculum areas in special schools should be mainstreamed in the regular school. The basic idea was that a child with special needs who can get the education from the mainstream educational institution should not be placed in a special school which was earlier allowed under the National Policy on Education. The next milestone was Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which was launched in the year 2001 to impart free and mandatory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). There are different provisions for children with special needs under SSA, one among them is “zero rejection policy”, according to which no educational institution can deny enrolment to any children with special needs. Besides under SSA, resource centres are established in different districts across the country in order to provide all the possible support to children having special needs so as to bridge them into mainstream education.

In the year 2005, a National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities was drafted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Also, in 2008, the Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) replaced the IEDC scheme of 1997. In 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act as a Fundamental Right for all the children between the age group of 6-14 years. This has further strengthened the inclusive education of Children with Special Needs as, without their inclusion, the objective of UEE under SSA cannot be achieved. The Persons with Disability Act (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) came into force in 1995 to provide equal opportunities and full participation of individuals with Disability, thereby giving them their due rights. After 21 years the Rights of Person with Disability Act, 2016 was passed which covered a number of new dimensions in the area of disability. It focussed on providing inclusive education to children with special needs by directing certain duties towards the educational institution like enrolment of children without any bias, proper barrier-free infrastructure, early identification, teacher training, appropriate pedagogy, educational aids, individualized support and proper intervention etc. traditionally students were required to conform to the school environment and those who failed have to drop out but now due to the new laws and considering the rights of children, the schools have to create such environment so as to conform to the needs of children, so that to create a space where all children can receive education considering every child's diversity, differences, and special needs.

The evolving context of education and disability has brought forth the importance of school social workers. According to National Association of Social Workers, “School social workers are an integral link between school, home, and community in helping students achieve academic success. They work directly with school administrations as well as students and families, providing leadership in forming school discipline policies, mental health intervention, crisis management, and support services”. School social workers goal is to help children make best possible use of their school experiences. These experiences should not just strengthen their academic outcomes but should lead to their overall development. The essence of inclusive education is only possible if all the support and facilities should be made available within the general mainstream education system. In this regard, the role of a social worker is of the utmost importance. Social work as a profession promotes equality, justice, change to empower the individuals for the general wellbeing of the whole society (Balli, 2016). School social work is a particular area of practice, wherein the professionally trained social workers assist the students with different needs and concerns like mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic and

classroom support, counseling etc. A school social worker acts as a network between home, school, and community in providing direct and indirect social services to enhance the students' academic and social success

(School Social Work Association of America, n.d.). School social workers promote and facilitate inclusiveness in schools and to cater to the individual needs of children with disability. The main objective of school social workers is to assist the students and provide them with a suitable environment to optimize the learning process (Openshaw, 2008). The roles and responsibilities of school social workers vary widely. Some of them work in the area of assessing special education eligibility for students with special needs, while some works in developing and implementing treatment and intervention plan for such children. To ensure inclusive education, a school social worker can work in different diversified areas like changing policies & procedures at the state and national level. Making use of various social work practices like casework, group work, and community-school models. Promoting inclusive education by using practice methods which involves peer tutoring, grouping special and general students together, team panning, student problem solving, partnership with teachers & parents etc. (Pryor, Kent, McGunn, & LeRoy, 1996).

**Aim:** The study aims to understand the different roles a social worker can play in the area of inclusive education for children with special needs. The study is review based and the data for the same is collected from secondary sources like journals, blogs, books, articles, research papers. The primary focus of the study is to gain an understanding about the role of social workers in the field of inclusive education for children with special needs.

**Role of a Social Worker:** Since children devote a substantial part of their time in school, therefore the school environment should be as such where they can learn, grow and develop academically, socially and emotionally. To ensure such an environment for all children, including children with special needs, social workers can play a vital role. In contemporary times, social worker's role is primarily directed to student's mental health needs, their need assessment and developing intervention plans for them to ensure special education services in an inclusive environment (Webber, 2018). Inclusive education demands to consider every aspect that can hamper or affect the child's education. It's not enough to think that building a barrier-free school with modern infrastructure is enough to call it an inclusive institution rather understanding individual differences is of utmost importance to inclusion research. School social workers function inside and outside the school, offering their services not just to the

school but also to families and communities (Mills, 2003). There comes into play the perspective of ecological system theory; which provides a useful theoretical framework to study children with special needs and the role of social workers to ensure inclusive education. As it takes into account different factors related to the child, which interact with each other to influence the inclusiveness in education (Kamenopoulou, 2016).

Professional social workers have the knowledge and skills required to work with children with special needs and to create collaboration between their home and school and also to involve the community in ensuring inclusive education practices. They provide evidence-based interventions for children and families (Meares, 1977) by doing the proper need assessment and linking them with adequate resources to reach the goal of inclusive education in society. The different roles of a social worker in ensuring inclusive education for children with special needs are:

**Assessment:** One of the most vital roles of a social worker in ensuring inclusive education is needs assessment of children with special needs to plan an early intervention. Social workers facilitate the assessment process by creating linkages among different service providers and systems. They have been given the name of "mobile teachers" for their main role in assessing the child's environment to facilitate their needs outside the classroom (Damyanov, 2010). To ensure inclusive education of children with special needs, a "needs assessment" of children is of utmost importance to create an environment to meet the diverse needs of children.

Home Visits& School home linkage: Home visits is one of the key aspects of social worker. Practicing home visit comes with a lot of beneficial information which can provide basis for proper assessment of child's needs. Home visits use ecological perspective to enhance the understanding of home environment and its effect on his/her functioning

### Conclusion:

Social Work being a therapeutic and problem solving discipline emphasises on use of its core principles and values while working with children with disabilities and special needs. The concept of school social workers is not very famous in Indian context, but due to the reforms in educational system, the need to include social workers in the educational institutions to meet the needs of children with special needs has become quite essential. Inclusive education demands utilization of proper knowledge, skills and attitude so that a proper intervention can be framed to ensure educational needs of the children with special needs. A social worker working in the area of inclusive education must have the skills to work with the individuals, groups, families and communities. They have a role to play both inside and outside the school.

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