

Suzanne Potts, LMSW, MPH-Member At Large Position Statement

I am eager to take on a larger role with the ASWIS Executive Board as the Member At Large as I've been working in this space for some time and now have the bandwidth to take on additional volunteer roles. I'd plan to expand my role in Sport Social Work, be an advocate for change as this community continues to grow and evolve.

The first connection I experienced as an advocate for sport and community was when I played Collegiate Club soccer at San Diego State University from 1990 to 1994. While I believe that I was an average soccer player, I became a better leader as a result of my time on the field. I served as team Captain and President of our on campus sports council, engaging our team through community volunteering, which led to ultimately getting a dual MSW/MPH degree from SDSU.

I worked in various clinical roles early on and then grew to love Macro social work, expanding my skills in program design and community engagement. I worked as a Program Officer at Lance Armstrong Foundation (now LIVESTRONG), which also provided insights about how professional athletes can strengthen or hinder communities through their advocacy and support. This transformational opportunity also helped me learn so much about nonprofit management, capacity building, community collaboration and brand engagement.

I've worked as an Assistant Professor of Instruction at University of Texas, Austin since May 2011, teaching Macro focused courses in the Graduate program. Ironically, we don't have a large Sport Social Work curriculum however I'm hoping to change that in this Executive Board role. I worked with Athletes for Hope (AFH) for almost a decade supporting athlete advocacy, service, education and mental health. In my final role there as Chief Wellbeing Officer, I helped design programs and advocacy efforts that built out a national Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA). I spent the last year as CEO of The Hidden Opponent leading organizational growth, building out a board, fundraising and supporting global programs in advocacy, education and support. I have recently left that role and am currently looking at positions that align with my skills and passions.

I joined ASWIS in 2017 and attended the conference in Orlando, FL that year with a poster presentation. I loved the connection with others working in this space, the diversity of ideas and incredible people that make up this network. I've been a member ever since and served on the ASWIS Pro Sports committee back in 2021. I've been able to supervise some wonderful Sport Social Work MSSW interns and have seen what new social workers can bring to the sports space. I feel that I can contribute to the growth and opportunities within the Executive Board through learning more about the unique needs of our network, implementing the ASWIS strategic plan, supporting committees and sharing these efforts on social media. I see such an opportunity among ASWIS members to educate a growing cohort of social workers, provide best practices in research and clinical roles, and by expanding the nonprofit footprint of ASWIS. In reviewing the 10 goals of the ASWIS 2025-2026 Strategic Plan, I believe I may play a strong role in strengthening the Education, Policy, Nonprofit Capacity (Infrastructure and Fiscal Management) goals best, as well as continue to be an advocate for Macro-focused Sport Social Workers. I've met some wonderful friends through this remarkable network and hope to continue to collaborate, align and support this community as a Member At Large representative.