

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

# Outreach to Social Workers

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## An Environmental Scan

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## ABSTRACT

### **Objective:**

Of approximately 642,000 social workers in the United States, 43% work in medical, public health, substance abuse, and mental health settings, a subset expected to grow by approximately 21% between 2008 and 2018. However, there has been little outreach from the medical library community to specifically address the information needs of the social work community. This project was designed to explore medical librarians' experience with, and interest in conducting biomedical and consumer health information outreach to social workers and social work students.

### **Methods:**

The project team employed a mixed methods approach to research health information outreach to the social work community. Team members conducted a review of the overlap between health information and the social work community in both medical and social work databases. Team members interviewed librarians at Masters in Social Work (MSW) programs across the country. Feedback from the Informationists at the NIH Library was also gathered. From the beginning the project team worked closely with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM), which involved presenting and gaining feedback at staff meetings, and two surveys: the first to the Regional Medical Libraries (RML), and the second to NN/LM member libraries.

**Results:** A literature review revealed few examples of health information outreach to, and no systematic needs assessment of, the social work community. Two articles in particular point to a potential need for health information in the social work community: the first found that 36% of social work clients have at least one chronic health condition; the second found that 16% of citations in social work journals come from medical journals. The survey to the RMLs (100% response rate) revealed that they do not specifically target social workers as a population for health information outreach, and member libraries interactions with social workers are not specifically tracked. However, 7 of 8 RMLs indicated interest in participating in future stages of research. The pilot survey to the NN/LM member libraries provided positive feedback on our survey instrument, and indicated that many member libraries may be interested in pursuing increased research and outreach to the social work community.

**Conclusion:** The social work field is a dynamic public health profession in need of targeted health information outreach. Moving forward, there is a need for: administration and analysis of the survey to the NN/LM member libraries, focus groups to follow up on survey results, and an information needs assessment of social workers and social work students. Each piece will contribute to the project team's decisions regarding the applicability, feasibility and nature of further health information outreach to the social work community.

## INTRODUCTION

### Project Goals

The Outreach and Special Populations Branch (OSPB) of the National Library of Medicine is exploring the social work community as a potential audience for training in the use of biomedical and consumer health information resources. This report presents the work accomplished as the first stage of the project. Each stage depends on feedback from previous project stages.

### Environmental Scan of Health Outreach to Social Workers

In this first stage of research, we sought to gather comprehensive background information on the social work community and their health information needs through: literature review, interviews with librarians at social work schools, and surveys to medical librarians in the RMLs and NN/LM member libraries. The goal of this first project stage was to determine the applicability, feasibility and nature of further health information outreach to the social work community.

### Health Information Needs Assessment of the Social Work Community

A review of the relevant literature revealed no systematic health information needs assessment of the social work community. At the next stage of the project, it will be necessary to contact social workers and social work students directly to better determine their specific health information needs.

### Health Information Outreach

If the environmental scan and information needs assessment reveals a need for health information outreach to social workers, the OSPB will seek to work with the social work community to design a training program to meet their specific needs. Training may include development of continuing education curriculum accredited through social work and medical librarianship's organizing bodies.

### The Social Work Profession

The field of social work is a dynamic population of public health workers, who often form the first line of care for populations suffering from chronic health conditions. As of 2008, there are approximately 642,000 social workers in the United States. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics divides the social work profession into four basic areas, based on the populations they work with: child family and school, medical and public health, mental health and substance abuse, and all other categories, which includes administrators, researchers, and policymakers. Medical and public health social workers make up 22% of social workers in the US, and this group is projected to grow by 22% between 2008 -2018, a much faster rate than the social work field as a whole. 21% of social workers work in mental health and substance abuse fields, and this subsection is expected to grow by approximately 20% over the same period. With these areas combined, over 40% of social workers practice in health related settings.<sup>1</sup> In depth statistics and trends data on the social work field can be accessed from the National Association of Social Work (NASW), which is the primary professional organization of social workers in the United States. The NASW produces materials relating to the dynamic change and health of the social work field including, code of

ethics, standards of practice for specific populations, cultural competencies, research reports and statistics. <sup>2</sup>

Social workers practice in many different settings, and perform a wide variety of job tasks, so it can be difficult to define their profession succinctly. One defining feature is that social workers unify their profession around service to the underserved. While social workers serve clients at various life stages, and not all clients will need permanent assistance, it is worth noting that social workers typically serve clients at a time of great need, and it is these populations who often have the most acute need of quality health information.

Social workers strive to address their clients' needs holistically, and this includes the biomedical aspects of the clients' condition. Social workers help their clients cope with and solve health related issues in their everyday lives such as disability, chronic health conditions and acute health conditions which require at least a basic understanding of the underlying biological condition, and a deep knowledge of the ways patients can navigate difficult decisions in a complex healthcare system.

