

RESEARCH ■ PRACTICE



EDUCATION ■ POLICY

**INSTITUTE FOR THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL  
WORK RESEARCH**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2001—2005**

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Dear Colleagues:

In the Fall 2003, the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) embarked on the celebration of its Tenth Anniversary, acknowledging the past decade's achievements in knowledge development and building of the social work research infrastructure. The IASWR *Strategic Plan*, launched in January 2001 has proactively guided IASWR's activities over the past three years in helping to build this infrastructure, developing research and researchers, and building the connections between social work research and policy, practice and education. Although originally conceptualized as only a three-year plan, in September 2003, the IASWR Board of Directors reaffirmed the broad goals and actions articulated in the *Strategic Plan* and extended it through 2005.

The inclusive strategic planning process, directed by IASWR past President David Biegel, benefited from the wisdom, ideas, and creativity of multiple constituencies, representing members of the IASWR Board of Directors, the IASWR Scientific Advisory Committee, members of the Society for Social Work Research, and other social work scholars and researchers. The mission and vision articulated in the *Strategic Plan* continues to guide our work and provide direction to IASWR's activities. As we look toward IASWR's second decade we look forward to working with our many partners to achieve the goals and objectives articulated in the plan.

Ann Nichols-Casebolt, Ph.D.  
President

Joan Levy Zlotnik, Ph.D., ACSW  
Executive Director

# INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

## Strategic Plan – 2001 - 2005

### IASWR MISSION

The mission of the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) is to advance the scientific knowledge base of social work practice by building the research capacity of the profession, by increasing support and opportunities for social work research, and by promoting linkages among the social work practice, research, and education communities. IASWR's purposes are to:

- Promote the development, support, and use of social work research on problems of serious concern to society.
- Promote social work research and the dissemination of research findings in order to improve practice, program development, and social policy that will enhance the quality of life for all people.
- Promote interdisciplinary as well as social work partnerships in order to advance the scientific basis for solving social problems.

### IASWR VALUES

The values of the social work profession, including the *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the values of integrity and quality in scientific inquiry guide the work of IASWR. IASWR promotes research that focuses on issues of serious social concern and is rooted in the social work values of social justice and enhancement of the quality of life for all people. IASWR advances the social work profession's potential to promote evidence-based knowledge that informs social work practice, policy, and advocacy for social justice.

### IASWR VISION

IASWR will lead the profession in the development, dissemination and utilization of scientific knowledge in social work through:

- Creating infrastructures for social work research, including enhancing the capacity of faculty, and baccalaureate, master's and doctoral students to compete for and to conduct sound research on important social problems,
- Leading advocacy efforts to expand funding for social work research,
- Influencing internal and external stakeholders to view social work research as integral to practice and to the solution of social problems,
- Providing high quality professional development opportunities to enhance social work researchers' knowledge and skills,
- Building collaborations within the profession and with stakeholders from other professional and organizational groups in order to advance social work research,
- Informing social workers about research opportunities, resources, and research findings, and
- Encouraging social work students to choose careers in social work research.

### IASWR HISTORY

IASWR was created by five major social work organizations in response to a 1991 National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) report on the status of social work research. The report cited the need to strengthen social work research resources in order to contribute to the social work knowledge base, particularly in the field of mental health, where 70% of the services are provided by social workers, while only about 1% of the research was being undertaken by social workers. Social work research initiatives are needed in areas that reflect the social work profession's significant involvement in promoting the public's mental health and general welfare, including the safety, well-being and healthy development of children and adolescents, care and housing of the mentally ill, poverty, substance abuse, conditions affecting traditionally under-served populations including diverse racial and ethnic groups, women, the aged, and those afflicted by acute and chronic illness such as HIV/AIDS.

IASWR was created as a 501 (c) 3 organization in 1993, and receives core support from its founding organizations which include:

- The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) - the organization that accredits the 163 MSW programs and 439 BSW programs in the United States.
- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) - the 150,000 member organization of social work practitioners,
- The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) - representing the interests of the 75 social work doctoral programs,
- The National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD) - representing the interests of social work graduate programs,
- The Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD) - representing the interests of BSW education.

