



Council for Standards in  
Human Service Education

# Bulletin

*Highlighting best practices in  
human service education*

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Editor

## A Message from the President

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This is my first message as president of CSHSE. Elaine Green, the former president, left an immense legacy for this organization. She served on the CSHSE Board for over 15 years, and most of that time as president. During her tenure, CSHSE:

- Restructured the Board, eliminating regional directors and replacing them with “Members at Large,” which more evenly distributed the workload.
- Created the “Board Consultant” position. When a program is ready to begin the self-study process, a Board member is designated as its consultant to assist the program and address any issues they may have along the way. That Board member does not participate in the evaluation of the self-study or site visit.
- Moved the self-study submission process from a paper process to an electronic submission, making the process easier for programs and “saving trees”!
- Grew as an organization. There are now over 50 accredited programs, with several more in the initial self-study process.
- Developed standards for master’s programs. The new standards became available in July 2019, and there are programs currently in the self-study process.
- Added Cultural Competence as a new standard for all three levels: associates, bachelors, and masters.

- Obtained CHEA recognition in 2014!

Shortly after I became president, the pandemic struck, and programs had to make immediate changes in practicum placements as universities and colleges went to online delivery almost overnight and students were no longer able to physically be in the community. We have witnessed the strength, resilience, and creativity of faculty, students, and placement agencies as alternative activities were quickly put in place for students to complete their field hours for the spring semester. As we move into the fall semester, programs have had the summer to plan for the “new normal,” and placement agencies are finding ways to involve students through Zoom and other video platforms.

CSHSE has also made some temporary changes. At the June meeting, the Board decided that any site visits scheduled through the end of calendar year 2020 would be held as virtual site visits.

The path is clear - we can be the architects of new and improved designs that will enhance quality in higher education. CSHSE is here to support human service programs as you create the pathways for tomorrow’s human service professionals!

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# Leading During a Crisis: Mental Health Implications During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Mental health issues related to the pandemic present significant challenges for human services administrators. Successful leadership is a skill that develops over time. Addressing the challenges vulnerable populations such as children, mentally and physically challenged adolescents and adults, and the elderly face due to COVID-19 requires heightened skills for those leading social service organizations. Administrators and faculty in institutions of higher learning, as well, are finding that additional problem-solving skills are needed to address the increasing demand for resources. Many administrators, faculty, staff members, students and families, practitioners, and clients are experiencing a variety of mental health issues, a lack of resources, and the stress of losing employment and income due to the pandemic.

Being an educational administrator is a challenging position on any given day; it requires balancing the needs of undergraduate students, and often the demands of their parents, along with the workplace concerns of faculty and office personnel. Over the last several years our colleges and universities have been faced with mounting challenges, including violence and school shootings, bullying and social media exploitation, and public health issues. Competent leaders must exhibit excellent communication skills in listening, writing, and public speaking, as well as in problem solving, assessment, budgeting, and planning skills. In these unpredictable times, it has become necessary for leaders to assess situations and determine decisions quickly, collaborate with partners and negotiate solutions, locate necessary internal and external resources, and advocate for long term and institutionalized changes.

Enter COVID-19 and the work of a college or university administrator has just tripled. Now we add on the practical considerations of maintaining quality instruction within a framework of systemic challenges and ongoing, and often additional, operational needs. To add to the stress, in the wake of the pandemic, many universities have imposed furloughs or reduced pay for employees, a concept unheard of in higher education with local and state faculty unions before the pandemic. However, today many institutions now face a financial crisis with the expectation that some will close (De Pietro, 2020).

