

Episode 264—Darrie Draper and Dr. Kirk Foster: Exploring the Integration of Social Workers into the Library Setting

[00:00:08] Welcome to inSocialWork, the podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at www.inSocialWork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of inSocialWork is to engage practitioners and researchers in lifelong learning and to promote research to practice and practice to research. We educate. We connect. We care. We're inSocialWork.

[00:00:37] Hi from Buffalo. On May 18th we celebrated the graduation of our MSW and PhD students. Congratulations to all. For the relatively short time we spend interacting with them, we grow quite fond of the bright people we meet and we look forward to hearing about the meaningful work their adventures will reveal. We will miss you and props to graduates everywhere. I'm Peter Sobota. Those of us of a certain age remember public libraries as quiet places where you could read magazines and books. But of course if you've been to any public library lately you know that they now operate as the new town square. Now more than ever libraries are practical places, especially for folks who occupy low socioeconomic status. Whether it's attending adult or child programming, accessing broadband, computers, DVDs or CDs, and yes at least still for the time being, books, There are many almost essential resources that public libraries provide access to across the country. In this episode Carrie Draper and Dr. Kurt Foster describe how they're leveraging the library's familiarity and resources in order to reach community members in need by integrating social work students as interns in those settings. Can a public library be conceptualized as a human service organization? Drawing on social or core concepts such as starting where the client is, and ecological approaches, our guests discuss the natural fit and the challenges they encountered as they placed and integrated social workers in these non-traditional settings. Our guests will tell us what they learned as they attempted to discover if library clients would experience stigma interacting with social workers there, what were the most common concerns of the clients, if social workers lead clients to new community resources would the clients followed through, and what new roles would social workers play in this setting. Carrie Draper MSW is research associate at the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina and Kirk Foster PhD is associate professor and associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. Our guests were interviewed in February of 2019 by Greer Hamilton, an adjunct faculty member here at the UB School of Social Work.

[00:02:51] My name is Gary Hamilton. I am an adjunct instructor here at the University of Buffalo and I also work for an initiative called the Mobile Safety Net Team, and I'd love to get started by just hearing from you all a little about yourselves, so we could start with Carrie could you just tell me a bit more about yourself?

[00:03:07] Sure. Well first thanks so much for having us on the podcast this is really exciting. I am a research associate in the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina and there I lead various research and evaluation studies on public nutrition assistance programs and how to address food insecurity and child hunger and local food system strategies. Currently I'm taking a bit of a break but I also have eight years of experience being an adjunct instructor in our college social work at USC as well where I've taught policy courses and community practice courses.

[00:03:44] Great. Thank you. And Kirk?

[00:03:45] Thank you, Greer, for having us. Appreciate it. I am an associate professor and associate dean for Diversity Equity and Inclusion at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. My teaching is primarily focused in the area of community practice and I currently chair our social community and economic development specialization. My research focuses and has focused primarily on urban African-American communities and matters such as social capital, mobilization through community based organizations and collective action, so more directly how folks who live in lower income urban communities come together to affect change on behalf of themselves. I've done some research with communities both in St. Louis, Missouri and Atlanta, Georgia, and launching a new project that examines grassroots restorative justice approaches to bridging the divide between African-American communities and law enforcement.

[00:04:40] Well you all have a really interesting background and so I'm really glad that we're able to talk them out about this library filled placement and that you're starting. So Carrie could you start us off by talking about your experiences with social workers and libraries?

[00:04:50] Yeah. The first experience was working with our local library here and Columbia, South Carolina Richland library to start a new field placement for our initially Master's in Social Work students but then also Bachelor's in Social Work students out of their children's room and it's quite a large library. So they have, oh, department geared towards children and families. And then from that experience it sparked an interest that we'll be talking about more later, but then reaching out to libraries around the country that also had social workers to some capacity to learn more about what that looks like from a national perspective.

[00:05:30] And Kirk what about you? What experience do you have with social workers and libraries?

