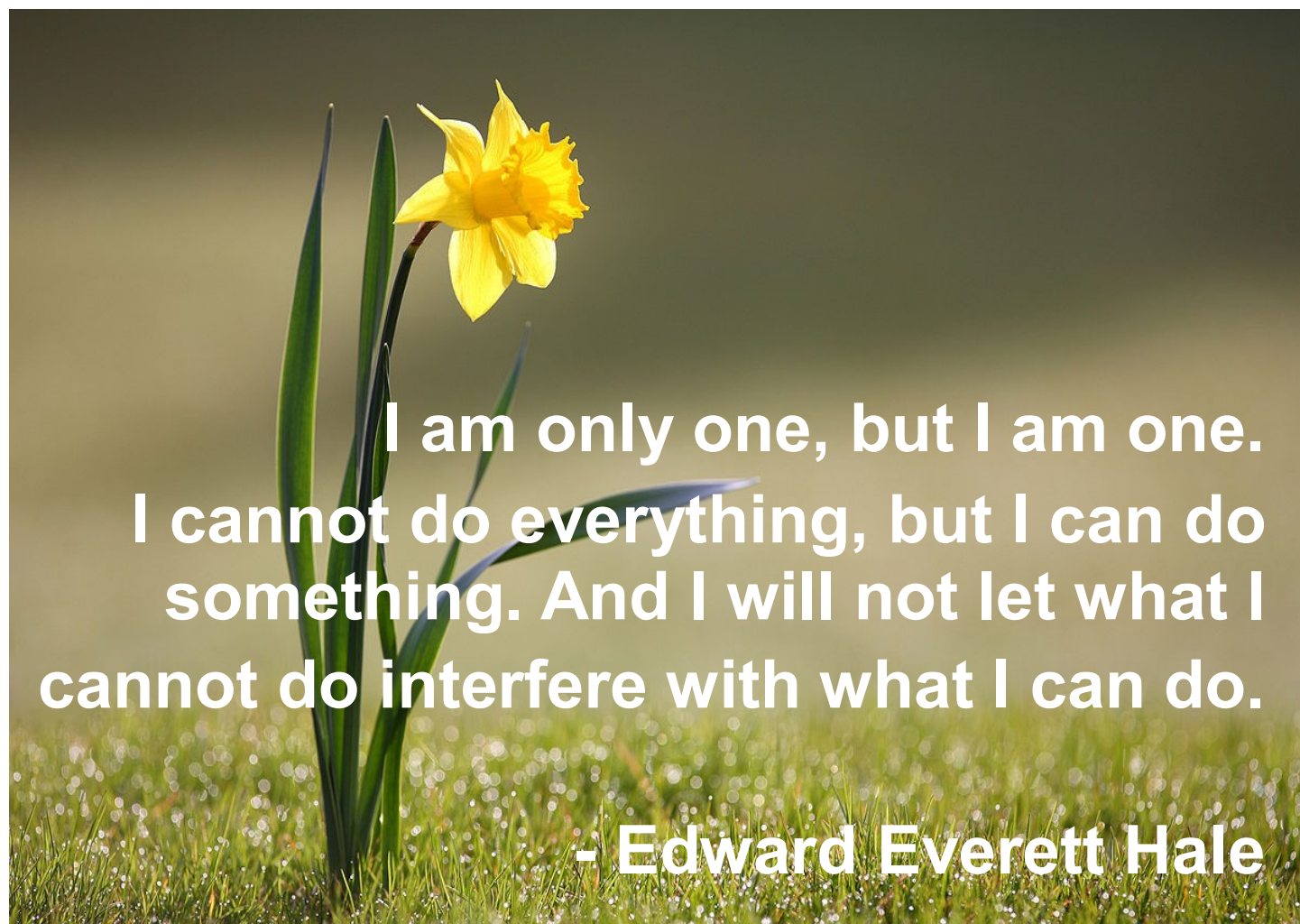


# CONNECTIONS

April—June 2020



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**Michelle Kenefick, LCSW, SEP**  
*President, Connecticut Chapter*

## R.A.I.N.

Where to begin? I never anticipated that I would be writing my final column as your Chapter President amidst the conditions we find ourselves in now. Our lives have shifted in unprecedented ways we couldn't conceive of only weeks ago.

Many of us have continued to function in our jobs / roles working in our communities serving our clients on the front lines – in hospitals, nursing homes, homeless shelters, domestic violence programs, emergency services, the list goes on. And on... The rest of us have quickly done our best to adapt to a world filled with technology that most of us struggle with on a good day only to have our livelihoods and our clients' well-being depend on our ability to shift rapidly to a new way of working and more importantly, grapple with what it means to "see" our clients on a screen rather than in the familiarity of our work spaces.

Many of us have children at home and we have found ourselves in the new role of teacher in addition to parent. Many of us are caring for loved ones who we didn't feel comfortable living in congregate care settings or who already lived with us and might be compromised in terms of their health.

All of this, as we grapple with the same questions everyone else has – when will this

end, how did this happen, what do I do, can I do this, how will I do this? This last question is the one that resonates the most for me because as Social Workers – when we are faced with situations such as this – overwhelm, stress, fear, worry, concern – we don't crawl into holes, we don't simply stay home from work – we ask **HOW WILL I DO THIS?** And then, with creativity, resolve, determination and courage – we set out a plan and then we put that plan into action. **THAT** is the difference Social Workers make. That is why we are **UNIQUE!**

The resounding feedback I am continually hearing from my colleagues no matter where they work, is that they – we - are exhausted. As I considered what to write for my final column – it would have been easy to simply regurgitate what has transpired over the past few years – which is a lot. We have much to be proud of in terms of accomplishments but, what felt more salient, was to use my experience with mindfulness and meditation to hopefully bring some tools that you can use yourself and pass on to those you care for and serve.

Some of you may be familiar with the acronym RAIN. I thought it made sense to re-visit it here as it is a good tool to help bring us to a place of calm, steadiness and peace. The following practice is adapted from Tara Brach:

## R.A.I.N., continued

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full, deep breaths. Take a few moments to consider what is happening right now for you: how are you feeling, what are your fears, be with whatever arises. Then, begin to gently name your experience(s): sadness, loneliness, fear... Consider placing one hand on your heart and the other on your belly, find your breath – easy, slowing, deepening, becoming more regular.

