

***Empowering Interns to be Social  
Justice Advocates: Ways Staff Can  
Model Advocacy Throughout the  
Training Program***



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# Learning Objectives



- Learning Objective 1: List barriers in engaging interns in social justice work.
- Learning Objective 2: Discuss challenges in getting staff to join in social justice initiatives on campus.
- Learning Objective 3: Define what social justice advocacy means for your center.
- Learning Objective 4: Apply strategies to engage staff in modeling social justice advocacy throughout training.
- Learning Objective 5: Apply strategies to empower interns to be social justice advocates over their internship year.

# Challenges in Engaging Interns



- **Values, Beliefs, and Experiences**
  - Beliefs in a just world, show less interest and commitment for social justice advocacy  
-Arpana et al., 2015
- **Training in their doctoral program**
- **Safety and Trust in the Training Environment**
  - Perceived multicultural and social justice emphasis of training program enhanced commitment to social justice  
-Beer et al., 2012

# Ideas and Examples to Build Engagement



- Understanding trainees levels of awareness regarding their own identity, privilege, oppression, and discrimination
  - ✦ Diversity Retreats
- Importance of self-disclosure in teaching social justice
  - ✦ Staff cultural story telling
- Education and exposure to other experiences
  - ✦ 50+ hours of diversity training (didactic and experiential)

# Ideas and Examples cont'd



- Experience and immersion with different communities
  - ✦ Diversity concentration areas
    - Working with Students of Color, LGBTQA+, or International Students
  - ✦ Immersion Experiences
    - Focus groups
  
- Intentional and courageous conversations
  - ✦ Starting at the intern application and throughout the training year

# Challenges in Engaging Staff



- **Clinical Demand**
  - Focus on direct service
- **Evening Hours/Long Days**
  - Needing to get home to family
- **Personal or Self-Care Time**
  - Need lunch hours and other “down” time to take care of oneself
- **Lack of Cultural Awareness or Competency**
  - Lack of their own training and/or understanding
  - Feeling insecure or threatened by trainees

# Ideas and Examples to Build Engagement



- Engaging directors to understand the need
  - ✦ Value
  - ✦ Support
  - ✦ Time
  
- Get creative with schedules
  - ✦ Evening hours (doesn't feel like this is extra)
  - ✦ Move a lunch hour or paperwork hour
  - ✦ Difficult discussions on self-care vs. rigidity
  
- Use the training program to promote engagement
  - ✦ Going through self-study
  - ✦ Including entire staff in the training program

# Ideas and Examples cont'd



- Value of teamwork and the shared value of not burning out
  - ✦ How to help one another
    - advising role, eating disorders awareness week, 3 outreach presentations a semester
  
- Cultural competency team
  - ✦ Facilitating difficult conversations with staff
  - ✦ Taking conversations to huddles/staff meetings
  - ✦ Allowing opportunities for staff to participate on the team
  - ✦ Cultural Competency Trainings
  
- Going back to what social justice means to your center
  - ✦ Women's lunch
  - ✦ Lunch group
  - ✦ Diversity work group



# What Social Justice Means for Your Center



- Define what social justice advocacy means for your center
  - Developing a program mission statement that defines social justice for the training program
    - ✦ Why is this an important part of your program
    - ✦ Why is it important for you that interns practice social justice work at your center
  - How is this tied to the ethics of our profession?
  - How is this tied to the mission of your institution?

# Final Thoughts



- Social Justice work is on-going, hard work, and takes a lot of energy
  - Self-Compassion
- Not everyone is going to buy-in, or at least not at the level you hope for
  - How can you focus on those who are trying
- Don't get stuck
  - Recharge, Get support, and Don't let them keep you from moving forward

# References



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