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SPECIAL SECTION: INNOVATIONS IN GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
THE CONSORTIUM FOR SOCIAL WORK TRAINING IN AGING: SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OF ADULT AND AGING SERVICES

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This article describes the Consortium for Social Work Training in Aging (CSWTA), a unique partnership among 3 schools of social work and 6 county departments of adult and aging services. Using an innovative collaborative training model that included structured rotations and curricular support, CSWTA contributed to increased student interest in aging, improved knowledge about aging and aging services, and enhanced training capacity of county departments of adult and aging services. This model represents a promising approach for increasing the number of professional social workers trained to provide effective service and leadership to the public sector in the field of aging.

RAPID INCREASES IN THE SIZE and diversity of the elderly population have prompted concern regarding the adequacy of existing social work resources for meeting the increasing needs of older persons. More than 15 years ago, it was estimated that at least 60,000 social workers were needed to provide aging services (National Institute on Aging, 1987), yet only about 5,000 of the National Association of Social Workers' 155,000 members cite aging as their primary field of practice (Rosen & Zlotnik, 2001). Moreover, only about 3% of MSW students specialize in aging or gerontology, and fewer than 2% of other MSW students take any courses whatsoever in aging during their graduate training (Damron-Rodriguez et al., 1997).

Consortium for Social Work Training in Aging

In an effort to increase the number of professional social workers trained to provide effective service in the field of aging, the Consortium for Social Work Training in Aging (CSWTA) was developed. The CSWTA training model had three goals:

1. Improve social work students' ability to practice effectively with elderly and disabled clients.
2. Increase students' knowledge and understanding of aging programs and services.
3. Increase the capacity of schools of social work and county departments of adult

services to train MSW students to work with older adults and their families.

The CSWTA was one of six implementation sites of the Geriatric Social Work Practicum Partnership Program (PPP), part of the John A. Hartford Foundation of New York's (JAHF) Geriatric Social Work Initiative, a national project to strengthen and advance social workers' practice with older adults by enhancing social work education's capacity to train aging-competent social workers (Council on Social Work Education, 2001). Although the specifics of each PPP vary, all share five essential elements: (1) university-community partnership—coalitions among university social work programs and community health and social service agencies designed to provide optimal gerontological field education for students; (2) competency-driven education for geriatric social work—field experiences aimed at facilitating students' attainment of competencies and skills for working effectively with older adults; (3) integrated field education—rotations through a variety of programs and agencies serving older adults, which vary in the services provided and the populations served; (4) expanded training staff roles—supervision of students, coordination of learning assignments among agencies, development of integrative seminars on policy and clinical practice, and consultation on curriculum development; and (5) focused recruitment of students to geriatric social work—outreach through brochures, posters, conferences, and websites promoting geriatric social work. Students accepted into the project are provided with incentives such as stipends, networking opportunities, subsidized conference attendance, and career counseling (Volland, Gartrell, & Lawrence, 2003).

The CSWTA is facilitated by the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley and includes San Francisco State University, San Jose State University and six county departments of aging and adult services (DAAS) in California (the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Sonoma). The CSWTA is the only PPP site focused exclusively on public aging services. This focus reflects the schools' common mission of improving public social services and preparing students to work effectively with the vulnerable elderly populations served by county aging service systems. It also reflects the importance of these services to California's increasingly diverse elderly population. Indeed, of any state, California is home to the largest population of people over 65 years of age of any state and also has the most diverse population of any state other than Hawaii.

Public-sector aging services comprise a unique array of programs and services for vulnerable elderly and disabled adults that are not available from other sources. These services are of increasing importance as a result of several significant trends: (1) federal and state devolution of services and programs to counties; (2) state initiatives that allow counties to integrate the funding and administrative structures of their long-term care systems; (3) expanded service mandates for county adult protective services; and (4) the development of county "public authorities" with responsibility for overseeing the delivery of state-funded in-home supportive services.