In 2000, the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), also became a supporting organization to IASWR. Founded in 1994, in close association with IASWR's mission, the membership of SSWR is now over 1400 social work researchers,

IASWR works together with these organizations, government agencies, foundations, and individual practitioners, researchers and educators to enhance the research enterprise in social work. The governance structure includes a fourteen-member board comprised of three officers, nine representatives from the six supporting organizations and two at-large members. In 2000, the Board's Strategic Planning Committee developed the following goals and tasks focusing on the organization's three major emphases, *Research Development*, *Research to Practice*, and *Research to Policy*.

# RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

## **I. IASWR SHOULD CREATE ON-GOING STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHERS.**

- A. Develop and implement expanded strategies to provide research training seminars, mentorship, and technical assistance in research proposal development, in order to groom faculty and agency-based social work researchers to become independent research investigators.
- B. Pursue a range of funding mechanisms, including grants and participant tuition, to provide research development opportunities.
- C. Work with sponsoring organizations to develop a Minority Researchers Group at SSWR or CSWE and provide assistance/mentoring to members of the Black Social Work Educators Group.
- D. In collaboration with CSWE, NADD, BPD and SSWR, strengthen opportunities to engage BSW and MSW students in research efforts.
- E. Encourage earlier entry into social work research training.

## **II. IASWR SHOULD PARTNER WITH SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ENHANCE SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH.**

- A. Strengthen collaboration between IASWR and SSWR to enhance social work research.
- B. Implement on-going technical assistance strategies with IASWR's supporting organizations, including on-going visibility at each organization's annual conference.
  - Sponsor sessions on funding resources (see RD III. B)
  - Develop a forum at each conference of BPD, CSWE, NADD, GADE and SSWR to stimulate discussion and to develop strategies for a comprehensive research plan for social work at all levels of the educational spectrum.
- C. Collaborate with BPD to enhance the research capacity within BSW programs by
  - Assisting faculty to overcome barriers to research,
  - Providing technical assistance to identify funding sources for agency-based research initiatives,
  - Promoting the importance of strengthening the research endeavor at the undergraduate program level.
- D. Collaborate with GADE to enhance the quality of doctoral education through research development, dissemination of practice relevant research findings, and development of research funding resources by:
  - Identifying and implementing strategies for preparing new social work PhDs to conduct funded, high quality research and working to increase post-doctoral fellowship opportunities.
  - Assisting doctoral programs to assure there are social work doctoral graduates who can produce excellent research and who are well-qualified to establish social work's national reputation.

## **III. IASWR SHOULD EXPAND EFFORTS TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION TO THE SOCIAL WORK COMMUNITY ABOUT RESEARCH FUNDING SOURCES.**

- A. Use the IASWR Listserve to provide information about a wide range of public and private research funding sources and expand the number of Listserve participants through regularly publicizing the Listserve.
- B. Expand IASWR's sponsorship of presentations on research funding opportunities at national social work conferences, including presentations by a wider array of federal funders and representatives of

national foundations. (see RD I. B)

- C. Develop a resource book of feasible grants/funding agencies, highlighting the type of research conducted.

#### **IV. IASWR SHOULD ARTICULATE THE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY OF FEDERAL AND PRIVATE FUNDING SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH**

- A. Create a strategy for a social work response to key reports, e.g., the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health and the NIMH report on Translating Behavioral Science into Action.
- B. Collaboratively with SSWR, explore the development of a mechanism (i.e., database) to identify social workers involved in particular areas of research and their current and recently funded research grants.
- C. Lead the social work profession to create a national initiative to bring together respected researchers in specific fields of practice (i.e., child welfare, aging, mental health, families, health disparities, prevention, social justice) toward establishing a research-based consensus about the effectiveness of practice and the demonstration of evidence-based practice research which will enhance the quality of life.
- D. Promote cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practice research efforts in areas of importance to social workers, including initiatives on health disparities and prevention and treatment.
- E. Demonstrate the social work profession's capacity to address issues associated with services aimed at the reduction of health disparities among racial, ethnic, geographic, and age-specific populations.
  - Assist the social work profession to take the lead in addressing the issue of disparities, especially the impact on African American and Hispanic families of the high proportion of young men who are incarcerated or in the criminal justice system.
  - Promote cross-cultural research to support the research of non-minority researchers interested in research on minorities.