Re-visit what is happening for you right now – connect to those experiences, feelings, where in your body do you feel anxious, afraid, etc.? Where is the sadness right now – behind your eyes, in your belly, in the tension in your shoulders?

- (R) Recognize: recognize what is happening. What sensations in your body are calling your attention? Are you surprised to notice how busy your thoughts are?
- (A) Allow: allow life to be just as it is. Just noticing what is present – with non-judgment, without resistance. “What is... is”.
- (I) Investigate: investigate with a gentle, curious attention. What is the worst part of this; what most wants my attention? What is the most difficult / painful thing I am believing? What emotions are present?
- (N) Nurture: nurture with loving presence. As you become aware of your needs, how can you nurture that in yourself? You might imagine someone in your life who has been loving and nurturing to you at a different time in your life.

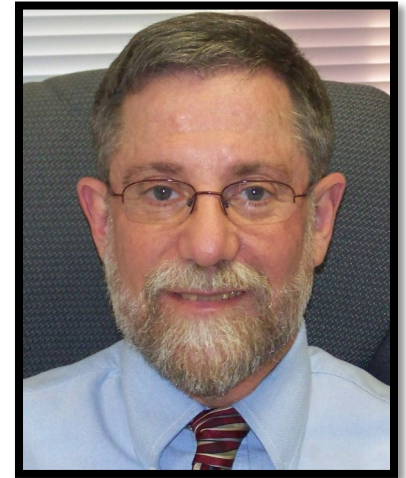
Imagine them sitting before you and intuiting what you are experiencing. Imagine their kind expression as they look upon you. What do you see? Can you see their love, compassion, their trust and confidence in you?

I see it. I know that each of us possesses the skill, the grit, the resilience and the wisdom to navigate these difficult waters. We do it every day. And while this may be taking a different toll on us because we are experiencing it simultaneously, we were trained to do this. We were born to do this. We will go through this together and we will get through this together.

I can't thank each of you enough for your trust and confidence in me to lead such an esteemed group of colleagues - it is beyond words. I feel privileged and grateful to have had this opportunity to lead the Chapter. I am indebted, again beyond words, to our AMAZING Executive Director – Steve Wanczyk-Karp. I have learned so much from you! Our Board Members have been faithful, inspiring stewards – always reaching and finding creative ways to fulfill our mission and strengthen our Chapter. To our new President: Shannon Perkins! I feel so confident and secure in our transition despite so many obvious challenges in our present circumstance. You bring so much to the Chapter – most of all I appreciate your sense of calm, ease and creativity that I have been able to witness and experience over the past several years together.

To all of you: stay strong, stay steady, stay safe and stay healthy. Until we meet again – be well, take good and gentle care.

## Social Workers are Essential Workers & Running the Chapter During Covid-19



Steve Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW  
*Executive Director*  
*Connecticut Chapter*

Governor Ned Lamont has declared social workers who work directly with clients to be essential workers. That is not the case in every state, however, in CT, we have earned the designation. You would not know it, though, from the focused attention of the media on doctors, nurses and more recently nursing home workers. Don't get me wrong, they all deserve the full recognition they receive. Social workers on the other hand, and the larger behavioral health workforce, has not (as of mid-April) had much attention paid to it and what I have seen has not been too spectacular. Why this is I am not sure, but here are some thoughts on it:

1. We have as a profession always worked in the community with underserved populations who themselves are marginalized. We as the workers are paid as little public attention as our clients.
2. Confidentiality calls for us not to reveal client's names and the media loves stories with actual persons names. While we can tell the stories of the people we work with, it is not as media attractive as having direct quotes.
3. Under no circumstances will we exploit clients for media coverage. Nor do we ask clients to be interviewed by the press as it

may interfere with the client/worker relationship. How many clients would feel they cannot say no?

4. Many social workers are in private practice and as such can be even less visible to the media.
5. Much of the media have few clues as to what we do and may not recognize the level of expertise we bring to the table.

To combat this invisibility the chapter is collecting stories from members that we can use in social media, hard print and online print. Our Board of Directors is heading up this project and I am excited about the potential to highlight the work of social workers in this pandemic, and the conditions we are witness to of individuals and families struggling to make ends meet. We know that the behavioral health aspects of Covid-19 will be immense and long standing for years to come. Isolation, stress, anxiety, depression, loss of income, fear of becoming infected, loss of loved ones (that you cannot visit) and the uncertainty of when the pandemic will be over has serious mental health ramifications. There are no bookends to this pandemic; it starts at different times in different countries, states and even counties. It has no clear ending that we can look toward for relief. We know that many years after 9-11



## Running the Chapter, continued

the trauma and psychological impact was still being felt. Covid-19 is like a 9-11 in every city and town. The expertise of social workers is very much in need for service delivery, plus to help policy makers and the public better prepare for the current and future road ahead.

As for the chapter's operations we have had to quickly go from a brick and mortar office to a virtual one. I now spend almost all of my time on the computer answering emails and writing letters, newsletter articles and assorted documents. My "office" is a spare bedroom that on any given day I share with 1 – 4 cats. Each day I start out wondering if we will need to send out an update and almost every day we do. Our in-person trainings, including our annual conference, have been postponed or cancelled. CT NASW has not until now produced online live webinars so we are scrambling as a staff to learn the technology, select a platform and recruit presenters. This no doubt is analogous to those of you who had to suddenly go to teletherapy. While many of our committees used web-based meetings or teleconferencing along with in-person meetings the daily work and exhaustion that comes with this new reality has led to fewer committees meeting. The biggest unknown for the Chapter is the impact on continuing education revenue that is approximately 40% of our operating budget. Approval of outside providers CE applications has taken a big dip as in-person programs are cancelled. I hope that the slack will be taken up by increased web-based approvals. The annual conference is our biggest one-day revenue source and that is now postponed to March 2021. Now the Governor has suspended CE for license renewal for a year, so while social workers still need continuing education for learning and connecting, and

while we will still offer CE programs, the potential loss in revenue does make me nervous. Whether membership will drop is to be seen as we have no way of knowing if members or their family members are now unemployed or underemployed. At the same time, opportunities abound; we are finally moving to offering live webinars that we should have done before now, and the amount of communications between the Chapter office and members has heightened in a way that should make the state's social workers gain greater appreciation of how much we have your backs. I am also thankful that we passed Title Protection on the first try last year. There are five bills in this year's legislative session that had various opportunities for advancing social work practice. It appears that all of them are dead as the Legislature keeps pushing off returning. On a personal positive note I get to have lunch most days with my wife, a clinical social worker who is now conducting teletherapy with elementary children and their parents.

