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 overestimate 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
References


