Organizational Capacity

RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Established in 1954, the Rutgers School of Social Work (RSSW) has a distinguished record of instruction, research, and public service. Fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, RSSW is one of the largest social work schools in the nation. Approximately 1,000 students are currently enrolled in degree programs offered on campuses in Camden, Newark and New Brunswick and at off-campus sites throughout New Jersey. The school offers a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in social work, M.S.W., and Ph.D. degrees. Joint-degree options include M.S.W./J.D. and M.S.W./M.Div. programs. The school has more than 30 full-time faculty members and about 150 part-time lecturers and is affiliated with more than 800 social service agencies throughout the New Jersey/New York/Philadelphia metropolitan area.

INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES

The Institute for Families (IFF) was created in July 2007 to coordinate externally-funded activities at the RSSW. IFF exemplifies the land-grant mission of Rutgers University by providing continuing education and professional development programs, program evaluation and applied research services, and technical assistance to the human services community across the state and beyond.

IFF’s focus is on developing and implementing workshops for professionals in various human services fields who want to update their skills, examine new theories and techniques, assess old problems in new ways, and respond to the demands of current social needs. Research, evaluation and technical assistance activities focus on applying scientifically-rigorous methods
of inquiry to understand social problems, identify needs, ensure the quality of services, examine the effectiveness of social service programs, and develop new interventions. In addition, IFF supports three faculty-led centers at the RSSW: the Center on Violence against Women and Children, the Center on Gambling Studies, and the Center for International Social Work and Outreach.

Located on the Piscataway campus, IFF includes more than 50 professional staff and a cadre of subject-matter experts representing an array of human services fields and related disciplines. The facility contains conference space and two “smart” training rooms equipped for videoconferencing and distance-learning. IFF also maintains training facilities in Parsippany, Princeton and Cherry Hill.

The array of IFF activities demonstrates its capacity to manage projects, meet multiple deadlines, and collaborate effectively with partnering agencies. IFF currently manages more than 25 grants, contracts, and income-generating programs, valued at more than $30 million, with various organizations, including local, nonprofit service providers and county, state, and federal governmental agencies. A few of these projects are described below.

New Jersey Child Support Institute

Through an initial $13-million, three-year contract with the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, IFF offers the first comprehensive training program designed specifically for New Jersey’s child support professionals. Program participants learn how to apply best practices to every stage of the child support process, from case initiation through case closure. NJCSI is a collaborative partnership of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, Office of Child Support Services, the
Administrative Office of the Courts, County Welfare Agencies, Probation Child Support Enforcement Units, and staff in the Family Division in each vicinage. The program features an integrated, Web-based Learning Management System that consolidates registration, enrollment management, evaluation, and reporting functions and an on-line Child Support Program Manual with active links to websites, glossary, statutes, rules, and regulations that support best practices in the field. The Institute offers foundation courses, specialized courses, and workshops to meet all audiences and objectives. IFF develops all curricular materials, including hands-on computer simulations, and is responsible for delivering all training. A goal of this effort is to increase collaboration and communication among the various state and county entities that are responsible for administering New Jersey’s child support system bringing greater financial and medical security to New Jersey’s children and families.

**New Jersey Child Welfare Training Partnership**

IFF serves as the lead agency for a collaborative partnership between public and private colleges and universities throughout New Jersey that provides in-service training to support child welfare workers in New Jersey. The project will ultimately deliver about 140,000 hours of training each year to more than 3,500 child welfare professionals. The Partnership is developing curricular materials, delivers workshops and evaluates training results.

**Administration of Courts – Family Friendly Court Assessment**

IFF worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts, New Jersey Court Improvement Program, Children in Court Improvement Committee to conduct a statewide assessment of the degree to which family courts in New Jersey are responsive to the needs of the children and families they serve. Through this project, IFF collaborated with judges, court
officials, probation workers, and the legal community to develop a research plan, create and pilot appropriate data collection instruments, schedule interviews with appropriate constituents, and review and understand study findings. Findings from the study were used to improve court practices, and to develop a training program for family court staff and related professionals. The training program was delivered by IFF staff between September 2006 and June 2007.