[00:05:34] Most of my experience and my interest in this particular project has been around social work delivery and non-traditional settings. So my dissertation and other practice experiences have focused on urban religious congregations and seeing how folks would come to local churches requesting various types of services from food and nutrition support to monetary support to mental health support. And so through the years I've worked on several initiatives, some in various places around equipping and training clergy to work with community members who come to them presenting with various sorts of needs, and so I've had a long interest in this alternative setting or non-traditional setting where social workers might practice but could very much effect change due to their training, due to their network connections that they have in the community and so that was the lens that I brought to this particular project.

[00:06:28] And so what sparked your interest in this topic, Carrie? You referenced you were going to come back to that and I would just like to hear more about that.

[00:06:34] Yeah. So when I was giving my introduction I talked about how my research and practice experience really largely focuses on issues of food access and child hunger. And so one of the studies that I coordinated out of the School of Public Health at USC about six years ago was called the Midland Family Study. And within that study we were looking at how can households and communities protect children against very low food security, so very low food security being where children within a given year might have gone whole days without being able to eat because their caregivers did not have enough

money to have enough food in the household. And so one of the main data collection strategies for that was to do 550 really in-depth surveys with caregivers within eight counties in South Carolina. And we were doing surveys kind of with an equal amount of households that were considered to be food secure so households where the caregivers were saying we really don't have issues with that, we don't have shortages of food or worries about running out of food because of money, households where they were food insecure, so where they were worried about that potentially happening for them or they might run out of food towards the end of the month, or the adults might have had to cut back on the quality and quantity of food, but they were saying that caregivers were reporting that their children really weren't impacted by that, then they were talking about how their children did have to cut back on the quality or quantity of food because of shortages. And so initially I was coordinating that study and so I was very comfortable going into places where people were living where there is a three story house or an apartment or a motel room, but I was the only social worker on staff so other people didn't have that level of comfort. And so what we started doing then we changed the study protocol, and what we were setting up the time and place to do that interview we started asking people "Okay, well where's a place that you can easily get to that you feel comfortable going to to do this hour and a half survey?" And the places time and time again that people would talk about was either their local McDonald's for their local library branch and that was in the middle of urban Columbia setting to really really rural places in South Carolina. And so during that experience, and I ended up spending a lot of time as an adult for the first time in public libraries where I was serving people who didn't have reliable transportation, didn't have health insurance, didn't have stable housing. And so that's what really sparked my interest, was understanding "wow this is a place where people of low socioeconomic backgrounds feel comfortable coming to that they can get to." And so it just seemed like an ideal fit to think about social workers coming to where the people are.

[00:09:28] You know it makes total sense. So Kirk, I know you brought up when you were talking about your experience your interest in non-traditional settings. Was that part of your interest in this topic or was there something else that drew you to social workers and libraries?

[00:09:39] It was absolutely part of my interest in this topic as an educator and as the one responsible in the college for thinking critically about our social community economic development specialization. I'm often thinking about where might we place our students in there for their field education settings that meet their needs but also might be an innovative interesting spot to have social workers. So that certainly was a piece of it and thinking very critically about how can we get social workers out where people are, where folks who might not otherwise be able to interface with a social worker would have the opportunity to do that and perhaps googling to some services and programs that they might not otherwise know about. So that's certainly almost part of it. Again you know as Carrie mentioned in the past it was my own research and chatting with folks about places in the community where they felt they were safe spaces or places where they felt they could access resources that they might need. Public libraries often came up in that conversation, and so really it's linking those two pieces together and then simply knowing how our main library here in Columbia South Carolina attracts folks who have significant needs, a number of homeless folks go to the library for different things. As Carrie mentioned, a number of families who struggle to make ends meet who are on the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder go to receive services, either computers for their kids they're there looking for jobs, resources, programming, all of those kinds of things and I do this partly from conversations with colleagues in and around Columbia but also just from merely

driving by the library on a regular basis and so when Carrie came to me, and I give all the credit to Carrie for thinking of this idea initially, when Carrie came to me and said, you know, "what do you think about this?" It immediately struck me as not only a good idea but an important innovative one where we could most likely reach some individuals and some families who may need services but one, didn't know how to go about getting them and two, weren't already receiving them somewhere else.

