

June 10, 2024

The National Association of Social Workers in New York State and New York City are deeply concerned about the rising incidents of social workers being attacked on the job. The most recent attack was on [Maria Coto](#), 56, of Westchester County on May 14, 2024 and national media coverage occurred on June 8th, 2024. Social workers dedicate their lives to serving vulnerable populations, advocating for social justice, and supporting individuals and families. They often work in high-stress environments, facing significant risks to their safety and well-being. According to [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), social service workers are 5x as likely to suffer a workplace violence injury than workers overall.

These attacks on social workers are unacceptable and a grave injustice to those striving to make a positive impact in our communities. New York's assault statute recognizes the severity of these offenses. Under Law § 120.05(3a), assaulting a social services employee directly involved in child, elderly, or disability abuse investigations, or providing public assistance, is classified as second-degree assault—a class D felony.

[The law states:](#)

..With intent to prevent an employee of a local social services district directly involved in investigation of or response to alleged abuse or neglect of a child, a vulnerable elderly person or an incompetent or physically disabled person, from performing such investigation or response, the actor, not being such child, vulnerable elderly person or incompetent or physically disabled person or with intent to prevent and employee of a local social services district directly involved in providing public assistance and care from performing his or her job, causes physical injury to such employee including by means or releasing or failing to control ad animal under circumstances evincing the actor's intent that the animal obstruct the lawful activities of such employee..

We call on policymakers, community leaders, and employers to prioritize the safety of social workers by:

- 1) **Enhanced Workforce Safety Measures:** Implementing robust safety protocols and emergency response systems to protect social workers in the field.
- 2) **Safety Trainings:** Providing regular mandated trainings to equip social workers with skills to de-escalate potentially violent situations and protect themselves.
- 3) **Pairing:** Creating policies that mandate social workers in the field be paired with other social workers, case aides, or peer counselors for safety.

- 4) **Supporting Mental Health and Well-being:** Ensuring that workers who experience harm have access to resources and support systems for the trauma and stress encountered on the job.

Social workers play a crucial role in building stronger, healthier communities. It is our collective responsibility to ensure their safety and well-being as they care for our community members.



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