**Curriculum Development and Training Delivery Capacity**

IFF is the state’s largest provider of continuing education and training programs for human services professionals. Each year, IFF provides more than 400 continuing education workshops, seminars, and conferences for adult learners who seek to update their skills, examine new concepts or techniques, enhance their specialty areas, and comply with licensing requirements. Continuing education and professional development programs are offered at a wide variety of convenient locations on the Newark, Piscataway, and Camden campuses of Rutgers University, as well as at other sites throughout the state. The workshop and training sites are located in high schools, libraries, social service agencies, and community colleges. Customized trainings are also developed for agencies throughout the state and delivered on-site to their staff. IFF also offers an array of workshops and training events using distance-learning technology. Overall, IFF training programs serve about 4,000 students in need of continuing education hours and an additional 3,000 students who attend grant-funded workshops each year.

IFF’s profession-oriented institutes, certificate programs, and freestanding workshops are developed by IFF staff in collaboration with more than 75 subject-matter experts and nine advisory committees. This development process contributes to the timeliness and relevance of course curricula. In addition, student feedback and evaluation data gathered from workshops are
used to continually improve curricula and training delivery. Several examples of IFF work in curriculum development and training delivery are described below.

*Family Preservation Training Institute*

IFF manages the Family Preservation Training Institute in partnership with the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). The Institute offers job-specific training to employees of private, not-for-profit agencies contracted by DYFS to provide intensive, in-home services to at-risk families that seek to preserve the family, prevent the need for out-of-home placement of children, or facilitate family reunification. IFF’s activities have included assessing the training needs of family preservation workers, developing a curriculum to support the Homebuilders Family Preservation model, and continually refining the curriculum based on feedback from advisory board members, family preservation supervisors, and participants; evaluation findings; and changing child welfare needs in New Jersey. Since 1990, the Institute has trained almost 2,700 family preservation workers with a variety of educational backgrounds and field experience.

*Rutgers Family Development Credential Program*

IFF offers the Rutgers Family Development Credential (FDC) Program, a training program for frontline family development workers in Abbott school district early childhood programs and Head Start centers in New Jersey. Funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development (DFD), the FDC program offers quality, sequential training designed to provide family workers with competencies and skills needed to help families attain a healthy self-reliance and interdependence with their communities.
Working in conjunction with DFD, IFF modified a curriculum from Cornell University to meet the needs of family development workers in New Jersey. The modified curriculum added New Jersey and childcare center specific content in several areas including cultural competency and child abuse and neglect. Since the program began in January 2004, over 550 Abbott District family workers have received the training and 434 have become credentialed. The FDC credential granted by Rutgers University reflects a standard of excellence recognized by major family-serving agencies. The credential has been approved by the National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction for seven college credits.

**Concurrent Planning Training**

Since January 2006, IFF has managed an extensive Concurrent Planning Training Program (CPT) for DYFS staff. CPT is a two-day training program intended to help casework staff and supervisors increase their knowledge and skills regarding concurrent planning philosophy, practice, and techniques. The program uses the Concurrent Planning for Timely Permanence curriculum developed for the Office of Children’s Services by the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work.

Training sites include IFF; Rutgers Continuing Education sites including the Executive Learning Center–Mt. Arlington; the Eco-Complex in Bordentown and the Atlantic-Cape Community College in Mays Landing; and various local DYFS offices. Curricular materials supporting the program include a learner’s guide, handouts, a trainer’s guide, a CD containing the PowerPoint presentation, and two videos. Other training support items include a pre- and post-training survey, a data form, a daily roster, and a workshop satisfaction evaluation. As of October 31, 2006, 117 two-day sessions have been offered, training 2,210 DYFS staff.
Expert Witness Training

Funded by DYFS, the Expert Witness Training Program is designed to provide information, demonstrations, role-playing, and practice testimony for psychologists and psychiatrists who will contract with the DYFS Practice Section of the Division of Law in the Attorney General’s Office. Those trained are being prepared to provide expert evaluation and testimony in Family Court on DYFS matters.

Research and Evaluation Capacity

IFF has extensive experience in evaluating the impact of social service programs, as well as educational and training curricula. Its research staff is involved in conducting evaluations for numerous community-based social service providers, as well as evaluating many of the training interventions offered by IFF.