Despite the increasing importance of public aging services, there has been a gradual deprofessionalization of DAAS, which impairs counties' ability to provide effective services.

A 2001 survey of California's public aging services departments found substantial gaps in professional education and training among the state's aging services personnel (Scharlach, Simon, & Dal Santo, 2002). In adult protective services, where advanced assessment and intervention skills are needed, only 42% of the workers had an MSW; among other case-management programs, 36% of workers had an MSW. Fewer than 12% of workers in various other programs (e.g., mental health, information and referral, in-home support services) had an MSW. Hispanics, who make up 28% of the general population, were under-represented. Managers indicated that the primary barrier to hiring aging services personnel was a lack of qualified applicants. Heavy workloads and a lack of professionally educated social workers were impairing service quality, and the lack of MSW field supervisors meant that few graduate-level gerontology internships were available in county aging services. The CSWTA was designed to address these issues.

Development of CSWTA

In 1998, the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley invited field directors from San Francisco State and San Jose State Universities and DAAS directors from counties in the greater San Francisco Bay area to join a work group that later became the CSWTA. With grant support from JAHF, representatives of the three schools and the five counties met monthly for a year to develop the training model and the procedures needed to implement it. Among the procedures developed were a standard student application, guidelines for recruiting and selecting field instructors, detailed descriptions of field instructors' and

training coordinators' responsibilities, and coordinated field placement calendars and processes. Representatives continued to meet quarterly throughout the duration of the grant, developing and implementing program rotations, reviewing student applications each year, and setting stipend levels based on available resources. In addition to staff resources, one county also contributed more than $33,000 toward student stipends.

Student Recruitment and Selection

Each participating school conducted its own recruitment of potential applicants for the project, which typically included written descriptions of the internships, meetings with interested students and current participants, and, in one case, a placement fair. Stipends made possible by the grant ranged from $5,000 to $8,000 per year per student, depending upon the student's status, the number of students accepted into the project, and the particular budget for that year.

Training Activities

The training model incorporated two methods of familiarizing students with services and practice skills in working with older adults: (1) assignment to a Primary Program Area within one county DAAS, where they learned social work practice skills under the supervision of a field instructor; and (2) structured rotations through all other programs administered by that DAAS (Secondary Program Areas).

Students were assigned to one county department of adult and aging services for the entire academic year. Within that department, they were assigned to a field instructor in a Primary Program Area, such as adult protective services

or the public guardian's office. During the first several weeks of their internship, students received an in-depth orientation to program goals and objectives, organizational structure, staffing, clientele served and eligibility criteria, management information systems, recordkeeping and documentation requirements, and program budget and funding sources. In addition, students accompanied staff on home visits, observed client intake and assessment procedures, attended relevant staff meetings, conducted interviews with key staff in the Primary Program Area, and visited other agencies.

After students completed this orientation to their Primary Program Area, they began a series of structured rotations through the department's Secondary Program Areas, such as case management programs, in-home supportive services, or various Older Americans' Act programs. During the 1st year of the project, these rotations were clustered at the beginning of the training program. However, as a result of student feedback, the rotations in subsequent project years were scheduled intermittently throughout the semester, alternating with students' return to their Primary Program Areas for 2 or 3 weeks. Each program rotation included similar components as outlined above through both didactic sessions and hands-on activities. The length of the rotations varied depending on the complexity of the program area and the number of activities scheduled. In the 2nd semester, students began to undertake casework assignments in their Primary Program Areas to acquire in-depth practice skills.

Training Coordinators

Because the rotation component of the training model was very labor intensive to design and implement, each DAAS director appointed a training coordinator, a role that had not existed previously at any of the agencies. All training coordinators were supervisors, which afforded them access to other program heads within the hierarchical structures that characterize these organizations. Specific coordination activities included explaining the purpose and scope of the rotations to program staff; identifying program staff who would orient students and explaining what content should be included in the rotation; arranging for conference rooms and providing other logistical support; scheduling field visits for students; coordinating home visits with program staff; producing and distributing a master rotation calendar; and monitoring rotations. Estimates of time needed to perform these activities ranged from 40 to 60 hours per year, depending on the number and complexity of programs included in the rotation schedule.

