Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work Program

Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC
Assistant Professor of Social Work
Morehead State University – Morehead, KY

- Experience working in residential treatment for SUDs
- Therapist in private practice treating SUDs and mental health disorders
- Coordinator of Chemical Dependency Counseling courses
- Advisor for all Chemical Dependency Counseling minors
- Created new addictions course for all social work majors
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC

Session Agenda

Examine the need for social workers to have improved training in SUDs

Explore options for BSW programs, give examples

Participants leave with ideas, resources, and excitement to make changes in their programs

Examining the Need

- SUDs impact individuals, families, groups, and communities in myriad ways, including disruptions in social, relational, occupational, financial, and healthcare structures and routines
- Social Workers are one of the primary mental health providers in the US (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018)
- Researchers have consistently found that social workers at all levels of education and licensure will routinely encounter and work with individuals with substance use disorders, even if their primary role is not as a clinician or in a substance use treatment setting (Minnick, 2019; Russett & Williams, 2015; Whitaker et al., 2006).
Examples of BSW-level Positions

- Child Protective Services
- Domestic violence programs or shelters
- Homeless programs or shelters
- Employment
- Housing
- Health Insurance
- Food Assistance
- Re-entry

Examining the Need

- Concerns in recent years that social work students are not receiving adequate foundational education about substance use disorders and are therefore not fully competent in their work with clients (Kourgiatakis et al., 2020; Minnick, 2019; Quinn, 2010; Russett & Williams, 2015)
Examining the Need

- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics requires that all social workers challenge social injustice, uphold the dignity and worth of all people, and practice competently (2021), all of which are relevant to this conversation.
- Recent research has shown that very few MSW programs and even fewer BSW programs nationwide provide the adequate knowledge and skills needed for social workers to work with clients with SUDs effectively (Kourgiantakis et al., 2020; Minnick, 2019; Quinn, 2010; Russett & Williams, 2015).

Surveying the Landscape

- BSW programs with addictions certificate – 5%  (28 of 540)
- MSW programs with addictions certificate – 12%  (37 of 308)
- MSW programs with specialization in addictions – 5%  (16 of 308)

(Council on Social Work Education, 2022)
Surveying the Landscape

• According to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), only 14 schools in the U.S. have an addictions counseling program

(Publication by CACREP, 2022)

Past Initiatives

• Published in 2013 by NASW
  • Defined the scope of services social workers should be providing
  • Helped clarify the social work lens through which treatment is provided and establish expectations

(Published by NASW, 2013)
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

Previous Initiatives

• Social Work Immersion Faculty Training (SWIFT)
• Funded by National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
• Was only for faculty within MSW programs (Lundgren et al., 2018)

Recent Initiatives

• Published in 2020 by CSWE
  • Focused on, and was piloted within MSW programs
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

New Approach for BSW Programs

- Infuse SUD-related topics throughout the BSW curriculum
- Creation of a required addictions course for all BSW students
- Creation of a minor in substance use disorders

Required Addictions Course for all BSW Students

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC
Development of the Course

- Gain support of fellow social work faculty & administration
  - Present evidence that supports such a course
  - See what other schools in your area are doing
- Utilize expertise and resources within the faculty
  - Draw on experience and expertise of those already on staff
  - Utilize adjuncts working in the field, if needed
- The goal is to provide a breadth of knowledge for all students and challenge stereotypes and biases

Required Addictions Course

- Stigma, stereotypes, biases
- Nature of Addiction (Introduction)
- Addiction Models (examines the medical model and some opposing views)
- Drugs of Abuse (because of the nature of this course, only the most prevalent drugs of abuse would be explored (opioids, alcohol, meth, marijuana – these could be adjusted as trends change), although the text would have info about many others)
- Physical and Mental Health Implications of Substance Abuse (co-occurring disorders; HIV, Hepatitis)
- Substance Abuse Across the Life Span (adolescents, college students, geriatric)
- The Family (the impact of SUD on the family)
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC

Required Addictions Course (continued)

- Cultural Competency / Gender Considerations (ethnic/cultural differences, special populations, LGBTQ+, women, minorities)
- Assessment and Intervention (the basics of assessment for SUD)
- Treatment Options (including MAT)
- Self-Help Support Groups (AA/NA, etc.)
- Relapse (what it is, why it happens, how to plan ahead, etc.)
- Drug Policy and Legislation (what social workers need to know about current drug policies, rehabilitation vs. incarceration)

Required Addictions Course (continued)

- Exposure to current films and media related to SUDs
- Opportunities for self-reflection throughout
- Empathy Building project
- Self-Help Recovery Group assignment
Academic Minor in Substance Use Disorders

- Minor consists of 21 credit hours:
  - Four courses in addictions
  - Two elective courses in a related topic
    - Social work, psychology, nursing, sociology
  - 120-hour practicum in substance use treatment facility
Academic Minor in SUD