[00:11:39] That's really great because as someone who does community social work it's always really interesting, and I also serve as a field educator, how uncomfortable some social work students have been in the past with doing community social work and like having to go to places like a library and interacting with people. So it's like really refreshing to hear both of your backgrounds and your interests in this because it's something that is really important to me. Kirk you mentioned a little bit about kind of why you thought it was a good idea. Is there anything else that kind of made you feel as though this project was a good idea before we go on to Carrie?

[00:12:09] There's one thing that I would add to the conversation about why we felt this was a good idea is was also to leverage the library resources and to leverage the library's trust and access within the community to meet additional needs. Library staff are only trained to do so much in their plates are already very full. And so in my thinking and in conversations with Carrie and conversations with others this just seems like the perfect idea to be able to leverage the institution of the library in order to do even greater good out in the community.

[00:12:43] What about you Carrie? What were pieces that made you think this is a good idea as a project?

[00:12:47] First, my interest was sparked, of course what I was talking about, from it just got personal anecdotal experience, but then in digging, looking at national data to see if my personal experience really lines with the norm, more than 50 percent of Americans use a public library and a year and certainly a lot of people the number one reason is still kind of the traditional reason for checking out books, but now with libraries really responding to changing technology, changing societal norms where that's not necessarily what's going to draw over 50 percent of people to libraries anymore that you find that people are also going there to participate in programming to get help from the librarian like Kirk was saying, to use computers to access free internet. And then also thinking about just looking at, I really thought much about the profession of library and information sciences, but just looking at comparing the American Library Association website and what their mission is and they're articulating the values of the profession are compared to NASW, National Association of Social Workers and really just seeing how many parallels there are in terms of the same value of service or similar values of access where the public good, thinking about how they have a policy called Policy 61 Library Services for the Poor where the purpose of that is to ensure that libraries are accessible and useful to low income citizens and to encourage a deeper understanding of poverty dimensions it causes and the ways it can be ended. So just hearing that, reading things like that, I was like "Oh my gosh this is a profession that I hadn't thought about being such an ally," and the work that we as social workers are trying to do to end poverty to make sure that everybody has access to information, to resources. So that definitely, then doing that kind of research on my own definitely made me think, again that this was a good idea. And then going to the library here, I had no idea how they would respond when I asked them about "what do you think about having social work interns at the library?" And they were thrilled. They just thought it was such a good fit for them. So I think we were onto something that other people in the

country had also already of course thought about. And I will get to what we found with those interviews in a little bit.

[00:15:05] I think it's important to note too, Carrie, that we didn't simply just deposit the social work interns in the children's room at the library. We were very intentional and the librarians were very intentional about posting outside of the children's library that social workers were available and here were the times each day that they were available, and information was posted up near the main entrance to the library "Social workers are here, here's where you can find them, here's when they're available." And so it wasn't a matter of just putting them there and hoping that people would come find them. There was a very intentional effort on behalf of the library, and this speaks to their excitement and this speaks to their excitement of having the social work interns and social workers at the library but also the connection between how they understood their mission as a community serving institution and how they understood what the role of social work could bring to that and serve their patrons in a much more holistic way.

[00:16:01] Thank you for that. I would like to hear what were you hoping to discover through your research? Kirk if you wouldn't mind starting?

