



## ***THE PRACTICUM PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM***

### EVALUATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION SITES: Report I: Background, Methodology, Sites, Essential Components *Spring 2003*

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#### **Background**

The John A. Hartford Foundation funded the Practicum Partnership Program (PPP) in 1999 to increase the numbers of graduate social work student specializing in aging through the development of more aging-rich field practicum sites. The six PPP demonstration sites participated in a collaborative cross-site evaluation in 2000-2003, founded in innovation theory and developed through a synthesis of white papers on geriatric social work, other documents, and the original evaluation plan of each PPP site.

The evaluation was conducted by the New York Academy of Medicine's PPP Coordinating Center through a subcontract with Partners in Care Foundation of Burbank, California. It was a unique collaborative effort of the demonstration sites, with representatives from the sites participating in decisions about the evaluation during each phase of development and implementation. This report is the first in a series prepared by the evaluation team and submitted to the New York Academy of Medicine between 2003-5.

#### **Purpose and Methodology of the Collaborative Cross-Site Evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the PPP model at the student and institutional (graduate social work program) levels. A simple pre-post design was used.

All students completed questionnaires before starting their PPP internship and upon completion of their PPP program. Students were surveyed at four months and one to two years post graduation to determine their employment status and career related activities. Background and impact data at the institutional level was collected before the PPP program started and at the end of the third implementation year. Institutional level background and impact variables included the numbers of students specializing in aging and in aging field placements, and numbers of aging agencies affiliated with field education. Finally, sites were surveyed during the third funded year to determine how they implemented the PPP essential components and during the four year of implementation (post Hartford grants), to determine the extent of their sustainability. All data was analyzed and reported in a series of evaluation reports.

Much of the first year of the evaluation was devoted to selecting and developing instruments and procedures due to timing considerations. Only, background data on the sites, student demographic data, and student knowledge of aging was collected for the first year. During the second and third years data was collected on all student variables (aging knowledge, skill in working with older adults, career interest, and satisfaction). Instruments included the Palmore Facts on Aging Quiz and the PPP Skill in Working with Older Adults Scale (later to be renamed the PPP Geriatric Social Work Scale<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> To learn more about the development of this important instrument, which has now undergone reliability and validity testing and revised to a shorter, user friendly version, go to the fact sheet titled "..." or [www.socialwork.nyam.org](http://www.socialwork.nyam.org). A copy of the instrument is available on this website.

## The Demonstration Sites

The demonstration sites, selected through a competitive process, were large graduate social work programs in large, aging rich, predominately public universities, with small numbers of students in aging specializations or concentrations (the six sites involved 11 universities).

The sites included:

- ✓ Hunter College School of Social Work/ Brookdale Center on Aging
- ✓ University of Michigan School of Social Work
- ✓ University at Albany, State University of New York, School of Social Welfare
- ✓ University of California at Berkeley School of Social Work with San Francisco State University School of Social Work and San Jose State University School of Social Work
- ✓ University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work
- ✓ Partners in Care Foundation in consortium with the Schools of Social Work and Social Welfare at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), California State University - Los Angeles, California State University - Long Beach, and University of Southern California

## Essential Components of the PPP Model

In 2002, after 2 years of implementing a PPP program, the principle investigators of the demonstration sites, came to consensus about the essential components of the PPP model. These components were viewed, and continue to be, as critically important to graduate education in developing competent geriatric social work practitioners.

The components are:

- **University-Community Partnership:** a partnership between one or more graduate program(s) and agencies providing services to older adults in the community that designs the PPP internship program and oversees program implementation and development.
- **Competency-Driven Education:** education built upon a set of geriatric social work competencies, or standards, for social work practice which are used to plan student learning goals and experiences, help define curriculum and coursework content, promote integration between field and coursework, and assess student skill level.
- **Integrated Field Education across Multiple Programs, Populations, Interventions, And Disciplines:** rotations, over one academic year, in which students have field learning experiences in several senior agencies or programs that vary in services provided, populations of older adults served, intervention methods, and disciplines providing care.
- **Expanded Field Instructor Role:** the role of the field instructor includes the traditional responsibilities but is expanded to include direction and coordination of student learning across programs and agencies, participation in the university-agency partnership activities, teaching selected education components, and consultation on education and training in field agencies.
- **Focused Recruitment Of Students To Geriatric Social Work:** specific strategies to attract students to aging careers and to the PPP program are developed and implemented.

## Preliminary Outcomes (2000-2)

One hundred and eighty-one students completed a PPP demonstration program in the first two years of the program. The sites recruited a diverse group of students. Findings on student outcomes were positive, revealing significant gains in student knowledge of aging and skill in working with older adults, a high level of sustained interest in working with older adults, and a high level of satisfaction with their PPP internships.