Finally, let me say that a special thank you goes to Michelle Kenefick, LCSW, SEP, our outgoing Chapter president. Michelle was a stalwart leader in the title protection campaign and in moving the Chapter forward in fundraising. She chaired the Executive Committee and Board of Directors with skill and inclusiveness that led to everyone feeling comfortable to contribute ideas. Michelle was a terrific support to me, offering guidance and always making herself available. Needless to say, Michelle was not expecting her final months in office to be occupied addressing the challenges of Covid-19. It has been a pleasure to work with Michelle and we all should give her a virtual round of applause.

## Online Training Survey Results

A recent survey conducted by the Chapter on Online Training resulted in an enthusiastic number of returns. Thank you to everyone who completed the survey and added comments for the Chapter to consider. As we move towards providing opportunities to obtain continuing education credits via the internet your comments are most helpful.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, close to 84%, expressed interest in attending an interactive, online training using Zoom or a similar meeting platform. Fewer were interested in attending an audio only conference call training but 85% also felt that a self-study training completed at one's convenience would also be attended. Since online, live, interactive offerings are the same as face to face trainings for the purpose of meeting the DPH licensure renewal requirements, we have decided to put our efforts into interactive trainings.



Most respondents preferred morning trainings (about 46%) but close to 37% liked afternoon trainings. Only 18% were interested in a lunchtime offering. Just over 50% were interested in a 3 hour workshop, while a solid 40% preferred 2 hours so we will probably concentrate on 2 or 3 hour trainings.

The topics garnering the most interest included Mindfulness, Stress Management, and Grief Work. The second tier of topics of interest included Evidence Based Therapy Models, Motivational Interviewing, Ethics, and EMDR followed by Domestic Violence, Suicide Risk, LGBTQ, and Adolescent and Couples Therapy.

Many of the individual comments written at the end of the survey pertained to DPH regulations re: Self study versus Face to Face. Please see our article entitled "The New World of Continuing Education" in this newsletter and on our web site for information about regulations during the pandemic and possible changes to the regulations in the future. As expected, comments ranged from "nothing can replace the Annual Conference—would rather have it postponed than replaced with technology" to the opposite sentiment of "more online training! Save gas and hassle of travel". Overall, however, the respondents were positive about participating in online training at least some of the time and were pleased to see that the chapter was working to plan online content for the securing of CE credits. Many were concerned about being able to secure all their required credits this year due to Covid-19 and others requested that the courses be free, held on Saturdays, be short, be user friendly. By in large, though, respondents thanked the chapter for reaching out and seeking the opinion of our members. The chapter's immediate goal is to move ahead in this direction and we, in turn, thank you, our members, for supporting the chapter during these difficult and unprecedented times.

## Interactive Online Workshops

*NASW/CT has planned several online, interactive workshops thanks to the generosity of several of our members. These topics were identified as being of interest during a recent membership survey and we're pleased to offer them during this time of social distancing.*

**Stay tuned for confirmed dates and registration links!**  
**When dates are confirmed and registrations open, we will send an eblast straight to your inbox!**

### **Grief and Mourning During COVID-19**

Cheryl Green, PhD, DNP, RN, LCSW

TBD

9 AM to 12 PM

3 CECs

### **Mindfulness for Therapists**

Dana Schneider, PhD, LCSW, ACC, CMT-P, RYI 200

Contemplative Insights, LLC

TBD

9 AM to 11 AM

2 CECs

### **Trans 101: An Introduction to Transgender Affirming Care**

Sarah Gilbert, LCSW

Transitions Therapy, LLC

TBD

9 AM to 11 AM

2 CECs- Cultural Competency approved

### **Screening, Assessment, Support, and Intervention for Victims and Survivors During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Sharlene Kerelejza, LMSW,  
Sacred Heart University

Kai Belton, LCSW,

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Linda Blozie,

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

TBD

9 AM to 11 AM

2 CECs

### **Zooming into Mindfulness: Telehealth with Children**

Rose-Ann Wanczyk-Karp,  
LCSW, BCD, DCSW, ACSW

TBD

9 AM to 10:30 AM

1.5 CECs

## Chapter Advocates for Telehealth Options

As the practice terrain rapidly changed with COVID-19 spreading throughout the state and nation, NASW/CT joined with other advocates to assure that the people social workers work with were able to receive services safely through telehealth. The chapter also had a second task, that being to help our members in learning what the rules were for telehealth delivery.

CT has statutory rules that govern telehealth <http://naswct.org/key-provisions-of-the-ct-law-on-telehealth/> which are posted on the chapter's website. Our first step was to get this information out to members. The main obstacles, however, were that Medicaid HUSKY did not cover telehealth, audio only was prohibited, and HIPPA rules limited the types of communication vehicles that could be used.

NASW/CT joined other health care advocates in calling on DSS to include telehealth under HUSKY. In a fairly quick fashion this campaign proved successful as Medicaid HUSKY changed their rules to allow telehealth services, including audio only services. The latter was a primary focus of the Chapter's efforts as so many lower income households and older adults do not have access to video equipment that would allow them to access video telehealth mental health services.

HHS waived the HIPPA requirements related to security of communication systems when the practitioner is acting in good faith to deliver telehealth. While HIPPA compliance is still recommended the waiver during the pandemic does open up greater access to care.

Medicare has been another matter as Medicare is not (as of late March) allowing for audio only telehealth. National NASW has joined with other national advocates in calling for this to change. The advocates successfully included authorization for audio only telehealth into one of the Congressional rescue bills, but CMS must still approve and implement this change. The Chapter has encouraged our members to reach out to the CT Congressional Delegation urging them to in turn reach out to CMS. We have heard from many members who work with older adults that there is dire need for mental health care but that clients

can only access care by audio. We can only hope that our efforts across the nation moves CMS to allow audio treatment.



NASW/CT took on a private insurer too. Anthem cut its reimbursement rate for providers using telehealth,

reportedly under the mistaken belief that it costs providers less to work from home using telehealth means of service delivery. NASW/CT worked with the Office of Healthcare Advocate to have Anthem reverse their rate cut. The Chapter also protested to the Insurance Department, Attorney General, co-chairs of the Legislature's Insurance Committee and the Governor's Office who we asked to issue an executive order for all insurers to pay the same rate of reimbursement for telehealth as they do for in-person treatment. To add pressure, we contacted the 7 social work legislators seeking help rectifying the problem. NASW/CT has called Anthem's actions price gouging in reverse. The Chapter's advocacy efforts paid off! After a week of actions against Anthem the insurer agreed to rate equity with in-person sessions for all telehealth visits for a 90-day period. This shows the power of collective action – The Power of Social Work.