[00:16:07] Sure. A couple of things. And let me just say this now so we can bookmark it and back into it a little bit. Carrie can certainly talk about that programming I do think it's important to have a robust picture of what the interns were doing. So we really hoped to discover several things. One was would patrons actually come to see a social worker. Would there be too much stigma or might stigma prevent patrons from coming and even seeking social services. So we were curious as to whether or not people would even make an appointment, even come down and ask one of the children's librarians to see the social worker. And then we wanted to know who would seek services. Were these families with children, were it only families with children because the interns were housed in the children's room at the library. We were interested in learning better why individuals and families would seek the services of a social worker. What types of issues were they presenting with, what were their greatest concerns, why did they need to sit down and talk with a social worker. And then we were interested in learning whether or not social workers could link the patron to otherwise unknown services. So in effect was the library then serving as a vehicle to be able to link patrons with services that would address their needs in ways that perhaps they were unable to through engaging other social service delivery organizations, or as the only point of social service delivery. And then we were interested in discovering whether or not social workers could impact the service receipt. So whether or not obtaining a referral or the social work intern doing some work on behalf of the patron to link them to services that would address the presenting issues that they explained during intake, whether or not those services actually were received to the patron, take advantage of those services, did those services actually meet their need, was there economic or housing or whatever presenting issue, was that affected by their interaction with a social worker. One of the things that we learned was that because of the transient nature of this particular population, the library population is inherently transient. But then in working with the folks who did actually come to see the social work interns, it was a very highly transient population. And it made it very difficult for us to do follow up evaluation to know whether or not we were able to make a difference in the lives of these individuals. Now, and Carrie can talk a little bit more about that in a few moments, the interns did attempt to follow up and they were able to follow up with a certain number of clients, but it was often quite difficult to do that. So what we hoped to learn was how we might make a difference, what was difficult to learn was whether or not we were able to do that and so the evaluation piece of that was particularly challenging.

[00:19:01] And what is the name of your research study, just in case people are interested in reading about it more after the podcast?

[00:19:07] We actually still need to publish on all of this.

[00:19:11] Okay.

[00:19:12] And thinking about the last question, what are your next steps. That's in the next that, is finally getting some of this out the door in terms of publications. We presented on the piece that I'm going to talk about, Kirk is really digging into some evaluation work that we did specifically at the library where we had the field placement but then we also did interviews with nine libraries around the country that we had identified who also had social workers either on staff or interned or in a volunteer capacity. So two weeks for the integration of social workers in the library setting, what did that look like, what's our national landscape about that. And so that, we presented on at the Society for Social Work Research that's past almost a year ago. So we tried to get it out in that way. With that research specifically we were trying to figure out what is motivating libraries to hire social workers and what does that program structure look like, is that looking the same across the country or are there are these really different models that people are adopting. And then thinking about what are the social worker roles at the library. Again, do those all look the same, are there different ways that social workers are being integrated into that setting and what they're doing day to day. And then thinking about program impact, so is that something that people are trying to figure out within their work. And if not why not. And if so what are they learning from that.

[00:20:41] Thank you for that clarification. And I'm excited to hear about your next steps at the end. Carrie, could you start us off by talking more about what you've learned about the role of social workers in libraries in the United States?

[00:20:50] Yeah. So I think we went into this partially based on our own experience, again doing the field placement here and where I know you were asking what did that look like. And a lot of that was sitting down one on one with patrons or customers at the library and the interns helping them navigate resource systems. And so we knew that that likely was a main role that social workers were playing, was to meet one on one potentially with patrons, customers, and refer them to community resources. So one thing that I was really excited to also learn is that every library that we've talked to also talked about the importance of the social worker's presence and the impact of that on other staff within the library. So one of the reasons why libraries were motivated to have social workers were because a lot of the librarians would make comments about "I feel like I'm a social worker," because customers were coming up to them with really tough situations, not having housing, not having food for their kids, and they're not necessarily trained in how to navigate or even talk to somebody who's struggling with those really big issues. And so that was one thing that was really exciting to hear, is the trainings that social workers are doing around the country with librarians. For one example in this interview I spoke to the supervisor of the social worker on staff and so she talked about how the social worker there was really opening the eyes of some of the employees regarding quote unquote problem patrons. They were starting to see them as human beings and that staff were interacting more with those patrons now and that they no longer saw them as people to avoid or to be fearful of.

[00:22:36] Kirk, what about you? Did you learn anything different from Carrie that you might want to speak about in terms of the role of social workers in libraries?