• The goal of the minor is to prepare students academically for gaining certification / licensure as a substance abuse counselor
• Focuses on CSWE competencies as well as the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) requirements
  • The overarching organization that provides a structure for state licensure boards that enables licensees to take examinations, get credentialed, and transfer credentials from state to state

IC&RC Requirements

• Focus on 4 domains
  • Screening, Assessment, and Engagement
  • Treatment Planning, Collaboration, and Referral
  • Counseling
  • Professional and Ethical Responsibilities
Screening, Assessment, & Engagement

• Best practices for interviewing
• Stages of change
• Criteria for diagnoses of SUDs
• Use of a variety of SUD assessment instruments
• Behaviors, patterns, and progressive stages of SUDs
• Elements of a biopsychosocial assessment
• How race, diversity, culture, socioeconomic status and demographics play a role in screening and assessment

Treatment Planning, Collaboration, & Referral

• Risk factors such as suicide, homicide, family violence, self injury
• Responding to clients in crisis
• Level of care placement criteria
• Advocacy techniques; utilizing community resources
• The recovery process and relapse dynamics
• Developing individualized treatment plans
• Documenting treatment progress
Counseling

- Techniques for building rapport and engaging with clients
- Counseling and therapeutic approaches specific to SUDs
- Various groups (self-help, therapeutic)
- Family dynamics and theories of family counseling
- Use of evidence-based modalities such as motivational interviewing
- Providing care that respects the differences in individuals based on race, culture, identity, ethnic background, age, religion, and gender

Professional & Ethical Responsibilities

- Application of the professional code of ethics
- Client rights and the grievance process
- Continuing professional development
- The use of clinical supervision
- Identifying and referring clients with needs outside the counselor’s scope of practice
- Client confidentiality
- Maintaining accurate reports and documents
Started with End in Mind

- Used IC&RC requirements as a guide for curriculum development
- Considered practice experience of faculty and beliefs about what should be included
- Current literature with novel ideas and current evidence-based SUD treatment (Begun et al., 2021)

Infuse SUD-Related Curriculum Throughout BSW Program
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC

Infusion Throughout Curriculum

- Research
- Micro Practice
- Mezzo Practice
- Macro Practice
- Human Behavior
- Social Work Policy
- Elective Courses

Research Courses

- Students can conduct a variety of studies related to SUDs
- Connect studies to practicum placements
- Survey research, focus groups, qualitative interviews
- Data analysis classes: use public data sets such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC

**Micro Practice Courses**
- Skills in professionalism and rapport building with all people
- Role plays and simulations
- Motivational Interviewing
- Assessment tools
- Treatment planning

**Mezzo Practice Courses**
- Case studies and role plays with families experiencing SUDs
- Family systems theory, family development and the life cycle
- Assessment tools
- Treatment planning
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

33

**Macro Practice Courses**

- Case studies and examples of how systemic oppression has led to increased substance use in specific communities
- Challenge false narratives and stereotypes about groups of people

34

**Human Behavior Courses**

- Integrate SUD into the teaching of psychodynamic theories, cognitive and moreal development theories, behaviorism
- Examine substance use along the lifespan from adolescent to geriatric
- Case studies that include persons at any stage of substance use

Presented by: Monica Himes, PhD, LCSW, CADC
Integrating a Robust Addictions Curriculum into a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

**Policy Courses**

- Discuss historic drug policies and their long-term effects on communities
- Criminalization of drug use
- Policy analysis related to substance use policing or substance use treatment
  - Differences in sentencing based on substance
  - Intended and unintended consequences of marijuana legalization

**Elective Courses**

- **Military Social Work**
  - Prevalence of substance use
  - Co-occurrence with PTSD, TBI
- **Child Welfare**
  - Impact of substance use on parenting
  - Facilitating family preservation when SUDs are present
- **Medical Social Work**
  - Pain management
- **Juvenile Delinquency**
  - Adolescent patterns of substance use
  - Role of childhood trauma
- **Women and Partner Violence**
  - The role of substance use in IPV
- **Race, Class, Gender, and Crime**
  - The role of policing and discrimination
  - How drug policies have unfairly impacted black and brown communities
- **Sport Social Work**
  - The role of substances in the life of athletes
Barriers to Teaching about SUDs

Possible Barriers

- Recent study about SUD inclusion in Social Work programs:
  - 48% report lack of space in the curriculum
  - 66% report lack of faculty expertise
  - 26% report resistance to change / lack of institutional support (Krull et al., 2018).
Possible Barriers

- Faculty Expertise
  - Continuing Education
    - Seek funding from administration to keep faculty trained in newest trends and treatment options
  - Utilize adjuncts who are currently working in SUD treatment
  - Share knowledge and resources among faculty
    - Curricular guide
    - Research articles
    - Books, films, media
References


