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**Aging Initiative**

**Background and History**

As a nationally recognized model for social work education and training, the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) leadership along with the Board of Directors recognized the significant unmet need for social work education, training, and employment opportunities for social workers serving aged adults and their families through the development of California’s Master Plan for Social Work Education published in 2004.

In February 2004, the CalSWEC Board of Directors established the Aging Initiative (AI) under the auspices of the CalSWEC Curriculum Committee. The intent of the Aging Initiative was to build upon successes and lessons learned through the CalSWEC Child Welfare initiative, and apply them to building the capacity for workforce development in geriatric social work by promoting a Model for Social Worker Practitioner Preparation in Aging services statewide.

The initiative was launched with the goal of creating a statewide coalition of key stakeholders representing the academic community and providers from the public and private sectors. The vision for the group was to develop a statewide plan with specific strategies to address the need for building the training and education capacity, creating incentives for attracting students, and improving the diversity of the workforce.

The Aging Initiative established four strategic priorities:

1. Create a Statewide Coalition to promote Social Work Workforce Development in Aging

2. Development of Core Competencies in Geriatric Social Work

3. Develop Workforce Development Strategies

4. Develop Capacity Building and Sustainability Strategies

**Timeline and summary of Accomplishments**

**2004 to 2009**

**Coalition Development:** A Statewide Aging Summit was held in 2004. This effort brought together 109 delegates, established a database of 305 key stakeholders and resources in the field of aging, presented successful models for training, and developed consensus in key areas to further the Aging Initiative. As well as institutionalized the Aging Committee as part of CalSWEC’s committee structure.

As a result of the groundwork laid during the 2004 October Summit the Aging Initiative was invited to submit a proposal to the Archstone Foundation and in July 2005 received a three-year grant to further many previously established AI goals. The Archstone Funding provided support for specific geriatric AI labor force development projects including the delineation of geriatric social work competencies and a university survey of social work curricula in aging.

**Curriculum Development:** The AI Curriculum Workgroup utilized the CalSWEC curricula model including the definition of first year and second year skill levels. The competencies developed nationally through the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Initiative particularly the Social Work Leadership Institute Practicum Partnership Program was used as guides for competency development. The Council on Social Work Education Gero Ed Center collaborated to disseminate the AI competencies through faculty development institutes. CalSWEC members and the Executive Board approved competencies through an extensive process of review. The CalSWEC Aging Competencies were completed and adopted by the CalSWEC Board of Directors in February 2006. CalSWEC promoted dissemination of the competencies throughout California Schools of Social Work.

**University and Aging services Surveys:** The Aging Initiative University Survey was conducted in 2006/2007 that it was intended to 1) to describe the current status of social work education in aging within the curriculum in California Schools of Social Work. 2) To provide baseline data for CALSWEC to use in assessing the level of competency-based social work in aging curriculum for both infusion and aging specialization. 3) To provide data for comparison of social work in aging in California with national surveys.

The Aging Services Labor Force Survey was conducted from 2006 to 2008. It aimed to describe current public aging service workers and their clients, project future growth in numbers of older clients and workers, and identify the skills required for staff as well as barriers to hiring and retaining qualified aging service workers needed to meet current and potential demand for social workers with geriatric competences, curriculum content, field placement, faculty specialization, aging programs, etc. The Labor Force Survey is reported in two reports, the first addressing public services for older adults, and this second report addressing community based organizations, including Area Agency on Aging (AAA), AAA subcontractors, and Adult Day Health Care Centers.

**Capacity Building and Sustainability efforts:** Three regional collaborative pilot sites were identified in northern, central and southern California to develop claiming strategies for allowable Medicaid/MediCal reimbursement costs for training in aging services. Almost a third of the universities with social work MSW programs are involved—five overall out of seventeen; and almost one in five of the fifty-eight counties were involved—eleven in all. This was accomplished through a request for proposals developed to recruit the university and county agency collaboratives. Stipends for students in aging were established through Archstone Foundation funding with match contributions from Collaborative partners.

The Aging Initiative was a collaborative partner in support of the development of a pilot program with the Institute of Geriatric Social Work at Boston University School of Social work to deliver training to current county social workers delivering services to the IHSS population.

The Aging Initiative was a collaborative partner in support of the development of the APS training project delivered by the Bay Area Regional Training Academy and the Southern Regional Training Academy.

**2009 to present**

During the 2009/2010 fiscal year the Aging Initiative began to rethink strategies for developing broader workforce development activities that supported the workforce in aging services. The Aging Initiative continued to meet and to reconsider how education and those leading social services for older adults could find more common ground from which to develop and support the workforce.

**Aging Initiative Convening:** In the winter of 2011, a group of stakeholders that have supported the Aging Initiative from its inception were brought together to rethink the current work plan and put pieces in place to develop a new plan. This event provided the framework for the current activities of the Aging Initiative. This plan consists of 2 area of focus, they are Goals for System Improvement and Outcomes and the Work plan itself.

The Goals for System Improvement and Outcomes are:

*Healthy aging focus.* Promote the development of ‘Aging in place’ services, less restrictive services based on needs instead of aging; the whole patient model engaging family & community; continuum of care services that promote active living in communities.

*Workforce capacity development.* Promote social work as one of the core professions that serves older adults. Examine how Social Work is funded in healthcare reform; Connect Social Work values and practice to Healthcare reform.

*Competency and Standards of Practice.* A well educated workforce that is trained to agreed upon competencies and minimum standards of practice. Develop a shared definition of ‘good practice’. Ongoing skill upgrade is met by training opportunities

*Collaborative Team Care.* Case Management and cross system collaboration in service delivery that utilizes an interdisciplinary approach offering more comprehensive services and practices that insure people are valued.

*Adequate and sustained funding.* Examine and develop new ways to bill for services; greater fiscal investment from government and philanthropy; increased public support measured by increased investment.

*Systematic Evaluation.* Develop a shared systematic evaluation process; Utilization of assessment tools for healthy aging; Services that aid in a better quality of life as defined by the consumer.

The work plan from the 2011/2012 fiscal year rested on 4 domains, they were:

**Funding**

* Pursue MH partners stipends, student support via WET funds
* Develop funding potential for training in Social service and tribal agencies

**Public Relations**

* Develop materials promoting social work jobs in targeted areas—health care, CBOs and counties

**Curriculum development and delivery**

* Collect, Organize and host training and educational materials, develop sorting and organization to be accessed on CalSWEC

**Continuum of Services Development**

* Come to agreement on continuum and create a 3 to 5 year plan for target WFD areas of the continuum

**Update on Progress:** Upon completion of the 2011/2012 fiscal year, there has been progress in all domains.

1. The Aging Initiative finalized its charter (see attached),
2. Currently some students in CalSWEC’s Mental Mealth program have field placements working with older adults and will likely go to work with older upon graduation
3. A toolkit has been developed for potential students to access loan forgiveness programs and other financial support
4. A public relations/communication package is under development to include a short video to inspire potential students to work in the aging field;
5. In the 2012/2013 academic year CalSWEC will begin hosting curriculum resources for education and training;
6. The Aging Initiative Summit will help develop actions for supporting the development of the continuum of services for older and aging adults