Incorporating Evidence-based Practice Skills in the Human Services Internship

Human Services internships provide opportunities for students to connect classroom learning with real practice with clients in health or social welfare organizations. Faculty and agency supervisors collaborate to ensure that classroom and field instruction keeps pace with demands for new knowledge and competencies.

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe field practicum assignments that facilitate teaching basic evidence-based practice skills. Three major questions guided this research: (a) What helping skills supervisors emphasize in field instruction? (b) What projects, activities, assignments, and standardized instruments are used by supervisors to teach helping skills? (c) Do students routinely review research evidence as a field practice assignment? Sixty agency supervisors volunteered to participate in the study. Participants were interviewed, individually, by a Human Services Department faculty member. The sample is not a representative sample but mirrors the diversity of human service professionals and the settings in which they practice. Of those interviewed, 38% are licensed social workers, 15% are psychologists, 10% are teachers, and 8% are nurses. Counselors, community health educators, job coaches, congregate residence assistants, guidance counselors, protective service workers, and benefit eligibility specialists made up the balance of the sample. The study generated useful knowledge of students’ internship experiences, field practice instruction approaches, and creative assignments that support learning evidence-based practice skills.

Panelists:

Human Services Department faculty:
- Dr. Carmen V. Negron, Principal investigator
- Dr. Justine Pawlukiewicz, Co-investigator
- Dr. Vandelette Ford, Co-investigator

Field supervisors:
- Becky Biggio, NP, PhD
  Selfhelp Community Services
- Joyce Slaughter-Scott, MPA
  City of New York Human Resources Administration