

Training Professionals to Address Socio-Behavioral Needs: Challenges and Opportunities in Social Work Education

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Social Work

- Promote human and community well-being
- Service providers, advocates, trainers, researchers, policy-makers
- Largest provider of mental health services in the U.S.
- Work is inherently collaborative, team-based, inter-professional

Social Work Education

- Designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge to promote human and community well-being
- Competency-based
- Signature Pedagogy – Field Education

Field Education

- Designated the “signature pedagogy” of social work education in 2008
- Relies heavily on community partnerships
- Required field placement hours
- Supervision by a social worker

Community Partners

- Collaboration is vital
- Field Directors
- Community Advisory Boards
- Faculty
- Shift in community relationships

Field Education Challenges

- Imbalance between needs and resources
- Increasing needs
- Diminishing resources
- Stakeholders have complex and competing interests
(Buck, Bradley, Robb & Kirzner, 2012)

Students

- High expectations for professional training programs
- High needs
- High Debt

Sites & Supervisors

- Dynamic of training sites has changed
- Changing nature of behavioral and mental health services
- Supervisors under increasing pressure

Clients & Patients

- Increasing healthcare needs
- Aging
- Increasing racial and ethnic diversity

Faculty & Administrators

- Tenure and promotion
- Field education increasingly managed by staff
- Administrators

Next Steps

- “Need Matching”
- Research and needs assessment to identify stakeholders perspectives
- Find common ground
- Acknowledge competing demands
- Identify opportunity in the challenge

Research

- National study of social work students
 - Online survey, n=768; qualitative interviews n=23
 - (Buck & Sowbel, 2016a)
- Report being able to meet the expected number of weekly hours only 50% of the time
- Only getting 33 minutes of supervision; most programs require 60-90 weekly

Implications

- Significant implications for workforce training
- Field Directors over estimate amount of supervision students are getting (Buck & Sowbel, 2016b)
- Indications that client needs are increasing at the same time that student training programs are experiencing significant challenges
- Risk that current training programs are less accessible to students with diverse socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds

Opportunities

- Students
 - Financial stress
 - Time stress
 - Services
- Supervisors
 - Partnership
 - Time
 - Incentives
- Sites
 - Partnership
 - External solutions
 - Rationale

New Landscape

- Training students in community-based settings requires new thinking – this is a new landscape
- Relationships with community partners is vital
- Professional organizations and institutions of higher education must take the lead
- Academic programs may need to absorb some of the training so time in the field can be maximized

Future Opportunities

- Increased funding
- Interprofessional collaborations among training programs
- Develop university-community clinics
 - UPenn's [United Community Clinic](#) in Philadelphia
- Establish post-degree training
 - [Yale Child Behavior Clinical Fellowships](#)
 - [Delaware Guidance](#) Advanced Clinical Training Program
 - Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

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