In a short period of time our institutions have had to accommodate students learning from home, often

with few resources, an unstable internet system, old computers, or with the distraction of parents or other family members nearby. Students who do not have computer access, or other technological resources in their home, may fall behind in their school work and fear failing and needing to repeat a course. Faculty, eager to assist their students, may become frustrated at the lack of resources available to them, or may lack the technological skills if they are not trained in online teaching and learning. If faculty development has provided training for online teaching, that is commendable. However, in many traditional colleges and universities where on-ground teaching was the norm, faculty are still learning how to teach effectively online, or how to reach students with little or no resources at home. Students and faculty with young children have to contend with many distractions and the added time commitment of assisting children with lessons in addition to completing their own work while at home. Some institutions have provided computers for their online students, but many cannot afford to, and student computer labs in on-ground buildings are often closed.

Although mental health and substance abuse issues are not new to our society, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated them, and the intensified economic difficulties that millions around the country have experienced has led to mounting stress. Many experience fear and anxiety over concerns of an unknown and devastating illness that has infected, and continues to infect, millions of people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Mental health and related issues that have increased in our communities due to COVID-19 include, but are not limited to, grief and loss, anxiety, depression, stress, and stigma (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Some of these issues stem from frustration and boredom from isolation and quarantine; stress from not having adequate supplies to care for one's family (such as food, medicine, cleaning supplies, masks, etc.); and inconsistent medical and public health information (Kaneriya & Douahy, 2020). Long term effects of COVID-19 may include stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization, grief, and loss (Mayo Clinic, 2020), economic loss, and difficulty reintegrating to "regular functioning" (Kaneriya & Douahy, 2020). These issues not only plague current mental health clients, they also plague front line workers and other essential workers, and the population at large.

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Leaders in higher education and in human services organizations need to understand that workers experiencing mental health issues due to COVID-19 need support and assistance (Greenwood, 2020). This could be accomplished by first promoting employee assistance programs (EAPs) in their college or university. These programs can connect employees to counselors that can assist them with issues related to mental health, child care, marriage and family counseling, elder care, food resources, and even medical bills and insurance issues. Although many organizations have EAPs in place, the average utilization rate is only about 4.5% (Wingard, 2020).

The blog *Mental Health America* mentions several innovative EAP practices that businesses and organizations have adapted (Adams, 2020). These initiatives include:

- live meditation sessions and activity breaks
- resiliency and stress management activities
- morale boosting activities
- newsletters
- podcasts
- Zoom book clubs
- meditation sessions
- animal therapy
- manager well-being calls
- weekly self-care videos
- 1:1 health coaching for employees and their spouses
- weekly well-being communications

These services can be adapted for people of all ages in institutions of higher learning and in community organizations. They are also cost effective and easy to deliver through online platforms such as Zoom, Teams, D2L, and Blackboard.

The need for more comprehensive mental health and substance abuse services is evident. As we train human services practitioners, who traditionally have worked to help people regain a sense of equilibrium and direction in their lives, we have to be vigilant in assisting students to learn how to work with clients within the context of the pandemic. Our human services practitioners must be aware of the challenges clients face as a result of the pandemic and be prepared to engage them in new ways. Utilizing tele-mental health (where appropriate) can prove beneficial in assisting clients that are unable to participate in face-to-

face sessions. Leveraging collaborations with other colleagues may enable more holistic service provision for clients. Additional tips to consider for assisting clients and communities in working through effects of COVID-19 include, but are not limited to: 1) clarifying a message of “physical distancing” while encouraging “social connection,” 2) helping clients establish daily routines and providing education about common psychological and behavioral responses to infectious outbreaks, 3) optimizing technology and social media to promote well-being and combat stigma, and 4) providing education on harm reduction strategies for those that continue to go out in public spaces (Kaneriya & Douahy, 2020). These skills are needed in human services programs to assist our students in handling these situations as successful leaders and clinicians of the future.

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# Quarantine's Paradox: Spreading Your Wings While Being Confined

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As we have begun to navigate the various challenges that COVID-19 has presented, many of us have found ourselves in a new working environment. In mid-January, as a senior at Fitchburg State University, I began an internship at Balance Recovery Center in Nashua, NH only months before everyone found their lives being turned upside down. So as unforeseeable circumstances began to shape the rest of my internship experience mid-semester, some may wonder exactly what took place during the rest of the semester once we were all sent home from our internship sites.

