
Practicum Partnership Program (PPP) Multi-Site Evaluation Student Outcomes

April 2005-July 2007

Introduction

In April 2005 ten graduate social work programs were awarded 3-year grants to implement the Practicum Partnership Program (PPP) and, in March 2006, an additional 25 received similar grants. These 35 sites were funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation as a part of an 8-year initiative to encourage the adoption and dissemination of the model in 60 universities. A 3-year demonstration project involving 11 universities showed that the model was successful in preparing social work students for careers in aging.

Of these 35 sites:

- 31 developed a PPP as a 1-year program; 4 as a 2-year program
- All sites with 1-year programs included 2nd year graduate students; several also admitted 1st year students
- Students applied and were selected after meeting multiple criteria
- The range of students in each site was 3-13 and most planned on increasing their program size in the future

This Report

This summary report presents the cumulative data for PPP students in the 35 sites for two academic years: 2005-06 and 2006-07. Outcome data on students in some programs are not included, as they had not yet completed a post-test at the time of this report. For more information refer to: *the Appendix*, which contains data tables and charts presented by year, grant cycle and in aggregate and the **Career Planning Report**.

Student outcomes are assessed in terms of the impact of the PPP on student knowledge of aging

(Knowledge of Aging for Geriatric Social Work Quiz and Knowledge of Aging Services Quiz), competency in working with older adults (PPP Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale II), satisfaction with the program, and career interest. Students were asked to complete web-based pre- and post-tests. In addition, field instructors for the first 10 schools rated their students on skill competency as part of the development of an objective competency measure (PPP GSW Competency Scale II – Field Instructor Version).

The PPP Students (n=263)

- PPP students were young (63% under age 29), mostly women (91%) and Caucasian (82%)
- A majority of PPP students (65%) were in year 2 of a graduate social work program, in PPP for one year (89%), and full-time students (84%)
- PPP students' undergraduate majors were diverse with social work as the most frequent (33%)
- One half of PPP students had taken an aging course prior to the PPP; of those 48% had taken only one course and 49% took the courses as an undergraduate
- Over half (55%) of the students were enrolled in a direct practice specialization and 76% were enrolled in an aging population specialization
- Forty-four percent of PPP students worked in aging before the PPP and 64% had volunteer experience in aging; most had regular contact with family or other older adults.

Knowledge and Skill Outcomes (n=195)

- Aging knowledge increased significantly from pre- to post-test although scores on the Knowledge Quiz were low at both points and scores on Aging Services Quiz were high at both points.
- Student self-assessed and field instructor evaluation of student geriatric social work competency increased significantly from pre- to post-test
 - Values and Ethics was the high domain at pre- and post-test
 - Programs and Policies was the lowest domain at pre- and post-test although many skills increased significantly
- The ten most improved skills are highly relevant to the PPP model and today's practice

Student Satisfaction (n=195)

- Students were highly satisfied with the PPP rotation (rating 4.4 on a scale of 1-5)
- Students would highly recommend the program to other students (rating 4.6 on a scale of 1-5)

Career Interest (N=191)

- PPP students were interested in careers in aging; 76% at pre-test; 83% at post-test
- Of students seeking a job at graduation 85% sought an aging related position
- Twenty-eight percent of students employed at post-test were going to jobs (new or former) in agencies where they were employed prior to graduate school
- Forty-five per cent were employed by the agency in which they completed their PPP internship
- Students reported interest in a variety of work settings; the PPP appears to have broadened their interest in settings, as overall, there were multiple shifts of interest after PPP

PPP Field Instructors- 10 Schools Only (N= 96)

- Field Instructors were predominantly women (81%), Caucasian (92%), and had a mean age of 48.3 years
- Seventy-three percent reported 10 or more years experience working in aging
- Only 45% of field instructors identify their primary field of practice as aging
- Field instructors have a breadth of experience in a variety of settings
- Thirty-five percent reported 10 or more years as Field Instructor

Did PPP Student Self-Ratings of Competency Match Ratings by their Field Instructor?

- Field Instructors evaluation of student's competence showed significant improvement in all skill domains
- There was no significant difference between field instructor ratings and student's self-assessment at pre-test; however, field instructors did rate students lower in the Programs and Policies domain
- At post-test, the only significant difference in field instructor and student skill assessments was in the domain of Values and Ethics; field instructors rated students higher
- Field Instructors used competencies in multiple ways in their training

Implications and Conclusion

Outcomes for this large group of PPP students are clearly positive. The PPP model in the 35 sites is producing graduates who have gained knowledge of aging and competence in working with older adults. Their commitment to work with older adults is strengthened and they frequently return to the community to serve in the agencies that trained them.

Opportunities remain to recruit an increasingly diverse group of students to PPP, to impact knowledge by increasing the number of classes in aging as well as having the enriched field experience, and to increase the interest and skill in macro practice in gerontological social work.

For More Information

More information about the multi-site evaluation, methods, and findings can be obtained by contacting the program evaluators, who are the authors of this report: Dr. JoAnn Damron-Rodriguez at jdamron@ucla.edu and/or Dr. Frances P. Lawrance at flawran@aol.com. Information about the PPP can be found on the PPP website, www.socialwork.nyam.org, or obtained by email at swli@nyam.org.