## The New World of Continuing Education

As the opportunities to attend Continuing Education programs have dissolved before our eyes overnight and, at the same time, there is the pressure to satisfy our license requirements, do not despair! There are solutions ahead!

**FIRST**, DPH has suspended license renewals and payment of associated fees during this pandemic. Throughout the duration of the declared COVID-19 emergency, licensees do not have to renew and pay for their licenses. So, if you are experiencing loss of income please know this is an option. However, be aware that when the emergency is over and the suspension is lifted, you will be required to pay these fees retroactively.

**SECOND**: While you can put off payment for your license renewal, to date there has been no waiving of continuing education requirements and no decision to allow all continuing ed credits to be obtained online. Therefore, here are some options:

Some of the programs previously approved for Continuing Ed and listed on our CEC Calendar on the website are converting to ONLINE programs—either Online Self Study or Online Live/Interactive. You can look to the Calendar as a resource.

Don't forget that an Online Live/Interactive training is **NOT** considered self-study but counts towards your face to face continuing ed requirement. So, the approved programs that you see being offered via Go-ToWebinar or ZOOM or some other LIVE platform will be fine to take if you are looking to satisfy the 9 in-person credits required.

Go to NASW's CE institute at <https://naswinstitute.inreachce.com/> for a large selection of approved ONLINE self-study and some ONLINE Live webinars. You can also access these programs from the NASW/CT web site at [www.naswct.org](http://www.naswct.org) and click on the tab Continuing Education and then the CE Institute.

There are **MANY** Online, WEB BASED trainings listed on our CE Calendar. Please note on our web site that you can click on the Calendar for Live Classes or Web Classes. We recommend that you take a look at this impressive and varied listing and that you not hesitate to fulfill your continuing ed requirements by signing up for an Online SELF STUDY class. DPH will be flexible and is not looking to penalize anyone. Getting your hours via SELF STUDY shows a good faith effort and DPH has not objected to our encouragement to obtain your necessary credits in this manner. For those of you anticipating offering continuing ed programs in the future we have updated our Program Application Forms to reflect the ONLINE Live/Interactive option. [Click HERE for the forms.](#)

On a final note, the CEC requirement is in CT state statute and is not under the control of NASW. We have heard from members who want to be able to either do all of the CE hours online or have the requirement waived. NASW/CT had been advocating to DPH to lift the limit on online/home study hours but instead, by the Governor's executive order, CE requirements have been suspended for 12 months. The Chapter is seeking clarification from DPH as to when the suspension will end and what CE hours will be required for those in the middle of their license year when the suspension is lifted. This suspension does not affect any private credential you may hold that requires continuing education hours. NASW/CT will continue to offer high quality, skills based CE to keep you up to date with the latest in practice knowledge. NASW/CT had legislation introduced that would have raised the home study limit from 6 to 10 hours annually. It would almost certainly have passed had the Legislature not adjourned. We plan to introduce it again in the 2021 legislative session.

[Click HERE for the forms.](#)

## The Legislative Session That Could Have Been

As you may know NASW/CT did not introduce bills this legislative session, with the exception of requesting a minor revision in the public health statutes to increase the maximum number of hours allowable for home study/online education from 6 to 10. Nonetheless, there are **5 bills that can positively enhance social work practice**. Plus, there have been no bills that would have a negative impact on social work practice. Below is a list of the bills with a brief explanation on each as to how it relates to social work and a link to our testimony.

We do not expect that the Legislature, if they return to session, will take up most bills that were introduced. We expect that any bills lacking consensus will not move forward. Still, we want our members to be aware of what we were working on prior to the pandemic. It was looking to be a very productive session with significant opportunity to advance social justice issues and professional practice. Social work related bills are below and to see all of the Chapter's testimony that is primarily on social justice legislation go to <http://naswct.org/category/leg-testimonies/>

**H.B. 5448: An Act Concerning A Risk Protection Order Or Warrant.** This bill expands the list of persons who can request a protective order for removal of guns and ammunition from a person deemed to be a risk to self or others. The bill includes "medical personnel" defined as physician, APRN, physician assistant, and psychologist. **NASW/CT is seeking to have social worker added to the list.** <http://naswct.org/testimony/testimony-on-h-b-5448-an-act-concerning-a-risk-protection-order-or-warrant/> **We were asking legislators to add social workers to definition of "medical personnel".**

**H.B. 5446: An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of In-Home Counseling and Support Provided by a Home Health Agency.** This bill would expand Medicaid coverage to clinical social work services provided by a home health care agency. Currently, Medicaid does not cover social work services from home care agencies. <http://naswct.org/testimony/testimony-on-h-b-5446-aac-medicaid-coverage-of-in-home-counseling-and-support-provided-by-a-home-health-agency/> **We were getting ready to testify in favor of this bill and to organize members in support.**

**S.B. 13: An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Licensed Occupations.** This bill would make all license applications and renewals online by 2022, provide for consistent handling of license applications from persons with a criminal record and allow for a person coming from another state with at least two years of licensed experience to receive reciprocity in attaining the CT license. This bill is meant for all professional and occupational licenses. <http://naswct.org/testimony/testimony-on-sb-13-an-act-expanding-economic-opportunity-in-licensed-occupations/> **This bill passed the committee and is in the senate.**

**S.B. 303: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force Regarding the Prevention and Treatment of Mental Illness at Institutions of Higher Education.** A task force looked at the availability of mental health services for students at colleges and universities in CT. Section 6 of SB 303 calls for the establishment of a task force to study the policies and procedures adopted by each institution regarding prevention and treatment of mental illness and to recommend statewide policy. NASW/CT seeks to include **at least one licensed clinical social worker as a member of the task force.** <http://naswct.org/testimony/testimony-on-sb-303-an-act-implementing-the-recommendations-of-the-task-force-regarding-the-prevention-and-treatment-of-mental-illness-at-institutions-of-higher-education/> **We were asking for at least one licensed social worker to be appointed to the task force.**

## The Legislative Session, continued

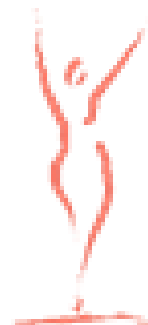
**H.B. 5417: An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes.** Section 41 of this bill increases the maximum number of allowable home study/online education hours for licensure renewal from 6 to 10. This is a technical revision bill of non-controversial matters and is almost assured to be passed. We are not seeking lobbying on this bill.