Curricular Support

Early in the project, the consortium identified knowledge that all students needed to work effectively with elderly clients, especially in a complex public social service system. The existing curricula in the three participating schools did not cover this information and DAAS staff did not have the resources to provide didactic training. Consequently, project staff developed and implemented a seminar series for all students that consisted of five or six day-long trainings scheduled throughout the year. Topics included a comprehensive introduction to federal and state systems of aging services, an overview of the aging process, common health and mental health issues in working with older adults, competency determination

and informed consent issues, and cultural diversity and aging. A workshop was also held for students on careers in aging and job-hunting strategies, with particular emphasis on the civil service employment system.

Program Evaluation

The CSWTA training model was implemented in 2000 with 3 years of funding from JAHF. This study examines the effect of the CSWTA project during this period on the three cohorts of MSW students who received training, on the schools of social work that participated in the project, and on the six county DAAS.

Evaluation Methods

Students

Students' knowledge of aging was assessed with three measures administered at the beginning and end of their internship experience: (1) Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz (a 25-item multiple choice questionnaire, with one point given for every right answer and zero points for each wrong answer or "don't know" response) (Harris & Changas, 1994); (2) definitions of eight aging program acronyms, such as APS (Adult Protective Services) and HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program); and, (3) matching of eight aging program names with their descriptions.

Students' career interests were assessed with two questions administered at the beginning and end of their internship experience: (1) students' self-rated likelihood that they would take a job working with or on behalf of older adults upon completion of the MSW (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree); and (2) students' self-rated likelihood that they would take a job in public social services (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Students' motivation for participating in the program was assessed by asking them at the beginning of the internship to rate the importance (from 1=very unimportant to 5=very important) of a number of possible reasons (e.g., "to enhance my ability to improve the lives of elderly persons;" "to prepare for a job in the aging field;" "to increase future job possibilities in public social services;" "to receive a stipend").

Students' satisfaction with the training program was assessed using a brief written questionnaire administered at the end of the internship. This questionnaire asked students to rate (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements regarding possible effects of the training experience (e.g., "I feel more confident working with older adults," "I am more confident working with older adults," "I would recommend the training program to other students").

Students also participated in focus groups facilitated by project coordinators at the end of each academic year, where students were asked to provide feedback regarding the overall training program, including factors that contributed to their participation, particular components of the training program they found most rewarding, and specific recommendations for improvement.

Social Work Program Field Faculty

Field directors or cognizant field faculty from participating schools of social work completed a brief written questionnaire each year designed to gather the following information:

(1) number of students specializing in gerontology; (2) number of aging-related courses offered; (3) number of students enrolled in aging-related courses; and (4) other specific ways, if any, in which the training program had affected the MSW curriculum. Field directors or cognizant field faculty also participated in focus groups facilitated by project coordinators at the end of each academic year to gather information regarding their overall experiences with the training program, including curriculum effects, challenges faced, and recommendations for modifications in the training project. At the end of the 3-year project, the field directors also were asked to complete a brief written questionnaire regarding their program's intentions for continuing project activities (e.g., actively recruiting students for public sector aging internships, courses in aging, aging-specific scholarships, cross-program collaboration).

Departmental Training Coordinators

Departmental training coordinators completed a brief written questionnaire each year that assessed their overall satisfaction with participation in the consortium on a 4-point scale (1=not at all satisfied to 4=extremely satisfied), as well as the effect of the training program on their organization's programs and services, interest in and capacity for training staff and students, and interaction or involvement with other counties and their staff. Program managers and other cognizant departmental personnel also participated in focus groups facilitated by project coordinators at the end of each academic year to gather information regarding their overall experiences with the training program, including the effect of the program on the DAAS' ability to

provide effective services to their clients, challenges in implementing the training program, and recommendations for modifications. At the end of the 3-year project, the training coordinators also were asked to complete a brief written questionnaire regarding their department's intentions for continuing project activities (e.g., internships for social work students, rotations, training coordinators, stipends, employment assistance).

Results

Student Participation

A total of 37 students from the three participating MSW programs completed the consortium training program during the three-year grant period, compared with 9 students who had participated in aging-related public sector internships at any of the DAAS training sites for the 3-year period before the project began. Participating students included 25 women and 12 men, with a mean age of 35 years; there were 16 Caucasians, 11 Asians, 4 African Americans, 3 Hispanic/Latinos, 2 Filipinos, and 1 Native American.

The primary reasons given by students for participating in the CSWTA training program were to improve the lives of elderly persons (cited as "very important" by 87% of students), to prepare for a job in aging (70%), and future job possibilities in public social services (57%); only 20% indicated that receiving a stipend was a very important consideration. In focus group discussions regarding their reasons for applying for the training experience, students indicated the particular importance of personal contact with field faculty and agency staff, who explained the learning opportunities of the training model and actively encouraged stu-

dents to apply. Positive feedback from students currently in the project regarding their training experiences also was considered important, as were written evaluations from previous program participants.

Student Knowledge

Scores on Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz increased significantly (paired $t=6.43$, $p<.001$) during the training period, from a mean of 11.14 correct (out of 25 possible) at pretest to 14.14 correct at posttest. Students correctly defined an average of 3.25 of eight aging acronyms at pretest and 5.33 at posttest, a significant difference (paired $t=8.44$, $p<.001$). Students correctly matched an average of 4.56 of eight program names with their descriptions at pretest, compared with an average of 6.08 correct responses at posttest, also a significant difference (paired $t=3.48$, $p=.001$).

Student Attitudes

At pretest, 74% of students strongly agreed that it was very likely they would take a job working with or on behalf of older adults upon graduation, compared with 70% at posttest. At pretest, 39% strongly agreed that it was very likely that they would take a job in public social services upon graduation, compared with 35% at posttest.

Student Satisfaction

In evaluating their experiences in the training program, all of the students agreed that they felt more confident working with older adults (89% strongly agreed), that they felt more confident working as a part of an interdisciplinary team (65% strongly agreed), that their personal goals in learning to work

with older persons and their families were achieved (57% strongly agreed), and that they would recommend the training program to other students (96% strongly agreed). Examples of written comments included the following: "I am impressed with the level of training I received and the professionalism of everybody involved," and "I strongly believe that I am a better social worker because of the training and support I received from the consortium."

In focus groups at the end of the 1st project year, a number of students indicated that having all of the rotations at the beginning of the training program was somewhat confusing, as they had not yet had an opportunity to fully establish their roles and responsibilities within their primary program area. As a result of this feedback, in subsequent project years the rotations through Secondary Program Areas were scheduled intermittently throughout the semester, alternating with students' return to their Primary Program Areas for 2 or 3 weeks at a time.

Social Work Programs

The number of students specializing in gerontology increased from 32 students in 1999–2000 to 38 students in 2002–2003. During this same period, the number of aging-related courses offered by the three schools increased from seven to eight, while the number of students enrolled in these courses increased from 78 to 82. In their responses to annual surveys, field directors and cognizant field faculty from all three social work programs reported increased student interest in aging-related courses, field placements in aging, and careers in aging, as well as increased status for students studying gerontology. Respondents

from two of the three programs indicated that information concerning public aging programs and services had been added to their existing MSW curricula, including content on planning, supervision, and management skills in aging services. In addition, respondents from two of the programs indicated that participation in CSWTA had enhanced their schools' successful applications for CSWE's Geriatric Social Work Enrichment (GeroRich) project.

In terms of plans for continuation of project activities, all three field faculty indicated that they planned to continue actively recruiting students for public sector aging internships. Two of the respondents indicated that their programs intended to offer additional courses in aging, and one intended to maintain the current offerings. Two programs intended to continue offering aging-specific scholarships, and one program was uncertain. All three respondents intended to continue their collaboration with other schools of social work and DAAS.

Training Sites

Each of the six county training coordinators rated themselves as "extremely satisfied" with participation in the consortium. The training coordinators indicated that departmental programs and services had benefited through enhanced worker morale and commitment to quality work, which they attributed to their exposure to new research, practice methods, and perspectives on social work resulting from their participation in the consortium meetings and having students onsite. Training coordinators also identified improved continuum of care for departmental clients, which they attributed to better relationships with community-based agencies and programs resulting

from the process of creating training rotations for the students.

Each of the six training coordinators indicated that participation in the consortium had produced a new or renewed organizational emphasis on training students and hiring master's-level social workers. Four counties established an enhanced training program for new, as well as long-term, employees. In some cases, the rotation model developed by the CSWTA was adopted as a training device to orient new employees to county services for older adults. Respondents also indicated that participating in the CSWTA enriched the potential county workforce by increasing the number of social workers with special training in gerontology. A number of respondents reported that students who had participated in the training project demonstrated superior skills and knowledge in subsequent civil service job interviews as compared with other candidates.

Each of the county training coordinators also indicated that the opportunities for direct collaboration with peers in other DAAS and with MSW program faculty were especially valuable effects of the project. Participation in the project was described as fostering networking, problem solving, and the sharing of information between counties, which were seen as especially helpful by those members who were new to student training. Specific discussion items identified most often as beneficial included recruitment and support of field instructors, garnering the support and involvement of DAAS programs in working with students, the appropriate role of training coordinators, and screening and selection of students.

One challenge identified by all of the training coordinators was the difficulty implement-

ing and coordinating rotations across diverse program areas. Respondents indicated that strong and visible support from their DAAS director was critical to their success, making it much easier to garner cooperation from other program staff. Training coordinators indicated that their positions as supervisors proved essential for consultation and timely administrative authorization of project commitments from DAAS directors, while affording them access to other program heads within the hierarchical structures of these organizations.

Training coordinators from some counties indicated that labor contracts made it difficult to alter field instructors' caseloads and training coordinators' work assignments to accommodate the extra time necessitated by the project. Training coordinators also reported that some of their field instructors had difficulty identifying appropriate assignments for their graduate student interns. The field instructors, many of whom had never before supervised graduate students, were concerned that the rotations to Secondary Program Areas were interrupting the teaching process, limiting the types of cases to which students could be assigned, and delaying the overall progress of students' skill development.

In terms of their departments' plans for continuing the project activities, all six training coordinators indicated that their departments would continue to offer internships for social work students based on the CSWTA rotation model and coordinated by a dedicated training coordinator position, as well as assist students to obtain employment in aging services. However, none of the respondents believed that their departments would be able to provide student stipends once the grant period ended.

Discussion

Many valuable lessons were learned from the extensive feedback collected throughout the project from students, training coordinators, and academic partners. Some of the lessons are unique to public sector aging services, while others have implications for social work education in general.

Student Recruitment and Training

The project resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of students interested in aging-related public-sector internships, as well as a substantial increase in the number of students specializing in gerontology. This is important in light of the demonstrated need to increase the pool of social workers with training and expertise in aging services (Rosen & Zlotnik, 2001; Scharlach, Damon-Rodriguez, Robinson, & Feldman, 2000) to ensure effective services for older adults and to reprofessionalize public aging services (Scharlach et al., 2002).

While student stipends were helpful in attracting students' attention to the project and to aging in general, they apparently were seldom the primary incentive for students deciding to participate in the training experience. Rather, the opportunity to improve one's ability to help the elderly and improve job opportunities in aging were cited by students as the most important reasons for participating. The most effective recruitment methods proved to be personal contact with field faculty, agency staff, and previous interns to demystify the training experience and discuss its unique benefits. This was particularly important as a way to overcome negative stereotypes about public social services, which previously had been

a substantial obstacle to student selection of public-sector internships.

Knowledge and Attitudes

Students displayed an increased knowledge of aging and aging services on all measures. Initial scores on Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz, while similar to those of undergraduate sociology students at pretest (Harris & Changas, 1994), were comparable to aging services professionals following the training experience after adjusting for the multiple-choice format (Gibson, Choi, & Cook, 1993). That the knowledge gains were modest is not surprising given that the project was not primarily didactic. Indeed, similar small improvements in Facts on Aging scores have been observed in medical students undergoing specialized geriatric rotations (Duerson, Thomas, Chang, & Stevens, 1992).

Students' subjective assessment of the effects of the training on their competence in working with older adults was especially positive, and county personnel reported that students performed better than other candidates in subsequent civil service job interviews. However, these findings are limited by the absence of pretest information or objective data from a comparable group of non-participants. On the other hand, there was no increase in students' reported likelihood of taking jobs working with older adults or in public services upon graduation. Commitment levels were fairly high at the beginning of the training, perhaps reflecting students' selective interest in social work with older adults. Previous studies also have found little evidence that field work experiences with older adults produce improved attitudes or work preferences (Carmel, Cwickel, & Galinsky, 1992; Intrieri, Kelly, Brown, & Castilla, 1992). Indeed, exposure to disabled older adults—especially the physically and cognitively impaired elderly likely to be served by public aging programs, such as county case management and APS—sometimes can result in poorer attitudes toward the elderly (Adelman & Albert, 1987).

Organizational Training Capacity

Student interest in aging field placements and related knowledge gains also reflected the increased capacity of the three social work programs and the six county sites to support the training of gerontological social workers. The number of aging-related courses offered by the social work programs increased slightly, as did the number of students enrolled in those courses. This was accompanied by an increased attractiveness of gerontology as an area of student interest. Additional curriculum content regarding policy, planning, supervision, and management skills in aging services was developed by some academic programs in response to the realization that social workers with specialized training in aging advance rapidly from line staff to supervisory positions. The social work programs also provided additional curricular support for students placed in aging services settings, as well as specialized support for field instructors and other DAAS training staff. Increased recognition of the importance of gerontology in social work education also facilitated two programs' interest in curriculum transformation, resulting in successful applications for GeroRich projects.

As a result of their participation in this training project, county DAAS were able to increase substantially the number of internships available for social work students. Each

of the six training coordinators indicated that participation in the consortium had produced a new or renewed organizational emphasis on training students and hiring master's-level social workers. In some cases, the rotation model developed by the CSWTA was adopted as a training device to orient new employees to county services for older adults or enhance the training of existing staff.

Participation in the CSWTA also was perceived to have a positive effect on the programs and services offered by the six county DAAS. Increased worker morale and commitment to quality work were attributed to information sharing among departments, exposure to new practice models and perspectives, and stimulation of student trainees. Client services also benefited from an improved continuum of care and enhanced relationships with community-based agencies and programs.

These gains in organizational training capacity were supported through monthly, facilitated meetings of academic field faculty and county training coordinators. These meetings enabled participants to spend extensive time exploring training issues, exchanging information, planning, and problem solving with a peer group that did not naturally exist. This intensive collaboration between the departments and the schools also resulted in a better understanding of each setting's particular requirements and constraints and in better coordination and support for students, training coordinators, and field instructors. The potential benefits of interorganizational social work training consortia, and the difficulties maintaining them, are well documented (Clifford, Burke, Feery, & Knox, 2002; Netting, Hash, & Miller, 2002; Spitzer et al., 2001).

Challenges and Lessons

The overall training model proved to be highly successful from the perspective of the students, field faculty, and training coordinators. However, implementing the training model also involved a number of challenges. For example, as originally designed, the training model clustered all of the secondary program area rotations at the start of the training period. Extensive student feedback revealed that the rotations needed to be spread throughout the training period and that students needed to be anchored in a Primary Program Area for several weeks before beginning rotations in other program areas. This anchoring served several vital educational purposes: (1) to provide a "homebase" for settling into the agency during the 1st few weeks, which are always characterized by high anxiety and a steep learning curve; (2) to establish a solid working relationship with field instructors; and (3) to provide a context for understanding the other programs that students would be exposed to during the rotations. The importance of a Primary Program Area echoes the findings of Netting and colleagues (2002) regarding the limitations of a strictly rotational social work training model and the recommendations of Spitzer and colleagues (2001) regarding the benefits of a primary internship instructor who provides continuity and oversees the student's learning experience.

Curricular support for students also proved essential to ensure that participating students would have the knowledge necessary to work effectively with older adults and their families. Early in the project, the consortium identified several types of information that all students needed to practice effectively in DAAS set-

tings. Because students in some of the three participating schools did not have access to classes that covered these areas, project staff developed and implemented a seminar series for all students that incorporated the needed information.

The training model also created significant challenges for field instructors, most of whom had never before had a graduate-student intern. Rotations interrupted the flow of teaching and the development of relationships with clients and delayed the overall progress of students' skill development. Project staff helped field instructors identify the types of case assignments that students could accomplish between rotations, such as shadowing staff and co-working cases. In addition, students generally were not given crisis situations or other intensive cases, as they might not be available at critical times. Because of these modifications, the start of independent casework generally was delayed until the 2nd semester.

The training coordinators also required technical support and assistance. Because this was first time that any of the participating DAAS had implemented departmental training units, training coordinators were appointed specifically for this project and were generally new to student training. Consequently, training coordinators typically lacked clear organizational authority for their training roles and did not have training peers in their departments with whom to consult. To provide the technical support needed by the training coordinators, project staff facilitated individual consultation and problem solving, group discussions about their appropriate roles and responsibilities, and the provision of training materials. Project

staff also met directly with DAAS directors at the beginning of the project to gain their commitment and support. It was the direct authority granted by their departmental directors that allowed the training coordinators to commit substantial time and effort to the project, ask social work staff to take on new student training responsibilities, and represent their departments at monthly and quarterly consortium meetings throughout the grant period. Time guidelines for field instructors and training coordinators developed by the consortium proved to be useful tools for helping field instructors renegotiate caseloads and work assignments with DAAS program administrators and supervisors, especially in light of labor contracts that limited worker and supervisor flexibility outside of formal union negotiations.

A final consideration was the need for advocacy within the county welfare agencies for advancing a training agenda in DAAS. Aging programs typically were overshadowed by child welfare services, general assistance, and welfare-to-work programs, which comprised a much larger part of county welfare agency budgets. Consequently, DAAS struggled to compete for attention and resources, including those needed to implement training units. For example, training coordinators and student stipends were new to these DAAS but had been available for many years in child welfare departments. Early, direct contact with county welfare directors by project staff helped to showcase aging programs and advocate for additional training within DAAS. The involvement of academic partners, furthermore, provided important credibility for the project and helped to raise awareness regarding the

needs of an increasing population of senior citizens in the counties. One outcome has been the active involvement of the county welfare directors in a subsequent statewide initiative sponsored by the California Social Work Education Center to promote gerontological social work education.

Conclusion

The training model described here represents an innovative collaboration among schools of social work and county DAAS. Although generalization of the findings is limited somewhat by reliance on self-reports, subjective data, and the absence of adequate comparison groups, this collaborative model appears to have produced constructive gains in student knowledge about aging services while substantially enhancing the capacity of participating MSW programs and DAAS to train future leaders in the field of gerontological social work. The DAAS created new training infrastructures, including the appointment of training coordinators and the recruitment of field instructors, and reportedly improved their ability to serve effectively their elderly clients. Academic programs enhanced their ability to recruit and prepare students for social work practice with the elderly. Students improved their knowledge of aging services and their perceived ability to provide competent services and leadership on behalf of older adults, while at the same time giving counties a pool of qualified geriatric social workers to employ. Future efforts should address the possible generalizability of the CSWTA model to other communities committed to enhancing gerontological social work education.

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