### **Social Work Education**

The field of social work has a robust education system designed to give students academic and hands on experience to prepare for the field. As of June, 2011, the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited 208 Masters in Social Work (MSW) programs and 467 Baccalaureate Social Work (BSW) programs in the United States. Since social work is a highly hands-on profession, accredited MSW programs require a minimum of 900 hours of supervised field experience, and accredited BSW programs require a minimum of 400 hours of supervised field experience. As of June 2009, the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education listed 74 doctoral programs in social work in the United States. <sup>3</sup> Foundational courses in human biology, psychology, sociology, statistics, and economics are required for both the BSW and MSW programs. MSW programs allow students to choose a concentration to study in more depth. CSWE reports that 36.6% of MSW programs offer concentrations in health, with 693 students enrolled. Approximately 36% of MSW programs offer a combined concentration in health and mental health, with 1,292 students enrolled. These concentrations may involve areas such as public health, health promotion, and disease prevention. In addition, many students decide to pursue dual degrees in Social Work and Public Health. As of 2004, 15.9% or 27 MSW programs offer a dual degree in Public Health. <sup>4</sup>

Social workers in the United States are required to complete either BSW or MSW from an accredited school of social work and become licensed. Licenses are issued at the state level, and a new license must be obtained from each state in which the social worker seeks to practice. In addition, social workers must maintain licensure by taking continuing education classes and becoming re-certified. Rules and regulations on licensure and continuing education can vary by state.

At a national level, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) lists only 18 approved continuing education courses, and 149 approved providers. The majority of these courses focus on law and ethics, and none have a biomedical or health sciences focus. While the ASWB is the only national certification of continuing education in social work, each state's social work licensing board has final authority to

approve or reject CE courses, and many more providers and courses are approved at a state and board level.<sup>5</sup> Most state boards require that licensed clinical social workers renew their licenses every two years with a certain number of continuing education hours completed. In most cases, social workers are required to pay for continuing educations out of pocket. Many classes are offered online to reduce travel time and expenses.

## METHODS

The project team employed a mixed methods approach, with the goal of identifying a network of interested librarians to serve as examples of collaboration with the social work community, and potential channels for further research and outreach.

### Literature Review

The literature review was conducted to gather information on the social work field and its education, continuing education, and relation to health information. Articles and reports were gathered and from a broad range of sources including: PubMed, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, NASW, CSWE, ASWB and the Department of Labor. Literature was gathered and analyzed throughout the project time period.

### Interviews with Social Work Librarians

Interviews with social work librarians were conducted to determine what health information training they currently provide, whether they think health information is relevant for social workers, and if they have any ties to practicing social workers in their communities.

Social work libraries and library liaisons to the school of social work were identified at the top 20 schools of social work, from the “US News & World Report” of which 9 schools responded. A ranked list of schools who responded was:

- Washington University at St. Louis
- Columbia University, UC Berkeley
- University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
- University of Southern California
- Case Western Reserve University
- University of Wisconsin Madison
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- University of Oklahoma
- Virginia Commonwealth University

Additional librarians with a known interest in social work and health were contacted and interviewed at University of Washington, Salem State University, and University of Maryland. A total of 11 interviews were conducted with 13 librarians. (See Appendix for a complete list of interview questions)

### Presentations to the NN/LM

The NN/LM started as a way to facilitate resource sharing between medical libraries, and over the years, it has also become one of the primary ways the NLM supports health information outreach to special populations. The National Network Office, or (the NNO), here at NLM, and the eight Regional Medical Libraries, (or the RMLs) both provide support and funding opportunities for the over 6,000 member

libraries in the Network, as they conduct health information outreach to a wide variety of special populations.

The NN/LM's key role in supporting and funding health information outreach made them a prime target audience to which to present, and from which to gather feedback. The project team presented at the NN/LM monthly all staff teleconference on April 5, 2011 on the goals of our project, and why the OSPB is considering social workers as a new population for health information outreach. Approximately 25 staff from the Regional Medical Libraries and National Network Office was present on the teleconference.

### **Presentation from the NIH Library**

The project team also presented at the NIH Library monthly all informationists meeting on May 3, 2011 on the goals of our project, and why the OSPB is considering social workers as a new population for health information outreach. The project team sought to determine if any informationists work specifically with social workers, and if those interactions had produced observations on the health information needs of the social work community. Approximately 20 NIH informationists were in attendance.

### **Regional Medical Library (RML) Survey**

The project team created a survey to the regional medical libraries to determine what training and outreach to the social work community the RMLs have designed and delivered, where outreach has occurred, what outreach has been funded, and what unmet or unique training needs have been identified. The project team also sought to assess the RMLs' interest in the social work community as a potential population for health information outreach, and their interest in assisting with future stages of research.

The survey was designed in April and May, following the April 5 presentation to the RMLs, and administered to the 8 Regional Libraries at the end of May, with a brief note from Angela Ruffin, Head of the NNO regarding the purpose of our survey. All responses were collected by June 23, 2011. (See Appendix for complete RML survey)

### **National Network of Libraries of Medicine: Member Library Survey**

The member library survey was designed to build on results obtained from the first survey to the RMLs. The member library survey was designed to find: examples of outreach and collaboration with the social work community, barriers member libraries have encountered in their efforts, and the general interest level in future participation in research and outreach.