The structure of my internship before the pandemic was very regimented. I gained insight into the daily lives of people experiencing addiction. I observed face-to-face groups in which clients shared their experiences throughout their recovery journey. While sitting in on these groups, I soon realized what long and hard roads these clients endured. I had no idea at the time that a pandemic was about to occur and possibly impact how the recovery of the clients would be shaped. Once everyone was ordered to stay home, we were forced to adapt to the situation.

Fortunately, this went better than expected. While in the center, client group attendance rates had not been up to par for a while. Once the structure of the group was switched to Telehealth, surprisingly, attendance actually improved. Changing over to this format not only seemed to help the clients but helped me as an intern as well. I was able to see how flexible one needs to be in the human services field. This experience showed me that it doesn't matter what part of the field you work in; you always have to be ready for anything, especially in a human services setting involving vulnerable clients. I was able to see that an "all hands-

on deck" approach was essential when trying to meet the needs of the clients. After I began working from home in March, I was assigned to attend some of the groups as I would have, but now remotely. My supervisor made the internship a valuable experience by making sure I was not completing the same kinds of tasks every day. Other days I was given more administrative tasks to complete. It was interesting to see how multiple skill sets could be used in one setting.

Before this experience I was somewhat unclear about my career path. I now realize that part of my confusion was that I was unaware how multiple skills could be used for doing one job. Now, I see how these skills sets can be applied to various jobs. I was born with a birth defect called Spina Bifida, and I would like to be able to use my personal experiences to help others with the same condition stay compliant with their medical needs. Working with the staff at my internship site helped me to define this goal. The staff consisted of two mental health professionals who each had personally experienced addiction previously, one of whom is a therapist, and a medical doctor (M.D.). The personal experience of the first two employees, along with the background of the M.D., allowed for each client to have an individualized treatment program. During individual counseling sessions with the therapist, clients were able to work through any problems they were experiencing while in treatment so that they could focus more on their recovery. I could see myself doing something very similar for individuals with Spina Bifida. The experience of this internship was very useful as a whole. I feel it gave me a path to focus on forward into my future career.

# One Breath at a Time, Moment to Moment: Mindfulness as a Best Practice in Self-Care

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*“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”*  
Albert Einstein

This short essay will explore how a commitment to mindfulness meditation is a tool for self-care and describes how bringing mindfulness into the classroom is a stepping stone toward sustainability as a human service practitioner.

## My Journey into Mindfulness

In 1982 as an undergraduate in a Music Therapy program, I was required to complete several practicum placements and a six-month internship. One of the practica was at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and Hospital in palliative care and oncology where I did a workshop with Jon Kabat-Zinn; this was my very first introduction to mindfulness. During my six-month internship, I was trained in music therapy and pain management that included mindfulness meditation with an emphasis on the mind/body connection. I purchased my first book on meditation entitled *“How to Meditate”* by Lawrence LeShan (1974) in which he states:

We meditate to find, to recover, to come back to something of ourselves we once dimly and unknowingly had and have lost without knowing what it was or where or when we lost it. We may call it access to more of our human potential or being closer to ourselves and to reality, or to more of our capacity for love and zest and enthusiasm, or our knowledge that we are a part of the universe and can never be alienated or separated from it or our ability to see and function in reality more effectively. (p. 2)

Since then I have been practicing and exploring a variety of teachings on meditation from experts in the field.

