

CSW Certificate Program Provides Training in Trauma-Specific Interventions

Trauma Treatment Graduate Certificate (TTGC) students recognize symptoms of trauma and respond with sound trauma-informed practice techniques.

By Elizabeth DeGeorge



Becky Bolen

trauma-informed practice techniques that will help them discover pathways to healing.

Because of this pressing need for trauma-focused and informed practice, the UT College of Social Work has introduced the graduate certificate program in trauma treatment. The program, which began in the fall semester of 2013, is open to currently admitted social work graduate students. It provides students with the coursework and practical experience needed to become competent in trauma-specific interventions and trauma-informed programming and policy development.

Trauma Treatment Graduate Certificate (TTGC) students learn to critically assess trauma and traumatic impact, apply current principles of intervention and program planning, and consider the larger social, cultural, and political forces at work that shape both exposure to and recovery from traumatic experiences. Currently 35 students are actively pursuing the trauma certificate. Dr. Becky Bolen, chair of the program, reports that interest in the program was immediate and the college plans to monitor that interest in order to manage the need for growth.

Members of the college faculty bring diverse experience and research backgrounds to address the wide range

of traumatic experiences. Children who are sexually abused, veterans returning from multiple tours of duty in active war zones, families whose homes have been swept away in floods, and women who have been physically abused, all have suffered extreme trauma. These people often need support from skilled professionals who realize how extensive the impact of trauma can be. They need counselors who recognize the symptoms of trauma, and who respond with sound

of traumatic experiences. Dr. Bolen, who has been involved in the process of developing this program over the course of several years, has written extensively in the area of child welfare and child sexual abuse. Also working in the program are Dr. Camille Hall, whose expertise focuses on support for persons serving in the military and veterans, and Dr. Mary Rogge, whose expertise in environmental risks includes a broad understanding of disaster management, as well as Sarah Keiser, LCSW, and Ashley Childers, LCSW, both of whom have expertise in the clinical treatment of trauma.

“Knowledge related to trauma and its treatment has grown exponentially in recent years,” explains Dr. Bolen. “Much of this is due to the increased understanding of the neurophysiological effects of trauma. For instance, young children who experience traumatic events can exhibit an inability



Trauma comes in many forms, from battlefield fatigue, to natural disasters, to personal abuse or disaster, the CSW TTGC teaches students to understand traumatic impact.

to connect feelings with thoughts and may demonstrate physiological changes in brain organization traceable to events or patterns of trauma.”

Dean Karen Sowers commented on the launch of TTGC. “The college has determined to broaden our course offerings in order to give our clinicians the tools they require to adequately meet the needs of traumatized clients. Both clinical and macro courses address modes of trauma treatment and neurophysiology, while supervised field placements with trauma populations allow students to assess and respond to traumatized clients or systems.”

Beyond Combat: Military Social Work Practice and Disaster Management

The military social work course draws from research data that explore the effects of deployment and combat stress on the physical and mental health of active duty U.S. service members and their families. Students receive course instructions on the modalities grounded in a synthesis of trauma, attachment, and cognitive-behavioral theories including individual, couple/family, group, and clinical case management approaches.

J. Camille Hall, PhD, LCSW, associate professor for the College of Social Work, is also a clinical social work officer, Major, U.S. Army Reserve. This gives her a unique perspective to teach the trauma certificate course entitled *Beyond Combat: Military Social Work Practice*.

Another of the certificate courses is entitled *Disaster Management* and is taught by Mary Rogge, PhD, whose research interests include environmental justice, climate change and climate refugees, technological and natural hazards, as well as disaster management, all in both local and global contexts.

For more information about trauma-informed social work practice and details related to the Trauma Treatment Graduate Certificate, visit *Stimulus* online at: <http://www.csw.utk.edu/about/stimulus>

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