

Mental health counselors train to help communities, not just individuals

June 13 2023



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Many people envision mental health counselors as professionals who sit in an office helping clients work through trauma and emotional difficulties. But many counseling students are pursuing civic engagement

as part of their training. Two articles in *Counseling Education and Supervision* highlight pilot programs aimed at training counselors on how to get involved in antiracism and community support efforts.

The articles appear as part of a special issue that offers ideas on how [counseling](#) educators and supervisors can add multicultural training, advocacy and [social justice](#) curriculum to counselor training programs.

The pilot programs center on the notion of healing entire communities, rather than just individuals, and of breaking down racist systems. These approaches also look to identify and utilize the strengths and resilience of oppressed groups.

Antiracism Internship: Applying the ecological social justice school counseling theory

In one program, school counseling interns learned antiracist activism by addressing health risks in schools. This initiative relied on the ecological social justice school counseling (ESJSC) theory, which focuses on addressing systemic racism that affects students' personal and academic lives. Kaprea F. Johnson, a professor at The Ohio State University, served as lead author on the article.

By applying ESJSC to their work, the interns—working at different elementary, middle and high schools—took such actions as developing assessment tools to better identify students facing food and housing insecurity, as well as physical and [mental health problems](#). One intern and her supervisor reported they helped an emancipated student apply for government assistance so she could focus on graduating. Another intern developed a resource and information packet to give to families based on the students' needs.

The interns "reported that the use of the ESJSC theory helped them to see students holistically" and "as much more than just students, but as individuals with complex stories, backgrounds and experiences," Johnson and colleagues wrote.

The Social Justice Consultation Corps: An interdisciplinary training initiative

An initiative called the Social Justice Consultation Corps (SJCC) at the University of Florida (UF) involved recruiting counselors-in-training to help racial-minority and LGBTQ+ student organizations working toward social justice. The trainees provided emotional support for the groups and helped them deal with intergroup conflicts that might have impeded their work.

The trainees reported they made valuable connections and bolstered their clinical skills.

"Consultants were somewhat surprised to realize their role was not to restructure or solve a problem within a student organization, but more so to facilitate organizational and interpersonal healing," the authors wrote.

The SJCC program could serve as a model for [training](#) in social [justice](#) work, according to authors Hannah Bayne, who until recently was a faculty member at UF and is now at Virginia Tech; UF doctoral [student](#) Jeanette Mejia; and Della V. Mosely, a psychologist and activist in Durham, North Carolina.

Both articles are published in the journal *Counselor Education and Supervision*.

More information: Kaprea F. Johnson et al, Antiracism internship:

Applying the ecological social justice school counseling theory,
Counselor Education and Supervision (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/ceas.12253](https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12253)

Hannah B. Bayne et al, The Social Justice Consultation Corps: An
interdisciplinary training initiative, *Counselor Education and Supervision*
(2022). [DOI: 10.1002/ceas.12256](https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12256)

Provided by American Counseling Association

Citation: Mental health counselors train to help communities, not just individuals (2023, June 13)
retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-mental-health-counselors-communities-individuals.html>

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