## What is Mindfulness?

Kabat-Zinn (2012) provides us with a detailed definition of mindfulness and its relationship to meditation:

Mindfulness is awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-

judgmentally. It is one of many forms of meditation, if you think of meditation as any way in which we engage in (1) systematically regulating our attention and energy (2) thereby influencing and possibly transforming the quality of our experience (3) in the service of realizing the full range of our humanity and of (4) our relationship to others and the world. (p. 1)

This description helps us see the potential value of mindfulness. We can practice mindfulness through formal sitting (for example, 20 minutes a day) and through informal practice such as in mindful listening, mindful speaking, mindfully brushing one’s teeth, or mindful eating. To be mindful is to be present, to have your “mind” (awareness) here now. The more we practice being in the present moment, the more we can be with our human experience. Through an on-going mindfulness practice, we can regulate our emotions (Teper, Segal, & Inzlicht, 2013), reduce stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and change our brains (Hölzel et al., 2011).

## Mindfulness in the Classroom

Mindfulness meditation and contemplative pedagogy has been unfolding as a paradigm in the teacher/learner dynamic for several years (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). In 2008, I began teaching mindfulness meditation in an Honors Colloquium course entitled *“Re-Writing Ourselves: An Exploration of Emerging Paradigms.”* Mindfulness meditation is a cornerstone of the course as a topic of exploration and is practiced in the classroom. Over the past decade mindfulness has fully emerged in our society and is being infused in a host of settings including, hospitals, academics, business, and government agencies.

## The Importance of Self-Care in Human Services

The Council for Standards in Human Service Education has a specification that addresses *“strategies for self-care for the human service practitioner”* (Standard 19-d). Integrating mindfulness in the classroom helps create a more structured behavioral aspect of self-care with students; not only does this practice address the specification, but it also reinforces it through regular practice. My interest in self-care for human service practitioners is what ultimately ignited my sabbatical leave so that I could further research and explore mindfulness meditation and contemplative pedagogy. As a result, I begin or end each human

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services class with five minutes of mindfulness, a stepping stone into the necessity of self-care. MPEG-4 Audio File - *5 minutes of Mindfulness* - J. Kennedy (1).m4a. Share it with your friends on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Eo0bMMkmP-0>

This provides students with a time and place to be still and slow down. Frequently, students respond with a statement such as this: “It was hard to sit still at the beginning of the semester but now I can relax more, it has helped me slow down and bring my mind to class.” Additionally, one alumnus reported: “I just don’t know if I would have made it to the end of my program...but I did thanks to my mindfulness practice.”

### Sustainability as a Practitioner

In order to honor the sacred gift of the intuitive mind, as Einstein states above, we need to be aware of ourselves fully. Mindfulness is one path toward the gift of our inner world, of fully experiencing ourselves. Mindfulness is a tool to awaken and nurture our gifts, to reach our full potential and to be able to sustain our important work. At this time in our history, human service practitioners are even more essential. We need each other now more than ever. Mindfulness is a pathway to knowing ourselves and a self-care tool for our sustainability.

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# Social Justice and Quality Education in Human Service Programs: Moving from Advocating to Enacting Social Justice

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*Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic.  
Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime.  
Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.*

**John Lewis**

Social justice and equity have become topics of discussion both nationally and internationally. How do teachers move from being advocates for social justice to enacting social justice as part of a formula for quality education? As education evolves using technology, faculty are now preparing to teach in a way that they themselves have not experienced. As social contexts change, faculty must be ready to address issues of diversity, equity, cultural competence, inclusion, and social justice in a manner that prepares students for the reality of today's and tomorrow's world. This necessitates creating an environment where discussion of diverse ideas is encouraged, and helping students to develop critical thinking skills and an understanding of the need for social justice to be a part of any career path they may choose.

Barriers to a clear commitment to “social justice” include the disagreement among scholars, educators, and researchers on the definition itself. That confusion adds to the complexity of integrating social justice content into the human service curriculum. Nicotera (2019), in discussing the integration of social justice into social work curriculum, noted that “Authentic, bold, committed, dialectical engagement will need to account for diverse, multilayered aspects of context, taking into consideration things such as participants’ country, race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and preference, political and economic systems, and culture” (p. 468). That same engagement is necessary for human service programs. In fact, the CSHSE standard on cultural competence asks programs to demonstrate how they are “effective in producing culturally competent professionals who possess a high level of self-awareness, knowledge, and skills in the complexities of multiculturalism” (CSHSE Standard 8).

