



International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

Contact mhuxtable@olympus.net

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Editor: Marion Huxtable

School social work in Hungary – The Pécs Model

János Szemelyácz, psychiatrist, program supervisor, **Zsolt Máté**, social worker, counselor, **Anna Kollár**, psychologist, prevention program associate, **Eszter Zákányi**, psychologist, translator

The first steps towards the formation of school social work in Hungary were taken after World War 1. The work was very similar to that of a present-day social worker. It consisted of individual case work and working with families in the field and at school. After World War II elements similar to those in the work of school social workers appeared in the activities of family care workers employed by educational advisory services, which were launched in 1967. Services consisted of guidance counseling, consultation, family counseling and in some places family therapy, with individual therapy conducted by psychologists.

After the collapse of the socialist regime in 1989, the unemployment rate was extremely high, people were poorer, drug abuse spread, and poverty and homelessness appeared. These social and economic changes prevented schools from fulfilling their basic tasks. It was apparent that these difficulties could not be handled by traditional educational tools. Child protection workers, whose positions were filled by teachers, were not able to cope with the task.

The first teams to be involved in school social work were formed in the early 1990s. Their formation was based on the recognition of the important role schools play in child and youth protection work. The Child Welfare Act of 1997 created a fundamentally new environment for operation of school social worker services. However due to lack of finances, most local governments assigned the tasks of child protection to school social workers and consequently classical school social work became overshadowed by the corrective tasks of child welfare.

Non-Governmental agencies then stepped in to provide services. At present there are three main approaches to school social work in Hungary: 1. Internal school social work, the so called traditional model, 2. External school social work, the Ferencváros model and 3. The Pécs model.

In the internal model the school social worker's employer is the administrator of the school. The school social worker works full-time at a single school offering various social services. The social worker is present at the school all day long, he/she is familiar with its way of functioning, has access to pupil information and is accepted by the staff and the pupils. He/she tries to form a team with the health professionals at school.

In the external model school social work is delivered by external agencies, who mostly work in networks. Each social worker assists 4-5 schools, so the service is available for each school for a

relatively short time weekly. Group and community work overshadows individual case management. In 2005, only 14% of child welfare services carried out school social work.

Since 2006 *INDIT Közalapítvány* (a non-Governmental organization) has been carrying out school social work in several primary and secondary schools in the city of Pécs, Hungary's 5th largest city. The Pécs model combines the advantages of the previous two models.

Special Features of the Pécs Model:

- The employer is a non-Governmental organization and the child welfare system so the social worker has the advantage of independence from the school.
- The school social workers operate in a network providing professional support with weekly case discussions and expanded or open case discussions every month.
- The school social workers work full-time in a single school with their own office, computer and telephone. The school social worker is a readily available source of help and support.
- Within this unified approach, it is still possible for different methods to be given priority in different schools (e.g. group work in a secondary school, teamwork in a polytechnic school and individual casework in a trade school).
- The model develops close cooperation with other youth helping programs in non-school settings. In fact many of these programs work within the INDIT Foundation, for example Alternatíva Ifjúsági Iroda (Alternative Youth Office) and Street Social Service, BuliSegély (harm reduction for drug users in party settings). This makes it possible for the system to reach dropouts and other youth unreachable from the school.
- Individual professional consultation in every school at least once a month, provided by the coordinator of the school social work network. The aim is to give individualized professional support.
- The social workers support a health promoting school team (school nurse, school doctor, school psychologist, program organizer, youth protection worker, homeroom teacher, etc.)
- Measuring effectiveness is given a priority.
- The program is child-oriented and uses the ecological approach. The school social worker tries to find a solution for the child's problem using individual case treatment, social group work and community work. The school social worker works with the child, the family and the school, and takes into account the complexity of the environment and personality. The social worker concentrates on the client's strengths, reinforces the protective factors, while recognizing the problems' complexities and the need for a multidisciplinary team.

Lately, the subject of aggression and bullying has become the focus of our interest. Any organization with a program on these subjects is welcome to contact us at gergalmate@gmail.com to exchange information, select programs, and get to know each other.

For further information on the history of school social work in Hungary and the Pécs model, please check out <http://www.indit.hu/?q=node/207>. Scroll to the end for articles in English.

Ed: For a detailed history of school social work in Hungary, see Hare, I. (2002). School social work in Hungary and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In Huxtable, M. and Blyth, E. (Eds.) School Social Work Worldwide (pp. 175-200). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

Bullying: It's More than Meets the Eye <http://www.takeyourtemperament.ca/>
The November issue of the newsletter featured Bullying: It's More than Meets the Eye by [Nanci Burns](#) describing how to use temperament to devise interventions for bullying.