[00:22:42] I don't know if I learned anything significantly different from Carrie, my takeaways were any significantly different from Carrie's. But what I would say is this capacity building piece as we think about human serving organizations within the community and libraries being one of them. Even using the language of libraries as human serving or human service organizations begins to shift the paradigm in important ways as we think about the diversity of places where folks in the community may access knowledge about social services or may access social services themselves. And so what we found was even through the interns and through conversations with libraries across the U.S. is that important capacity building piece that social workers brought to a library staff. And so I think as we're able to effect change at the community level more and more in this way, not only building the capacity of library staff to handle and work with a diverse group of patrons, also beginning to shift our thinking about libraries within the context of community based organizations. Are they only a place where one goes to check out books or movies or access the Internet, or are they also a place that can serve people more robustly in a very diverse way that we didn't anticipate before, again to revision the evolution of libraries as an important community based organization.

[00:24:08] Carrie, could start us by talking to us about challenges you learned in doing this research project?

[00:24:14] Yeah. In terms of talking to the libraries across the country certainly one big challenge is funding. How do you find the funding for this non-traditional profession within the library setting and so there wasn't a single library that I talked to who wouldn't have loved to have at least one full time social worker on staff, if not more than that. But due to a lack of funding sometimes, and the model was having interns or sometimes it was connecting with their local NASW chapter where then NASW members would come and volunteer multiple times in a month to meet with patrons. And then thinking about just the challenges that Kirk's going to talk about more about and has had highlighted earlier about evaluating impacts. So thinking about that certainly then going hand-in-hand with being able to justify then the funding. And then also thinking about this is partially from the research that we're talking about or practical experience that we've had within this. But I also did a series of interviews as a consultant that was around the role of public libraries and increasing information and access to reproductive health care. And so I did a series of interviews with directors of libraries. And one of the things that I talked to them about was this idea of having social workers who could do that kind of work. And one of the biggest challenges that they saw in that was especially in rural libraries was just this physical space to be a social worker to meet with customers. You of course need privacy to be able to do that. You need an office space and we are really really fortunate that in Columbia we have one of the most amazing libraries that got, I think it was the number one library in the nation award this year, Best Library. But that's not the same experience that you have then at a rural library. You don't have the space for 20 meeting rooms for individual office space for everybody. That's just what I've been thinking about a lot. Of course when you find something that's successful and it seems like it is successful, then how do you scale that up, how do you replicate that. And I think just that capacity of funding but also physical space is a real issue and thinking about what that will look like. And then one thing that people also talked about when talking to supervisors of them social workers and libraries was just kind of that hiring process of job descriptions. What does the job description look like. How do you fit a social worker into the internal H.R. system. How do you know how

much to pay them compared to other staff within the library. Witnesses a different kind of professional. So those are some of the challenges.

[00:26:49] I echo those. And as Carrie suggested this evaluation piece that I did raise earlier, good practices always informed by good solid evaluation. And that was one of the biggest challenges with this project that we ran with the student social work interns here at our main library in Columbia South Carolina. Since we had so much difficulty in following up with individuals, it's been difficult for us to demonstrate empirically that these particular encounters made an impact on someone's outcomes. Where they not only informed about services, do they actually receive services and did those services actually provide some sort of relief from the issue that they presented a social worker with. So is one of the ongoing challenges because if we can demonstrate effectiveness then it will be challenging to convince funders to provide grants for these social workers and libraries but also it may be difficult to convince libraries to set aside part of their very scarce resources in order to fund full time social workers. But I think part of it is too I think another couple of challenges are helping the community understand that libraries are places where they can have a variety of needs met and we have full time social workers there then it's another spot for folks to come and receive social services maybe in a non-stigmatizing place and way, and I think one of the other challenges as I think about this as an educator is getting social workers and getting students to consider libraries as a viable career path. It's not a place where students say "oh after I graduate I'm going to go work in the library." It's not front and center in their thinking, doesn't strike them oftentimes as a logical place to go and practice. And so again I think part of the challenge that this highlights is not only specific to libraries but more broadly about how do we get the social work profession, how do we get our students in particular to be thinking about non-traditional places to practice where they might better interface with the population upon whom they seek to affect change or work with to effect change than they might otherwise at a sort of a traditional place. And so I think as I reflect on the work that we've done and my time with the students those are the biggest challenges that I see in moving this work forward.