<http://naswct.org/testimony/testimony-on-h-b-5417-an-act-concerning-the-department-of-public-healths-recommendations-regarding-various-revisions-to-the-public-health-statutes/> This is a non-controversial technical revisions bill that potentially could be passed if the Legislature resumes the session.

If the Legislature comes back into session NASW/CT will assess what bills may be doable and we will notify members of actions needed. Since the state is on a biennial budget and we are going into year two of that budget it is possible that the Legislature may take no further action, and surely if they do take actions it will be on a very limited number of bills.

## CT Women's Consortium Offers New Online CE Classes

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, The Connecticut Women's Consortium staff has worked tirelessly to continue to offer NASW-approved CECs to the behavioral health workforce. In doing so we have added ten new online courses, bringing our total to 49, and have developed a pilot program for live virtual trainings, soon to be available to all who need them. Additionally, we have leveraged our social media and email relationships to share resources and news with our networks.



Our staff remains resilient and hopeful for the future. As we transition to work from home, we are learning much about our own potential to adapt in the face of adversity. Above all else, we are grateful for the work medical providers and other essential workers continue to do in service of our communities.

**NASWJOB LINK**  
THE SOCIAL WORK CAREER CENTER

Whether you're looking for a new job,  
or ready to take the next step in your career,  
we'll help you find the opportunity  
that's right for you.

Visit <http://careers.socialworkers.org/>

[Offices/jobs \(860\) 447-2047: PsychologyCT.com](mailto:Offices/jobs@PsychologyCT.com)

## The NASW/CT 2020 Advocacy Fund Drive

### THE NASW/CT 2020 ADVOCACY FUND DRIVE

#### *Help Us Protect Social Workers & Social Work Services During Covid-19*

#### *Our Virtual Advocacy Agenda Includes:*

- Protecting the Safety Net for Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens;
- Advocating for federal & state funding for community non-profits;
- Advocating for fair reimbursement rates under telehealth
- Getting clarifications and executive orders regarding CEUs and licensure;
- Advocating for audio only telehealth for all insurers, public & private;
- Calling for PPEs for all essential workers, including social workers;
- Calling for release of inmates who are safe for early release;
- Signing onto advocates letters to the Governor and Congress on rescue funding, election reforms and civil rights;
- Collecting members experiences to educate the media and public as to the critical work of social workers in this pandemic;
- Supporting the federal Social Worker & Health Care Professionals Safety Act.

100% of your donation goes to the cost of our continued advocacy that has taken a new tract in these times of virtual administrative and Congressional action. This includes maintaining our lobbyist contract that keeps us informed and connected to key state policy makers.

#### **YES! COUNT ME IN TO HELP NASW/CT REMAIN AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE DURING COVID-19.**

\$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$35 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

As the office is mostly closed, we ask for Online Donations Only  
<http://naswct.org/donate-to-advocacy-fund/>

Contributions are an investment in your profession but regrettably not tax deductible.



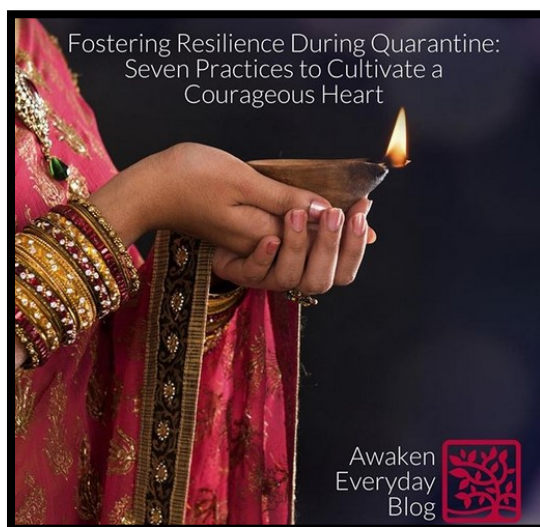
# Fostering Resilience During Quarantine

## Seven Practices to Cultivate a Courageous Heart

By Brandon Nappi,

Mindfulness teacher, writer and founder of Copper Beech Institute

While so much has changed in these past days, it's essential to remember what hasn't. We are capable of immense love. We all long for connection. We're resilient beyond our imagining. **Each of us will one day confront a dread that we fear will consume us.** All of us have felt lonely even when surrounded by loved ones. Across the world, a global community yearns to discover how a pandemic can help us grow into stronger, wiser, and more compassionate versions of ourselves.



An unswerving truth arrives more persistently than COVID-19 itself: Sometimes life is hard, really hard. After all, who told us that life would be easy all the time? Nearly every wisdom tradition actually anticipates that the hero's journey would include heart-stretching hardship. Growing in wisdom is not quick, nor easy. **There is no lifehack to enlightenment.** Distrust any guru who teaches otherwise. As we peer into the dense fog of the future and wonder what life will be like in the months ahead, what's clear is that COVID-19 has arrived as our letter from Hogwarts, an invitation to awaken to our deeper calling.

We are unlikely sages in training shocked out of a warm bath of distraction. Just like in the Harry Potter classic, if at first you don't get the message that you are a magical creature capable of boundless courage and selfless love, then you'll receive it ten-thousand times until you heed its revelation. The world needs you to wake up and claim your heart's true calling—we are healers in the making and sages in training! **This is our opportunity to become the wise elders that our aching world is longing for.** Who knew that a pandemic would call forth all the skills of the heart that our ancestors cherished and handed on for millennia—bravery, trust, patience, selfless-love, and kindness?

### 1. Dive Deep

We'll need wisdom in abundance in the coming days to meet our most terrifying foe which will not come in the form of an aggressive virus or untreatable pneumonia; **the most dangerous agent in a global pandemic is a human being acting out of fear. Fearful people become dangerous people.** While we do not currently know

## Fostering Resilience, continued

how to cure COVID-19, wisdom traditions have long shared practices to heal the danger inside by waking us up to our true nature. The way to wake up is to dive deep. **Going deep down is the way forward.** Just like Harry, we will need to practice and train. We'll need to be honest about our shadow and confront our own shortcomings. We'll need to help others, and we'll need to learn to ask for help. While living a heart-centered life cannot be reduced to lists, I'd like to offer some simple practices that can help foster a resilient spirit and train the heart in courageous caring. The Pandemic of 2020 is our first year at Hogwarts, and here's how we can train.