Susan Barnes from the Outreach Evaluation Resource Center (OERC) assisted in the design and sampling methodology of the survey. The survey was designed and reviewed in June, and the project team worked with the RMLs to identify 11 member libraries to pilot the survey. Libraries were selected based on their known experience with social workers, availability to pilot the survey, and designated library type. The pilot survey was administered in July, in three categories: Academic Non-Medical, Academic Medical, and Hospitals, to provide a representative sample of the Network.

The primary purpose of the pilot survey was to ensure the quality and clarity of the survey instrument. 11 survey responses were gathered in June.  
(See Appendix for full NN/LM member library survey)

## RESULTS

### Literature Review

#### Social Work Community and Health Information

The field of social work is a large and growing affiliated health profession, with its own particular health information needs. Social workers often serve clients with chronic and acute health conditions, and they frequently cite biomedical literature in their research publications, but there is a lack of infrastructure to train social work students and social workers in the effective use of consumer health and biomedical information.

Regardless of their specialization within the field, many social workers serve clients who have health related conditions. 88% of social workers in a 2004 NASW Workforce Study reported working with at least one client with a chronic medical condition, and 80% reported working with clients suffering from acute medical conditions.<sup>6</sup> As of 2005, social workers report that 36% of their clients have at least one chronic health condition.<sup>7</sup> Researchers have suggested that the extended length of service with the client (.58 yrs)<sup>7</sup> affords “a significant advantage of the care worker as information seeker and provider,” and that “clients [trust] home-care workers to suggest reliable, trustworthy services and sources of information.”<sup>8</sup>

A brief search of PubMed revealed over 4000 articles with “social work” in the title or abstract and 90 journals relating to social work. Social workers also make use of the biomedical literature in their research. A high proportion of the citations in social work research come from non-social work specific journals, and a high proportion of those citations come from medical journals. One recent article, “Use of Non-Social Work Journals in Social Work Research: Results of a Citation Analysis,” found that approximately 16% of citations in social work journals come from medical journals. Despite this high citation rate, few of these journals are represented in popular social work literature databases (PsycINFO, SocINDEX, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts) because these databases are not specifically biomedical in nature. None of these databases indexed more than 68% of medical journals cited in the social work literature.<sup>9</sup>

#### Lack of Health Information Needs Assessment of Social Workers

Despite the social work community’s apparent need for health information, there has been very little research into their specific health information needs. A search in PubMed, Social Services Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts revealed no health information needs assessments of social workers. Instead, research focuses largely on the health information seeking behavior of the client populations social workers may serve,<sup>10-13</sup> or on broader groups of public health workers that may include social

workers.<sup>14-17</sup>

A small body of literature addresses the general topic of information literacy in social work. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) maintains a wiki for information literacy in social work -- a bibliography of curricula, articles and presentations currently listing 11 publications.<sup>18</sup> This research acknowledges the lack of research output in this general area. In their article, "Health and Mental Health Social Workers Need Information Literacy Skills" Darrell P. Wheeler, and Harriet Goodman acknowledge that unlike other health professions that "have produced a burgeoning literature on information literacy skills as a central concern for educators...the social work literature is for the most part silent."<sup>19</sup> In another article, "Evidence-Based Practice and Information Literacy in Social Work: An Assessment of Students' Reference Lists" Kate Silfen and Karen Zgoda write, "to date, only a small number of articles have been written about the information literacy needs of social work students," and that "this is a topic that needs to be addressed more among librarians."<sup>16</sup>

Health information literacy in social work has been most specifically addressed in the UK, where an increased focus on home care to treat chronic conditions, and a specific government drive to professionalize the home-care workforce has led to a number of studies on the health information needs of home-care workers.<sup>8 20-22</sup> This research has found that information sources in the UK for social workers are generally underutilized. Few home-care workers use the library, which they associate with information needs for coursework or training, not questions arising from the work setting. Another literature review found that many home care workers are "poorly equipped by professional education, relying heavily on personal communication and 'gut instinct' to deliver packages of care" – with less than 50% trained to use research findings on the internet, and approximately 75% with no instruction on searching literature databases.<sup>21</sup> However, these findings may be difficult to generalize to social workers in the United States, because homecare workers in the UK are not required to complete any formal degree program, whereas all licensed social work positions in the United States require at least a Bachelors, and in many cases, a Masters level education in social work. Social workers practicing in the United States may have stronger information literacy levels resulting from more mandatory education.

