

# SOCIAL SERVICE EXPERT NEWS

Committee for Public  
Counsel Services

3/31/2021

Edition 1, Volume 5

*Your place for SSE news, updates, training notices and more.*

**March is National Social Work Month** and we are getting this edition in right under the wire! We want to thank you for all the work you are doing to help our clients meet their legal and life goals. As you know, social workers/social service advocates play a key role in the legal defense of our clients. After all, very few social problems can be solved through the legal system, but many legal problems can be influenced with social work support.

Given the importance of this work, we thought we would take the opportunity to talk about “best practices” in legal social work. Here are just a few of the best practice questions that have come up recently:

**Expressed Wishes vs Best Interest:** CPCS works under an expressed wishes model of representation. This means our clients direct their own litigation and the legal team represents their wishes to the court. Sometimes this can be difficult for social workers who are used to working under the best interest model. Remember in almost all cases social workers can find services and supports to work within the expressed wishes model and help clients meet their legal and life goals.

**Staying in Your Lane:** Before starting a case, we recommend that you talk with the attorney about the scope you are being hired to do. For example, you may be asked to complete a home study, that does not mean you are being asked to make a placement recommendation.

**Am I an Expert?** We have talked about this before and we recognize that all of you have a wealth of training and experience that you bring to the work and we are forever grateful to have you as CPCS vendors. That being said, no one cannot do it all. For example, you should not take an aid-in-sentencing case or bonding assessment case, if you don't have the training/education or experience. There are many training opportunities for vendors to

## Getting Started on a Case

•••

What you need when  
starting a case:

- The ENTIRE APPROVED Motion for Funds.
- The NAC #.
- Letter of Engagement that specifies scope of requested work and services, and your role.
- Client contact information.
- Signed releases-remember do not contact anyone without permission from the attorney.
- The context/theory/criminal charges of the case.
- Timeline for any work product.

add to their skill base and we would love to add any new certifications to your profile.

**Watch for Conflicts of Interest:** It is important that vendors assess for conflicts throughout a case as many of you may be employed by a non-state agency/school/hospital in which a client is currently (or has in the past) received services. Some of you do work for the courts as Investigators, GALs, or in the court clinics and while this does not preclude you from taking CPCS cases, you must be mindful of potential conflicts whenever taking a new case.

**Business Etiquette:** As an independent contractor you are your own best advertiser, so please remember to call attorneys back even if you can't take a case. Always let the attorney know if you need to withdraw from a case, and please don't stop responding to their communications. Have a resume that highlights your vendor work and related experience. Have a redacted writing sample to share with attorneys who may be seeking written advocacy.

**Email:** We encourage every vendor to have a dedicated email for this work. If you use an email affiliated with another job or school, you risk breaking the attorney-client privilege because you do not own that email.

**Can I Bill for That?:** The Indigent Court Cost Act (ICCA) allows attorneys to hire expert vendors in the legal defense of their clients. ICCA funds do not cover direct care services such as therapy or supervised visits. Additionally, ICCA funds cannot be used for supervision, case opening/closing/, filing or billing.

**Helpful Billing Hint:** Include a cover letter if you are submitting more than one bill at a time or if you are using a subsequent motion for funds. In other words, if you want the billing department to take note of something, include a cover letter!!



Let Us Know If You Have Become an "Expert"

Since you first filled out the vendor information form you may have new licensing, certifications, trainings or jobs that you want to add to your profile. You may have been qualified as an expert in a particular area by the courts, and we want to know!!

Please email [ssvendors@publiccounsel.net](mailto:ssvendors@publiccounsel.net) with any new profile information!

