Field Instruction Initiative



**Program-in-Brief**

# December 31, 2012

**Pilot Site / Name of Project:**

San José State University

Child-Welfare Partnership for Research and Training (CW-PART)

**Problem Statement (What issue(s) is the project trying to address?):**

The partnered research model is designed to address the following issues:

1. *Gaps in research and evaluation capacity on individual level.* The ability of counties to evaluate success in relation to national indicators and to respond to emerging needs requires a workforce that understands the value and is capable of using data for evaluation and planning. Students, and their field instructors, often lack confidence or capacity for research.
2. *Gaps in research and evaluation capacity on organizational level.* Partnered research models offer one strategy for leveraging resources in county agencies and universities to address gaps in county abilities to conduct timely research and evaluation to inform practice, program, and policy development.
3. *Need to strengthen connection between research and practice in social work education.* Students interested in professional practice in child welfare and other fields of practice often struggle to understand the relationship between research/evaluation and practice.

**Hypotheses/Operating Theory:**

The Child Welfare Partnership for Research and Training, CW-PART model is informed by three theoretical frameworks.

1. **Community-Engaged Research** involves working collaboratively with stakeholders who are affiliated by common interests and geographic location. CW-PART is a partnered research model, which embodies a respectful partnership with community members and allows researchers and community members to mutually define their respective roles and negotiate responsibilities. In this context, researchers provide leadership for projects that are defined, implemented, and disseminated with full involvement with agency partners and participation of both students and practitioners.
2. **Implementation Science** is an emerging area of research in child welfare, which focuses on how research findings and evidence-based practices are integrated into practice in a specific setting. Partnered research helps to leverage resources in both agency and university contexts to support the four essential activities of implementation science: 1) planning/exploration – the process of identifying a challenge or better intervention; 2) engaging/preparation – deciding on an innovation; 3) implementation – executing the innovation, and 4) sustaining and evaluating the innovation.
3. **Adult Learning Theory** emphasizes the importance of connecting learning to the experiences of the student, application of theory to practice, and problem-solving. The partnered research model offers s*ituated learning environments* in which students have the opportunity to apply research skills to practice contexts, addressing questions that are of immediate interest to partners

**Description of Project / Intervention:**

The Child Welfare Partnership for Research and Training (CW-PART) is a collaborative project between the School of Social Work at SJSU and two local counties: Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County. The CW-PART is a partnered research model with a special focus on collaborative research with local county child welfare and allied services funded by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC). Whether partnered research projects are affiliated with funding projects such as the CW-PART or are coordinated as smaller pilot research projects, core elements of the model are as follows.

* Research teams of students working under the supervision of faculty to focus on research questions defined as priorities by county partner agencies.
* The team model creates a situated learning environment for students in which teams conduct applied research on issues that are of immediate relevance to the county or partnered agencies.
* Students satisfy course requirements for their capstone MSW research project, concurrently providing summaries of research findings that may be used to inform local planning, policy or practice.

During the planning phase, faculty and community partners work together to identify prospective research topics and questions. Possible projects are evaluated based on several criteria: priority for county partner(s); availability of faculty team leaders with appropriate expertise (content and/or methodological); feasibility (e.g. access to data); and availability of interested student team members.

In the implementation phase, student team members work under the supervision of faculty to conduct reviews of literature, collect and analyze data, and develop written reports. County partners and faculty work together to coordinate logistics and solve problems as needed. The guidance provided by Field Instructors to MSW students completing their 298 research project is a valuable component to the student’s learning experience. As practice experts, Field Instructors can: work with students to help ensure that research projects are connected to important practice topics, facilitate data collection activities, and assist students in considering the potential relevance of research findings to practice and policy.

In the final phase of the project, findings are communicated to partners with a showcase presentation and/or feedback to stakeholder groups. In addition, county partners, faculty, students, and other stakeholders are invited to provide evaluative feedback about their experiences.

**Implementation Start Date:**

July 1, 2012

**Current Project Status:**

Partnered research projects for the current academic year are underway. Resource materials related to project planning and implementation are currently being revised to prepare for dissemination.

