QUT Student led social work unit: Increasing capacity in challenging contexts

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The social work field education landscape

- An increasingly complex and competitive landscape for social work (Barton, Bell & Bowles, 2005).
- Increased student enrolments juxtaposed against the increasing challenges for social work in practice
- Field placement requirements and supervision trends
- Need to identify non-traditional sites for placement (National Health Workforce Taskforce, 2009b)
Inter-disciplinary Student Placement Units

• Drawing on the QUT GP Super Clinics Project 2010-2013
• Building on existing service offerings at QUT Health Clinics
• Focus on Inter-professional education
• Focus on student-assisted placement hubs to build capacity and sustainability (Frakes, Tyack, Miller, Davies, Swanston & Brownie, 2011).
Student Unit: Our Vision

- Student unit design
  - 1 supervisor, 6 students – pairs

- Multidisciplinary practice settings
  - Vision Rehabilitation Centre - 2 days, partner agency - 2 days

- Staffing and supervision requirements
  - 1 supervisor providing weekly group supervision and informal and formal on the job supervision

- Three phases of field placement program
  - Orientation and Training – Weeks 1 – 2
  - Direct Practice – Weeks 3 – 16
  - Closure and Evaluation 17

- Transforming our vision to reality
QUT Student Placement Hub

QUT Health Clinics
Vision Rehabilitation Centre
Formal supervision
2 days

St Vincent’s Hospital, Health Advocacy Legal Clinic
Task based supervision
2 days

The Villa Maria Centre
Task based supervision
2 days

Interdisciplinary Family Based Therapy
Task based supervision
2 days

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QUT Social Work Student Unit – QUT Health Clinics Optometry Clinic

• QUT Optometry Clinic
  • Vision Rehabilitation Centre (Est. 1993)
  • A multidisciplinary low vision already providing social work services
  • Optometry, Social Work, OT, Orientation & Mobility

• Client Demographics
  • 250 patients per year
  • Mean age: 71 ± 20 years (18 - 103)
  • Gender: 45 M : 55 F
  • Disease profile: 70% Age related macular degeneration
  • Majority legally blind
Social work scope of service delivery to Vision Rehabilitation Centre clients

- Psychosocial assessments
  - Grief surrounding loss of vision and independence

- Providing information on community resources and transport
  - Advocacy and access to resources
  - Subsidies for the vision impaired
  - Blind disability pension, Taxi Subsidy Scheme, Free Public Transport

- Individual and family support/counselling
  - Adjusting to life with low vision
  - Carer support issues

- Connecting to social support groups
  - 20+ support groups in Brisbane and surrounding coastal regions
  - 24/7 tele-support e.g. Macular Disease Foundation

- Safety and risk intervention

- Linkage and referral to other services
QUT Student Placement Unit

- St Vincent’s Hospital, Health Advocacy Legal Clinic
  - Task based supervision
  - 2 days

- The Villa Maria Centre
  - Task based supervision
  - 2 days

- Interdisciplinary Family Based Therapy
  - Task based supervision
  - 2 days

QUT Health Clinics
Vision Rehabilitation Centre
Formal supervision
2 days
Initial Orientation and Training

- Overton, Clark and Thomas (2009) highlight the importance of effectively preparing students for clinical placement to ensure a quality learning experience.
- Weeks 1 – 2
  - Planned program approach
    - Documentation
    - Introduction to participating agencies
    - Teambuilding activities
    - Shadowing opportunities
    - Guest speakers
    - Social work practice workshops
    - External training
    - Agencies visits
    - Evaluation
Phase 2: Direct Practice weeks 3-16

- Direct practice
- Research and project work
- Contributing to community outreach events
- Group activities
- Multidisciplinary practice
- External training opportunities
- Interagency visits
- Weekly group supervision
- Field trips to agencies
Phase 3: Closure and Evaluation

- Week 17
- Farewell agencies and clients
- Consolidate learnings and experiences
- Finalise and present project work
- Contribute to program evaluation
- Group celebration and closure event
Program Evaluation

- Program evaluation objectives
  - Effectiveness of placement model
  - Future social work student service delivery
  - Program development

- Mixed methodology design
  - Orientation and training evaluation questionnaires
  - Final evaluation questionnaires
  - Focus groups
  - Weekly statistics reporting
  - Patient feedback forms
  - Patient case studies
Program Enablers

• Effective coordination (Cleak & Wilson, 2013, p. 79; Ornstein & Moses, 2010; Zuchowski, 2013, p. 115).
• Regular communication
  • Weekly emails
  • Student Unit updates
  • Coordinator as the liaison visitor for all students
• Range of learning opportunities
• Different practice contexts
• Weekly group supervision
• Importance of effective teamwork (Cleak & Wilson, 2013, p. 79).
Lessons Learnt

- Program logistics
  - Staffing - cost
  - Physical space for students
  - Student learning needs
  - Programming
- Program strategy
  - Student selection
  - Managing partner agency needs and expectations
  - Continued social work student services during semester breaks
  - Community outreach opportunities
Questions?

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