These underdeveloped areas in the literature are compounded by slow uptake of research findings in practice. Lack of access, time, and expertise all prevent social work research from translating to evidence-based practice (EBP) within the field. Social work students, accustomed to the services and resources offered by trained librarians, graduate into a workforce without the resources or time to inform practice with the literature. This research addresses what social work researchers have called the lack of "research that addresses dissemination and implementation," and the "veritable lack of support and training for community practitioners," and begins to take up the challenge to "support the adoption and staying power of EBP principles."<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the best example of collaboration between social workers and medical librarians is the Social Work Information Specialist in Context Fellowship, at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), which was designed to combine consumer health librarianship skills with social work skills. For five months, Monica Leisey, a PhD candidate in social work at VCU, trained with medical librarians in consumer health librarianship, and established connections with oncologists at the VCU Massey Cancer Center. Following

this training phase, Leisey worked as an embedded informationist in the cancer center, providing contextualized consumer health information to cancer patients receiving care.

Leisey has written on her experience in two articles, “The Journey Project: a case study in providing health information to mitigate health disparities,”<sup>24</sup> in which she described her experience providing health information at the VCU Massey Cancer center, and “Viewpoints from a Social Work Information Specialist in Context: Thoughts for Consumer Health Librarians,”<sup>25</sup> in which she discusses the emerging focus on health literacy in policy and research. Leisey writes eloquently of the need to establish trust with clients over an extended period of time, and how social workers trained in consumer health information can meet not only the affective needs, but also the information needs of their clientele. She notes that social workers with this training face the responsibility of not only providing information, but also finding ways to integrate it into the client’s life and societal context.

### **Interviews with Social Work Librarians**

Of 22 social work libraries contacted, we interviewed a total of 11 social work librarians from nine schools. Two schools had two librarians at the same location interested in participating in interviews. The following are observations made by the social work librarians interviewed. Questions evolved to reflect interest areas as interviews progressed, and responses have been aggregated to preserve anonymity.

Interviewees noted that biomedical and consumer health resources are both necessary and helpful for students preparing to enter the social work field. Social workers often work in health related settings, and treat patients suffering from chronic health conditions, who need assistance navigating complex health care systems, and difficult health related decisions. One interviewee indicated that approximately 70% of the questions she receives at her library are related to health or the healthcare system. While several social work librarians indicated that consumer health information may be more of a priority, since it is easier to understand and has a direct client focus, most agreed that both biomedical and consumer health information were useful areas about which social workers to know more.

Several interviewees noted that many social work students return to get a Masters in Social Work degree after many years in another profession, and that these “non-traditional” students often have more difficulty with technology and online research. Interviewees also noted that social workers tend to appreciate face to face interactions, and may experience high levels of library anxiety when tasked with research assignments.

A review of the websites of the schools contacted revealed that most have either a dedicated library or library liaison responsible for collecting social work specific resources and making them available to their students. While most schools have social work specific library pages, few have health specific topic pages listed on those websites, and most are unable to offer workshops covering subject specific areas for their students, due to the students’ time constraints. Most library instruction is conducted on an as needed basis, when an assignment is due, or when a student is studying a particular topic.

Most interviewees indicated that they and their schools do not offer services or resources to practicing social workers in their surrounding communities. However, interviewees generally acknowledged the acute need for information access and information literacy in the practicing social work community.

Interviewees indicated that they would be very interested in a health information needs assessment of the social work community, and a potential health information CE course geared for social workers and social work students.

## **Project Presentations**

The project presentations to the NN/LM and NIH Library successfully informed stakeholders of the project, and gathered valuable feedback on future project directions. The NNO and RMLs were better informed about our plans to survey them and their member libraries. Susan Barnes of OERC was informed of the project, and later helped with survey design and population sampling. The NIH Library put us in contact with social workers at the NIH Clinical Center, who we will contact at a later date.

## **Regional Medical Library Survey results**

The survey to the Regional Medical Libraries (RML) revealed that although RML staff members have contact with social workers at non-social work specific events, they do not target social workers specifically, and they do not track their member libraries interactions with the social work community.

Only 2 of 8 RMLs have had interactions with social workers at social work specific events, while 7 of 8 RMLs have had interactions with social workers while reaching out to a broader group. This indicates that, although social workers are not specifically targeted, they are accessible within the more general population that the RMLs work with on a regular basis.

Half of the RMLs have identified unmet information needs in the social work community. The most common unmet information needs were: locating and evaluating consumer health information for clients, health literacy, and cultural sensitivity/competency, with 3 RMLs reporting each as an unmet information need.

3 out of 8 RMLs have funded projects that had social workers or social work students as the target audience. Projects included work with the Rochester Regional Library Council, Boston College School of Social Work's "Information Technology Skills for Social Workers," San Juan College's "Sound Mental health Information and Learning Exchange Project" in New Mexico, and the Texas Tech Health Science Center's RML subcontract. However, these results are likely incomplete, as the Outreach Projects Database (OPD), which the RMLs use to track projects, does not include a category specific to social workers. Any interactions with social workers are likely contained in the OPD's "other" category, which encompasses all groups not specifically mentioned.