For several decades, the concept of lifelong learning has had a strong focus on the development of skills for knowledge-based economies and societies. For some, it has become a strategy for continuous development that is focused more on becoming competitive in the workplace rather than a focus on social inclusion (Tyson et al., 2019). Currently, a renewed focus on lifelong learning goes beyond separating out adult education from traditional college-aged students and has become inclusive of all age

groups. Equity and social justice are receiving attention in terms of educational policy (Breyer, 2018).

Using the five knowledge domains for teaching (personal, contextual, pedagogical, sociological, and social), provides a framework for social justice to be a foundation of quality education (Goodwin & Darity, 2019).

## **Domain #1: Personal Knowledge**

Since faculty bring their beliefs and lived experiences with them into the classroom, it is important for faculty to analyze their own beliefs in terms of presenting an objective and factual picture of past and current issues to their students. Challenging students to delve into history and identify the linkages between and among past events that have shaped today's world will help them understand that their clients' views and beliefs may differ from their own.

## **Domain #2: Contextual Knowledge**

“While contextual knowledge begins with the classroom and family communities, it also acknowledges that these contexts are situated within larger political, historical, institutional, and cultural contexts” (Goodwin et al., 2019, p. 66). An effective and critical part of human service programs at the associate and bachelor's levels is the practicum placement. Internships in community-based agencies, both direct practice and policy focused, provide students the opportunity to identify and understand the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

## **Domain #3: Pedagogical Knowledge**

Pedagogy generally refers to the art and science of teaching. The last decade has seen colleges and universities around the globe embrace the technological age and move to online education, in both synchronous and asynchronous designs. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the move out of necessity. However, the move now requires a different skill set to engage students. It is important to understand the cultural

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identifications, and capacities and needs of the student population; for most human service programs, that means meeting the needs of non-traditional students. With these considerations in mind, faculty can become engineers of change, creating a seamless path through the transition for our students.

### Domain #4: Sociological Knowledge

As our diverse world becomes more complicated, faculty should be aware of the ways in which large systems, including colleges and universities, have historically replicated social stratifications. Ask yourself how your college / university approaches diversity and inclusiveness in campus life. How are those with differing abilities treated? Does the institution present a multicultural picture to the public? Do the faculty and students reflect diversity and inclusiveness?

### Domain #5: Social Knowledge

As our world continuously shrinks through digital technology and globalized consumerism, it grows exponentially in complexity (Goodwin et al., 2019). Human Service graduates face a world that is experiencing a “new normal.” Communication skills have increased in importance. Students need to acquire the ability to communicate with diverse individuals, recognize the dynamics that occur within different cultural interactions and intersections and make critical judgments that affect the lives of clients, many of whom are part of oppressed populations.

### How is quality conveyed to the public?

Blanco and Metcalfe (2020) looked at the symbols or emblems that colleges and universities use to display their commitment to quality education on their websites. Of 62 universities in their study, only nineteen referred to accreditation on their main website. Review your program's website and ask yourself, other faculty, and students:

### Does our program's website convey the following?

- a mission that future students can relate to their culture
- the role that accreditation plays in enhancing quality education
- inclusiveness
- active engagement in social justice
- faculty who are committed to student learning

Human service programs have been leaders in quality education for many years. CSHSE will continue to support programs in adhering to quality standards and to being leaders in cultural competence and social justice. Human service programs can become the architects of positive social change.

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\*Harold Gates has recently retired from the CSHSE Board after many years of service. He was the Board member who took the lead in creating the Standard on Cultural Competence.