[00:29:10] Out of curiosity did the interns after working in the library have a better understanding of what nontraditional social work could look like and their opportunities and careers for that? At least let you be. I see a lot of students that want to do a lot more clinical work and so I'm just kind of curious did the students have a better understanding of what nontraditional social work could look like and if they would be interested in that type of career?

[00:29:29] Yeah I certainly think so, and I think ironically some of the interns then had at least interim had then full time jobs at the library and then ironically I wasn't expecting that to happen and this wasn't the purpose but some of the interns also ended up, one changed her major to library and information sciences, another who was a bachelor student decided to pursue a master's in library and information sciences instead of social work. So it also had a different outcome than I was expecting. But I think that that really shows that it could be really really valuable to have dual degree programs between social work and Library and Information Sciences or at least dual course as a profession.

[00:30:11] I'll add to that. And certainly those were some unintended consequences of having this particular field placement for our students. The other piece that I think was important for some of our students, again speaking from the lens of an educator, not only an educator but also a community practitioner, one who is interested in community level processes and community based organizations. You are correct, we do see a lot of students come to graduate social work programs with a clinical focus wanting their practice

career focused on mental health services and mental service provision. What was important about this opportunity and this internship for me for students who work more clinically focused was they left this with a better understanding of the variety of ways in which you can not only use your clinical training in various types of settings but the important role that community based health and community based mental health plays within the population. Because oftentimes a lot of the folks that came to see our social work interns at the library, they may not have been receiving any sort of mental health care elsewhere. And so they provided those students with a very particular opportunity to think more critically about, Okay, well how might I then practice the provision of mental health care or clinical practice in this particular community based setting as opposed to a traditional setting where I'm in a counselling organization and you know we set appointments and people come in for their 50 minutes of psychotherapy which is an important role that social workers play. But at least with this having the students in this particular setting provided them a different look into how people's needs are met or how they're not being met and how they might think about clinical practice through a different lens.

[00:32:00] I also have one more follow up question to the challenges that you all talked about, it was about communicating the role of libraries to people. And so I'm curious, besides doing the flyers in the library announcing a social worker be there was there any other media type a plan that you all had as part of the research to help the community better understand understanding, I guess, what this new field placement could look like for them and how they could be connected to services? Because I know with the 2020 census coming up libraries are going playing a large role in that since a lot of the census will be done online and so I'm just curious about how do you communicate what the role of a library is more effectively I guess to community at large.

[00:32:38] The main Virtual Library here in Columbia South Carolina actually does a good job in branding itself as a place that is more than books. It has a different PR campaigns to showcase its programs. It has meeting rooms, it has lecture rooms where they have community based programming. For instance, they have a very robust Black History Month set of programming, I think they have 32 different events happening at the library just this month around black history. There is a cafe in the library that focuses on skill building, human capacity and human capital building for staff. And so I think there is the general acceptance, at least here in Columbia South Carolina, that our main downtown library is a place that is more than just books and more than just computers. But there hasn't been any concerted effort to also say that this is a place where you might be able to connect to have some of your other needs met, your other social service needs and such. So I don't know if that helps address that follow up question.

[00:33:39] I think it does, because I'm just thinking about the Buffalo and Erie County Library here in New York and there is some promotion for events but they already do so much, they do so many programs that help people with resumés other skill building and it's not necessarily always known and I was just curious what you had said about what the role of marketing was in sharing the information and the Internet. So thank you. So Kirk would you mind starting us off by talking about what are some practical implications of the research for practice, social work education or future research?