5 of 8 libraries have funded projects that had social workers or social work students as part of the target audience, but only 3 of 8 have funded projects specifically for social workers. Funded projects including social workers as a larger population have been conducted at the Central Massachusetts AHEC Outreach

Work Training Institute, Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, San Francisco State University, El Rio Community Health Center, Pacific Resources for Education & Learning Resource Center, University of Maryland, Baltimore, and East Tennessee State University. The survey indicated high interest in pursuing health information outreach to the social work community, even though there are relatively few examples of projects to social workers or social work students. 7 of 8 RMLs indicated interest in participating in future stages of research, which may include running focus groups, collecting data, and interviewing social workers and social work students in their region.

### **NN/LM Member Library Survey Pilot Results**

The main purpose of the NN/LM member library pilot survey was to ensure that the survey instrument functioned properly before administering the survey more broadly across the Network. Feedback indicated that the survey instrument was indeed clear, comprehensive, and non-redundant. Respondents were able to complete the survey in a brief amount of time; most indicated that the survey took only 10 minutes to complete.

While our convenience based pilot sample was too small to come to any final conclusions regarding the feasibility and utility of health information outreach to the social work community, the survey did reveal promising preliminary findings. First, the pilot revealed a high level of interest in the project, with 8 of 11 member libraries indicating that social workers would benefit from training in biomedical information, and 10 of 11 indicating that social workers would benefit from training in consumer health information. While 8 of 11 of the member libraries provide services to social workers or social work students, only 2 of 11 have conducted projects with social workers. 9 of 11 libraries were interested in learning more about social workers and our ongoing research, and 6 of 11 are interested in participating in future stages of research and outreach. These preliminary results show us that while few member libraries conduct projects, most are interested in social workers and social work students as a target population for health information outreach.

## DISCUSSION

This initial stage of research highlighted the need for health information in the social work community. Although the project's literature review revealed a need for both biomedical and consumer health information in the social work field, there has been little research into social workers' information literacy needs, the health literacy of their clients, or ways to promote evidence-based practice in the field. Our interviews and surveys with social work and medical librarians revealed several excellent examples of ways that medical librarians can reach out to the social work community, but it is apparent that outreach to this population has yet to be implemented on a wider scale.

Health information outreach may also contribute to a strengthened culture of evidence-based practice in the social work field. Required continuing education courses for licensed clinical social workers go part way towards a culture of continued learning, but few of these courses have a specific research or methodologies focus. Of 18 CE courses approved by the ASWB at a national level, none specifically address how social workers can access, interpret, and contribute to the research literature. Perhaps for this reason, the social work literature has often been criticized for its over-reliance on research originating from academia rather than practice.<sup>23</sup> This presents a potential opportunity for those developing future training and curriculum development, and for this project in particular, as it explores consumer health and biomedical information trainings for the social work community as a potential way to promote research in practice.

Although this project found relatively few examples of health information outreach to the social work community, it did identify a network of social work and medical librarians with a strong interest in pursuing health information outreach to the social work community. The project also successfully raised awareness for the potential need for health information in the social work community. These contacts will be very useful in future stages of research, as the project team conducts an information needs assessment of social workers and social work students, and considers developing trainings geared towards social workers and social work students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The social work field is a growing and dynamic public health profession in need of targeted health information outreach. Moving forward, there is a need for: administration and analysis of the survey to the NN/LM member libraries, focus groups to follow up on survey results, and an information needs assessment of social workers and social work students. Each piece will contribute to the project team's decisions regarding the applicability, feasibility and nature of further health information outreach to the social work community.

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## Appendix

### Original Project Proposal

PROJECT TITLE: Outreach to Social Workers

SUBMITTED BY: Laura Bartlett SIS

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

In an effort to reach a variety of public health workers, Outreach staff is exploring social workers as a target audience for training in the use of biomedical and health information resources. For the purpose of this project social workers will be defined as currently licensed social workers, students at the undergraduate, graduate and professional licensure seeking levels, and social work educators. Social workers as a group are ethnically diverse, have a variety of education and licensure requirements and serve a majority of economically disadvantaged individuals and families through the lifespan. Social work education is varied with some programs residing in liberal arts and others residing in schools of public health and medicine. Although there are specialties in medical and clinical social work (leading to certificate to be a therapist) the amount of education and training for biomedical and health information that social workers receive is not known. The Outreach Branch seeks to assess the need for training and outreach to social workers.

The Outreach Branch will do a literature review, review of social worker competencies, course work and licensure to assess the current education/training required for biomedical and health knowledge. The Outreach Branch will also work with the RMLs and their network libraries to see what training and outreach has been offered and delivered, what their experience has been with social workers at their libraries, and what is the need for training and outreach to social workers. The Outreach Branch seeks the assistance of Associates to complete these tasks. This information will be synthesized and disseminated among the medical library and social work communities.

If the assessment reveals that social workers are a group that would benefit from the NLM outreach and training, NLM will work with the social work community to design a training program to meet their specific needs. The training program will also seek approval of required CEC (continuing education credits) to encourage social workers to take the NLM training. The training would be developed to be convenient, with multiple delivery methods (in person at medical libraries, online, etc.), and have a "train-the-trainer" component so social workers can educate their clientele.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WORK:

This is an excellent opportunity to gain experience with a variety of social science research methods that can be applied to the field of library and information science. Methods to be used are focus groups for quantitative and qualitative analysis, content analysis, literature review, development of evaluation tools for post- and pre- test assessment, survey methodology, and structured interviewing.