---

## *Our Work, Works!*

### Social Work Intervention Addresses the Substance Use and Mental Health Needs of a Client

On Christmas Eve, I was assigned a case where a woman (K) was charged with assault with a dangerous weapon and several other charges at a hotel. It became apparent she had mental health issues. She was arraigned. I filed a 15(a) and after the doctor examined her, she was sent to the Worcester Recovery Center that day. Her bail was set at held without right, without prejudice (which meant that this condition could be re-addressed at a later date.) I got funds for a Social Services Expert (SSE) and asked her to start work on a release plan for the client. K had a prior history of mental health breakdowns and alcohol abuse issues. She had no connections or family in MA. Also, her mental health problems interfered with her ability to trust both me and the SSE, which caused problems in developing release plans. When she was released to the women's jail, the SSE and I tried to get her out of jail on the developed release plan; neither the judge nor the ADA agreed with the plan. K then started decompensating at the jail as the Worcester Recovery Center had not sent all of the medications they prescribed her. She was sent back to the Worcester Recovery Center as the ADA filed a petition to have her civilly committed. The petition was withdrawn as K improved once back on the right medications, and she was again returned to the jail. The SSE drafted a new release plan with the client. At the next hearing, the release conditions proposed were approved by the judge. K was to go to a substance abuse residential treatment program, get telehealth mental health appointments, stay on her medications and transition into the community when appropriate. However, the jail did not get the medical records to the SSE in time, and the bed was lost over the weekend. So we had to go back into court on an emergency motion and request a different judge (the original judge was not available) modify the conditions to allow K to go to the new facility. The judge allowed this and K went into the facility last Thursday! It was the diligent work with the client, the jail, the hospital and the court by the SSE that made this possible!

**DO YOU HAVE A SUCCESS STORY YOU WANT TO SHARE?  
EMAIL US AT [SSVENDORS@PUBLICCOUNSEL.NET](mailto:ssvendors@publiccounsel.net)**

## What are Attorneys Saying?

“A great SSE whose work on the case has been outstanding. She was instrumental in achieving an amazing result for my client-pre-trial probation on 4 counts of distributing cocaine/heroin, on the conditions that he maintain employment, work on his GED and continue to engage with the JRI Boston program, which the SSE helped him get into.” -Attorney

“SSE is extremely professional, knowledgeable and wonderful to work with on a case.!” – Attorney

“SSE was quick and really easy to work with”- Attorney

“I just want to say that (SSE) has been a pleasure to work with. She is smart, resourceful, persistent and patient. I highly recommend her. Thank you for recommending her to me.” – Attorney

“I am currently using [SSE] on a couple of cases, including this one. She is awesome and will rely on her in the future!” - Attorney

### **EXTRA! EXTRA!**

Check out the vendor webpage!  
<https://www.publiccounsel.net/soc/>

Make sure to spend some time exploring the CPCS website where you can find links and resources to helpful information.

<https://www.publiccounsel.net/>

# Trainings, Conferences & Certifications

Please check out the CPCS training page for upcoming trainings available to the public:

<https://www.publiccounsel.net/train/events/>

The various schools of Social Work and other graduate programs offer trainings, workshops, and post graduate certificate programs in Trauma, CBT, Human Service Management and other specialty areas.

**NASW Events/workshops/ trainings:**

[https://www.naswma.org/events/event\\_list.asp?show=&group=&start=3%2F19%2F2020&end=&view=&cid=20886](https://www.naswma.org/events/event_list.asp?show=&group=&start=3%2F19%2F2020&end=&view=&cid=20886)

**NASW Virtual Symposium 2021: April 15 & 17**

<https://www.naswma.org/page/symposium2021>

**Charles Hamilton Houston Institute:**

<https://charleshamiltonhouston.org/>

**Boston University Center for Anti-Racism Research:**

<https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/the-center/>

**National Association for Public Defenders:**

<https://www.publicdefenders.us/>

The National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) engages all public defense professionals into a clear and focused voice to address the systemic failure to provide the constitutional right to counsel, and to collaborate with diverse partners for solutions that bring meaningful access to justice for poor people.



Coming Soon

“Brown Bag” training series on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 12-1pm. We hope to start in May and will send out information as the presenters are scheduled!

# HAPPENING TOMORROW!

Please join us for an exciting MIC meetup this **Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup>** at **11:30 AM Pacific Time--1:30 PM Central Time--2:30 PM Eastern Time**. Fellow mitigation specialist, Jill Steinberg, will lead us in a conversation on writing to create empathy. During this meetup we will discuss techniques we use to make our writing more engaging and impactful. I hope you will come with ideas to share about how you create empathy for your clients. Also joining us for Q&A will be Allison Langer of Writing Class Radio (<https://www.writingclassradio.com/>).

Please take a few moments before the meetup to review the attached masterful piece of mitigation research in the form of a Statement of Reasons, filed by Judge Weinstein in the EDNY in US v. Bannister. This judge is legendary and we are blessed to have him. Consider how deep he dives into the history of impoverished communities of color in Brooklyn. Think about *how* it is written. How could you re-write these facts to have a greater empathetic reaction from the intended audience?

