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NASW news

Social workers inspire and motivate family members to follow in their footsteps

PAGE 8



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Global Social Service Workforce Alliance



Panel discussions at the 4th Annual Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Symposium: Case Management and the Social Service Workforce included strategies to strengthen HIV case management systems. From left are Djeneba Coulibaly-Traore, project director of 4Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Tapfuma Murove, project director of 4Children in Nigeria; and Theresa Fox, research analyst at the Institute for Families at Rutgers. Photo by Paul Pace, NASW News

Briefing to focus on NICU infants

Babies at increased risk for maltreatment after discharge

By Paul R. Pace, News staff

Infants admitted into the Newborn Intensive Care Unit are at increased risk for child maltreatment after discharge.

JaNeen Cross plans to inform members of Congress of the unique psychosocial challenges NICU infants and their mothers face and what can be done to reduce the chances for infant maltreatment.

Cross is the 2016-17 policy fellow through the NASW Foundation/Council on Social Work Education HEALS (Health Care Education and Leadership Scholars) Policy Fellowship. It is made possible with a grant from the New York Community Trust Robert and Ellen Popper Scholarship Fund.



Cross

Cross noted that the average NICU stay is approximately 30 days and often the physical and emotional bond between mother and infant is disrupted as a result of the NICU.

"That's a crucial point," she said. Although the NICU is providing life-saving medical care, "we're also taking an important attachment bond away," she said.

In posing limits and precautions to infant contact during the NICU process, the risk for infection may be reduced. However, over a prolonged period of time, the psychosocial impact on attachment

SEE BRIEFING, PAGE 14

Symposium examines HIV strategies

By Paul R. Pace, News staff

To stop the spread of HIV, it cannot be treated as a health or medical problem alone, says Tom Fenn, project director of the Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children (4Children).

"It's not going to go away if we act like it's the health sector's responsibility or simply a question of ensuring we test and treat everyone," he said.

"HIV is a disease with its roots in inequality," Fenn says. To make an AIDS-free generation a reality, efforts must be made to tackle the social and economic factors that fuel and impact the epidemic, he added.

Fenn shared his remarks at the 4th Annual Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Symposium: Case Management and the Social Service Workforce on May 24 in Washington, D.C.

The GSSWA, based in Washington, works toward a world where a well-planned, well-

trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations.

Susan Rubin, assistant director of the NASW Foundation, serves on the GSSWA's Steering Committee. She and other NASW staff attended the symposium.

The meeting, which was streamed live around the world, offered practitioners, government representatives, scholars and other experts an opportunity to examine case management's role in addressing HIV/AIDS, as well as other causes of vulnerability of issues requiring an integrated approach to social services.



Fenn

"Case management has truly become the unifying tool in the HIV response, contributing to our efforts to identify, access and prioritize risk and vulnerability; and to our efforts to engage families and communities in the development and monitoring of case plans," Fenn told attendees.

He added that case management also helps strengthen family capacity and resilience, and supports efforts for children to receive and benefit from comprehensive care.

PEPFAR

Fenn noted the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is taking on the lion's share of the global response to treat and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

He said in 2015, five countries provided 80 percent of the world's multilateral HIV funding and 66 percent of that came from PEPFAR.

SEE HIV, PAGE 4

Programs help homeless, foster LGBTQ youth

By Maren Dale, News contributor

Although progress continues to be made toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) equality in the U.S. — as evidenced by marriage equality and better recognition of and respect for people who identify as LGBTQ — this progress is not felt by all members of the LGBTQ community.

For LGBTQ youth in foster care in particular, the challenges often seem insurmountable. For instance, sometimes when they come out to their foster families, they not only are met with disapproval, they are forced to leave the home.

Even if they aren't forced out, they often feel rejected and many run away and become homeless. Other negative consequences from coming out include relationship issues and drug or alcohol abuse.

True Colors

True Colors, based in New York, N.Y., is a national organization working to help LGBTQ youth, with a strong focus on preventing homelessness.

According to their research, although LGBTQ youth make up just 7 percent of the foster

youth population, a full 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBT.

Christa Price, LMSW, is a program officer for the organization. When asked what social workers can do to help, she offers this suggestion.

“What we hear from youth over and over again is that they want to be able to walk into a space, show up as themselves and be gendered correctly and consistently,” she said. “If those places are hard to find or don't exist, build relationships with agencies that have space and may be able to provide this.”

While finding a physical location could take some time, Price says there are other things social workers and other adults can begin doing now to support these youth:

Always use the name they want to be referred by, and the name they chose for themselves. This may be different from the name they were born with or the name on their legal ID.

Ask them what pronouns to use when speaking to them or about them, and use them consistently.

Get informed about the poli-

cies and practices specific to your area regarding LGBTQ youth in foster care.

Within group home settings and shelter systems, give youth a choice regarding which bathroom they want to use or what sleeping arrangement they prefer.