### 2. Stay in Today

**Powerlessness is the dreaded and sacred classroom where life's most essential and heart-stretching lessons are learned.** So often our minds spiral into worrying about tomorrow or reliving yesterday. We will find resilience only to the extent that we learn how to stay in today. COVID-19 is a radical disruption of our preferred systems of control. Because the attempt to control the past or manipulate the future is now revealed as the absurdity that it's always been, **all we can do is learn to live within the present moment as it is.** So, allow yourself to dive deeply into each day fully. Eat slowly. Taste your food. Wash your dishes with care. Cultivate gratitude for what you have. Hold hands with a loved one (and then wash them). Feel your feet on the floor. Wash your hands again. Take a full breath. Walk slowly. Enjoy your screens, but not too much. Let yourself laugh. Sing. Learn something new. Notice the arrival of springtime. Give yourself permission to cry. Dance. Play. Be puzzled. Advocate for others. Clean something, but not too many things. Surrender to what needs to happen. Take a break. Be imperfect. Let go of self-judgment—**there is no perfection, only this moment as it is right now.** Listen to the news—but only for a little bit. If you need to plan for the future, do so intentionally and for a brief time. Plan your planning so you don't spend the entire day projecting doomsday scenarios into the future. **Any action, if you give your heart to it fully, has the capacity to anchor you in your true nature.** Every moment, when lived fully is a spiritual moment.

### 3. Be Mindful

For so much of my life, I lived from one deadline to the next—just trying to get through. I was living for weekends or the next vacation or the next arbitrary time when I thought life would be easier. "If I can just get through this week, I'll be OK," was a familiar mantra. When I finally did survive the week, I spent my weekend anxiously awaiting another stressful week or another unpleasant event in the future. Life was binary in my mind. I was either working which meant stress, overwhelm, and hardship or I was relaxing, which was usually a combination of sleeping, eating, binge-watching, and thinking about what to eat next.

[Discovering mindfulness](#) helped me over two decades to notice this pattern and slowly shift how I approach my life. Life is not binary. Mindfulness is simply our natural capacity to be awake and aware in each moment as it is. We practice mindfulness because every day is a mixture of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. "Stressful days" have moments of joy and delight. "Easy days" have moments of displeasure and angst. Can we show up for it all? **Your life will not begin or resume when COVID-19 is over. Your life is happening *right now*.** We practice mindfulness because life is unpredictable; sometimes you're in the light and sometimes you're in the tunnel. The truth is, it's always a mixture of both. No matter. The practice is still the same—to stay curious, to show up as fully as you can, and to resist creating elaborate stories in our minds. **Can we trust that we have within us the courage and capacity to meet whatever arrives?**

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## Fostering Resilience, continued

### 4. Care for the Soul

Your soul is unbreakable. This has been the great insight of nearly every great spiritual tradition over millennia. While the resilience of the soul is your birthright, the soul also needs nurturing along life's journey. A pandemic has a way of distilling life to what is essential. By surrendering what's unnecessary, we free our energy to care for our often-neglected souls. Spiritual practice allows us to stay grounded, stable, and open-hearted amid this ever-evolving crisis.

There are countless contemplative practices that can help to steady your spirit in these unsettling times. Some might try [meditation and mindfulness](#), while others find comfort in yoga, journaling, poetry, or dance. Some will seek out a [labyrinth](#) to walk while others will read sacred scriptures, pray, or find a mantra to support them. Still others will draw solace from being in nature, 12 step meetings, or participating in virtual religious services. There are countless ways to care for the soul. **What's essential is that we dedicate some moments each day to nourishing the sacred dimension of our lives so we can care for others sustainably over the long haul ahead.** For beginners, keep your practice short, simple, and steadfast. Spiritual practice is our way of staying consciously connected to our Source and the ultimate reality beyond names. These days invite us to hold fast to the deepest values that anchor us amid the storm. **More than ever, we need to remember that we belong to Love, the original connection that binds all things together.**

### 5. Care for Each Other

**A pandemic teaches us just how interconnected we are.** Even as we distance ourselves, we do so out of a deep sense of connection and care for each other. It seems clearer than ever that we belong to each other. Isn't this our greatest lesson to learn in life? While the next step is not always clear, a pandemic invites us to keep drawing the circle of love around us bigger and bigger. **Those who are willing to journey with others through the darkness are needed more than ever.** We don't know how long this tunnel will be and if there will be another tunnel after the light. So be a light *in* the tunnel for others.

Caring for others can be as simple as listening deeply. Deep listening seeks to understand another's experience without judgment. **Wholehearted listening without convincing or defending is a supreme act of love.** If someone wants your advice, they will ask. Most of the time they just want to be heard. Take time each day to check in on those in your community. When you commit to caring for others, you may face the inevitable temptation of comparison or worrying about what others think about you. Keep your eyes on your own paper. When you stop minding everyone else's business, you have more space to care. When you stop judging others, you'll have more space to love them with compassion. **Comparing yourself to others is a sure signal that you are avoiding doing your own inner work.**

### 6. Be Gentle

A crisis provides the opportunity to learn to be gentle with yourself. We are all a work in progress. We are all figuring this life out for the first time. Let's be honest—we are all making it up as we go along, and we will all certainly disappoint ourselves in these days. The inner-critic's voice will grow louder so you will need self-compassion in equal measure. Trust that you are deserving of compassion. **Trust that you are enough just as you are.** Trust that you are infinitely loveable. And remember, you are not a self-improvement project. Love yourself as you are with all your imperfections and your growth will follow.

