Insights from Research on Library Social work

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Practitioner Professional Composition

- Library titles varied
- Average length of time working in the library: 19 months
- 80% MSW
- 67% social work license
- Prior practice experience: community mental health, community organizing, health/hospital settings
Practice Setting

- Average program length: 2.64 years
- Most were the first social workers in their positions (67%) and were the only library social workers in their library system (84%)
- 50% hosted interns/ 50% did not
- 60% reported no supervision
- Funding: the city or local government (34%), internally funded through the library (31%), and/or in combination with grants (25%)
- 94% worked with people experiencing homelessness and 94% with people experiencing food insecurity
- 90% worked with people with serious and persistent mental illness
Practice Tasks & Duties

- **Micro**
  - 95% worked with patrons directly
  - 54% of their time was spent providing direct service to patrons
    - Assisting with resource linkage to basic needs
    - Providing assistance with government applications
    - Providing emotional support

- **Mezzo**
  - 92% worked with library staff & 90% with community based organizations
  - Outreach to community-based organizations, individual support for library staff, engaging in library programming, developing and providing library staff training

- **Macro**
  - 77% worked with library administration
    - Policy revisions
    - DEI initiatives
Experience in Practice Setting

- Most challenging
  - Lack of community resources
  - Program visibility/marketing
  - Navigating confidentiality
- Most important
  - Access to community resources
  - Funding opportunities
  - Library staff buy-in
- Most lacking
  - Access to community resources
  - Library staff buy-in and access to administration
  - Supervision or support from the field of SW
Barriers & Facilitators

- Role clarity
  - Lack of understanding of social work
  - Differences in professional philosophies
  - Buy in and support
- Space
- Supervision
- Funding
- Lack of community resources
Recommendations

- Role clarity
  - Librarians should be fully informed about all social work practice components
  - Familiarize themselves with the NASW code of ethics
- Supervision: incorporate more opportunities for oversight
- Space: confidential but visible
- Funding: more than just a salary
- Community resources: advocacy by the library
- Future research: standardization of program components
Thank you!
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Other Reading


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