

APPLICATION

The Pennsylvania Institute for Children's Environmental Health Advanced Educational Advisory Board Grants.

TITLE: Children's Environmental Health in Context with Families in the Social Environment: An Integration.

Applicant: Edward. P. Hanna, D.S.W.

Department of Social Work

Content Course: FAMILIES IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT (SWK 500).

Calendar of Activities:

Course content development: Summer, 2009.

Content implementation: Fall Term, 2009.

Evaluation of content and implementation: December, 2009.

Description of the Project:

Families in the Social Environment (SWK 500) is an advanced year graduate level course in the Master of Social Work program. The course is "pivotal" ... "as it provides the theoretical underpinnings of the students' practice concentration". The course rationale further states that "An understanding of families in all their diverse forms as they interact with the social environment is necessary to develop into an autonomous practitioner with a concentration in Family-in-Environment".

Family-in-Environment is the unifying conceptual basis for the M.S.W. program. Students who graduate from this program provide direct and indirect professional social work services to individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations and government. All of these services significantly impact on the quality of life of children at all levels of intervention, from direct care to policy development.

Incorporating children's environmental health into the environmental/ecological/systems focused curriculum would greatly enhance the objectives of the course and empower future professional social workers with the skills and knowledge for purposeful intervention as it relates to children in their physical environment. Learning goals (still being developed) will include (but not limited to):

1. Understanding the relationship between physical environment and child development in the family.
2. Understanding the relationship between family financial/social/emotional/relational well being and children's physical environment. This would include exposure to lead based paint, second hand smoke, home environment safety issues, residential air quality, and family modeled learning behaviors (drug abuse, for example).

3. Understanding and developing specific program and policy intervention methods that would improve environmental health conditions for children.

4. Understanding the differences between adult and child reactions to physical environment exposure across the life cycle.

These goals will be achieved through the integration of environmental health issues into specific course assignments and projects, including “family eco-maps”, exploring family internal social ecology, and the creation of a multi-level, family-centered policy practice discourse with a focus on the physical environmental health of children. As these assignments are congruent with the current objectives and activities of the course, no need for additional teaching supplies or materials is anticipated.

If this grant request is approved, the course content will be fully constructed during the summer of this year and will be implemented in the Fall term of 2009.

Both the course content and its implementation will be evaluated on an ongoing basis by the students. Graduate students are expected to demonstrate independent evaluation capacities and each student will be expected to provide critical and substantive input regarding the relevance and importance of children’s environmental health, theoretically and in practice. Further, evaluation will be conducted through review of the projects and assignment noted above (for which students receive grades), as well as a verbal report included in the final group presentations.

It is the applicant’s intent to provide a presentation of the process and results to the faculty of the Department of Social Work. A review of how content might also be integrated holistically with other courses will be reviewed. A final report regarding the analysis of effectiveness of the course content and its development will be provided to the grantor by 12/18/09.

