



WHAT IS AVASW?

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AVASW is a professional membership organization. It is devoted to the interests and concerns of VA employees who have a master's degree from a graduate school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education regardless of their assignment, job title, or occupational series. One unique characteristic of social work is that it is a very versatile and adaptive profession, resulting in a wide range of practice settings in many different organizations and agencies. That is also true in the VA where social workers are normally available to all veterans receiving VHA services regardless of the programs, clinics, or locations in which they are enrolled. We consider services provided by licensed social workers to be clinical, regardless of the social worker's assignment.

AVASW engages in advocacy, and has approached members of the US Congress directly regarding concerns about VA social work and services to veterans. There is a position on the AVASW executive committee entitled "Congressional Liaison". The Liaison and AVASW presidents have represented AVASW and VA social work in contacts with members of Congress. For example, our past President was asked to testify at the Senate confirmation hearings for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Senate considered AVASW's input to be important in their deliberations for the confirmation of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

AVASW interacts with social work leadership in VA Central Office, with the President serving as AVASW representative on the national Social Work Leadership Council. AVASW is asked to take a position on issues where the Association could add additional information and recommend a course of action. Interaction with other VA Central Office staff and departments also occurs.

AVASW maintains a website at - www.vasocialworkers.org - that contains a variety of information. It has links to VACO Social Work Service, links to other agencies, etc. On the website there is a list of the officers and appointed members of the Executive Committee, the history of AVASW, and the Constitution & Bylaws which describe the functions and purpose of AVASW and the duties of elected officers and appointed members of the Executive Committee. On the website there is a tab called "Continuing Education" which has links to education resources, including online courses with CEUs, some free, some requiring registration fees. The AVASW partnership with McKissock Education Online offers discounts to AVASW members who enroll in courses they offer. Although the list is not exhaustive, it does offer a variety of relevant continuing education opportunities.

AVASW also has a merchandise inventory of useful items that showcase pride in the social work profession. The prices are kept low and are set mainly to cover purchase, shipping, and postage costs. AVASW merchandise is available to anyone who wants to purchase it.

AVASW provides input to other related organizations through participation at national conferences and meetings. AVASW officers were invited to participate in the CWSE project to write education standards for social work graduate schools to give social work students a better understanding of the needs of veterans.

As with any organization, there are a variety of development and maintenance tasks. The elected and appointed members of the Executive Committee volunteer their time to meet monthly via conference calls and, between calls, to provide follow-up activities and new initiatives. Minutes of Executive Committee conference call meetings are posted on the AVASW website. Membership dues are purposely low and set to cover the operating expenses of AVASW, and to make sure the cost of membership is not an obstacle to eligible persons who want to join.