Specific tasks for the Associate include:

- Background readings on social work and social workers. o Gain and understanding of social workers and their jobs through backgrounds readings. These readings will be from Web sites, journal articles and text books. Readings will be provided by the mentor, will not exceed 10 hours, and can be done at home in pajamas. After completion there will be a brief discussion with the mentor findings, ideas and a synthesis of readings - No formal presentation is required.
- Create a 20 minute (or less) PowerPoint presentation on the demographics of social workers. The target audience will be medical librarians
- Visits to local social work programs to speak with faculty
- Interview social work staff at NIH
- Interviews via telephone with RML and network librarians
- Develop focus group questions and administer focus groups
- Submit a poster abstract to professional social work organization
- Submit an paper abstract to MLA
- NOTE: Depending on interests, any of the social science research methods can be included

TOTAL DURATION / ELAPSED TIME [in weeks]: 18 to 25 weeks

LEVEL OF EFFORT / FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT [in weeks]: 15 to 20 hours a week = approx. 350

EXTERNAL SCHEDULES / DEADLINES [if any]: **Several tasks will have deadlines and meetings will have specific dates of attendance. The majority of the project will be open schedule.**

PRIMARY LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR ASSOCIATE:

- Project management
- Inter-department communication
- Communication with outside agencies
- Academic libraries and school faculty experience
- Social science methodology exploration and administration

EXPECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCES:

- Problem definition
- Project scope definition
- Design and implementation of research methodology
- Use of applied statistics
- Data analysis
- Workflow analysis
- Development of functional specifications
- Identification of and negotiation for needed project resources
- Examination of an unfamiliar technical area
- Identification of others' technical expertise
- Identification and evaluation of alternatives
- Development and presentation of recommendations
- Responsibility and accountability for a discrete product
- Role definition in a task group and participation in group dynamics

- Observation of organizational politics
- Preparation of a poster for presentation

#### EXPECTED OUTPUTS/PRODUCTS:

- Specific tasks already identified under “Brief Descriptions of Work” “Specific task for Associate include:”

#### SUGGESTED METHODOLOGIES:

- Literature review
- Methods to be finalized with Associate

#### BENEFITS TO NLM:

- Evidence-based results to determine if social workers should be targeted for training and outreach
- If the assessment reveals a need for training and outreach to social workers, NLM will have a starting point to engage with the social work community
- By working with this group to determine need, we also have the opportunity to inform this population about NLM and our services
- Add to the medical library research community with unique, original research

PROJECT LEADER(S): Laura Bartlett, SIS

OTHER RESOURCE PEOPLE: RMLs, OERC

#### List of Questions to Social Work Librarians

- What is your relationship with your SW department?
- What kinds of services do you offer?
- Does your school have a specialization in medical social work, or are some of your students interested in working in a medical setting?
- What types of activities do you do, relating to health information?
- Are health information questions common from your students?
- Does your school offer a medical specialization in social work?
- Is there a medical school, and medical library on your campus? And do you have access to common resources?
- If so, do you have much interaction with that Library? If medical questions, or requests for medical information instruction come up from your social work students, will you typically handle it in house, or refer it to the medical library?

- We're looking into the relevancy of biomedical resources, like PubMed, Ovid, etc, compared to more consumer health level resources like MedlinePlus. Is there one type of information that you think your social work students would be more receptive to, or find more relevant?
- Is there anything unique about social workers information seeking behavior that you've noticed in your experience?
- Do you do outreach, or have partnerships with practicing social workers in your community?
- If we eventually develop a biomedical and consumer health CE course geared towards social workers, would you be interested in hearing more about it? Is this a type of course you would \*possibly\* be interested in offering to social work students, or social workers in your area?

# Survey for RMLs

## 1. Welcome

We designed this survey to find out more about your RML's experience reaching out to social workers. It is mercifully short – 10 minutes should be enough time to fill it out. Thank you for your help with our project.

### Our Project

In an effort to reach a broader audience of public health workers, the SIS Outreach Branch is undertaking an environmental scan to explore social workers as a potential audience for training in the use of biomedical and health information resources. As part of the preliminary stage of this project, SIS staff want to learn from the RMLs what training and outreach they have offered and delivered, where outreach has occurred, what outreach has been funded, and what unmet or unique training needs have been identified. Future steps of this project may involve gathering information from your regional members about their work with social workers.

Please have ONE member of your staff compile the answers for your RML and complete the survey.

