

Becky Vacco-Giudice, MSW, LCSW : Candidate for Member-at-Large

From my earliest memories to my professional roles today, sport has been a constant presence in my life. What first drew me in as a young athlete—the competition, the drive to improve, and the pursuit of performance—has evolved into a deeper appreciation for the community sport builds, the identities it shapes, and the sense of belonging it fosters. Through my many experiences as an athlete, coach, clinician, educator, and parent, I've seen how performance pressures can overshadow athletes' well-being, fueling my commitment to changing how we support athletes.

As an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Aurora University, I teach future social workers while expanding opportunities for students to explore sport-focused practice. I serve as the faculty mentor for the women's volleyball team and faculty advisor for Project Resilience, a student-led initiative promoting mental health conversations and community among student-athletes. I founded The Game Within Institute (www.thegamewithininstitute.com), in order to advance athlete development, coach education, and culture change. I believe meaningful change requires supporting individual athletes while equipping the coaches, parents, and organizations around them to create healthier sport environments.

I am running for Member-at-Large because I believe deeply in the mission of ASWIS and in the opportunity to strengthen sport social work as both a profession and a movement. If elected, I would be committed to advancing several priorities:

- **Expanding pathways into sport social work.** Strengthen connections between universities, field education programs, athletic departments, clubs, and sport organizations to create meaningful field placements, employment opportunities, and career pathways for social workers.
- **Supporting education and professional development.** Help expand accessible, practical learning opportunities that equip social workers to apply their skills across youth, collegiate, and professional sport settings.
- **Bridging research and practice.** Promote collaboration among educators, clinicians, researchers, coaches, and sport organizations so that evidence-informed approaches translate into meaningful changes in athletes' everyday experiences.
- **Strengthening prevention and early intervention.** Support efforts to equip coaches, parents, and sport organizations with the tools to recognize concerns early, respond effectively, and foster environments where asking for help is viewed as a strength.

I would also bring a perspective grounded in the realities of working across multiple systems: higher education, clinical practice, youth sport, and collegiate athletics. These experiences have shown me that meaningful culture change requires more than good intentions. It requires collaboration, accessible education, sustainable opportunities for social workers, and a willingness to challenge the norms that have historically placed performance above well-being.

I would be honored to serve ASWIS as Member-at-Large, contributing my experience, energy, and commitment to a growing profession with the potential to transform sport from the inside out. I look forward to collaborating with fellow members to expand opportunities for sport social workers and build a future in which every athlete has the opportunity to feel supported and equipped to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.