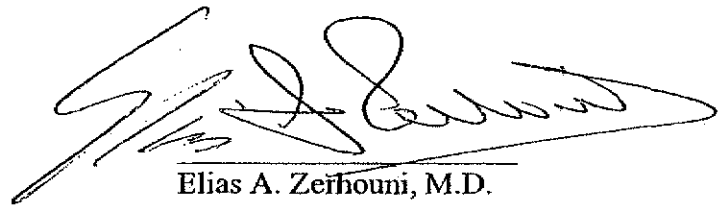


DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes of Health

NIH Plan for Social Work Research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elias A. Zeihouni', written over a horizontal line.

Elias A. Zeihouni, M.D.  
Director, NIH

May 2003

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## NIH Plan for Social Work Research

### Executive Summary

#### Background

This report constitutes the first National Institutes of Health (NIH) wide plan for social work research. The Congress requested that NIH develop this document in the fiscal year 2003 Congressional Appropriations Committee Reports. Specifically, the Committee urged:

*NIH to develop a social work research plan that outlines research priorities, as well as a research agenda, across NIH Institutes and Centers to be reported to the Committee by April 1, 2003 (Senate Report 107-216, page 155).*

The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) prepared this report in response to this request.

To appropriately address this mandate, OBSSR convened a Social Work Research (SWR) Working Group composed of representatives from NIH Institutes and Centers (IC). The result of the SWR Working Group's deliberations is the *NIH Plan for Social Work Research*.

#### NIH Accomplishments to Date

In detailing the NIH's accomplishments relative to social work research, the report outlines what to date have been the NIH research priorities in this area. As the Congressional Appropriations Committee acknowledged in their report (Page 155), NIH has long recognized the importance of social work research.

The NIH support for social work research spans across a number of Institutes, Centers and Offices. As the Appropriations Committee pointed out, the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and OBSSR have been particularly active. However, other NIH Institutes have made significant contributions in this area, including the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and others. Details of NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices activities and accomplishments in social work research are elaborated upon further in the report.

#### Proposed NIH Activities in Social Work Research

Examples of NIH activities alluded to above abound in the report. Nonetheless, the SWR Working Group also recognized a number of steps that NIH could take to sustain the momentum created by this report and further galvanize social work research at the NIH. The recommendations of the SWR Working Group are as follows:

### Social Work Research

1. Establish a SWR Committee as a standing internal committee composed of IC representatives that continues to monitor the state of affairs in the field of social work research as it relates to health and the NIH research agenda. The committee would meet regularly to assess and initiate activities aimed at fostering social work research at the NIH.
2. Expand outreach activities to encourage the submission of investigator initiated research projects focused on studies of social work practice and concepts relevant to missions of each of the NIH Institutes.
3. Propose a new Program Announcement entitled *Developmental Research on Social Work Practice and Concepts in Health* to provide the impetus and resources to fully incorporate social work's unique concepts and perspectives into the NIH research portfolio and to build the scientific base to be used by allied health professionals.
4. Implement a competitive supplement for current Research Project (R01) grantees patterned after the minority supplement mechanism. Social work researchers would be added to existing research projects to increase mentoring, research training, and improve competitiveness for NIH funding. This program would also increase interdisciplinary approaches to research studies, adding the unique perspective of social work.

### Research Infrastructure/Training

5. Develop and implement an NIH Summer Institute on Social Work Research offering new researchers intensive exposure to issues and challenges in the field of social work research. The program of the Summer Institute would include lectures, seminars, and small group discussions in research design relative to social work as it relates to health, discussion sessions on methodological approaches and interventions, and consultation on the development of research interests and advice on preparing and submitting research grant applications to the NIH.