## Fostering Resilience, continued

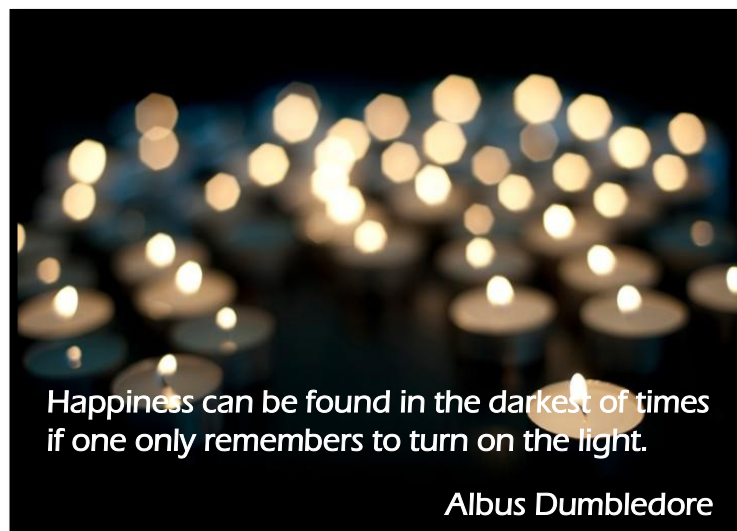
Make room to grieve for the plans that will not come to pass, for the suffering of others, for the life that must be surrendered to the pandemic. Extend to others the same care and gentleness that you most need. Be patient with the imperfection of others. Someday soon, you'll need their forgiveness, too. You have no idea what is happening in the hearts of others no matter what story you create from the limited information you have about them. In the end, care. Care again. And again. It's what our world most needs now. **Care is what people have always needed but have not always known how to ask for.**

### 7. Remember Who You Are

**May these days somehow reveal our true nature so that we may finally see ourselves clearly as the light-bearers that we are.** It's true, we were not ready for this. It's also true that not feeling ready is a common theme in the hero's journey. **There is no need to be ready, only the need to be willing.** In these strange and soul-testing days, I offer this intention as we seek to put our willing hearts in the service of our aching world.

When the path is clear,  
may we be brave enough to follow it.  
When the path is unclear,  
may the light of trust guide us through the unknown.  
May we remember that our natural capacity for fear  
stands alongside our boundless capacity for courage.  
May any trace of prejudice within us dissolve  
as we remember our shared humanity.  
May we not shrink in an impulse of self-protection,  
but wake up to the power of compassion within us.  
Even in the grip of fear, may our hearts stretch open,  
letting love guide everything we say and do.  
May we remember that we are always connected to Life.  
Each time we forget, may we be guided back  
to this unshakeable truth.

This blog post was first seen on Thrive Global. [Click here to see the original post.](#)





## Freedom Series Presentation is a Hit!

On February 1, 2019, the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers' Diversity Committee partnered with Quinnipiac University's MSW Program to host the first-ever Freedom Series event. The Freedom Series celebrates diversity, inclusion, and equity in social work and beyond by offering social workers the opportunity to earn cultural competency continuing education credits in a "non-traditional" format. These formats include art and interaction as social workers immerse themselves in a cultural experience and then discuss their thoughts, feelings, and its implications to social work practice with members of the Diversity Committee and others with experience and humility in working with such populations.

Occurring during Black History Month, the first event titled "*A Journey: Musical One-Women Show Written and Performed by Kimberly Wilson*"

celebrated the Black experience as told through the eyes of women. To tell these women's stories, inclusive of the Native African Queen, Harriet Tubman, and Maya Angelou, among other African American women who have indelibly shaped the history of our nation, Ms. Wilson employed deeply spiritual singing, movement, and symbolic character transformation. Following her performance, Ms. Wilson had a talk-back with the audience in

which she connected the stories shared during her performance to her own experience and the larger experiences of African American women today. Following the talk-back members of the Diversity Committee and the Quinnipiac University MSW Program joined to engage the audience in a discussion to relate Ms. Wilson's performance to social work practice.



As pictured above, from left to right, the panel included Alberto Cifuentes Jr., LMSW, of the Diversity Committee, who acted as the panel's moderator, followed by panelists Marlanda Hamilton, LMSW, of the Diversity Committee, Carol R. Awasu, Ph.D., of Quinnipiac University, and Cheryl Green, Ph.D., DNP, LCSW, RN, of the Diversity Committee and Member, NASW/CT Board of Directors. Themes discussed with the audience included resilience, empowerment, and the power of storytelling in social work practice. Conversations

with attendees afterward reflected a moving and meaningful overall experience at this continuing education opportunity. To expand this learning opportunity to social workers throughout CT the Diversity Committee plans to continue the Freedom Series in the fall of 2020 by planning other cultural experiences and discussions in locations throughout the state; stay tuned for updates!



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Or contact us at [info.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:info.naswct@socialworkers.org)

# Latino/a Recognition Awards

Recognizing Exemplary, Culturally Competent Community-Based  
and Social Service Agencies in Connecticut

By Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., LMSW, and Celaura Estrada, LCSW  
Co-chairs, NASW/CT Latino/a Social Workers Network

¡Hola! We hope all of you are staying safe and healthy amidst this public health crisis.

The NASW/CT Latino/a Social Workers Network is proud to announce the three award recipients that will be recognized at our annual Recognition Dinner: **Latin Enrichment Organization (LEO) Clinic, Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), and the Women's Mentoring Network, Inc.**

The Network's annual Recognition Dinner, which is usually held in March (Social Work Month), has been an exciting opportunity for the Network to recognize the accomplishments of Latinx social workers in Connecticut, including, but not limited to, community organizers, clinicians, and long-time NASW members. While this year's Dinner has been postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are delighted to recognize the three outstanding agencies that have received this honor.

Unlike previous years, the process for nominating agencies for this year's Recognition Dinner was a competitive one, and the top three agencies were selected by the Latino/a Social Workers Network Steering Committee with the guidance of the chapter's Executive Director. Nominated agencies were evaluated based on three main criteria: (1) Practices to recruit and retain Latinx and bilingual employees; (2) Programs to improve the health of the Latinx community in their respective catchment areas; and (3) Efforts to eliminate bias and discrimination in the workplace.

**The LEO Clinic, CREC, and Women's Mentoring Network, Inc., demonstrate high levels of professional and cultural competence when working with Latinx employees, clients, and communities.** These organizations not only offer opportunities for advancement to Latinx employees but also provide exceptional services for Latinx clients that improve their overall well-being.

This honor includes a plaque, ad in the NASW/CT chapter's Connections newsletter, ad on the chapter website, announcement on chapter's social media, chapter press release, and three free tickets to the rescheduled Recognition Dinner.

**Please stay tuned for more details on the new date of the Recognition Dinner. We hope you will join us for this event in the near future!** In the meantime, please read the honorees' bios, check out their websites and ads throughout the newsletter, and join us in congratulating them on their commitment to enriching the lives of the Latinx community.