### **BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

#### **I. IASWR SHOULD WORK WITH NASW AND CSWE TO ENHANCE SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS' USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE.**

- A. Disseminate findings from social work research that are of relevance to social work practitioners and social work educators through publications, both electronic (website, listserv) and paper copy.
  - Create periodic *IASWR Research to Practice Briefs*.
  - Explore publication of a newsletter focusing on *research highlights for practice*.
  - Provide synopses of social work research findings for NASW and CSWE newsletters.
  - Work with GADE to gather and disseminate abstracts of social work doctoral dissertations through the IASWR Website.
- B. Enhance practitioners' awareness of and appreciation for evidence-based practice by assisting NASW, its practice sections and other social work practice organizations to enhance their capacities to relate research to practice.
- C. Work with CSWE to strengthen integration of evidence-based practice into schools of social work curricula in social work education programs.
  - Bring together researchers, practitioners and faculty to identify and implement strategies to

- integrate research into practice courses.
  - Promote the creation of research-based teaching modules that can be readily adopted by faculty.
  - Promote the development and dissemination of model syllabi that infuse qualitative and quantitative research across the curriculum and text books that use evidence based research in full range of fields of practice.
- D. In consort with BPD, NADD, GADE, and SSWR, assess the effectiveness of previous efforts that were initiated by IASWR and NIMH to link the teaching of practice and research including assessing outcomes from the summer institutes for BSW and MSW faculty which were held at Cornell and Michigan.

## **II. IASWR SHOULD TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN WORKING WITH SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL WORK AND THEIR AFFILIATED RESEARCH CENTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF MECHANISMS TO DISSEMINATE RESEARCH FINDINGS THAT ADDRESS BARRIERS TO THE USE OF RESEARCH IN PRACTICE AND SERVICE DELIVERY.**

- A. Explore opportunities to develop grant proposals focused on profession-wide research agenda setting and/or research dissemination, e.g. NIMH Research Infrastructure Support Program (RISP).
- B. Secure federal research conference grants to:
  - Identify Research Dissemination Strategies.
  - Disseminate research findings to social work practitioners
- C. Secure funding for IASWR to create a liaison to research centers at schools and departments of social work to disseminate research findings.

## **III. IASWR SHOULD WORK WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES TO PROMOTE EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE**

- Engage in efforts to place social workers on committees in other disciplines that are developing/reviewing practice guidelines.

# RESEARCH TO POLICY

## I. IASWR SHOULD DEVELOP A LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH IN THE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND POLICY ARENAS.

- A. Develop or increase social work links to relevant scientific advisory bodies to assure the profession's involvement in setting national research priorities.
  - Identify scientific advisory bodies to which social work should be linked.
  - Establish strategies for securing appointments to relevant scientific advisory councils, panels.
  - Identify individuals in the social work community who already have these links and use their expertise and contacts to assist in the identification of barriers and development of strategies for overcoming barriers.
  - Identify potential social work appointees to scientific advisory bodies.
  - Working together with IASWR's Scientific Advisory Committee and SSWR, consider the possibility of establishing a scientific academy for social work to facilitate this objective.
  
- B. IASWR should increase social work representation on relevant scientific review panels.
  - Develop strategies for getting appointments to these review panels.
  - Identify relevant scientific review panels on which social work should be represented
  - Identify barriers to obtaining appointments to these panels and develop strategies for overcoming these barriers.
  - Identify potential social work appointees to review panels.
  
- C. IASWR should, in collaboration with ANSWER, increase the impact of social work research on significant national and policy issues.
  - Submit names of qualified social workers to key national policy and administrative positions.
  - Identify and establish a working relationship with social workers who currently hold key policy positions in Washington.
  - Enhance the network of social workers who are interested in working on national policy issues.
  - Establish/maintain mechanisms for identifying policy issues of significance to social work.
  - Establish work group networks of social work researchers to exchange emerging findings on a regular/periodic basis.
  - Facilitate communication with policy-makers.
  - Facilitate collaboration for multi-site studies that have greater impact.

## II. IASWR SHOULD INCREASE LINKS TO OTHER DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS.

- A. Facilitate development of multidisciplinary/cross-disciplinary research initiatives.
- B. Participate in coalitions with other organizations to advocate for funding critical research studies to address emerging social concerns.

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