### Information Dissemination and Community Outreach

6. Plan a meeting at NIH, involving all interested ICs and an invited group of Deans from Schools of Social Work with Doctoral Programs to explore the needs of the social work research community and share information about the NIH grant process, highlight areas of research appropriate for social work researchers, and identify the kind of support faculty would need from school administrations in order to be successful in applying for and conducting NIH funded research.
7. Explore the possibility of a joint effort between NIH and social work research organizations to host a conference on the topic of advancing the social work research agenda. This effort would help train social work leaders who would work to build the knowledge base in regard to effective psychosocial interventions to best optimize the well being of individuals and their families.
8. Plan a trans-NIH conference showcasing social work research results relevant to health.

9. Develop and implement coordinated outreach efforts to universities that would include training on writing grants and provide information about research opportunities. This activity could include regional seminars to bring NIH staff to universities and assure that social work researchers are aware and knowledgeable about relevant research training opportunities sponsored by NIH Institutes and Centers.

## **I. Introduction**

In the fiscal year 2003 Congressional Appropriations Committee Reports, the Committee commended the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) for their recognition of social work research's important contribution to the Nation's health. Further, the Committee urged:

*NIH to develop a social work research plan that outlines research priorities, as well as a research agenda, across NIH Institutes and Centers to be reported to the Committee by April 1, 2003 (Senate Report 107-216, page 155).*

The OBSSR prepared this report in response to this request.

In developing the report, OBSSR convened a Social Work Research (SWR) Working Group composed of representatives from NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices. The SWR Working Group met to consider the state of social work research at the NIH and what follows is a summary of the Working Group's findings and some recommendations for future activities.

## **II. Background**

The NIH mission is to fund and conduct research that will result in an improvement in health. Social workers at the NIH and in the extramural community contribute significantly to this mission. As the Appropriations Committee acknowledged, NIH has long recognized the importance of social work research. This is evidenced in the funding history of social work research across NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs).

Historically, social work research has focused on studies of the individual, family, group, community, policy and/or organizational level, focusing across the lifespan on prevention, intervention, treatment, aftercare and rehabilitation of acute and chronic conditions, including the effects of policy on social work practice. Doctoral level social workers and faculty under university, government, and research institute or community agency auspices primarily conduct this research. Research often examines cross-cutting foci, such as children's mental health in juvenile justice settings, aging and care-giving, or community services to diverse cultural groups.

## **III. NIH Accomplishments To Date**

### **Highlights of OBSSR Activities in Social Work Research**

The OBSSR, which is located in the Office of the Director, serves to stimulate the growth of behavioral and social sciences research at the NIH. Behavioral and social factors are important contributors to health and illness and frequently interact with biological factors to influence health outcomes. They also represent critical avenues for treatment and prevention. Social work research as it relates to the health of individuals sheds light on the behavioral and social

determinants of wellness and disease and helps to develop effective interventions for improving health outcomes. In recognition of this fact, OBSSR facilitates increasing the contribution of social work research to the broad mission of the NIH. OBSSR plays a leadership role in developing ideas for initiatives, and in gaining the support for them within the NIH Institutes and Centers. Most activities focus on substantive questions rather than a particular disciplinary approach. However, a range of approaches, including social work, are welcomed and encouraged under most initiatives. Following are initiatives appropriate for social work research that have been developed by OBSSR.

### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

In 1999, using funds appropriated by Congress to the OBSSR, the NIH issued a Request for Applications (RFA) for *Centers for Mind-Body Interactions and Health* and subsequently awarded five Specialized Center Grants (P50). These grants terminate in September 2004, and OBSSR intends to expand its efforts, in cooperation with NIH ICs, through a *Mind-Body and Health Research Infrastructure Program*. The primary purposes of the program are to provide resources to support and advance research that will improve the understanding of mind-body interactions and health, facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration among investigators conducting health-related mind-body research, and promote innovative approaches to mind-body and health research questions. An additional goal is to facilitate interaction among scientists in locations throughout the US in order to contribute to the integration and coordination of mind-body and health research. The program will support approximately six center-like grants and four smaller developmental grants, commencing at the close of FY 2004.

