



MSW Program at West Chester University

Local and worldwide impact

The MSW Program is celebrating the accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni as we wrap up another semester. We plan to continue advocating for social justice in our communities, nation, and world.

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Faculty and staff take the lead in Mental Health First Aid training

General public being trained in Mental Health First Aid for adults and teens

First aid training gives people the knowledge to provide immediate help to someone experiencing a medical emergency, like a heart attack or severe bleeding. A new, evidence-based training called [Mental Health First Aid](#) teaches the general public how to help someone experiencing mental health emergencies such as panic attacks or suicidal thoughts.



The MSW Program is taking part in the effort to increase the number of people in Chester County who are trained in Mental Health First Aid.

MSW Program Director Dr. Stacie Metz is chair of the evaluation committee for the [Brandywine Health Foundation's campaign](#) to train people in the Coatesville area in Youth Mental Health First Aid, which is designed to help adolescents. Lisa Allen, field education director at the campus in West Chester, was trained this summer to train others in Mental Health First Aid for adults.

"It's really about working toward changing the stigma," Allen says. "It helps people decide not to cross the street when they see someone acting in a way that's unfamiliar to them."

Nearly 700 people in the Coatesville area have been trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid since 2014. Those who have gone through the training are more comfortable talking with adolescents about suicide.

"It's helped everyday people who are not trained in mental health and substance use disorders," Metz says. "It's built their confidence." For example, school cafeteria workers who had been through the training noticed a student who was acting withdrawn and referred him to school resources for help.

Students from several WCU graduate programs are working with Metz to gather and analyze data about the training's effectiveness and identify other needs in the Coatesville community.

Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings are free and take a total of eight hours. [Two more sessions](#) are being offered in December.



Shelby Davey, MSW '17, and Kelly Smack, MSW '16, with a bulletin board students designed during last year's Human Rights Exploration Abroad course.

MSW students returning to Dominican Republic *Study abroad experience will focus on human rights*

During the summer of 2017 students in the MSW Program will have the chance to examine how social work is practiced in the Dominican Republic.

In the summer of 2016, Assistant Professor Dr. Christina Chiarelli-Helminiak led a group of five students on the MSW Program's first overseas-study class, Human Rights

Exploration Abroad. The students visited sites such as social-service agencies and community organizations. Their focus was how social workers can uphold the basic human rights of all, especially for groups such as children, migrant workers, and those who identify as LGBTQ.

Chiarelli-Helminiak says this human-rights based approach to social work – that all people have certain rights that must be protected – is different from the needs-based approach in the U.S., which focuses on connecting people to resources they need in their lives.

"To work with people from a diverse background, and be in their environment as opposed to them coming into the U.S., was a great lesson in cultural competence," says Kelly Smack, MSW '16, who was the student trip leader in 2016.

One insight from the trip was that those in developed countries lack awareness of what people in developing nations need.

"When we went to a market at the Haitian border, we saw piles and piles of hundreds of shoes because they don't need shoes," Chiarelli-Helminiak says. "They need money."

The Human Rights Exploration Abroad experience in 2017 will follow a similar itinerary. Smack is teaching the class as an adjunct professor. She wants students to develop an understanding of how social workers can work with those in developing countries to uphold their rights.

"My hope is that they develop a sense of what advocating for others really means," she says.

A private practice, therapeutic summer camps, and a book

MSW graduate adds several components to her clinical repertoire



Patience Domowski, MSW '09.

Patience Domowski, MSW '09, is taking an entrepreneurial approach to developing her clinical practice.

After graduating from the MSW Program she worked for another agency, providing wraparound services for children. She saw that she couldn't always work with her clients in the way that might provide the most help.

"Sometimes people may have wanted in-home therapy, but didn't qualify for it," she says.

So two years ago Domowski launched [Patience's Behavior Therapy](#), a private practice specializing in children and adolescents. She usually visits clients in their homes, which is a major benefit for parents who are homebound and unable to drive their children to outpatient therapists. She also tries to make therapy accessible by charging rates that are close to many insurance companies' co-payments.

Domowski's work includes helping children follow directions, manage anger or anxiety, and cope while parents are going through a divorce. She has also run summer day camps that teach children social skills.

"We watched the movie *Inside Out* and talked about feelings," she says. "We colored in color-by-number sheets to practice following directions."

She runs her practice while working full-time as a clinician with [Exton Behavioral Health & Rehabilitation](#). Domowski also recently released her latest book, a manual of parenting strategies, called [An \(Un\) Common Sense Guide to Parenting: Including the Duh Factor](#).

Faculty, student, and alumna present at national social work conference

Ten MSW faculty members, one 2016 MSW graduate, and one MSW student gave presentations at the [Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting](#), which took place in Atlanta in November. These are their presentation topics:

- Using social media to pique student interest in social movements (**Akbar, G.**)
- Eco-systemic, integral practice in military social work across all military service trajectories (**Arriaza, P.**; Dutton, S; & Simpson, D.B.)
- Building an interprofessional lens for social work practice in the classroom and field (Moss, T.; **Bean, N.M.**; Pooler, D.K.; & McGuire, L.)
- Teaching across the boundaries of health disciplines: The imperative for interprofessional education (**Bean, N.M.**; Davidson, P.G.; **Metz, S.M.**; & **Nuzzi, G.M.**)
- Human-animal interactions: Implications for wellness and social work education (**Buck, P.W.**; McDonald, S.; Hoy, J.; & Kim, C.)
- Humans and animals: An emerging and promising collaborative practice (Hoy, J.; Vincent, A.; **Buck, P.W.**; & Strand, E.B.)
- The associations among community violence exposure, parenting stress, and harsh maternal parenting (**Chen, W-Y.**; & Lee, Y.)
- Maternal community violence exposure and harsh parenting: The mediational role of depression (Lee, Y.; & **Chen, W-Y.**)
- Social work educators: Gendered differences (**Chiarelli-Helminiak, C.**; & Tower, L.E.; Faul, A.C.; & Hodge, D.)
- Women empowering women to advance leadership in social work education (Hodge, D.; Wells-Wilbon, R.; Anyikwa, V.A.; & **Chiarelli-Helminiak, C.**)
- Women's rights are human rights: The price paid by women for caregiving (Deepak, A.C.; Tower, L.E.; **Chiarelli-Helminiak, C.**; Anyikwa, V.A.; Hamilton-Mason, J.; Kominkiewicz, F.B.; & McClerkin-Motley, S.)
- Incorporating environmental justice into social work education: A theoretical framework and application (**Holbrook, A.**; & **Akbar, G.**)
- Liminality and loss: Older adults waiting for low-income housing (**Lavery, A.**)
- Effects of maternal exposure to domestic violence and community violence on toddler behaviors (**Pasqualette, M.**; **Chen, W-Y.**; & Lee, Y.)
- Everything falls on me: Motherhood, heavy drinking, and intimate partner violence (Bohrman, C.; & **Tennille, J.**)

[Learn more](#)



