

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research

1993-2003

*A Decade of Linking Policy,
Practice, and Education through
the Advancement of Research*

RESEARCH • PRACTICE

IASWR

EDUCATION • POLICY

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What is IASWR's Mission?

The Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) was founded in 1993, in response to “the crisis in the development of research resources” declared by the Task Force on Social Work Research (1991). Five major social work organizations joined together to provide the core support to create IASWR, a 501 C-3 organization based in Washington, DC. IASWR works to fulfill the following mission:

- *To strengthen the research capacity of the social work profession to study problems of serious concern to society, and to advance the scientific basis for solving social problems.*
- *To promote the use of evidence-based research to improve practice, program development, policy, and thus, the quality of life, especially for underserved individuals, families, groups and communities.*
- *To enhance the voice of the profession in the national scientific community and in public policy determinations, through partnerships with interdisciplinary and social work organizations, and outreach to federal agencies.*

What is Social Work Research?

Social work research addresses psychosocial problems, preventive interventions, treatment of acute and chronic conditions, and community, organizational, policy and administrative issues. Covering the lifespan, social work research may address clinical, services and policy issues. It benefits consumers, practitioners, policy-makers, educators, and the general public by:

- Examining prevention and intervention strategies for health and mental health, child welfare, aging, substance abuse, community development, managed care, housing, economic self-sufficiency, family well-being, and more.
- Studying the strengths, needs, and inter-relationships of individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods, and social institutions.
- Providing evidence for improved service delivery and public policies

Rapid expansion in research efforts, enhancement of the social work research infrastructure and a renewed focus on knowledge development has occurred over the past decade. A growing number of social workers are undertaking rigorous research studies, and receiving researcher-initiated,

research career development, research infrastructure and research training grants.

Recent contributions from social work research include studies that address:

- Psychosocial assessment and intervention strategies for persons at risk of and living with cancer
- Access to mental health services for youth in urban and rural settings
- Depression among elders in long term care and home health care settings
- HIV/AIDS prevention and intervention in urban communities
- School based violence prevention efforts targeted to youth
- Risk factors associated with poverty and mental illness
- Community-based child maltreatment prevention models
- Resilience factors for diverse groups experiencing trauma
- Co-occurring disorders of substance abuse and mental illness.
- Assessment and interventions for individuals dealing with the multiple risk factors associated with poverty and domestic violence

What does IASWR do?

IASWR provides both new and experienced researchers with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare successful grants, obtain funding, and gain knowledge about emerging research relevant to social work. It offers researchers the opportunity to participate in workshops on cutting-edge research techniques from leading researchers and methodologists. Through building and strengthening of relationships with federal agencies, and by demonstrating the profession's capacity to conduct quality research, IASWR has been successful in advancing social work research within the federal sphere.

In its ten-year history, the IASWR staff, board of directors, consultants and scientific advisors have worked successfully:

- To establish a national social work research presence in Washington DC.
- To expand opportunities for social work research.
- To mentor social work researchers.
- To disseminate findings to inform policy and improve practice.
- To represent the profession in scientific and policy communities, including by establishing linkages with other related disciplines and national organizations.

Training Researchers

In 2000, with support from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), IASWR developed a researcher training curriculum used by NIDA in three regional technical assistance workshops.

*In summer 2003 IASWR twice hosted a research training workshop, **Rigorous and Relevant Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research**. Over 100 doctoral students, social work educators (from assistant professors to deans), and agency-based researchers learned cutting-edge methodology from expert faculty Deborah K. Padgett, New York University, James W. Drisko, Smith College, and Suzanne Heurтин-Roberts, National Cancer Institute.*

Each year IASWR invites federal program staff and successfully funded researchers to provide pre-conference technical assistance sessions for doctoral students and faculty in conjunction with the Society for Social Work and Research Conference. In 2003 in Washington, DC more than 300 participated in these sessions.

In 2001, IASWR embarked on implementing a *Strategic Plan* with three major emphases: Development of Research and Researchers, Bridging Research and Practice, and Connecting Research and Policy. At this tenth anniversary of IASWR's founding, it is important to celebrate accomplishments and highlight the changes that have occurred to enhance the research enterprise and knowledge building within the profession.