If your state does not have laws that help protect LGBTQ youth, form those relationships yourself. Find agencies and organizations so youth have a place where they can be involved in programs and find support.

Sanctuary Palm Springs

Sanctuary Palm Springs is a new transitional housing program based in Palm Springs, Calif., focused on helping LGBTQ foster care youth who are ages 18-21 — a critical period in their development, when they are transitioning out of the foster care system and into adulthood and independence.

The organization provides a home where youth can live for up to three years, where they receive support, education and mentoring.

NASW member Julie Siri, MSW, LCSW, is program direc-

tor for the organization. Since 2015 when she began working with Sanctuary Palm Springs, she has helped the organization navigate the many obstacles they faced — from housing laws to funding obstacles and beyond — to get licensed and finally open in November 2016.

Now that this groundwork has been laid, not only are they operational, they are in the process of opening a second location.

Siri explains that in her role, she has observed that social workers are especially well-suited to work with LGBTQ foster youth and encourages social workers to get involved.

“We want these youth to be in charge of their own lives — and empowerment and self-determination are also core principles of social work,” she says. “We also promote a life-affirming style, to move forward and become more successful, which is also a social work value.”

Here are other ways Siri says she sees social workers adding significant value to the lives of LGBTQ foster youth in transition:

Social workers value teamwork and promote growth through relationships and inclusion.

There is great diversity within the social work profession and being culturally competent is a core social work value.

Social workers have a biopsychosocial perspective and have been educated in multiple disciplines. They understand a bit about biology, medicine, psychology and more — and all of these things impact LGBTQ youth in foster care.

Social workers have the ability to understand the grief LGBTQ youth experience in having their identity invalidated and help them find ways to overcome it.

Finally, she says, the modeling social workers can offer could be the most beneficial of all.

“If social workers live with integrity, if they keep their word and live out their values, this is great modeling for youth to see,” Siri said.

Resources

- True Colors (truecolorsfund.org) offers free online training, toolkits and other resources for social workers and service providers working with LGBTQ youth
- Sanctuary Palm Springs (sanctuarypalmsprings.org).

“We want these youth to be in charge of their own lives — and empowerment and self-determination are also core principles of social work. We also promote a life-affirming style, to move forward and become more successful, which is also a social work value.” — NASW member Julie Siri, program director of Sanctuary Palm Springs

HIV FROM PAGE 1

Because of PEPFAR's efforts, 18 million people are now accessing HIV/AIDS treatment, Fenn said. “We've seen particular success in tackling new infections among children, as 1.6 million new pediatric infections have been prevented since the year 2000.”

But much work remains ahead, Fenn noted.

He said according to the U.N., the number of HIV infections has not dropped and has stayed at roughly 2.1 million per year. The number of pregnant women with HIV is still at 1.4 million and has been there for six years. In addition, Fenn said adolescent girls are still disproportionately infected with HIV.

In 2015, there were still more than 13 million children who had one or both parents die from AIDS, he said. “The epidemic is still one of the major human rights issues of our time.”

Continued support for social services is necessary to address the social and economic factors that fuel the epidemic, he said. Poverty, food insecurity, drug and alcohol abuse, social marginalization, exclusion, stigma, inequity, gender inequity, violence and sexual exploitation are increasing risk and decreasing resilience.

Case Management Matters

Rebecca Davis, associate profes-



Amy Bess, director of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, speaks during the Alliance's fourth annual symposium “Case Management and the Social Service Workforce” on May 24 in Washington, D.C. Photo by Paul Pace, NASW News

sor and director of the Center for Global Social Work Studies at Rutgers School of Social Work, told attendees that case management functions within the broader context of multiple disciplines and sectors, including social service, education, justice and policy.

Case management helps reduce

fragmentation of services and staff turnover, she added.

The workforce focus on case management aims to build the infrastructure of systems of services, Davis said. It integrates practices and principles into an organizational mission and vision to improve employee morale and

effectiveness.

Case management and referral mechanisms “are the glue that binds populations affected by HIV with services,” she said.

What's in the glue? It's the process, Davis explained. “This is the crux of case management. It's engaging, supporting, participat-

ing, leading, guiding, networking and empowering.”

“There is no substitute for that relationship,” she said. “It takes good knowledge and skills.”

Attendees also heard panel discussions addressing:

How to build a stronger workforce to strengthen HIV-sensitive management systems to reach national and global HIV goals

Promotion of multidisciplinary links to carry out integrated case management approaches

Innovations in capturing evidence to improve case management and workforce strengthening

Working toward sustainable models of staffing for effective case management and systems of care for children and families.

Amy Bess, director of the GSSWA, said the Alliance acts as a convener, which helps to develop and disseminate knowledge and information on the social service workforce.

“Coming together across organization and countries, we can do more together than alone to build the evidence base and advocate for improved services for families,” she said.

To learn more, visit:
socialserviceworkforce.org.