[00:34:11] Certainly. So there are a couple of implications that I would like to highlight. One is this helped us to develop a set of guidelines that shape how we think about the practice of social work in nontraditional settings. And that is an important piece for me as a community practitioner whose research and practices focus primarily in low income urban

communities. The other implication that I think is important, it gives us insight into the types of services that individuals may seek who might not be going to other social service providers. The library sees itself as a very neutral place to go seek services and you're walking into a traditional social service provider office then everyone sees you and knows that you're going in there for a very specific thing. But when you walk into a library it's a very neutral space. You might be there for a number of different things; you might be there for a lecture, you might be there to grab lunch, and you might be there to check out a book or to attend a meeting, or you might be there to go see one of the social workers. So that is an important implication of this all. It can give us, certainly the work gave us better insights into why people would seek out a social worker in this particular type of setting, and are they receiving services through the library-based social workers that they might not be either seeking or receiving elsewhere.

[00:35:33] Carrie, what about you? Do you want to highlight any practical implications for the research, social work education or future research?

[00:35:38] Yeah, I think just to reiterate that I would definitely really like to see there be dual courses offered between the professions as well as even potentially dual degree programs. And I also think, this is another challenge from doing the interviews was just thinking about when a social worker is in a library they're in a setting potentially all on their own. And so there definitely was the interest and the need for then, who do you rely on to talk about the ethical dilemmas that you experience when you're not an office surrounded by other social workers. And so thinking about potentially there being some sort of just network set up with social workers and libraries to certainly not talk about confidential information but just be able to talk about and think during the challenges that they are experiencing being kind of this one person in some cases.

[00:36:30] So why don't we talk about what's next for both of you all? Carrie if you wouldn't mind starting?

[00:36:36] Sure. So like I said before I'd love to get some publications out the door finally. This was something that was unfunded that Kirk and I both did because we thought it was important to do, so it's kind of hard to fit some of this into to the day to day. But I have been able to continue to collaborate with libraries around the state and again of my quote unquote day jobs. Like I was saying earlier, I do work around nutrition assistance programs and a lot of my funding comes from what's called the National SNAP Ed program. And so a lot of my team does their evaluation work, but we also have started doing some of our own implementation work. And so we have worked with libraries around the state to implement nutrition support strategies including farmers markets and garden produce box programs. So for example, we worked with the library here that we keep referring to where the field placement was set up, but to start a Farmer's Market and then having the interns in the library, I used to serve as the external field instructor for the students there and Kirk served as a field liaison because there weren't social workers on staff, but since then there's a whole social work department now at that library, so they've, of course, taken over field instruction for students. So with working on starting the Farmer's Market at the library then one of the things that happens at that market is that social workers are there are to help customers apply for SNAP. So I've still been able to figure out how to work with libraries as well as social workers and libraries through just what I do every day when it comes to food access so I'll definitely be continuing to do that work and evaluating it and publishing on that as well.

[00:38:17] And Kirk?

[00:38:17] Really for me, thinking around this project specifically from the educational side and continuing to encourage our students to go into nontraditional settings, not only as they seek employment but to gain some experience in those when they're still working on their degree, taking field education and opportunities in these nontraditional settings such as libraries so they can get a more robust picture of social work practice and what that practice looks like in various community settings. I think certainly Carrie's comments highlight the power even in unfunded research as this was that after this work the library created a social work department. And so what started out as an idea of just putting a couple of social work interns in a library evolved into a library then seeing the benefit of that and creating a social work department. And that certainly is an important step and important piece of this that I want to highlight that we can effect change through all different types of research, be it a very small scale or very large scale.

[00:39:15] I do just want to get some acknowledgments. None of this would have happened if it wasn't then for people at the library who are the ones that really put the time in day to day to integrate social work students into that setting and served as their preceptor. So Heather McHugh and Jerry Williams and then Lee Patterson, who I continue to learn a lot from, who is the lead social worker now at the public library. I just want to give them kudos as well as to the students who kind of took a risk in having a field placement at that setting and gave us the opportunity to learn a lot through their eyes and through observing their experiences.

[00:39:54] You've been listening to Carrie Draper and Dr. Kirk Foster discuss integrating social workers into public libraries on inSocialWork.

[00:40:11] Hi I'm Nancy Smyth, professor and Dean of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series. For more information about who we are as a school, our history, our online and on the ground degree and continuing education programs, we invite you to visit our website at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. And while you're there check out our Technology and Social Work Resource Center. You'll find it under the Community Resources menu.