

March is National Social Workers Month



Our annual health observances are more than just a date on a calendar. They are an opportunity to step back from our daily tasks to appreciate what our colleagues contribute via our individual or collective roles in caring for patients.

March is National Social Work Month—a time to recognize our social workers.

Historians trace the origin of social work to the advent of the Industrial Revolution when rapid urbanization led to corresponding increases in social problems and, in turn, social activism. By 1929, social work was becoming recognized as a profession, with 10 American universities offering training and education in the social sciences.

Today, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, we have 680,000 social work professionals in the United States, including a reported 25,000 licensed social workers here in Massachusetts.

In our healthcare organizations, each of us has followed a different academic or vocational path to our specific role or career. But whatever our

journey, whatever clinical setting we work in, all of us share a commitment to effecting change. Every day, in large and small ways, social workers help our patients to change their lives, behaviors, health outcomes and, by extension, our families and neighborhoods.

Some days, it's easy to see the change we've supported. Other days, the change is so incremental that it's almost invisible—at least on that particular day.

In the past five years, we have seen huge changes in healthcare, particularly in how we care for our most vulnerable neighbors and how we meet their multiple needs and treat their co-occurring disorders. Social workers have applied their skills, compassion and training to act as change agents in this move toward more integrated, holistic care.

They use their skills and training to connect our clients to housing, food, transportation, disability assistance and other needed services. In other words, social workers engineer personal and social change and our nation's paradigm shift in how we deliver care.

So this March, we thank you for your commitment, care, leadership and advocacy.