In FY 2002, OBSSR in collaboration with 15 NIH ICs issued a Program Announcement (PA) calling for increased research on the influence of social and cultural factors on health and illness. The PA, *Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health*, is the direct result of the OBSSR-sponsored conference on "Higher Levels of Analysis: Progress and Promise in Research on Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health" and represents continuing efforts to achieve a better understanding of the interdependence of social, behavioral, and biological levels of analysis in health research. Topics addressed included sociocultural constructs such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender; sociocultural linkages between demographic factors and health; social and cultural factors in prevention, treatment, and health services; interpersonal, neighborhood, and community influences on health; health justice and ethical issues; and global perspectives on health.

Recognizing the importance of providing support for the development of the tools for research, in FY 2002, OBSSR led a trans-NIH activity to develop and issue a PA in *Methodology and Measurement in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*. This PA was issued in March 2002. Research was sought in areas such as the processes that underlie self-reports, research design, data collection techniques, measurement, data analysis techniques, and related ethical issues.

### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

Maintaining behavior change over the long term appears as challenging, if not more so, than the initiation of behavior change. Past research efforts have typically focused on short-term behavioral change. However, other research indicates that relapse rates for addictive behaviors, such as substance abuse and tobacco use, are very high. For example, most individuals who stop

smoking cigarettes relapse within six months. Adherence to exercise, diet and other health regimens is no better, despite the fact that initial success rates for various behavior change programs are very good. OBSSR has developed an RFA entitled *Maintenance of Long Term Behavioral Change*, to encourage investigators to expand on the current theoretical base of change processes and intervention models, and to expand our understanding of how change, once achieved, is maintained over the long term.

While the positive association between education and health has been well documented, there is a paucity of scientific information on the biological mechanisms and the causal pathways that underpin this association. OBSSR in collaboration with the ICs issued an RFA entitled *Pathways Linking Education to Health* to increase the extramural research activity on this important scientific question.

Family members often experience conflicts between the demands of work and family life. Foundation and federally funded research has begun to examine the role of family and work on the health and well-being of both families and employees. Scientific evaluation of these workplace programs will yield useful information about the effectiveness of these programs and about whether these potentially conflicting demands impact family and worker health and well-being. To address this issue, OBSSR is jointly planning a conference for FY 2003 with NICHD, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Sloan Foundation. Previous research has examined the relationships between work and health and between family and health, but not the interactions among all three. The goal of the conference is to foster communication between researchers working on health from the family and work perspectives, to identify the major gaps in knowledge, to discuss differences in research methods and theoretical approaches, and to foster cross-disciplinary research examining the interaction of paid work, family life, and health. Subsequent conferences in FY 2004 and beyond will address methodological challenges of conducting this type of research and evaluation of existing or new intervention strategies.

## **Overview of Institute and Center Activities in Social Work Research**

### **1. National Cancer Institute (NCI)**

#### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

In April 2002, the NCI convened a Social Work and Cancer Research (SWCR) group to explore the current state of social work cancer research, with the goals to increase social work participation in cancer research and disseminate current research knowledge to social work practitioners. This group is composed of NCI staff, social work and oncology researchers, and the executive directors of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR). In addition, both the NASW and the IASWR are performing analyses that will help inform further activities of the SWCR group. The IASWR is conducting a comprehensive analysis of social work, health care, and oncology research and will be completing a working paper summarizing its findings by Spring 2003. The NASW is designing a comprehensive dissemination strategy to translate oncology social work research to practitioners and will develop a working paper with its results by Summer 2003.



The NCI has launched various initiatives that are appropriate for social work research including those in cancer prevention and control (e.g., health disparities, intervention research, and behavior change) and survivorship (e.g., quality of life, mental health, family burden, and social support), and currently supports three social work researchers in these areas. In addition, NCI staff has worked with both the IASWR and the Society for Social Work Research (SSWR) to present workshops to social work researchers regarding grant writing, social work research opportunities in cancer, and qualitative research.

