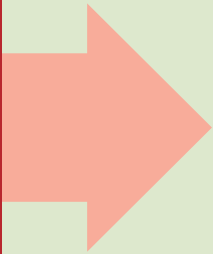


IT'S A FACT:

Despite the recent increase in attention and org work still needs to be done to effectively create

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NASW STANDARDS FOR Social Work Practice with Family Caregivers of Older Adults: A Supervisory and Administrative Opportunity

PHYLLIS MENSCH BROSTOFF, ACSW, CISW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) published *Standards for Social Work Practice with Family Caregivers of Older Adults* in November 2010. The goals of these standards are to enhance social work practice with family caregivers of older adults and to help the public better understand the role social workers play in supporting family caregivers. The viability and implementation of these

standards will depend to a large extent on the support and promotion that they receive at the supervisory and administrative levels. Since these standards are relevant to staff across many social work settings, all supervisors and administrators who oversee and supervise social work practitioners are encouraged to become familiar with these practice standards and to consider how they might

incorporate them into their professional responsibilities.

The development of the *NASW Standards for Social Work Practice with Family Caregivers of Older Adults* is part of Professional Partners Supporting Family Caregivers, an initiative done in partnership with the AARP Foundation, the U.S. Administration on Aging, the Family Caregiver Alliance, and the National Association of

Social Workers, and made possible by funding from the John A. Hartford Foundation.

The standards build on two foundational documents (NASW, 2010):

- *Advanced Geriatric Social Work Practice* (by the Council on Social Work Education)
- Meeting proceedings from State of the Science: Professional Partners Supporting Family

Caregivers, an invitational symposium of social workers, nurses, family caregiver advocates, and other experts in family caregiving. The symposium was developed under a grant from the John A. Hartford Foundation to the AARP Foundation. Meeting proceedings were published in the *Journal of Social Work Education* and the *American Journal of Nursing* in 2008.

The standards address 12 domains of social work practice with family caregivers of older adults (NASW, 2010):

- Ethics and values
- Qualifications
- Knowledge
- Cultural and linguistic competence
- Assessment
- Service planning, delivery, and monitoring
- Advocacy
- Collaboration
- Practice evaluation and improvement
- Documentation
- Workload
- Professional development and competence

The standards also include an extensive resource list of governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and foundations devoted to aging, family caregiving, and gerontological social work.

The aging of the population presents both opportunities and challenges for the social work profession and society. Family caregivers play a critical role in supporting older adults but may not receive either the recognition they deserve or the support they need. Every social work agency has employees who are family caregivers.

Social workers of all specialties encounter family caregivers across practice settings, including settings (such as schools) unrelated to aging. The social work role with family caregivers may vary based on practice setting, specialty, or funding source. In every situation, however, social workers need to be attuned to family caregivers' contributions, goals, and needs, and social work agencies need to be prepared to assist their employees in their role as a family caregiver.

The publication of these practice standards gives supervisors and administrators a unique opportunity to assure that they are incorporated into social work practice and become a practical resource in the everyday work of our profession. Understanding the comprehensive process involved in the development of these standards assures their credibility and their value to the field. If we are to move our profession forward in addressing family caregiver issues, supervisors and administrators must be at the forefront in making this happen.

Phyllis Menseh Brostoff, ACSW, CISW, is the CEO of Stowell Associates • SelectStaff, Inc., a private company she cofounded in 1983 to provide care management and caregiving service to the elderly, disabled adults, and their families, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She can be contacted at phyllisb@eldersselectstaff.com.

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Kelly, K., Brooks-Danso, A., & Reinhard, S.C. (Eds.). (2008). Proceedings from *State of the Science: Professional Partners Supporting Family Caregivers. Journal of Social Work Education, 44*(3). Available at www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/GeroEdCenter/GECPublications/27835/16629.aspx

Organizations/Programs

AARP Public Policy Institute/ Professional Partners Supporting Family Caregivers, Phase II www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-11-2009/091104-caregiving.html

National Association of Social Workers Aging Resources

- Aging Web Page: www.socialworkers.org/practice/aging/
- Aging Resources Flier: www.socialworkers.org/practice/aging/2008/agingBroch0808.pdf
- Help Starts Here Caregiving Web Page: www.helpstartshere.org/seniors-aging/caregiving

National Family Caregivers Month www.nfcares.org/national_family_caregiver_month

National Family Caregiver Support Program/The Year of the Family Caregiver www.celebratingfamilycaregivers.org

Social Worker Directory

National Social Worker Finder www.helppro.com/nasw/BasicSearch.aspx

