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Former CPS School Social Worker Recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award

Chicago, IL— Every day the nation's 650,000 social workers act as advocates, champions, and leaders who make our society a better place to live. In continuation of this year's National Professional Social Work Month theme, "Social Workers: Leaders. Advocates. Champions," the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals 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 Statewide Lifetime Achievement Awardee Patricia Rivera. **Patricia Rivera** (*MSW, University of Illinois at Chicago; LCSW, ACSW*) is pro bono executive director for Chicago HOPES for Kids, a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that provides academic support and literacy mentoring for children living in Chicago's homeless shelters. She retired in 2010 after 33 years as a school social worker for Chicago Public Schools (CPS), with the last seven years as administrator for the CPS Homeless Education Program. After she retired and CPS cut the funding for the shelter-based tutoring program, she and a group of dedicated volunteers founded Chicago HOPES for Kids. She has been executive director for HOPES since that time and has increased HOPES' reach from two to ten shelter sites.

In support of the nomination of Patricia, colleagues at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless wrote: "[Pat] embodies innovation and creativity while dedicating her work to bettering the educational outcomes for children and teens who experience homelessness." Another individual, Patrick Carroll, who serves Chicago Hopes for Kids Board Chair, wrote: "I emphatically recommend Patricia...as she is a true leader, advocate and catalyst for social change by providing equitable education opportunities for children experiencing homelessness. Patricia is the most selfless person I've ever encountered and deserves this award because she has spent her entire career in public service working to improve the lives of children. Her perseverance to educate and empower disadvantaged children continued into her retirement when she founded the nonprofit organization Chicago HOPES for Kids shortly after Chicago Public Schools shuttered their Homeless Education Program. Under her leadership and financial support this invaluable educational programming for our City's most vulnerable children has continued and thrived."

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Patricia Rivera and others like her who fight every day for the underserved and underprivileged in Illinois. Patricia is one of four individuals being honored this year. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website (www.naswil.org) or contact Joel L. Rubin, executive director, at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with over 120,000 members. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association's largest chapters with over 5,500 members in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession.