The Affordable Care Act and Social Work Practice

By Keli Peterson

The Affordable Care Act, popularly known as “Obamacare” has recently received a lot of media attention due to the rollout of new health care plans and a new health care enrollment system on October 1, 2013. However, little is publicly known about the details of the program. Prior to delving into how social work practice will be affected by the Affordable Care Act, it is important to discuss what exactly the Affordable Care Act entails and what will be changed by the program’s implementation.

The Affordable Care Act affects individuals who currently have insurance as well as individuals who are currently uninsured. The Affordable Care Act will ensure that insurance company competition will be stimulated within the health care market. For those who already have insurance, this means that insurance rates may drop as the insurance companies make an effort to keep individuals as clients. Services covered by insurance will also increase. Minimally, insurance companies are now required to provide coverage for pre-existing conditions, ambulatory services, emergency services, hospitalization, maternity and newborn care, mental health and substance use disorder services, prescription drugs, rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices, laboratory services, preventative and wellness services, chronic disease management and pediatric services. These services are considered “essential health benefits” or EHB.

For those who do not currently have insurance, there are a few options they can choose from. These individuals and families can choose to purchase health insurance on the health care exchanges, which are sites that connect individuals and families to insurance options in their area. They can also explore their eligibility for insurance under Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Finally, these individuals can also choose not to purchase health insurance and pay a fee beginning in 2014. Specifically for those exploring Medicaid, this may be an option for individuals who did not qualify for insurance in the past because Medicaid coverage will expand to cover many who are currently uninsured. However, some specifics of Medicaid eligibility are determined by each state; therefore, it is important to look at state qualifications when considering Medicaid eligibility. Also, individuals and families who believe they may qualify for coverage under Medicaid can apply on the health insurance exchanges and be notified through this process if they are likely to qualify. Michigan specifically will expand its Medicaid program to cover those with incomes at 133% of the federal poverty level or below.

Little is known about how the Affordable Care Act will affect the social work profession. On a surface level, social workers may need to help clients navigate the new health care enrollment system, help raise their awareness about their

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From the Director’s Desk

By Elizabeth (Betsy) Voshel, Director of Field Instruction & Associate Clinical Professor

Phil Collins, one of my favorite musicians, said, “In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn.” As our graduate social work program continues its journey towards refining integrative learning as a teaching method, Phil’s inspiration hit home. It reminded me of the role field instruction plays not only for our students but for our field instructors as well. Learning is a cycle of events and each cycle has its own beginning, middle, and end stage upon completion, and then cycles onward to the next learning event. While students are typically the recipients of a teacher’s knowledge, wisdom, and experience, the field instructor as teacher has an equal opportunity to learn as much from the student’s experiences. I particularly see this as the case in social work due to the fact that it is difficult to separate, as well as to define, the role that ‘self’ plays in our work. In Donald Schon’s 1983 seminal work, The Reflective Practitioner, he proposed his idea of a reflective practice paradigm with the goal of capturing those aspects of professional practice that go beyond knowledge and known principles. He posits that “knowing-in-action” or tacit knowledge is a powerful element that provides budding and experienced practitioners alike, the ability to hone their professional skill set through the key practice of reflection (Marion, 2010, p.41).

One of the Office of Field Instruction’s learning paradigms focuses on “What? (What did you learn?), “So What? (Why was what you learned important?), and “Now What? (What are you going to do with what you learned?). We are training students to use this reflective technique in our Foundation Field Seminar as well as focusing on how to use this as a teaching tool in our field instructor training. I think this simple reflective instrument can be used in almost any arena from changing a tire to graduate education! Taking apart what was learned and focusing on how to build a vocabulary of wisdom is how tacit knowledge is generated.

In field instruction, I think we have taken this one step further by introducing the Key Learning Experience Summary requirement. This summary is completed by the student at the end of each term and focuses initially on a specific experience the student has had during the term and then culminates at the end of placement in an all-encompassing look back at the placement experience. Obviously, students and field instructors should be discussing these learning experiences throughout the field placement. We encourage more in-depth discussions in supervision sessions that assist the student in identifying their field-based assignments that can be turned into Key Learning Experience Summaries. For reference, the template for the Key Learning Experience Summary can be found here: https://ssw.umich.edu/sites/default/files/documents/field-instruction-key-learning-experience-worksheet-summary-assignment.pdf.

We have found that when students capture their learning using this method, they are able to take apart their learning and to effortlessly uncover their tacit knowledge to articulate the impact the experience had on them and those involved. Finally, identifying the lessons learned in each of these experiences has proved to be a powerful process that encourages the student to recognize the value of reflective practice. I think the Phil Collins quote provides a way to tie all of this together because it helps us appreciate the important role that reflection plays in our work--not only for the student in the equation but also for the teacher/mentor who moves through this process in tandem with the student throughout the field placement experience.

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Our sincerest thanks to the School of Social Work students, faculty, staff, and field instructors whose contributions made this newsletter possible.

OFI Welcomes New Project Coordinator: Emma Rector

Emma officially began her position at the start of the Fall semester. Her job entails helping to coordinate the working relationships between organizations that participate in field instruction and the School of Social Work. She is very excited to be joining the OFI team! She previously worked at the Department of Community Health for the Women, Infants and Children Program as a Vendor Module Analyst. Emma graduated from James Madison College at Michigan State University with degrees in Social Relations & Policy and Comparative Cultures & Politics, with a special focus on health and disability. Outside of work Emma loves cooking, canning, crafting and hanging out with her husband and 1 year old daughter. Emma is a Spartan fan. Deal with it.
Twice a semester U-M SSW interns placed at the University of Michigan Health System, as well as social work professionals in the community, attend the Social Justice Grand Rounds. This particular educational presentation is unique because it is conducted by a social work intern. The presenting student puts together a panel of experts such as field instructors, nurses, doctors, surgeons and professors from the University and medical center, who provide input following the presentation on a particular social justice issue faced by the intern in his or her field placement.

Daniel Fischer, Director of the Child & Family Department at CS Mott Children’s Hospital and graduate student social work education coordinator in the Department of Social Work at the University of Michigan Hospital, explained that “the school looked at the relationship between the University and various field agencies. Through collaboration talking about the gaps in these relationships, UMHS got the idea for the Social Justice Grand Rounds.” The purpose of the presentation is to provide students with the opportunity to present real cases that deal with social justice issues and social work ethics. The panel helps promote clinical discussion and gives students an opportunity to hear the opinions of a multi-disciplinary team. With professor involvement, members of the university’s community are drawn into attendance as students display their connection between ethical ideas and the case work it applies to in the social work field. To become involved in this program, UMHS interns are invited to apply during their third semester of field. Fischer explained that students write up their clinical case and clearly identify the social issues involved in their proposal. Out of these proposal’s, two students are chosen to present and build their expert panel. The educational committee that makes this decision looks to have new topics for each presentation, often looking for a medical health case and a mental health case each semester; though this is not a stern necessity.

“It is a lot of work for the student but I have never heard a student regret participation in Grand Rounds.” Fischer explains, “It gives students the opportunity to discuss issues, bring University and hospital staff together to discuss social justice issues...and the CE credits encourage faculty to come and it helps keep Social Justice in the forefront of the Social Work Department and training program.”

In the past, Grand Rounds have covered a wide array of topics. One presentation Fischer cited involved a liver transplant where the patient was a physician who did not meet transplant criteria. In the situation the student noticed that the team advocated for this patient differently because of the patient’s status as a physician. Another presentation evaluated the many issues associated with access to psychological care and family supports of different patients. This past September, the presentation explored working with the transgender population and provided students with a thorough education on this population as well as identified the many social justice issues that arise when advocating and working with this population.

“It is a lot of work for the student but I have never heard a student regret participation in Grand Rounds”

Dan Fischer, LMSW

As this program continues to grow, social justice will gain more attention and social work students will therefore be better prepared to identify and respond when these issues arise in the field. When the opportunity presents itself to attend a Social Justice Grand Round at the University of Michigan Health System, take it!
Mistakes Lead to Learning

By Michael Lynch

There are many different theories regarding how people learn. Some people can watch a Youtube video about a subject and become instantly fluent in the subject matter. People may read a book or two about a particular subject to learn the material, while others may learn by using more of a hands-on approach by physically doing the skills they are striving to learn. People tend to lean towards one type of learning style, but this does not mean that people do not also use the other types of learning styles. Everyone usually experiences the full cycle of learning before they fully master a skill. The School of Social work is very in-tune with this idea. Classroom theory and practical experience can both stand on their own as independently valuable, but brought together the combination is like peanut-butter and jelly, Paul McCartney and John Lennon, fall weather and sweaters, or any mixture that goes together well. The Office of Field Instruction has created a module about learning styles, called Field Instruction 101 Chapter 2: Logistics of Learning. Click on the link to learn more about learning styles and how it can affect people’s field experience, as well as their professional work experience https://ssw.umich.edu/my-ssw/field-instruction-forms.

For students who are currently in field work, they not only have to learn what they are doing in the classroom and articulate the information there, but they must also take what they learn to their
DSM-IV Versus DSM-V:

By Hilary Russel

The widespread presence of mental illnesses necessitated a method of understanding, diagnosing and treating clients presenting with distressing symptoms. In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) published the first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-I). The goal of the DSM-I and each subsequent edition was to facilitate the reliable and practical diagnosing of disorders by providing the best available descriptions of the expression of mental illnesses. As studies of mental disorders increased, so did the understanding of these disorders. As a result, newer editions of the DSM were published that reflected these findings. On May 18, 2013, the APA released the fifth edition of the DSM. Mental health care providers across the country quickly realized that many diagnoses were affected by changes made in the DSM-V. It is imperative to fully understand how these changes will affect agencies, especially agencies that students are involved in through their field placements.

While it is important to understand all modifications made in the DSM-V, understanding those made to autism is extremely important. In recent years, awareness of autism has increased among the general population and clinicians, through the increase in media stories about autism and recent insurance changes that address the coverage of autism. With 1% of the worldwide population diagnosed with autism, it has also become a common diagnosis among clients across many fields. According to the DSM-V, individuals with a previous diagnosis of autistic disorder, asperger’s disorder or pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) should now be given the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). According to the APA, significant differences in prevalence rates are not expected with this new change. This reassignment is important to recognize, as it may have implications for treatment and overall understanding of this disorder.

In the DSM-IV, autistic disorder was considered a pervasive developmental disorder. However, in the DSM-V, ASD is considered a neurodevelopmental disorder combining the DSM-IV diagnoses of autistic disorder, Asperger’s disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder and PDD-NOS. This change is based on the DSM-IV being criticized for inconsistently diagnosing autistic disorder and the associated disorders across treatment facilities. Professionals sought significant changes in the DSM-V that included a more accurate, medically and scientifically useful method of diagnosing that better reflects the current state of knowledge about autism. For instance, clinicians disliked the term “pervasive developmental disorder,” arguing that symptoms are not pervasive.

Symptoms are confined to social communication and repetitive behaviors and fixed interests.

The understanding of autism is constantly evolving. At this time, it is understood to be a behavioral disorder with multiple etiologies, including genetic and environmental factors. In general, individuals with autism experience some level of impairment in social interaction, repetitive behaviors and restricted interests. Autism is considered a lifelong disorder. As with most lifelong disorders, early diagnosis is crucial for positive outcomes. Individuals with autism display a wide range and severity of symptoms. While many individuals require some level of support, specific interventions and assistance needed vary by person and age. To assist clinicians in understanding differences in severity associated with autism, the DSM-V provides three levels of severity. The lowest level of severity is level one, which applies to those “requiring support.” An individual at this level has difficulty initiating social interactions and displays unusual or unsuccessful responses to social advances of others. In general, an individual at level one may have a decreased interest in social interactions. Additionally, an individual would face difficulties in multiple contexts related to inflexibility of behaviors, such as having difficulty switching between activities. Level two applies to clients “requiring substantial support.” At this level, an individual would have deficits in both verbal and nonverbal social commu-
An In-Depth Look at Autism Spectrum Disorder

disorder. SCD affects individuals with significant deficits in the use of social language but without the presence of restricted interests or repetitive behaviors. Using the DSM-IV, an individual with these symptoms would receive the diagnosis of PDD-NOS. The SCD diagnosis should only apply to newly diagnosed individuals. Services provided to individuals with SCD will closely resemble those provided to individuals with an ASD diagnosis because symptoms of SCD resemble those of ASD, but it is important to remember that they do not have the same symptoms.

The understanding of autism is constantly evolving.

The APA believes the transition from the DSM-IV to the DSM-V will be completed within all agencies by January 1, 2014. This includes the update of forms, data systems and the training of agencies and clinicians. For many clinicians, the changes made to the DSM-V are welcomed. The new definitions allow clinicians to understand the client’s specific symptoms related to this disorder on a continuum of mild to severe, which assists in offering a more personalized treatment approach. While individualized services may change, the diagnosis of ASD should not change. Clients with Asperger’s disorder or PDD-NOS keep this diagnosis, although the name of the diagnosis will change to ASD. This change should not require re-evaluation or reconsideration without clinical or legal reason. Revisions are intended to better capture all clients with ASD, not to exclude or reduce diagnoses. The spectrum system may have implications on clients’ ability to receive services. While the DSM-V states that the level selection should not be used to determine a client’s eligibility of services, it is possible that this would be used. However, the single diagnosis of ASD may also improve access to services because those with a PDD-NOS or Asperger’s disorder diagnosis did not qualify for services in fourteen states. Additionally, no disruption in insurance coverage for ASD is expected.

Students enrolled in field placements during the 2013-2014 year face a unique, and potentially challenging, opportunity. Students will collectively have the chance to witness and engage in agencies transitioning from the DSM-IV to the DSM-V. Each agency will be impacted by these changes differently and will present learning opportunities for students. These changes will impact the majority of agencies in numerous fields. Students have a personal responsibility to learn about the changes made to ASD, as well as the numerous other diagnoses impacted by these modifications. Their understanding of these changes will allow them to provide services informed by current research and help them further understand to their present and future clients.

For more information regarding changes in the DSM-V, please visit http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/changes%20from%20dsms-iv-tr%20to%20dsms-5.pdf.
Every experienced social worker began as an inexperienced younger person.

According to The US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2012, there were approximately 55 million workers in the workforce. Young professionals accounted for about 30% of these workers. While this is an encouraging number for prospective young professionals who are eager to get their foot in the door, many young people find themselves struggling with how to transition from student to professional when they still view themselves, and they sense that others do too, as ‘young.’ New MSWs, younger or older, also face the same issue. Many worry whether they will be taken seriously by clients if they are perceived to be “too young” or “too inexperienced.”

Recent University of Michigan School of Social Work MSW graduate, Luke Gogliotti, landed a job shortly after graduation, although it is not in the area of Social Work he studied at the U-M SSW. Gogliotti explained, “It’s tough to get started. Most places don’t want to hire someone with a limited license. It’s especially hard for macro students because there aren’t nearly as many entry level positions available. Most first jobs aren’t permanent and they’re mainly about gaining experience. My job has very little to do with what I studied in school.” With a concentration in health management, Gogliotti is currently providing therapy to people with mental illness at an adult day program.

This is not always the case for all new, young MSWs entering the job market, but it is a common story for a number of reasons. As Gogliotti pointed out, for macro students there are not a lot of entry level jobs available. For both macro and micro social work employers, they are looking to hire someone with a few years of experience. It is also hard for new MSW’s because these positions usually prefer fully licensed individuals over limited licensed applicants.

Another obstacle social workers can encounter is in the work itself. U-M SSW student, Amy Tournoux shares, “Although my experience has been positive for the most part, I have noticed that clients do not view me as their social worker because I am a lot younger. Some have told me that I do not have enough ‘life experience’ to be able to help them.”

This dilemma plagues many new social workers as they are beginning their career. Proof that being a new MSW will not stunt someone’s career is all around the University of Michigan School of Social Work community. Every experienced social worker began as an inexperienced younger person. A great way to handle this issue when it shows up in both field and as a new MSW, is to talk with the other established social workers who work there. They can provide support and advice on how to impress during interviews and how to engage and connect with clients. Simple advice such as dressing professionally, using proper language instead of slang, and doing other somewhat superficial things to present yourself in a professional light are also helpful. Most importantly, be brave! Dive into opportunities confidently utilizing your youth to your advantage whenever possible.

By Jordan Cusumano

Many Thanks to our Peer Facilitators!

Thank you to our student Peers for their valuable contributions as co-facilitators to the SW 531 Foundation Field Seminars Fall 2013 term.

eligibility for Medicaid under the recent expansion and generally advocate for the health care needs of their clients. An article released by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) states that "social workers should be aware of the essential health benefit (EHB) development process in their states, to ensure that their state EHB plan addresses the needs of people with chronic disease, disabilities, and other complex health issues, including individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, and that access to social work services is maintained and strengthened" (Collins, 2012).

Additional research reveals that the implementation of the Affordable Care Act will increase job opportunities for social workers as a whole and enhance the profession, as part of the Affordable Care Act includes provisions of the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young Social Work Reinvestment Act (Malamud, 2010). These provisions include the authorization of extensive funding to develop the social work workforce, including $8 million in grant funding for institutions that train social workers; four of these grants specifically will go to historically black colleges or minority-serving institutions as stipulated by the law. Additional funding has also been authorized for geriatric education centers, and the law expands geriatric career awards available for clinical social workers and psychologists. It further authorizes grants to educational institutions "for the development, expansion or enhancement of training programs in social work... in child and adolescent mental health and pre-service." (Malamud, 2010) Within the law, competitive grants will also be offered to encourage the development of the health care workforce, including enabling state partnerships and completing comprehensive planning to enhance the health care workforce – of which social workers are considered a part.

Overall, the law will enhance both funding and training within the profession of social work as well as educational opportunities for those entering the profession. The law even establishes a national commission to assess the needs of the health care workforce. Lastly, the law includes provisions regarding loan repayment for social workers and other health professionals. This includes an $80 million loan repayment program for those working with medically underserved populations, the implementation of mandatory funding for federal Pell Grants, and an amendment of the Income-Based Repayment program. This amendment lowers the percentage of loan payments that are permitted to be out of adjusted income to 10% from 15% and forgive remaining loan balances after 20 years of making payments instead of the previous provision of 25 years (Malamud, 2010).

In addition to the measures that are embedded in the language of the Affordable Care Act, there will be extensive impact on the field of social work in addition to the above stated provisions. For example, the Affordable Care Act will likely have an impact on billing procedures for social workers. Billing will affect both school social workers as well as clinical social workers. For school social workers, more students may now be eligible for Medicaid, which will increase their ability to bill for more students. This could provide a small increase in school funding. For clinical social workers, the approved providers will increase which will also allow for more billing opportunities.

Specific implications for social work practice will be further understood as the new health care companies enter the market, beginning in January of 2014. At this time, social workers must make an effort to educate clients, connect them with resources and become aware about vulnerable populations that may be disadvantaged by how insurance companies choose to implement the EHB. As students in field placements, each student must be aware of how the Affordable Care Act may affect their practice through billing, advocacy, education and other aspects of practice.
Field Instructor Spotlight: Shoshana Hurand
Social Work and Art
By Michael Lynch

Shoshana Hurand, LMSW, is a field instructor for Community Organization students placed at the Arts Alliance and Artrain. Shoshana has the remarkable ability to transfer ideas from project to project, a skill that all MSW candidates should develop. As an undergraduate student, Shoshana experienced Project Community’s peer facilitated model for service-learning classes. Once in the MSW program, Shoshana initiated research in collaboration with Elizabeth Voshel, Director of the Field Instruction Program, which led to the switch from lecture hall style foundation seminars to the intimate peer-facilitated model used today. While earning her MSW degree, Shoshana became involved in a number of arts-related community projects, including organizing and creating Ann Arbor’s first FestiFool event. The event has since then been held annually for seven years and is known for its unique public art displays. She was also a producer on the feature film “Bilal’s Stand” which concentrates on social mobility through the lens of a Muslim high school student living in Detroit. Through these projects, she felt that producing films and working in community organizing was “the same thing!”

After receiving her MSW in 2007, Shoshana began her post-masters professional career at the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning as an Associate Director for Project Community, which is one of the country’s first service learning programs. After three and a half years at the Ginsberg Center, Shoshana became an independent contractor for a variety of art-based nonprofit programs and films in the Ann Arbor area. This ultimately led to her current dual position as Program Director of both the Arts Alliance and Artrain. The two organizations are run separately and while they complement each other, the mission of Arts Alliance and Artrain are not the same. The Arts Alliance mission is to advocate and support the creative sector in Washtenaw County, such as arts and cultural organizations and creative individuals and businesses, to ensure that the region remains a great place to live, work, learn, play and visit. Artrain “utilizes the power of arts and culture to transform lives, organizations, and communities” on a national scale. In summary, the Arts Alliance is the advocacy and service organization while Artrain creates programming.

Student Spotlight: Rachael Wiener
A Story About Connection
By Michael Lynch

Rachael is a 20-month student concentrating in the Management of Human Services within Community and Social Systems and an Interpersonal Practice minor. The theme of ‘connecting’ seems to be a recurrent theme in Rachael’s activities as a MSW candidate. She is currently a student advisory board member of the interdisciplinary Nonprofit and Public Management (NPM) Center, a work-study liaison between the Community Action and Social Change (CASC) undergraduate program and works at the Office of Student Services (OSS). She humbly attributes some of her graduate school occupations to ‘timing’ and ‘chance’, her enthusiasm and passion for social work is almost tangible. Within each program, her goal has been to connect college students with potential employers or connect undergraduate CASC students to supportive programming. In all of Rachael’s work, it is evident that she does not blindly create programs that adhere to her personal agenda; she instead tailors each event to the specific needs of the population. To accomplish this, she utilizes interpersonal skills in the context of interviews. In her own words, Rachael believes, “You can’t be a good manager unless...”

Shoshana Hurand
As a field instructor, Shoshana emphasizes the importance of reflection in any learning experience. This reflection piece involves critically analyzing and being able to articulate what was learned. As a social worker, Shoshana has taken time to reflect on how her work is empowering within the context of social work. Shoshana described her work beautifully and succinctly quoting these lines from a James Oppenheim poem “Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew -- Yes, it is bread we fight for -- but we fight for Roses, too.” 

Rachael Wiener
What a Beautiful Transformation
By Joanna Krasnisky

~To a young mind, distorted by violence and the need to survive~

We met and you challenged me
I brought love, and you resisted me
I brought empathy, and you questioned me
I brought nurturance, and you hated it
I brought more love, and you threatened me
I brought more nurturance, and you tried to understand why
I brought empathy, and you felt it
I brought love, and you understood it
I unconditionally accepted you,
Every time, as you were
You pushed me away,
... I came back

I saw your pain, your struggle to make sense of the world
I entered your world, at the pace you allowed
I was there, and I saw you

And for that, you are able to heal and learn how to become whole again.

~May you go forward and continue to grow in self-nurturance, accept the love from others, and feel inner peace throughout your life~

A Story About Connection (continued)

you understand what is going on at every level.”

In her field work, Rachael refers to herself as a “do-er”. When asked how she operates in her role as an intern, a role that is often loosely defined, she responded by stating, “Give me a task, and I’ll do it.” Now in her second year, Rachael has already completed field work at Royal Oak Community Coalition, a relatively small substance abuse prevention agency, and is now an intern under President Larry Voight at Catholic Social Services. During her field placement at Royal Oak Community Coalition, Rachael took a lead role in creating an inaugural community health and wellness expo and wrote grants for the agency. Continuing her work as a ‘connector’, Rachael will be creating events centered on employee engagement within Catholic Social Services.

As an undergraduate student, Rachael was the Director of Leadership and Youth Development Grand Rapids, her hometown, for three years. As the Director of Leadership and Youth Development, she coordinated and ran summer programming for high-school students primarily aimed toward breaking down social barriers and connecting dissimilar teens to each other. Rachael is an astute and considerate listener. She takes every opportunity given to her, such as taking classes outside of the school of social work including classes in business, higher-education and special studies. She wants to know the goals and intentions of people, but also takes the time to listen to each individual story. In her free time, she constructs vibrant canvas paintings and has also taken up running. ♦
Brandon Alford is an advanced standing student with a concentration in Social Policy and Evaluation and an Interpersonal Minor. His practice area is in Community and Social Systems. Through his field placement, his work study position and his independent study opportunity, Brandon is doing amazing things during his time at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Brandon’s path to become a Michigan Wolverine is unique, inspiring and impressive. Sprinkled with hardships, confusion and meant-to-be moments, Brandon has overcome many obstacles and is determined to use his education and experience to help shape the social work profession and positively impact the lives he touches.

Brandon received his BSW at the University of Arkansas in May 2012 at the age of 26. After receiving his BSW, he applied to the University of Michigan School of Social Work but believed it would be a “shot in the dark.” He explained, “I applied to other places and The University of Michigan was my ‘reach for the stars’ choice. With great support from my professors, I was accepted and began to really consider the reality of attending U of M.”

Brandon’s acceptance into the U-M-SSW was a huge feat, especially considering the obstacles he faced in his early 20’s. Brandon shares, “I was actually outted by my parents. They shut me out and I had no other support systems intact. I couch surfed for a while and drank a lot.”

During this period he shared that he struggled with alcohol addiction and felt lost until he found some support in a close friend. Around the time he had a falling out with his parents after he came out, Brandon became involved in the National Guard. Brandon explained that “the National Guard was really wonderful and flexible. I was able to serve one weekend per month and have a day job as well.” Throughout this time, Brandon ran restaurants and had other various jobs, but his big moment was when he was accepted for a position in the mental health department at a therapeutic day treatment center for preschool children. As fate would have it, he found out that his aunt was the Executive Director of the agency. Through his aunt’s guidance and his experience at the treatment center, he realized that social work was something he was passionate about as a career.

Brandon’s career goal is to contribute to research on the LGBTQ population, particularly in the military during a post ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ environment. Once he graduates, he intends to re-enter the armed forces as a practitioner working with this population.

Brandon’s field placement is at the Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group (CCPEG) evaluating the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion. For his IP minor Brandon spends time with the Photovoice project working with youth at Western International High School in Detroit. These opportunities give Brandon experience both in program evaluation and the macro setting of social work as well as the micro environment working with high school students in Detroit. As Brandon listed off the many things he is doing as a student this year, he explained, “I need to get as much out of this as I can!”

Brandon has overcome many obstacles and is determined to use his education and experience to help shape the social work profession and positively impact the lives he touches.

As a work-study, Brandon is involved with the Detroit Initiative working as a course liaison for undergraduate students at their field placements. Brandon also contributes to an undergraduate course as the Social Worker contact. Additionally, Brandon is evaluating a program called FATE, which rewards college-bound high school students with a $5,000 scholarship toward their higher education after they complete the program. Finally, Brandon is also working on a literature review with Dr. Shawna Lee, focusing on social context and issues faced by the LGBTQ community in the military.

Despite all of these projects, Brandon shares that he still has time for self-care. He described himself as being “very outdoorsy” which he said lends well to the Ann Arbor lifestyle. While he is soaking up and enjoying every minute of his Michigan experience, he said, “I love the south. Its culture, everything. I love the south. I’m used to it, I still love the south! Ann Arbor is a bigger version of my hometown Fayetteville, Arkansas, very earthy and hipster which I like.” Brandon is making impactful footprints in the social work field. Coupled with his inviting personality and southern charm, he is sure to go far in his social work career.
Freud Fellows Newsletter Team

Many thanks to our dedicated team of writers who have taken time out of their busy student lives to make contributions to *Field Notes*. Michael Lynch, Keli Peterson and Jordan Cusumano are the recipients of the Clarice Ullman Freud Fellowship. Hilary Russell is the recipient of the Clarice Ullman Freud Individual Research Scholarship. Professor Clarice Ullman Freud was Director of Field Instruction when she was on the U-M School of Social Work faculty. These scholarships, awarded to MSW students in the Children and Youth in Families and Society practice area, are made possible through a gift from Professor Freud, with the intention of providing opportunities to help students build connections between theory and practice.

**Hilary Russell**

Is from Northville, Michigan. She completed her undergraduate education at Michigan State University, where she majored in social work. Now, she is an advanced standing student and is placed at The Guidance Center in their Parent Infant Program. She is interested in working with families, specifically in the Infant Mental Health field.

**Jordan Cusumano**

Received her undergraduate degrees in Social Work and Journalism at Eastern Michigan University as a double major. While working on her undergrad she interned at The Cancer Support Community in Ann Arbor and worked with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Her concentration is Interpersonal Practice. Her practice area is Children and Youth in Families and Society. Her internship has been at Mott Children’s Hospital at the in-patient PICU as well as the out-patient Pediatric Neurology and Neurosurgery clinic.

**Keli Peterson**

Is a 12-month student studying Interpersonal Practice with Children and Youth, and is also pursuing a School Social Work Certificate. She received her Bachelor’s in Social Work and another in the Arts and Humanities from Michigan State University. As a graduate student, she is currently placed at Ann Arbor Technological High School with a school social worker.

**Michael Lynch**

Is concentrating in Interpersonal Practice with Children and Youth in Families and Society. He is currently an intern at the Monroe County Intermediate School district within the Early Childhood Special Education Department. He attended Dakota Wesleyan University and studied Biology and Psychology as an undergraduate. He enjoys music, reading, and sports in any spare time he has.
Advocacy: A word that is frequently thrown around in many circles all across the world. But what is advocacy anyway? I knew I wanted to be an advocate from a young age—which was puzzling seeing how, until recently, I never truly knew what it was. I knew all people should have equal rights and that our country was not delivering on its promises, therefore, advocacy seemed like an appropriate path to pursue. I went into social work, went to class, took notes, asked questions, and left, but still not having a good grasp of what advocacy, activism, and a potential career in this area might look like. I did know, however, that if I had any chance of submerging myself into the world of activism, Washington, DC would be the place to go.