Training Evaluation

Training evaluations conducted by IFF reflect the belief that the meaningful evaluation of training programs must extend beyond examining changes in knowledge and student satisfaction to identifying the impact that training makes on the day-to-day work performance of participants. The following section highlights a few curricula and training evaluations completed by IFF’s research and evaluation staff.

Interdisciplinary Training Program for Public Agency Caseworkers

IFF staff provided evaluation resources for New Jersey’s Interdisciplinary Training Project for Public Agency Caseworkers to Improve Child Welfare Services, funded by the
Federal Administration on Children and Families. The curriculum, which was developed in partnership with RSSW faculty, national experts, and DYFS, sought to improve child welfare worker skills in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence. The evaluation used item analysis to assess and improve the validity of knowledge assessment items. Analysis of proximal outcomes found large, positive effects of training on caseworkers’ knowledge of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence. In addition, improvement in caseworkers’ knowledge was found to be related to improved substance abuse substantiation rates. Findings supported the efficacy of the training program and suggested ways evaluation strategies may be used to build capacity of child welfare agencies.

**Child Assault Program Evaluation**

IFF recently completed an evaluation of the Child Assault Program (CAP), a school-based curriculum aimed at reducing abuse, assault, and bullying among children in elementary school. Using an experimental design, the evaluation identified improvements in self-efficacy among children who participated in the CAP program. Evaluation findings will be submitted to the Administration on Children and Families and Prevent Child Abuse America as part of an effort to have CAP designated a model program for child abuse prevention.

**IFF-Based Centers**

IFF includes several faculty-led centers which focus on research, evaluation, policy development and training around special topics of interest to the human services community.

**Center on Violence against Women and Children**

The mission of the Center on Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) is to strive to eliminate physical, sexual, and other forms of violence against women and children and the
power imbalances that permit them. This mission is accomplished through the use of a collaborative approach that focuses on multidisciplinary research, education, and training that impacts communities and policies in New Jersey, the U.S. and throughout the world. VAWC is led by Dr. Judy Postmus.

VAWC is developing professional training and certification programs including instructor-led and interactive, web-based continuing education of professionals, resulting in enhanced personal and job competencies. Certificate programs can be replicated nationally or internationally. In the area of research, VAWC is conducting community-based, collaborative research on issues related to violence against women and children. This work includes program evaluation and evidence-based practice at the individual, family, organizational, community and policy levels. In addition, VAWC provides a venue for collaboration, dialogue, and problem-solving among survivors of violence, and academic, government, corporate, and nonprofit groups.

Finally, VAWC is preparing future executives and advocates working in domestic violence, sexual assault or child welfare organizations by offering the only advanced degree in social work specializing in violence against women and children.

Center for Gambling Studies

The Center for Gambling Studies (CGS) is committed to driving global decision-making on gambling-related issues by conducing strategic, non-partisan research and policymaking that is international and multidisciplinary and by initiating innovative training and intervention programs to benefit individuals and families adversely affected by gambling problems. CGS is led by Dr. Lia Nower.
CGS’s research includes collaborative teams investigating legal and economic initiatives, sociological and ecological implications of gambling technologies, and multi-sector prevention, intervention and treatment interventions for problem gamblers and their families. In the policy arena, CGS has brought together a consortium of experts to evaluate the impact of gambling-related issues and to design frameworks to inform legislation, program planning, and research with global applications.

In addition to its research and policy work, CGS has developed the first university-based training for students and counselors to address gambling issues. The 60-hour training satisfies National Council on Problem Gambling standards for certification for compulsive gambling counselors. CGS is also developing a Certificate in Gambling Studies that would provide an opportunity for Master’s students in counseling disciplines to develop expertise in gambling-related issues.

Center for International Social Work

The Center for International Social Work (CISW) seeks to expand study abroad opportunities for graduate social work students while simultaneously assisting other countries in developing academic programs to educate social work professionals. Additionally, the Center provides capacity-building consultation to social service agencies and organizations throughout the world.

CISW is currently providing technical assistance to six former Soviet-bloc countries to develop training and education programs for social work professionals. This initiative is expected to help these countries develop professional standards for social workers.
Additional Capacities and Expertise

IFF also has expertise in information technology, geographic information systems, online and software-based data collection systems, and staffing community planning groups.