



Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

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"As social work practitioners or as students, we need to ensure that our practice wisdom influences our social service agencies, our schools of social work, and, more importantly, national and state level policy. We must use a time like this to applaud ourselves for a job well-done, and be mindful of our mission for the future."

The above quote appears in the Commissioned Paper "Reaffirming Our Mission: From Past to Present" by Dean Ruth Mayden and highlights her personal and professional vision of social work in America. Her message is both eloquent and prescriptive in its charge to the profession to become a major catalyst for change. The conditions and challenges referred to in her article can be directed to both the traditional academic community as well as the much larger practice community, which in the United States numbers more than 150,000 members. A careful reading of Dean Mayden's article will provide practitioners with bountiful clues for navigating the direction that continuing education efforts should and could take in the future.

Professionals who graduated from Schools of Social Work more than five years ago carry out the majority of social work practice. These individuals are required to address the issues and utilize the technologies that have emerged in recent years and have changed practice dramatically. The TANF legislation has irrevocably altered the face of social work policies and practices in the United States. The requirements and expectations placed upon our practice by politicians and the public have compelled us to heighten our expertise in our capacity to evaluate and validate our work. And the extraordinary technological revolution has permeated every aspect of our practice.

The policy and programmatic changes not only affect the profession, but have left the emerging needs of practice momentarily unfilled. While the social work profession contemplated its role in

these policy shifts, other entities, such as for-profits and non-social work professionals, saw this moment as an opportunity to vigorously move into fill these voids. We must convince policy makers that we are committed to working to bring about community desired outcomes while still operating within the social work code of ethics.

These confounding realities require us to take a step back and examine those gaps left in our profession as a result of these changes and label them as continuing education needs. We are continually reminded that education never really ends, and as professionals we must upgrade our skills to both anticipate future needs and ensure that the profession sustains its progressive growth in face of unrelenting challenges. Client and practitioner diversity, the role of community as both client and "co-worker," and the emergence of new practice arenas, such as fatherhood and workforce initiatives, are just a few of the new issues that affect traditional academic and practice communities. The Schools of Social Work will continue to evaluate their structure and curriculum as the practice community will continue to search for new ways to increase their capacity to fulfill the needs of the client and community.

We are sincerely indebted to the fine work of Dean Ruth Mayden, and commend her for the honest and compelling insights her article offers. The journal's remaining four articles implicitly support her appeal for reappraisal and highlight the central components of continuing education endeavors: the skills enhancement of social work practitioners. "The Implementation of a Sustainable Social Work Exchange Program: The University of Georgia and the University of Veracruz," by Dr. David P. Boyle and Bertha Murrieta Cervantes provides a viable model for an exchange program and explores the inherent benefits that each University gained from this unique crux of cross-cultural perspectives and

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methodologies. Dr. Joshua Miller's article, "The Use of Debriefings in Response to Disaster and Traumatic Events," advances that social workers can rely upon their extensive knowledge base and utilize debriefing models when serving traumatized groups or communities. Drs. Thomas E. Smith, Steven Schinke, and David W. Springer's article "Single-System Evaluation of Child Protective Services Training," underscores the necessity for child protective services workers to receive more intensive clinical training so that they can assume a

more holistic approach to the needs of their respective clients. The article also provides a training model that can be replicated in various practice environments. "The Integration of Theory into Practice: Suggestions for Supervisors," by Dr. Joan Beder, advocates the return of practice informed by a strong theoretical base, while emphasizing the crucial role that theory plays in the practice experience.