**Project Goals / Achieved Outcomes:**

The overall purpose of the project is to strengthen local capacity for practice-based research and use of research to inform program development through sustainable university-community partnerships. The project goals are as follows:

* Plan and implement partnered research projects based on local priorities and designed to inform and improve local practice, programming, and policy.
* Build capacity for sustainable partnered research between SJSU School of Social Work and DFCS and capacity for practice-based research among both students and FIs.

*Research outcomes:* Implementation, documentation, and dissemination of multiple research projects based on county priorities.

*Partnership outcomes:* Development and institutionalization of partnered research model, including documentation of partnership tools and processes for sustainability and expansion.

**Barriers to Implementation:**

Challenges to implementation include the following: 1) Competing demands for time and resources in both agency and university contexts; 2) Different time frames (e.g., practice context vs. academic year); 3) Matching experts to emerging priority questions in the county; 4) Continued investment in planning, clarifying priorities; developing and staffing teams; problem solving; and 5) Creating clarity around roles and opportunities for Field Instructor participation.

Key ingredients for success and for addressing implementation barriers and challenges include the following. First, ***respectful partnership*** involves flexibility in managing the timeline and tasks of the research teams; recognition of the demands and constraints in both university and agency settings; willingness to problem-solve as challenges arise; and active attention to building and sustaining relationships in addition to completing project related tasks. For example, based on feedback from the field, SJSU faculty provided an orientation to the model that integrated opportunities for field instructors to inform research plans and select their own level of involvement. ***Support of leadership*** in both the agency and university contexts is critical to both leveraging resources (i.e., time for agency staff to attend planning meetings and allowing integration of research into existing MSW courses) and endorsing the overall vision of creating a successful partnership. ***Liaisons*** in each system are essential for managing the overall partnership, brokering resources, and serving as active conduits between systems. Liaisons in the partnership include an intern coordinator with the county, the IV-E Program Coordinator, and three to four faculty members. Finally, successful implementation required ***organizational assets****.* Assets included a sufficient number of faculty who possessed backgrounds in conducting research in child welfare and/or use of relevant methodologies; relevant courses in the social work curriculum for accommodating a year-long research project; adequate numbers of interns/students for creating research teams; and funding to pilot the model (in this case, through the California Social Work Education Center).

**Future Directions:**

1) *Expansion and institutionalization with other agency partners*. This partnered research model is being replicated with other content areas and through smaller pilot research projects, such research related to alcohol and drug treatment services.

*2) Replication in other counties.* Protocols and planning tools developed through the CW-PART will be disseminated for us by interested partners in other counties and regions in, and beyond, California.

3) *Long term sustainability plans* include continued integration of model elements into the social work curriculum and efforts to seek funding to fund development of new research and evaluation projects.

**Participants**

*You may refer to the Levels of Partnership document*

* **Students**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year of initiative | Number of foundation year students | Number of concentration year students |
| 2011-2012 | (outreach for year two – 16) | 19 IV-E students; 5 Non IV-E students |
| 2012 - 2013 | (outreach for next academic year only – 15) | 14 IV-E students; 13 Non IV-E students |

* **County Agency Affiliates (county agency staff stakeholders/collaborators)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year of initiative | Position in Agency | Number of participants at this level |
| 2012 – 2013 | Managers/Supervisors/Administrators | 5 |
| 2012 – 2013 | Field Instructors | 14 |

* **University Affiliates (university faculty and staff stakeholders/collaborators**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year of initiative | Position in University | Number of participants at this level |
| 2011– 2012 | Faculty & Director | 7 |
| 2012 – 2013 | Faculty & Director | 6 |

* **Community Collaborators (community member stakeholders / collaborators)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year of initiative | Name of collaborating agency | Position in collaborating agency | Number of participants at this level |
| 2011 - 2012 | Dependency Advocacy Center | Director, Managers, Line Staff | 10 |
| 2012 - 2013 | Dependency Advocacy Center | Director, Managers, Line Staff | 11 |
| 2012-2013 | Santa Clara County Differential Response Operations Team | Various: Collaborative of agencies providing DR services | Approximately 15 |
| 2012-2013 | Latino Child Welfare Equity Project: Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children’s Services | Various: Collaborative of DFCS staff and other stakeholders | Approximately 15 |

## Other Stakeholders/Collaborators

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year of initiative | Who | How many |
| 2011-2012 | Institute for Collaborative Response for Victims of Family Violence | 8 students (includes IV-E) |