# What Does Human Services Have to do With Defunding the Police?

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The idea of defunding the police is not new, but now “police reform” is in the public vernacular due to the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. There are wide variations in the interpretation of “defund the police,” and the idea is often a controversial one. On the furthest end of the spectrum, activists are calling for the complete abolition of police (Akbar, 2020), while the middle ground suggests that funding should be divested into community services while maintaining the police. Others still suggest that defunding police would hamper managing officer misconduct and push dealing with social issues to the private sector (Rushin & Michalski, 2020). Social activists are largely in agreement that the funding for police departments would be better spent rerouted toward community organizations, social programs, and investing in communities through quality education, affordable housing, and quality medical care, to name a few.

Defunding the police is a call to reimagine public safety by divesting funds to communities, and investing in people and the programs that support them in a way that moves away from the act of social control. If this does in fact happen in the future, human services educators, practitioners, and advocates should be ready to step in to provide many of the services currently asked of police.

In an opinion article in *Newsweek*, Paul Robinson (2020) of the University of Pennsylvania states that this call for defunding is a “golden opportunity” for police departments to correct the “mission creep” that has resulted in them spending significant time away from that which they have trained to do: investigate, and potentially prevent, crime. Police agencies are a “free” (taxpayer paid) service that is available 24/7 to deal with the so-called “ills” of society, resulting in potential criminalization of social issues such as drug addiction, poverty, mental illness, and homelessness because police act as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, not as access to social supports. Significant research and financial investment have gone into reimagining police training to include training on implicit bias, crisis intervention skills, etc. Yet, problems of police brutality and deaths of Black and Brown people by police remain a stubborn reality in the United States. It is a matter of life and death that something changes in terms of structural racism and policing in the United States.

Perhaps, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel of policing, community leaders would be wise to consider utilizing human services graduates to address the social issue creep faced in policing. Human services addresses or supplements many of the target areas outlined by the final report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015). The overall goal of the Task Force was to make recommendations to “identify best practices in policing, and offer recommendations on how policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while building public trust” (p. 1). Pillar one, for example, calls

for building trust and legitimacy of police organizations. Pillar two discusses the utilization of resources to reduce crime by building community relationships and increasing engagement. Pillar four describes identifying community problems and sources of collaboration, with a focus on appreciating the needs of vulnerable citizens (such as children and the elderly). Pillar five specifically addresses the best practice of engaging with community members with specific expertise in addressing social problems. Clearly, human services education focuses on community engagement and outreach, addressing social problems, and building trust with communities. Further, funding supports for many of these recommendations would arguably address pillar six, which is to improve police health and wellness. Within the executive summary, the Task Force recommendation highlights the needs for programs that address “poverty, education, health, and safety” (p. 1). There is ample space for human services to address some of the very significant recommendations made in this report, either as the specialists/experts mentioned within the report, or as replacements or supplements for police.

Social scientists illuminate social problems and identify possible means to ameliorate them; police are trained to respond quickly to citizens in need of help or protection. It is problematic when the police, as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, respond to social problems with incorrect or insufficient, but lethal, tools. Police training is not able to replace or replicate human services education, nor should it. The two can co-exist. One often cited example of successful community-based intervention utilizing human services workers is the CAHOOTS (Crisis Helping Out on the Streets) program in Eugene, Oregon, which takes a holistic approach utilizing mental health workers (not social workers) to assist with crisis counseling, suicide prevention, conflict resolution, housing, substance use, and more (White Bird Clinic, 2020).

## What, specifically, can human services offer?

**A new perspective:** Human service workers are trained to help promote self-advocacy and self-determination rather than to diagnose, as some other helping professions do, or use force, as the police do. Educational programs can provide the means to think creatively about grassroots interventions and working from the ground up, while respecting community and individual culture. Human services students are taught a range of skills and knowledge to engage as equal community partners and to build bold and innovative programs to address social problems that are culturally appropriate for their community, and to evaluate their effectiveness. The focus on advocacy in the human services field is also crucial to push for the resources necessary to safely migrate a community from feeling that they are being policed to being supported.