¡Felicitaciones y salud!



Since 1966, the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), working with and for its member districts, has developed a wide array of cost-effective and high-quality programs and services to meet the educational needs of children and adults in Greater Hartford. CREC regularly serves 35 member districts (36 towns) in Greater Hartford, assists approximately 145,000 students each year, and offers more than 120 educational programs annually to students and educators in Connecticut. CREC also provides ongoing professional development workshops for educators, high-quality educational programs for grades preK-12 through 16 interdistrict magnet schools, specialized educational programs for students with special needs, and more. [www.crec.org](http://www.crec.org)

## Latino/a Awards, continued



The Latin Enrichment Organization (LEO) was established in 2010. Originally, LEO focused on enriching coping skills in the elderly and college students through teaching them a specific Salsa routine choreographed by the owner. Currently, LEO is an organization that solely focuses on enriching the lives of children, adolescents, and families as a whole through consistent support and creative engagement. This agency focuses on behavioral health, emotionally disturbed, transitional micro struggles and more. This agency also utilizes creative support groups, mental health trainings, dance classes, mentoring, and more. LEO specializes in increasing success. The LEO Clinic was established in 2014 and is an out-patient psychiatric clinic for children and families. [latinenrichmentorg.wixsite.com/leoclinic](http://latinenrichmentorg.wixsite.com/leoclinic)



Established in 1990 by co-founders Paige Oristano and Louise Moss, Women's Mentoring Network is an established organization serving Fairfield County. The agency is non-profit and is funded through individual contributions, foundations, corporate grants, gifts from community organizations and special events. There are no fees for services. Extensive volunteer participation is an integral component of all programs. The mission of Women's Mentoring Network (WMN) is to provide career, educational and personal resources that

lead to the economic empowerment of low-income women and their families. [wmninc.org](http://wmninc.org)

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Women's Mentoring Network promotes financial independence, economic security, economic mobility and asset building through education and employment services for socio/economically disadvantaged women and their families.

The organization is proud to work with many Latina women & their families.

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Volunteer Opportunities available: [www.wmninc.org](http://www.wmninc.org)

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***Congratulations to all of our award recipients!***



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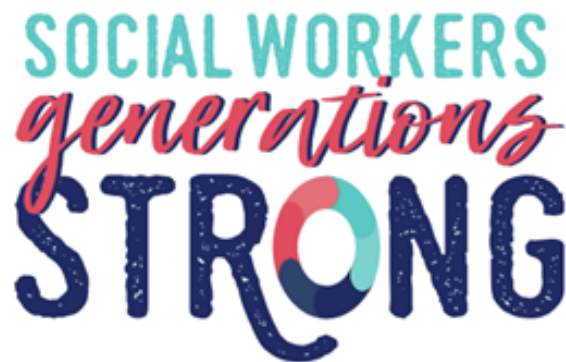
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The preparation of these materials was financed under a Contract with the State of New Hampshire, Department of Health and Human Services, with funds provided in part by the State of NH and/or such other funding sources as were available or required, e.g., the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**SAVE THE  
NEW  
DATE!**



**NASW/CT's  
35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
planned for May 29, 2020  
has been postponed until  
**March 26, 2021****

**We look forward to seeing you then,  
at the  
Marriott Hotel in Groton.  
Until then, be safe and well.**

## Upcoming SWES Exam Prep Courses Now Online Via Zoom!

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## Reminders: On Our Website

### Seeking Online Education for LCSW Renewal?

Visit the NASW/CT website [www.naswct.org](http://www.naswct.org) and click on the CE INSTITUTE. Here you will find a wide range of online classes and webinars all with continuing education credits. Remember CT LCSW renew allows up to 6 hours of home study including online education. Live webinars count the same as in-person programs.

No matter what practice field you are seeking education on you will find it at the NASW CE INSTITUTE @ <http://naswwa.inreachce.com/>

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## CE Renewal for Licensing Suspended

The Governor has a new executive order that includes the suspension of all continuing education requirements for license renewal. Professions have either a 6 or 12 month suspension and social work is in the 12-month group. Here is the language from the executive order. We are Chapter 383b. *"9. Suspension of Continuing Education Requirement for Health Care Providers. The continuing education requirements in Chapters 370, 373, 376, 376a, 376b, 376c, 378, 379, 379a, 380, 381, 381a, 383, 383a, 383b, 383c, 384, 383d, 384a, 384c, 385, 387a, 388, 397a, 398, 399 and Section 19a-515 of the General Statutes are suspended for one (1) year for occupations and professions with annual education requirements, and for the other occupations and professions within said statutes, the continuing education completion period and reporting requirements are suspended for six (6) months. The continuing education requirements are modified as stated above for each person for the continuing education year in which March 10, 2020 lies for him or her."*

The effective dates of the suspension are March 10, 2020 to February 28, 2021. Also, to be covered by the suspension your license renewal year must include March 10, 2020. If you start your new license year on April 1, 2020 or later, you must attain the required 15 hours for that license year. Note that if you hold a private credential that requires CE hours this order will not apply to such a credential. **We still encourage all social workers to meet our professional standards that include keeping up to date on practice information and education. The chapter will continue to offer high quality continuing education programs that provides you with practice expertise and keeps you professionally connected.**



## Contact Information

2139 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 205  
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

(860) 257-8066  
Fax: (860) 257-8074

[naswct.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:naswct.naswct@socialworkers.org)  
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Ethical Questions  
Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, NASW/CT Executive Director

860-257-8066 x202  
[skarp.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:skarp.naswct@socialworkers.org)

Committee Participation  
NASW/CT Chapter Staff

860-257-8066

Licensing Questions  
NASW/CT Chapter Staff

860-257-8066

Continuing Education Information/Conference Questions  
Pat Hartman, NASW/CT Coordinator of  
Professional Development

860-257-8066 x204  
[phartman.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:phartman.naswct@socialworkers.org)

Bookkeeping  
Nicole LePore, NASW/CT Bookkeeper

860-257-8066 x203  
[naswbookkeeper.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:naswbookkeeper.naswct@socialworkers.org)

Website, Newsletter, Advertising & Labels  
Meghan Maxwell, NASW/CT Office Administrator

860-257-8066  
[mmaxwell.naswct@socialworkers.org](mailto:mmaxwell.naswct@socialworkers.org)