***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

While the NCI does not have any planned initiatives specifically targeting social work research, the Institute does support several trans-NIH initiatives relevant to social work research, such as the following: (1) Pathways Linking Education to Health, a trans-NIH RFA released in January 2003; (2) Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health, a trans-NIH PA that will be funded through December 2004; and (3) the OBSSR Mind-Body Interactions and Health RFA released in January 2003.

In addition, social work researchers are encouraged to take advantage of existing NCI training opportunities, including the Cancer Education and Career Development Program (R25T); the Cancer Prevention, Control, Behavioral and Population Sciences Career Development Award (K07); the Transition Career Development Award (K22); the Established Investigator Award in Cancer Prevention, Control, Behavioral, and Population Research (K05); and the Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program. Social work researchers are also encouraged to take advantage of the Small Research Grants (R03) and Exploratory/Developmental Grants (R21) mechanisms, which provide support for pilot projects and encourage the development of new research activities, respectively.

Currently planned information dissemination and community outreach initiatives include participation in the Association of Oncology Social Work conference scheduled for April 2003, including sponsoring a poster session and attending the Social Work Oncology Research Group meeting. In addition, workshops on grant writing, social work research opportunities in cancer, and qualitative research are planned for the annual SSWR conference to be held again in January 2004. Further, in Spring 2003, the NCI will launch the Cancer Control PLANET (*Plan, Link, Act, Network with Evidence-based Tools*), a universal portal Web site for cancer control planners, program staff, researchers, and health educators to help bridge the research discovery/program delivery gap and to increase the adoption of evidence-based approaches across the cancer control continuum from primary prevention to end of life care. Components of the Cancer Control PLANET will include: cancer and behavioral risk factor surveillance data; relevant community, state, and regional partnership resources; the CDC's Guide to Community Preventive Services, providing a systematic review of the literature on what intervention approaches work and where more research is needed; easy access to research-tested, evidenced-based intervention programs; and cancer control planning and evaluation information.

## 2. National Institute on Aging (NIA)

### *Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research*

The NIA makes routine presentations at the annual conference of the SSWR and the IASWR. Further, the Institute meets regularly with the Fellows from the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Initiative. Ongoing discussions with the IASWR are also maintained.

NIA is also funding “Social Research Training on Applied Issues in Aging,” a training grant with the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work. This project is under the direction of Dr. Ruth Dunkle. The Institute also funds several grants (R01 & R13) to Principal Investigators with Doctorates in Social Work or PhDs in Social Work/Social Welfare.

Additional research priorities at the NIA that are appropriate for social work research include the following:

**Care-giving:** Research on care giving of Alzheimer’s disease victims, frail elders, and older parents caring for developmentally disabled adult children, and custodial grand parenting.

**Elder Mistreatment:** Research on prevalence, risk factors, prevention, signs and symptoms, and consequences for the elderly.

**End of Life:** Research on the quality of life at the end of life, measurement of issues related to end of life research, the impact of bereavement upon the family, the quality of death in various settings (home; hospital; hospice).

**Long-Term Care:** Research on the various settings in which long-term care occurs, including the causes and consequences of transitions between settings (e.g., Assisted Living Facilities to Skill Nursing Facilities), the quality of care within settings, interventions to maintain and motivate workforce, interventions to change the quality of outcomes through organizational change, the involvement of family (informal caregivers) within formal care settings.

**Behavioral Change:** Research on interventions to motivate change in behaviors such as diet, exercise, and research on maintaining changed behaviors over time.

**HIV/AIDS:** Research on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases among middle aged and older persons, and research on the impact of HIV/AIDS on older persons and their families.

### *Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research*

NIA does not have any planned initiatives specific to social work research, however social work researchers are not excluded from any initiatives that are considered to be in the purview of social work – for example, long-term maintenance of behavioral change; elder mistreatment; end of life care; and quality of life in long-term care settings.