In order to advocate, or as the dictionary says- plead, speak, or argue, one must be aware of the current legislative climate. I faced a steep learning curve when I arrived at the nation’s capitol to complete my semester internship, which was at a national membership organization that helps advocate, develop policies and programs, and foster collaboration in the intergenerational area. I instantly felt the pressure to know everything going on and produce an educated stance on it all. The moment I arrived, my internship supplied me with a great deal of paper and web resources that explained current bills, events and issues. I was also given a pocket book that listed every congressperson’s information. Reading and research shed a lot of light on the issues, however, I found the best way to learn about the legislative process was getting out and experiencing it firsthand. I attended many bill hearings, markups, and events, as well as organizational collaboration meetings and policy working groups. These experiences allowed me to learn the “policy lingo”, watch the legislative process in action and hear what other organizations had to say.

Once I was able to get a grasp on the general process, I turned my attention to learning the advocate’s role within it all. The organizational collaborative meetings revealed to me the great deal of progress that could be accomplished when a dedicated group of organizations came together to speak up about a cause. I witnessed how important it is for groups from all different backgrounds (research-based, religious, advocacy, lobbying, membership, etc.) to come together and talk about a certain issue. Advocates play an important role in these collective spaces as representatives of larger organizations that can work together to nurture a cause and together tackle specific legislation.

I learned so much being among these groups and members of congress. I saw the importance of being located in Washington and advocating on behalf of others. However, my most enlightening experience with advocacy came from empowering the people directly. One of my biggest roles this summer was managing the Hill Day activities that took place during my organization’s biennial conference. We had attendees join us from all over the country. My job was to help prepare them for visits with their members of congress so they could advocate on behalf of their organization and service population. This project not only included endless amounts of calls to congressional offices trying to schedule visits, but also preparing webinars, trainings and briefing materials for constituents to take to their visits. It was a long summer of planning, but it paid off to see firsthand all the benefits that the event cultivated. The people were so eager to learn about the advocacy process and how to effectively speak with their representatives. In addition, they were extremely grateful for all the behind the scenes work I had done that enabled them to simply come and speak from their hearts about the programs and people they care for. We had 45 people go out and advocate, and each person came back with a unique and touching story.

One particular story that really showed the true impact of this experience was with a conference attendee from South Carolina. At first she was nervous to visit with her representative, but after the educational session and talking with staff about the process, she decided to go forward with the plan. She had a productive visit with her congressman and was able to share the impact of her organization and the needs of the children they serve. In the end, she was satisfied with her visit and glad that she decided to participate. We reminded all constituents to see this initial visit as the basis for building future relationships with their members, but for this attendee that message resonated. After a few weeks, I received an email from an
organization working to save Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in the Farm Bill. They had a list of representatives to target for support and the representative from South Carolina happened to be on this list. I took the opportunity to contact our friend from South Carolina and asked her to call her representative and petition his support. Because of the previous groundwork that she had done, she was willing to contact her Congressman again. The next day, SNAP had another supporter.

This experience uncovered the true meaning of an advocate’s role for me. It is not simply going out and speaking on behalf of others, but working with the people themselves and giving them the tools, support, and assurance they need to go and speak on their own behalf.

My summer experience in DC allowed me to uncover my own meaning of advocacy and how I personally fit into the role. It was the activities that I participated in outside of the classroom that really solidified these insights. Certain classroom concepts such as professional identity and organizational context are difficult to learn in a lecture. Being in the field allowed me to further develop these areas and provided direct opportunities for professional growth. For example, I never imaged I would be sitting down with the Public Engagement Director of the White House, but learning the power of networking directly and how that coincides with my professional identity allowed me to meet people like this every week.

I learned in class that advocates stand up for others, raise their voices, and engage stakeholders, but it was not until I actually immersed myself into the field of advocacy that I truly learned what that meant. An advocate’s role is so much more than just raising their voice. It is up to them to have comprehensive knowledge of legislation, make connections with other groups, get the community involved, train people how to speak on their own behalf, and be the encouraging voice for all along the way. For me, these lessons learned had to come from a direct experience. Being in DC was an experience that changed my life and future trajectory forever. I encourage everyone to take responsibility for their own learning process and make arrangements to discover these and other vital lessons from direct practice.

Mistakes Lead to Learning

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field-work placements and apply their learning there. This is considered applied learning. On top of that, students must know the mission, policies, and procedures of their field placement (the competency called “organizational context”). This is a tall order—especially considering most social workers want to not only make positive changes in the world, but they want to do it their best ability. It is important to remember that learning often involves making mistakes and mistakes typically carry an ugly connotation. This means there is a potentially thin line student’s walk in the social work field: on one side, making mistakes and learning from them and on the other, ensuring that they take careful consideration before putting any plan into action. This is why receiving adequate supervision and seeking consultation about any encounter students experience in field is extremely important.