HIGHLIGHTS 1993-2003 DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCHERS

IASWR works to develop research and researchers through:

- Advocacy with federal agencies to promote opportunities for social work researchers and to identify the contributions from social work research. Social work advocacy resulted in NIMH's funding social work research development centers between 1993 and 2000, and NIDA's funding of seven research infrastructure development programs in schools of social work between 2000 and 2003. The overall number of social work researchers funded by NIH (including doctoral students, K awards, senior researchers and centers) more than tripled since 1993.

- Collaboration with federal partners, provider organizations, foundations, and professional organizations to focus on research agenda setting, and research strategies, and dissemination of research.
- Dissemination and exchange of information regarding social work research opportunities, funding, and research findings through our weekly listserv announcements, and semi-annual newsletter, *IASWR Research... Reports... Resources*.
- Offering presentations and workshops at conferences of our sponsoring organizations and at individual social work education programs on grant writing, funding opportunities, and emerging areas of research priorities.
- Hosting summer research methods training workshops, intensive faculty development institutes on relevant social work research issues, and research training curriculum workshops.
- Connecting social work researchers with federal program officers.
- Making grant writing resources available through the IASWR website and listserv announcements www.iaswresearch.org.

BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Collaboration with National Organizations

IASWR has built bridges to national groups with shared agendas to address common issues, identify the current state of research, and to promote evidence-based practices. Areas for research receiving attention include *child welfare practice, social worker recruitment and retention, aging, end of life, oncology, women's health, mental health, substance abuse, veteran's affairs, health disparities, family violence, economic security, co-occurring disorders, and the effectiveness and the efficacy of social work interventions.*

IASWR partners with an array of interdisciplinary organizations and coalitions, i.e., the Coalition for the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Science Research (CAHT-BSSR), the Consortium of Social Science Associations, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, the Child Welfare League of America, the National Child Abuse Coalition, the National Children's Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Center at Georgetown University, the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences, the Decade of Behavior, the

Gerontological Society of America, the ad-hoc Advocates for Quality Social Work in Long Term Care and the National Leadership Coalition on Social Work and Aging.

Through these relationships, IASWR helps to develop social work research initiatives, bring greater visibility to the contributions of social work researchers, and disseminate and diffuse research information to the social work community.

Connecting Research and Practice

- A series of summer institutes for BSW and MSW faculty to incorporate recent mental health research findings into social work curricula were held between 1996 and 1998.
- IASWR assisted in the development and dissemination of a gerontological social work research agenda which involved input from researchers and practitioners.
- With the growing focus on 'evidence-based practices', IASWR tracks federal efforts, participates in the Campbell Collaboration, and informs the social work community about resources and relevant research findings.
- IASWR collaborated with NASW to examine the current state of social work

Showcasing Social Work Research Contributions

"Moving Forward: Social Work Contributions to Mental Health Research" a June 2002 NIMH-sponsored, invitational symposium featured social work research presentations on the personal, cultural, and community dynamics of the promotion of mental health and prevention and treatment of mental illness.

In July 2003, IASWR convened representatives from the CDC Injury Center and the social work profession to highlight social work research contributions to the Injury Center's Research Agenda in regard to preventing domestic violence and child maltreatment and the interconnectedness of the multiple levels of violence.

PROJECT SAFE

*Following a five year effort led by Principal Investigator Kathleen Ell, to systematically test an evidence-based case management approach to improve cancer screening follow-up adherence, the **Project SAFE Toolkit** is now available. Funded by the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP) at the CDC, **PROJECT SAFE** implemented a health education counseling and systems navigation protocol, adding mental health screening and assessment, and intensive psychosocial counseling for women with special needs. The target population was medically under-served, ethnic minority, low income women from diverse populations. **PROJECT SAFE** improved adherence significantly over baseline rates. The Toolkit includes a self-instructional training manual which can guide adoption in practice settings or serve as a teaching resource.*

- involvement in psychosocial oncology research and to connect with researchers and practitioners examining effective dissemination strategies, as part of an emerging collaboration with NCI.
- Representing social work, participated in NCI and Center for the Advancement of Health meeting on “Designing for Dissemination,” and CDC and Lance Armstrong Foundation meeting on setting a cancer survivor research agenda for CDC.

Communicating with practitioners, educators and researchers.