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## What does Human Services Have to do With ... *continued from page 9*

**Program management:** Unfortunately, money talks, and money is required to build programs. Human services education specifically addresses nonprofit management, including budgeting, grant writing, fundraising, program evaluation, and documentation management that allows this work to continue and be effective despite limited resources. Similarly, human services organizations must advocate for better pay and better support for their workers to retain the best and brightest social-justice oriented players, alongside with advocating for equitable resources for the communities they work in.

**Ethical and non-violent means of engaging with communities:** Human service workers are trained to listen, engage, problem solve, and provide meaningful supports for individuals who need them. Education emphasizes the importance of the interpersonal relationship. Students should be trained as human services workers to engage holistically with community members, promote peer support, and intervene and work within informal resources and formal networks. Human service workers are ethically obligated to engage in active social justice work, which is not a priority of police work.

**Educate and empower:** Human services workers should be able to educate people on the causes, scope, and definition of crime; the importance of addressing social problems; the public health crisis of racism (and the related issues of classism, ableism, etc.); and the need for holistic supports of communities. Their strengths lie in their proximity to communities, the perception that they are there to help without instilling fear that they have the power to incarcerate, and their ability to listen nonjudgmentally. Human services workers can and should advocate for the community resources needed in order for their interventions to be successful. Finally, in order to be effective, human service workers must understand racial trauma, community trauma, and engage in trauma informed practices.

The field of Human Services alone is obviously not a panacea for systemic racism, and significant work must be done to respond to ongoing inequities within this field as well. Additionally, as a field, human services needs to examine its own history with racism and as an agent of social control in order to be effective in supporting BIPOC persons and communities. As human service educators, we must engage in both individual and

systemic reflection and change. We cannot ignore the systemic racism inherent in the fields of education, psychiatry, social work, and human services as they intertwine with disenfranchisement, a lack of culturally appropriate services, and issues of social control and policing of Black and Brown people.

However, it is clear that training the police to be human services workers while still retaining the power of social control and lethal means is limited as an answer to reducing racism and deadly outcomes for Black people. Human services provides supports and an alternative response to social issues than policing. Much like this is a golden opportunity for policing, this is an opportunity for human services to have a significant impact on reimagining public safety and community empowerment. Miriam Kaba, in her op-ed in the *New York Times* (Kaba, 2020), calls for making police obsolete by so strongly investing in communities that we no longer need police. This may be idealistic, but let's, as human services educators, be so bold as to imagine the role our students could play in a more equitable, safer society for all.

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# Interviewing Techniques Curriculum: Starting from Scratch

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Our Human Services faculty identified an unresolved tension in the curriculum for our undergraduate Interviewing Techniques course. We had been unsuccessful in striking the balance we sought between a focus on students' understanding of the topic and the skills they were able to do in practice. Most students weren't reading the assigned textbook, and those who were reading were not necessarily successfully demonstrating mastery of the interviewing skills that were the primary learning outcomes of the course. Consequently, we decided to re-examine how best to align our curriculum with our objectives for this foundational practice course.

We convened a curriculum task force of faculty who have taught the course and those who teach the subsequent practice courses in the human services major. We reviewed alternative textbooks but struggled to find one that sufficiently supported practical skill development. However, we recognized that as a group sitting around the task force table, we represented decades of experience in teaching and professional practice. Our combined expertise drew from social work, counseling, advocacy, family therapy, and clinical forensic psychology, and reflected professional experience in child welfare, disability services, and prisons, as well as school, clinical mental health, and grief counseling. Based on the wealth of experience around the table, we took on the ambitious project of constructing a new curriculum from scratch.

Over the course of nine months, we divided the labor and authored new course readings. Drawing from empirical research across several disciplines, the new readings better reflected the multidisciplinary nature of undergraduate human services education. We scaffolded our approach and tailored it to the many young undergraduate students in the classes, often with little or no practical experience. Introductory material laid a foundation for more complex material in order to progressively build understanding, apply new knowledge, and help students grow in the mastery of skills through ongoing practice and self-reflection. The chapters we authored are considerably more concise than most textbook chapters, prioritizing practice-focused learning over the history of counseling.