### **\*1. For which Region are you reporting?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

### **\*2. What is your name and position?**

# Survey for RMLs

## 2. Staff

**\*1. We would like to know if RML staff has interacted with social workers and social work students at social-work-specific meetings, conferences, or community events.**

**Has any of the RML staff interacted with social workers or social work students while:  
(check all that apply)**

- Exhibiting at social-work-specific conferences/meetings/events
- Training specifically for social workers
- Attending social-work-specific meetings and workshops as a participant or representative
- Reaching out to social workers in the community
- Reaching out to social work students or academic social work departments
- We have not interacted with social workers or social work students
- Other (please specify)

# Survey for RMLs

## 3. Staff, cont.

**\*1. We would like to know if RML staff has interacted with social workers and social work students at non-social-work-specific meetings, conferences, or community events.**

**Has any of the RML staff interacted with social workers or social work students at non-social-work-specific conferences/meetings/events while: (check all that apply)**

- Exhibiting at conference/meetings/events
- Conducting training
- Attending meetings or workshops as a participant or representative
- Conducting an outreach activity in the community
- Conducting an outreach activity with college students and college departments
- We have not interacted with social workers or social work students at non-social-work-specific events
- Other (please specify)

## 4. Staff, cont.

**\*1. Has any of the RML staff identified unmet needs of social workers or social work students through outreach or encounters?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5.

**\*1. Based on the RML work with social workers, please identify any of the following potential unmet needs: (check all that apply)**

- Training to effectively search all NLM resources
- How to use PubMed and MyNCBI
- How to locate/evaluate consumer health information for their clients
- How to locate/evaluate materials in languages other than English
- Health literacy
- Cultural sensitivity/competency
- Community engagement techniques and best practices
- No unmet needs identified
- Other (please specify)

## 6. Funding

**\*1. Has your RML funded any projects that specifically had social workers or social work students as the target audience?**

- Yes
- Yes, the information is in the outreach projects database
- No

## 7. Funding, cont.

**1. If you recall, please provide which member libraries were funded for projects that specifically had social workers or social work students as the target audience.**

## 8. Funding, cont.

**\*1. Has your RML funded any projects that included social workers or social work students as part of a larger target audience?**

- Yes
- Yes, the information is in the outreach projects database
- No

## 9. Funding, cont.

**1. If you recall, please provide which member libraries were funded for any projects that included social workers or social work students as part of a larger target audience.**

## 10. Member Libraries

**\*1. Are any of the member libraries “currently” working with social workers in the community?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## 11. Member Libraries, cont.

**1. If you recall, please provide which member libraries are “currently” working with social workers in the community.**

## 12. Member Libraries, cont.

**\*1. Are any of the member libraries “currently” working with social worker students or academic social work departments?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## 13. Member Libraries, cont.

**1. If you recall, please provide which member libraries are “currently” working with social worker students or academic social work departments.**

## 14. Member Libraries, cont.

**\*1. Do you know if any member libraries have social work liaison librarians?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## 15. Member libraries, cont.

**1. If you recall, please provide which member libraries have social work liaisons.**

## 16. Feedback

**\*1. As we progress through this study, there will be opportunities to participate in the research.**

**Potential areas of assistance may include running focus groups, data collection activities and interviewing social workers and social work students in your Region.**

**Are there any staff members in your RML who are interested in assisting in this study of social workers?**

Yes

No

## 17. Feedback, cont.

**1. If yes, please provide their name(s) below.**

## 18. Feedback, cont.

**1. Please provide any comments or questions your RML has for us.**

## 19. Finished

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey and help us with our research! We will share the results once they have been compiled. As mentioned in the beginning of the survey, future steps of this project may involve gathering information from your regional members about their work with social workers.

# Pilot: Outreach to Social Workers: NN/LM Member Library Survey

The Outreach and Special Populations Branch of the National Library of Medicine, in cooperation with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM), is exploring the social work community as a potential audience for training in the use of biomedical and consumer health information resources. Through this survey, we are contacting the Network member libraries to learn from their experience reaching out to the social work profession. We are looking for examples of outreach and barriers to outreach you've encountered while reaching out to social workers and social work students, and how NLM support for outreach to the social work profession would be helpful in your efforts.

Please have ONE member of your staff compile the answers for your library and complete the survey. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

\*\*\*\*\*

In this survey, the term "library" refers to the department or person(s) responsible for information services and NN/LM membership activities.

Your individual library's results will remain confidential. If you choose to share your email, we may contact your library for more information about your responses. Aggregate survey results may be combined with other research and shared as a part of a poster or journal article.

Please direct any questions or comments to Laura Bartlett -- bartlettl@mail.nih.gov

## 1. What is the name of your organization?

## 2. In what type of organization do you work?

- Academic Non-Medical Library
- Academic Medical Library
- Hospital Library
- Other

### 3. Does your library provide any of these services to social workers or social work students? (check all that apply)

	Social workers	Social work students
Reference and information services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resource training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collection development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social work liaison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No services offered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify, and identify for social workers or social work students)

## 4. Based on your library's work, please identify any of the following unmet information needs of social workers or social work students: (check all that apply)

	Social Workers	Social Work Students
Using PubMed and MyNCBI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locating and evaluating consumer health information for their clients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locating and evaluating materials in languages other than English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating research literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using technology and social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding Health literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding cultural sensitivity/competency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using technology to engage the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No unmet needs identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify, and identify for social workers or social work students)