- IASWR Listserv Announcements* is the only online newsletter produced specifically for the social work research community. Reaching out to more than 1500 subscribers (including deans, doctoral program directors, agency-based researchers, faculty, and individual researchers) the listserv provides an array of useful resources including information on funding opportunities, calls for papers, conferences, and social work relevant research findings and reports. The success of the listserv has been demonstrated by almost tripling subscribership in three years – with readership continuing to grow on a weekly basis.

- The IASWR website provides a central place for accessing resources for social work researchers as well as for informing the public of the profession’s research accomplishments. We plan future expansion of the website and a collaboration with NASW for their newly launched research page in Fall 2003.
- IASWR Research..Reports..Resources* is a semiannual newsletter distributed to the social work community to provide information on national research priorities, research resources and IASWR activities.

CONNECTING RESEARCH AND POLICY

Expand Influence and Collaboration with Federal Agencies

Over the decade IASWR has expanded its work with federal agencies, beyond the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. IASWR promotes opportunities for social work research(ers) with the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), National Institute on Aging (NIA), and the

National Institute on Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at NIH; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Administration on Children and Families, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at the Department of Health and Human Services, and with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), and the United States Air Force (USAF).

IASWR's work includes sharing findings from social work research efforts, promoting the development of social work research agendas; encouraging social work researcher participation on review committees and advisory groups; facilitating the development of collaborative efforts and funding opportunities for social work researchers and practitioners, and promoting sponsorship of social work specific research infrastructure building opportunities.

Specific Research to Policy Efforts

- Co-sponsor of the biannual Student Policy Practice Forum on Capitol Hill, which provides students with an opportunity to see first hand the involvement of social workers in the policy-making process and the importance of social work research in those efforts.
- Active participation in the Action Network for Social Work Education and Research (ANSWER), a coalition of social work groups advocating for federal legislation to enhance social work research opportunities.
- Provide input and guidance to federal agencies on critical issues, e.g. addressing health disparities, aging research, child welfare workforce, and psychosocial care in nursing homes.
- Develop on-going relationships with members of Congress to promote the contributions of the social work profession.

Assessing Progress in Building Infrastructure

*IASWR provided staff support for the NADD Task Force on Administrative Research Infrastructures within Social Work Education Programs which prepared the 1997 report **Challenges and Opportunities for Promoting Federally-funded Research in Social Work Programs.***

*David Austin, chair of the NIMH supported Task Force on Social Work Research (1988-1991) assessed the advances made in addressing the Task Force's recommendations in **A Report on Progress in the Development of Research Resources in Social Work.** (available on the IASWR website)*

Capitol Hill Briefing

In February 2002, Curtis McMillen, Associate Professor, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University spoke on "The Positive By-Products of Adversity" at a Congressional Briefing, Health in a Stressful World sponsored by CAHT-BSSR.

What are Sources of Support for IASWR Projects and Programs

National Institutes of Health

- NIMH
- NIDA
- NIAAA
- NCI
- Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program
- Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- Center for Mental Health Services

Department of Defense

United States Air Force/Department of Agriculture

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Family-Centered Practice

Ford Foundation

Casey Family Services

How Does the Social Work Community Support IASWR?

Core support for the activities of IASWR comes from leading social work practice, education and research organizations:

- Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD)
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE)
- National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD)
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
- Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)

Between 1999 and 2003, 52 social work education programs have directly supported our technical assistance, training and communication activities. The thirteen highlighted programs provided funds annually.

Adelphi University
Andrews University
Boston University
Bryn Mawr College
Case Western Reserve University
CSU, San Bernardino
CSU, Stanislaus
Columbia University
Florida International University
Fordham University
Gallaudet University
James Madison University
Louisiana State University
Michigan State University
New York University²
North Carolina Central University
Ohio State University
Portland State University
Rutgers University
St. Ambrose University
St. Louis University
Simmons College
Southern Illinois University
Southwest Texas State University
Syracuse University

University of Alabama
University of Albany
University of Arkansas, Little Rock
University of Buffalo
University of Chicago
University of Denver
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Illinois, U-C
University of Illinois, Chicago
University of Kansas
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland
University of Maryland Baltimore County
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of Pittsburgh
University of Southern California
University of South Carolina¹
University of Tennessee
University of Texas, Austin
University of Utah
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Virginia Commonwealth University
Washington University
Wayne State University

¹ Distribution of Listserv

² *Information for Practice*

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