



BRIEF NOTES

Best Practices in Human Services Education

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The Journal of Human Services has always recognized the importance of continuously evolving educational practices to better prepare future human service providers. This special issue, “Best Practices in Human Service Education,” exemplifies this commitment by showcasing contemporary inquiry, innovative methodologies, and advocacy within a context marked by significant sociopolitical events. The articles highlight the interconnected nature of pedagogy, research, practice, and advocacy, covering ethical principles, competency-based training, motivational interviewing, remote internships, and online education for nontraditional learners. This edition provides valuable insights and practical applications for advancing human service education, aiming to inspire curricular revisions and innovations to foster competent, compassionate, and ethical human service professionals.

The *Journal of Human Services* has always recognized the saliency of human services education and the need to consistently address and revise our pedagogy. Human services professionals, practitioners, educators and researchers ensure our praxis is focused on training the next generation of human service providers with evidence-based and promising strategies. Our pedagogy, research, practice, and advocacy are inextricably interconnected. Human Services practice is informed in theory-driven skills and the application of theory to real-life work in our field, which in turn, informs research questions and theory building. For this reason, this special issue of the journal, *Best Practices in Human Services*, is both salient and timely. The issue exemplifies an important iteration of teaching and learning, research, practice, and advocacy within this sociopolitical and historical landscape; a landscape marked by significant current events of the past several years including, and not limited to, changes made to human services education and practice post-Covid and in a national and international political landscape that has significantly impacted historically marginalized communities that human services professionals engage (e.g. the health, economic and educational consequences of a world-wide pandemic, escalating violence against BIPOC persons, immigration debates and xenophobic political rhetoric, anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation, international conflicts across the globe—just to name a few).

The articles collected in this issue represent contemporary inquiry, practice, and advocacy in human services. The issue contains a balance of case studies—focused both on pedagogy and advocacy, review articles that support

pedagogical innovation and best practices, and research articles that represent important inquiry connected to the teaching of future human services professionals. These contributions also represent educational strategies across diverse educational contexts and pedagogies from online education to experiential to project-based modalities of teaching and learning. Most importantly, however, while diverse in content and focus, these articles are unified in their explicit call to create a more robust human services educational framework from curriculum redesign that is informed in ethics and theory-driven skills quality to online instruction for adult learners to designing better remote internship infrastructure and providing students opportunities to engage in advocacy initiatives.

In “Knowledge of Legislation as an Ethical Principle for Undergraduate Rehabilitation Studies,” Abigail Akande, argues that undergraduate rehabilitation education degree programs are informed in ethical frameworks as per accreditation standards and should also include a dedicated course on ethics. The article makes a compelling case for this curriculum development in the context of our shifting political and policy landscape that directly impacts clients’ accessibility to quality healthcare and human services, especially for clients from minoritized communities.

Similarly advocating for shifts in human service curriculum, Maureen Doyle, Juline Koken, Karla Chincilla and Landon Rachor advocate for the inclusion of motivational interviewing skills, as an evidence-supported interpersonal communication and interviewing skill set, relevant to many practitioners in the field of human services. In “Implementation Model for Motivational Interviewing Training in a Community College Human Services Program”, they report on the implementation of a Motivational Interviewing training as part of their core curriculum and micro-credentialing program for students in a community college. Given the saliency and increased popularity of micro-credentialing, this case study provides an important perspective and roadmap for those human service educators hoping to create similar micro-credentialing programs and curriculum developments in their own institutions.

Results of a research study investigating human service students’ preparedness to assess client suicidality revealed that the students in the study were not prepared to address clients’ suicidality. Thus, the authors, Narketta Sparkman-Kay, Jeffrey Moe, Bianca Augustine, and T’Airra Belcher advocate and make a compelling appeal to support competency-based training in suicidality with undergraduate human services students. In their article, “Human Service Students’ Preparedness for Assessing Suicidality: Recommendations for Human Services Education,” they point out that human services students, as persons who enter the field even before their degree completion—during practicum and internship experiences—should possess knowledge and competencies around client suicidality especially as suicide remains a critical public health concern at a time when suicide rates are increasing. Hence, the article both highlights an important gap in the

literature on students' knowledge and competency around client suicidality and makes important recommendations for human service education. This is an important contribution that highlights the interconnectedness of research and practice and human service praxis.

Other recommendations for teaching and learning in Human Services are proposed in both Chaniece Winfield, Kathryn Hughes, and Jessica Huffman's literature review article on engaging non-traditional adult learners through quality human service online educational programming and Nicole Kras and Jennifer Keenan's research article on remote human services internships. Both articles focus on quality teaching and learning in an increasingly popular and relevant online and remote curricular space. In "The Current Role of Remote Human Services Internships: a Follow-Up Study." The authors report findings from a qualitative study focused on the perceptions and experiences of faculty, students, and human service professionals engaged in remote internships. This represents a follow-up study to the authors' initial investigation on the topic, which began with the advent of Covid-19 related migration to remote internships. Given these internships have remained popular, researchers studied the phenomenon once more finding that students continue to report that these internships are more "flexible" and "cost-effective," which the authors note make these remote experiences ones that promote educational access and equity. On the other hand, however, participants also noted that these remote internships challenge their capacity to engage interpersonally and that this is a significant drawback. Hence, authors conclude that these experiences are important and more complex to design effectively and call for the necessity to establish best practices in the design and delivery of these learning opportunities.

Responding to this call, the authors of "Non-Traditional Adult Learners After Covid-19: Applying National Standards for Online Teaching in Human Services," recognize and reflect the importance of remote learning in human services, especially for non-traditional adult learners, and specifically advocate that human service educators engage in the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching as a framework and set of standards to deliver high-quality education. The authors make a compelling case that these standards should guide our curriculum design. The authors connect these standards to the Community of Inquiry Framework (COI) for online education as well as the application of CSHSE's and NOHS' standards for preparing competent human service providers. This review weaves together these standards to highlight a roadmap to best practices in online education.

In the two case studies "Nurturing Success: Empowering Human Services Students to Lead a Campus Food Pantry" by Carly Redding and Michallene McDaniel and Cinzia Pica's "Facilitating Learning in Context: Refugee Resettlement Case Management Pedagogy in a Human Services Course," readers may recognize the potential for experiential and project-based human services education to support students' content learning that is context-situated, systems oriented, and focused on advocacy and action. These case

studies recount the experiences of two human services initiatives that sparked knowledge of food insecurity as well as migration and refugee resettlement processes, respectively, and how students were called to action on these issues. Given that human service educators are charged with inspiring the next generation of human services practitioners and professionals to engage both interpersonally with clients and communities and at the systemic level through advocacy for social change, one will recognize the importance of initiatives such as these highlighted in the case studies that promote competencies on the micro and macro level.

Finally, this special issue on best practices in human services education presents a wide array of topics, teaching modalities, and research. While authors engage in diverse topics as well as a diversity of pedagogies and research methodologies, the articles are united in that they provide a roadmap for thinking about the future of human services education towards the goal of preparing competent, compassionate, ethical human service practitioners and professionals. It is my hope that readers of this issue of the *Journal of Human Services* will appreciate the relevance and importance of each of these contributions. It is our hope that these contributions will spark curiosity, questions, and revisions to our own iterative curricula and instruction.

Respectfully,

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