## 5. Has your library conducted an information needs assessment including social workers or social work students?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## 6. Has your library been involved with projects (any planned and implemented activity) that included social workers or social work students?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 1

**7. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**8. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**9. Did you apply for funding?**

Yes

No

**10. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

Yes

No

**11. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**12. Has your library conducted any additional projects that included social workers or social work students?**

Yes

No

Don't know

## Project 2

**13. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**14. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**15. Did you apply for funding?**

Yes

No

**16. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

Yes

No

**17. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**18. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

Yes

No

Don't know

## Project 3

**19. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**20. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**21. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes
- No

**22. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes
- No

**23. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**24. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 4

**25. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**26. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**27. Did you apply for funding?**

Yes

No

**28. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

Yes

No

**29. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**30. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

Yes

No

Don't know

## Project 5

**31. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**32. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**33. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes
- No

**34. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes
- No

**35. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**36. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 6

**37. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**38. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**39. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes
- No

**40. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes
- No

**41. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**42. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 7

**43. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**44. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**45. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes
- No

**46. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes
- No

**47. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**48. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 8

**49. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**50. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**51. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes
- No

**52. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes
- No

**53. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**54. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Project 9

**55. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**56. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**57. Did you apply for funding?**

- Yes  
 No

**58. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

- Yes  
 No

**59. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

**60. Has your library conducted any other projects that included social workers or social work students?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

## Project 10

**61. Please provide a brief description of one of your library's projects that included social workers or social work students.**

**You may copy and paste from pre-existing project description text.**

**62. When did this project take place?**

Ongoing (year started)

Past (year - year)

Proposed (year of proposed start)

**63. Did you apply for funding?**

Yes

No

**64. If yes, did you receive the funding?**

Yes

No

**65. If yes, what amount of funding did you receive?**

Dollar amount:

# Pilot: Outreach to Social Workers: NN/LM Member Library Survey

## 66. **\*\*Within your library\*\*** what barriers have you identified with providing information outreach to social workers or social work students/schools? (check all that apply)

	Social Workers	Social Work Students
Not our target population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We do not have enough time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We do not have enough money or resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We do not have enough social work subject expertise to train social workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We don't know any social workers or social work students in our community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We do not teach health information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No identified barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

## 67. **\*\*Within the field of social work\*\*** what barriers have you identified with providing information outreach to social workers or social work students/schools? (check all that apply)

	Social Workers	Social Work Students
No, or low interest/priority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They don't have enough time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They don't have enough money or resources to work with us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They don't have enough training in information skills to work with us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They don't know about us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They do not need health information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No identified barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

**68. What is your library's most significant barrier to conducting health information outreach to \*\*social workers?\*\***

**69. What is your library's most significant barrier to conducting health information outreach to \*\*social work students?\*\***

## 70. Is your library interested in learning more about: (check all that apply)

- Outreach to social workers and social work students with biomedical and consumer health information
- Relevance of biomedical and consumer health information to social workers and social work students
- Demographic information on social workers and social work students
- Description of social work subgroups and job functions
- Large scale change trends within the social work field
- My library is not interested at this time in learning about social workers and social work students

Other (please specify)

## 71. In what format would you like this information? (check all that apply)

- Short summary handout
- Resource list
- PowerPoint
- Electronic tutorial
- Brief Web-based presentation (similar to Web Meeting or GoToMeeting)
- We are not interested in this information at this time

Other (please specify)

## 72. Would your library be interested in ready-made training materials to use with social workers and social work students?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Based on your **\*\*opinion\*\*** please answer these next few questions.

**73. Social workers and social work students would potentially benefit from training in biomedical information.**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Why or why not?

**74. Social workers and social work students would potentially benefit from training in consumer health information.**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Why or why not?

# Pilot: Outreach to Social Workers: NN/LM Member Library Survey

As the study progresses, there will be opportunities to participate in our research into social workers as a potential population for health information outreach.

Areas of assistance may include: Focus groups, data collection, and interviews of social workers or social work students in your community.

## 75. Would any of your library's staff members be interested in assisting in our research?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## 76. If yes, please include their name(s) and email address(es) below.

Contact 1

Contact 2

## 77. Would you or your library like to receive the results of this survey and project updates?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email.

## 78. Does your library have any questions or comments regarding this project?

## Pilot: Outreach to Social Workers: NN/LM Member Library Survey

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your responses are invaluable in our exploration of social workers as a new population for outreach with biomedical and consumer health information.

For more information about outreach activities and resources at NLM, please visit: <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/outreach.html>

Please direct any questions to Laura Bartlett at [bartlett@mail.nih.gov](mailto:bartlett@mail.nih.gov)

**79. As the test group of the pilot survey, we would appreciate your feedback on our survey. Please let us know if any of our questions failed to cover important areas, or if they were unclear or redundant. Any comments or questions are welcome.**

**Thank you in advance for your feedback!**

**80. Approximately how long did this survey take you to complete?**