Rather than have our students read extensive verbatim excerpts of clinical interactions, as is common in many of the textbooks we reviewed, we opted to record demonstrations of skills. These included demonstrations of particular skills, such as paraphrasing, full interviews, and examples of "what not to do." We were guided by common misconceptions our students had expressed over the years, such as an

assumption that a professional stance is characterized by authoritative answers and sage advice for human services clients. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of adapting skills to meet client needs when working with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. In our readings, video demonstrations, and classroom exercises, we aimed to introduce foundational knowledge, but then pivot relatively quickly to in-class application and collaborative feedback.

We also took stock of what each instructor for this course had already developed on their own, incorporating innovations born out of necessity. We standardized in-class exercises to reinforce students' ability to accurately distinguish between different skills, and to be able to provide a rationale for why to use different skills in different situations. Scaffolded assignments now guide students to reflect on their interviewing skills with increasingly more complex layers of self-evaluation. For instance, they move from noticing non-verbal communication and rapport building to higher skills such as evaluating the effectiveness of different strategies used to elicit information from clients and establish mutual goal setting, and to providing a structured professional interview. As they learn more and practice more, the sequence of assignments requires them to critically analyze the development of their interviewing skills more deeply and constructively. For their final assignment, they conduct an entire interview, including introductions and informed consent, learning the client's presenting issue, mutual goal setting, and effectively bringing the interview to a conclusion within a specified time frame. This is followed by a reflective paper in which students identify the various skills used and possibly any others that may have been more effective as well as an assessment of their skills.

Finally, we developed a pre- and post-test student questionnaire to assess how effectively the revised curriculum accomplished our goals and learning objectives. Results indicated that students' confidence in communicating with those they don't have much in common with increased (pre-test 36% confident/very confident; post-test 80% confident/very confident). Further, students reported their overall skills in conducting a professional interview increased after completing the course (pre-test 15% skilled/very skilled; post-test 89% skilled/very skilled).

Three instructors field tested the curriculum in 10 class sections over the course of two semesters. The curriculum task force met twice more to evaluate the curriculum and make adjustments as needed. Understandably, students reported unanimous support

for required readings to be provided at no cost to them. For our student body, a large proportion of whom are first generation and working (and working class) students, this was an important outcome of our efforts. Students also reported a high degree of satisfaction with the clarity and progression of the curriculum. Students frequently report a good deal of anxiousness about being observed in role plays, but by the end of the course, there was near-unanimous endorsement that the practical focus of the course, including extensive use of in-class role plays and feedback, contributed to their understanding, confidence, and effectiveness in demonstrating interviewing techniques.

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought further changes to the Interviewing Techniques course, as we needed to quickly find a way to move the class to a remote format. The practice components of the course posed the most challenge to replicate in a remote environment, and as such, students completed their midterm and final interview assignments via video conferencing. Assigned pairs found a common time to conduct their interviews before the due date and recorded their interviews. The video recording and corresponding assignments were then submitted electronically. The interview videos were shared with

the class, so that each student could view and complete online feedback forms on their peers' skills. The students reported having significantly less anxiety using this method, as they didn't have their peers and instructors watching live behind a two-way mirror. Further, faculty observed that peers provided more detailed feedback, as they could take as much time as was necessary, rather than only having a few minutes to jot down feedback between interview sessions within the class time frame. While this class is ideally run in a face-to-face format, technology allowed us to continue to meet the course objectives and deliver our new curriculum during the pandemic. Lessons learned, such as the benefit of having electronic feedback forms, could also be implemented in a face-to-face delivery of the course.

Overall, we are so pleased with the effectiveness of our Interviewing Techniques curriculum that we are now working with one of our university librarians to license it through the OER (Open Educational Resources) Commons. Our hope is to make our materials available to other human services programs, to be adapted and used to fit a variety of students and educational contexts.

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