Please also take a look at these two links in preparation for our conversation with Jill and

Allison: <https://jerryjenkins.com/character-archetypes/> & <https://jerryjenkins.com/create-character-empathy/>.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86031921711?pwd=a3AvVEtUeTlIUepTVTBCQU5KcmdRUT09>  
Passcode: MICmeetup

Meeting ID: 860 3192 1711

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,86031921711#,,,,\*849327187# US (Tacoma)

+16699006833,,86031921711#,,,,\*849327187# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 860 3192 1711

Passcode: 849327187

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86031921711?pwd=a3AvVEtUeTlIUepTVTBCQU5KcmdRUT09>

**READING MATERIALS ARE ATTACHED TO THE ORIGINAL EMAIL**

---

# Helpful Resources and Links

**One Can Help:** <https://onecanhelp.org/>

“We work with court-appointed attorneys and social workers to provide clients at risk with essential resources when no other aid is available, to help them break the cycle of deprivation and hopelessness.” Resources available in juvenile court case (Primarily CAFL & YAD).

**National Organization of Forensic Counselors:** <https://www.nofsw.org/>

**National Association of Forensic Counselors:** (<http://www.forensiccounselor.org/>)

**The National Board of Forensic Evaluators:** (<https://www.nbfe.net/>)

**William James College Continuing Ed/Life Long Learning:**  
<https://www.williamjames.edu/academics/lifelong/index.cfm>

**Massachusetts General Hospital: Center for Law, Brain & Behavior:** <http://clbb.mgh.harvard.edu/>

The Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Law, Brain, and Behavior is an academic and professional resource for the education, research, and understanding of neuroscience and the law.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness, Massachusetts:** <https://namimass.org/>

**Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS):**

Helpline: <https://helplinema.org/>

Search for Treatment: [https://mahelplineonline.custhelp.com/app/account/opa\\_interview](https://mahelplineonline.custhelp.com/app/account/opa_interview)

**Sentencing Project:** <https://www.sentencingproject.org/>

**Family Resource Centers:** <https://www.frcma.org/>

## Re-Entry Services

**Coming Home Directory Greater Boston:**

[http://www.cominghomedirectory.org/assets/2019/02/CHD\\_Print\\_Final\\_With-cover-2019.pdf](http://www.cominghomedirectory.org/assets/2019/02/CHD_Print_Final_With-cover-2019.pdf)

**Office of Returning Citizens, Boston:** <https://www.boston.gov/departments/returning-citizens>

**After Incarceration Support Systems (AISS), Hampden:** <http://hcsdma.org/aiss-3/>

**Worcester Initiatives for Supported Reentry (WISR):** <https://www.advocates.org/services/worcester-initiative-supported-reentry-wisr>

---

## **BILLING**

While we can help with some billing questions, your best resource for answers is the Vbill User Manual or you can email [vendorbills@publiccounsel.net](mailto:vendorbills@publiccounsel.net) with any questions. That being said, here are a few quick reminders.

- Travel time is billable. The rate is lower than the hourly rate for other services and is pre-populated by VBill.
- Remember if you make a billable phone call during your travel time, you cannot bill for both services.
- Supervision and training are not billable services.
- Reminder FY2020 is from 7/1/19-6/30/20
- Billable hours per FY are capped at 1,650, and you can only bill up to 12 hours/day. Anything over those hours requires a waiver.
- There are timelines for submitting Vbills. Make sure you know what they are.

***Don't forget to keep us updated on new licenses, additional certifications or potential conflicts. If you have not done so already, please update the attached vendor information questionnaire.***

## ***Your Social Service Expert Contacts***

---

If you have any questions or need guidance, please contact the person who oversees the Social Services Experts for that division.

**Kristin Dame, LMHC**

[kdame@publiccounsel.net](mailto:kdame@publiccounsel.net)

617-910-5815

**Private Counsel Division**

**Claudia Dunne, LICSW**

[cdunne@publiccounsel.net](mailto:cdunne@publiccounsel.net)

617-910-5753

**Youth Advocacy Division**

**Annabelle Frazier, LMHC, Ph.D.**

[afrazier@publiccounsel.net](mailto:afrazier@publiccounsel.net)

617-910-5807

**Mental Health Litigation Division**

**Meg Grant, LICSW**

[mgrant@publiccounsel.net](mailto:mgrant@publiccounsel.net)

617-910-5839

**Children and Family Law Division**

### **The Committee for Public Counsel Services**

- We Defend the Accused
- We Demand Justice
- We fight for the Rights of Parents and Children