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## **Oak Park Social Worker Recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Oak Park, IL**—There are nearly 720,000 social workers in our nation with roughly 20,000 in Illinois alone. That national number is expected to grow by 12 percent by the end of the decade, making social work one of the fastest growing professions in the nation. This is because the life-affirming services that social workers provide are needed more than ever. This is especially true as our nation continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, economic inequality, global warming, and other crises.

In continuation of this year's National Professional Social Work Month theme, "The Time is Right for Social Work," the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals of every generation, whose work promotes social justice and social change with and on behalf of the people and clients they serve.

One such exemplary Illinois social worker being honored this year is 2022 NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Linda Sandman. **Linda Sandman** (MSW, University of Illinois at Chicago; LCSW) has over 35 years' experience working with people with disabilities, including mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, Linda is a co-director with Blue Tower Solutions, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging individuals, organizations, and systems to create cultures of respect, inclusion, dignity, and equality for people with disabilities. She is bilingual (Spanish/English) and bicultural and deeply committed to promoting inclusion for all. Linda played a role in implementing landmark legislation in Illinois giving access to sex education for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, culminating years of work promoting sexuality education and violence prevention.

In support of their nomination of Linda, colleague Teresa Parks, Deputy Director of Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission wrote: "Ms. Sandman is a motivated leader in the disability field.... [S]he has created a large body of resources for the benefit of persons with disabilities, their families and for professionals. She has always approached her work in a way that advocates for persons with disabilities as well as helping persons with disabilities to advocate for themselves. Her work embodies highly ethical practices and approaches, professionalism, thoroughness, diversity, human rights and social justice."

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Linda and others like her who work every day to effect positive changes in their communities and beyond. Linda is one of four individuals being honored as this year's 2022 NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Awardees. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website ([www.naswil.org](http://www.naswil.org)) or contact Joel L. Rubin, executive director, at [jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org](mailto:jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org).

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*The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association's largest chapters and advocates for over 20,000 social workers in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession while seeking to also enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy.*