Applied learning is crucial to a student’s experience in field and will help cultivate their career as a professional social worker. For example, consider the course SW790 which is a mini-course on Adventure Therapy, which is taught by Professor Tony Alvarez, MSW. The course educates the student on adventure-based activities in therapy with individuals, groups and families through theoretical and philosophical foundations of adventure-based practice as well as a personally experiencing the adventure activities. The student is able to learn about adventure therapy through multiple learning styles. After a student completes this course, they should be able to come up with ways the information they learned may be beneficial to anyone in social work, both macro and micro. Imagine being involved with a client, policy or community. Each has a history of its own and is on its own trajectory towards some destination. Is it headed somewhere good or somewhere where questions may be raised? It will ultimately be up to the client, the political climate, or the community to decide with the social worker to encourage self-determination. Here are some suggested steps. First reflect on what a person might know about the current entity and end result. Second, embark upon the journey. Remember, each ‘mistake’ made along that journey is merely an indicator of something to be learned. This is what Adventure Therapy emphasizes—what is learned cannot be seen complete as a theory or solely as an experience. The two have to come together in order for complete understanding to occur. This is why making mistakes as a student in class, as an intern in field, or as a professional are “ok” steps to take along the mistake laden journey called learning. Reflection is the key and learning and tacit knowledge will be the end products.
Seelio, Welcome to the School of Social Work!

WHAT IS SEELIO?

Seelio is an e-Portfolio based website that has been recently introduced to the School of Social Work. The school has partnered with Seelio experts in order to provide students with a high quality platform where they will be able to showcase their accomplishments.

CAN EVERYONE IN THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK CREATE A SEELIO E-PORTFOLIO?

Yes! Right now only the advanced standing and scholar students are currently required to create a Seelio e-Portfolio, but all students and faculty are encouraged to consider starting a Seelio e-Portfolio now.

HOW CAN I ACCESS SEELIO?

Simply go to the School of Social Work career services and request an invitation. If you are an advanced standing student or a scholar student, then you should have already received an invitation to join Seelio. If so, follow the steps in the invitation to create a Seelio account.

The School of Social Work has created a comprehensive online module that explores integrative learning and includes activities to assist you in reflecting on your accomplishments so that you are ready to begin creating an e-Portfolio. You can access this module by going here: https://ssw.umich.edu/my-ssw/msw-forms and scrolling down to e-Portfolio. For explicit instructions about how to use the Seelio platform, click here: https://www.ssw.umich.edu/ofi/modules/Putting-Your-Portfolio-Together/.

WHY WOULD I USE SEELIO?

Creating a Seelio e-Portfolio will help integrate key learning by connecting coursework with fieldwork experiences through the process of reflection. By creating “projects” in the Seelio e-Portfolio, individuals will be able to take apart their learning experiences and identify the tasks completed, the skills acquired/used and uncover lessons learned; all of which are crucial aspects of reflective, integrative learning. The Seelio platform will help individuals organize their experiences and thus allow them to uncover what they have learned so they are able to articulate this to professors, field instructors, field faculty and future employers.

By creating a e-Portfolio using Seelio, individuals will be able to market themselves to potential employers in the most modern and comprehensive way possible. Seelio is a blend of LinkedIn and Facebook – professional, but with a casual vibe to it as well. Instead of posting statuses, they post “projects” to their profile. The “projects” they post can include both what they have accomplished in the past and also what they are currently learning in their field placement and in their coursework. It gives future potential employers a way to see more detail about what they have done, rather than just looking at generalized and bulleted items on a resume. Simply put, Seelio is the resume of the future.
Announcements

New Commuter Bus To Detroit

Tired of driving back and forth to Detroit for field or class? The Detroit Center Connector is offering transportation to Detroit. Individuals must make a reservation 24 hours in advance and are able to ride the bus up to four times a day. Riders must be able to present their MCard in order to ride the bus. For more information, visit their website at http://detroitcenter.umich.edu/dc-connector.

New Online CE Course!
The DSM-5: Updates for Professionals

U-M SSW alumni, faculty, current students and field instructors will receive the University of Michigan Friends and Family discount, reducing the course fee to $69. For more information see: http://dynamicinstitute.com/dsm5/

Accolades

Thank You Field Instructors!

The Office of Field Instruction would like to thank our field instructors for their time, commitment and passion for the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work students. We owe the success of our field instruction program to the hard work and investment that the field instructors provide our school each day! The next field instructor training will be held on Friday, January 24th 2014.

826michigan Receives Two Grant Approvals

826michigan recently received approval for two grants, one from the Walmart Foundation for $30,000, and the other from the Pitney Bowes Foundation for $5,000. University of Michigan School of Social Work student, Annie Kennedy, is currently an intern at 826Michigan and wrote both of the grants that were recently approved. Congratulations to Annie on her hard work and her great success!
Camilla Reynolds is a first year Advanced Standing IP student with a concentration in aging. She graduated from Eastern Michigan University in August with a Bachelors in Social Work and has been interested in social work for her entire life. Her current placement is at the Housing Bureau for Seniors. Before her work with the field office, she worked with Office of Continuing Education. When she is not working or studying, she enjoys reading, making up songs to sing to her dog and people watching.

Jeterra Davis-Griggs is currently in her third year at UM concentrating in Psychology. She is also an Urban Studies minor which gives her the opportunity to learn and understand the things that are going on in her hometown of Detroit, Michigan. She plans on applying to the School of Social Work concentrating in interpersonal practice in mental health. Working in the Office of Field Instruction has been a great pleasure for her. In her free time, she enjoys journaling, shopping, eating good food, and mentoring younger girls to prepare them for higher education. She also enjoys spending quality time with her friends and family when she’s able to make it home on the weekends.