Some information dissemination and community outreach efforts are planned via NIA’s ongoing relationship with the Gerontological Society of America and the nationwide Geriatric Social Work Initiative, as well as with representatives from the IASWR.

### **3. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)**

#### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

The NIAAA has recently completed a curriculum and faculty training course for graduate schools of social work, *Social Work Education Model for the Prevention and Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorders*. It will be disseminated to all Masters level and Doctoral level programs in the US. The program is designed to increase the research-based knowledge on alcohol problems for both students and graduate social workers preparing to work in all levels of social work practice.

NIAAA also had workshops in January and February 2003 at the annual meetings of the IASWR, SSWR and the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE). Faculty development workshops were held in 2002 in Washington, D.C. and San Antonio, Texas to pilot test and further develop the NIAAA curriculum.

Almost every area of the NIAAA research agenda is appropriate for social work research, and would in fact benefit from the addition of the unique perspective of the social work profession. Direct clinical practice and social policy and administration (or macro practice) in social work are on all levels touched by individuals and families with alcohol problems. Areas include but are not limited to epidemiology, prevention, treatment, special populations (immigrants and refugees, the homeless, elderly, individuals with disabilities, adolescents), fetal alcohol syndrome, college drinking, co-morbid mental health disorders, violence, and underage drinking.

#### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

NIAAA will continue to develop and refine the *Social Work Education Model for the Prevention and Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorders*. Utilizing an existing Program Announcement, PAS 99-165, *Alcohol Education Project Grants*, the Institute is seeking applications from qualified Social Work educators to implement and test this curriculum.

The NIAAA social work curriculum described above will be updated in 2003 to include a research-training module that focuses on ways social work research can contribute to our knowledge of prevention and treatment of alcohol problems. This module should be ready to be included in the Institute's evaluation and dissemination plan for the curriculum, including the above-mentioned grant.

NIAAA continues to hold workshops at the annual meetings of the IASWR, SSWR and the Council for Social Work Education.

### **4. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)**

#### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

The NICHD seeks to assure that every individual is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no adverse consequence from the reproductive process, and that all children have the opportunity to fulfill their potential for a healthy and productive life unhampered by disease or disability. In pursuit of this mission, the NICHD conducts and supports laboratory, clinical, and

epidemiological research on the reproductive, neurobiologic, developmental, and behavioral processes that determine and maintain the health of children, adults, families, and populations. NICHD also supports research and training programs involving families and children. Social work is one of the disciplines commonly supported as part of these activities. Below is a listing of Centers within NICHD and the subject matter supported by each that is relevant to social work research.

The Center for Population Research, which is organized into three branches, carries out the primary Federal effort in population studies through support of research and research training in the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences. Support is provided through grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and interagency agreements. In particular, research on child and family well-being and the transmission of HIV are relevant to social work research.

The Center for Research for Mothers and Children (CRMC), composed of the Office of the Director and seven branches, serves as the principal NIH source of support for research and research training in maternal and child health, through grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. Through this research, CRMC-supported scientists are advancing fundamental and clinical knowledge concerning maternal health and child development problems such as low birth weight, mental retardation and developmental disabilities, specific learning disabilities, congenital and genetic defects, growth retardation, HIV, and other congenital infections and diseases. The Center and its programs are helping to maximize human development, prevent diseases and disorders, and improve diagnosis, therapy, and clinical care. The major goals of the Center are to ensure that mothers and families are healthy, and that all babies are born healthy and will reach adulthood and achieve their full potential. In particular, the topics surrounding child abuse and neglect are relevant to social work research as well as remedial intervention research pertaining to mental retardation, developmental disabilities and the development of basic cognitive skills.

The National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) was established within the NIH in 1990. The Center is a component of the NICHD. The mission of NCMRR is to foster development of scientific knowledge needed to enhance the health, productivity, independence, and quality of life of persons with disabilities. This is accomplished by supporting research on enhancing the functioning of people with disabilities in daily life. A primary goal of the Center is to bring the health related problems of people with disabilities to the attention of America's best scientists in order to capitalize upon the myriad advances occurring in the biological, behavioral, and engineering sciences.

### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

Activities in four broad areas of research in social work research are currently planned at NICHD. They include research on child and family policy, care and rehabilitation, special diseases (such as HIV/AIDS), and research on special populations (e.g., immigrants, women, and minorities).

- **Child and Family Policy:** This area would include research to enhance our understanding of the etiology, extent, services, treatment, management, and prevention of child neglect. Also included would be research to provide a mechanism for educational activities designed

to address goals related to the effective dissemination and use of complex data sets, the extension of interdisciplinary science related to population, and the application of cutting-edge statistical, mathematical, and other methodological tools to population research. Efforts to understand how biology and community intersect to influence infant mortality and morbidity and early childhood outcomes, and to create a collaborative interdisciplinary network of scientists dedicated to conducting developmental research that will lead to an integrated model (or models) of fertility and family behaviors and a feasible, coherent strategy for empirically testing the model(s), including designing and implementing pilot studies, would also fall within this area.

- **Care and Rehabilitation:** This area includes efforts to stimulate innovative solutions to the problems of children who are critically ill and those who have survived serious illness of childhood. Efforts to develop high quality educational materials for a curriculum in surgical amputation techniques, prosthetics, and orthotics suitable for training orthopedic and general surgical residents are included. The Institute is also funding the development of high quality training materials that would lead to more uniform training in surgical programs under this area of research. Further, initiatives to encourage the development of healthcare and wellness facilities and equipment that are fully accessible to persons with disabilities are included. A study to develop computerized dynamic health assessments for individuals with disabilities is also planned. This new testing paradigm will expand and upgrade existing knowledge about the health of individuals with disabilities that is directly relevant to problems encountered in rehabilitation on an every day basis.

Additionally, rehabilitation clinicians frequently need to better understand, evaluate, and treat individuals with weakness, joint dysfunction and malalignment, as well as abnormalities of complex, integrated movement. An initiative to stimulate the development of quantitative models that could be used to describe motor function and better understand the biomechanics of movement has been implemented.

- **Special Diseases:** Within this broad area, NICHD is planning a number of initiatives; one such initiative seeks to build a body of basic social science knowledge that will lead to innovative and effective approaches to HIV prevention by expanding thinking on how community institutions affect HIV risk and prevention. NICHD is also funding Mental Retardation Centers (MRCs). The primary objective of the MRCs is to provide support and facilities for a cohesive, interdisciplinary program of research and research training in mental retardation and related aspects of human development. Also, an initiative to stimulate research in the field of injury prevention in a focused population of children and adolescents with known deficits of attention has been implemented.

An effort is underway to conduct preclinical or clinical, biomedical and/or behavioral research that concentrates on studies of (1) nutritional factors and HIV transmission; (2) nutritional requirements for optimal growth, development, and maintenance of health; (3) impact of HIV infection on breastfeeding; (4) interactions between antiretroviral therapies, diet, nutrition, and health; (5) nutritional assessment methodologies; and (6) specific functional biomarkers of outcome related to the nutrition/HIV relationship.

NICHD is encouraging the development and application of new genetic chip technologies to newborn screening. Also, efforts to gain insight into the acceptability of new prevention methods, including microbicial methods currently undergoing development and testing, are supported. NICHD is also funding an initiative to examine the impact of the HIV epidemic on social, economic, and other aspects of the well-being of families, communities, and populations in areas of high or potentially high HIV prevalence.

- **Special Populations:** As part of the special populations research area, NICHD seeks to develop the optimal methods for teaching literacy skills to adolescents, and understand the interactions of other factors that will influence the process. NICHD has also implemented an initiative as part of the special populations research area to encourage research specifically focused on examining (1) the impact of violence during pregnancy on women and their fetuses; (2) birth outcomes of women who are the victims of domestic violence during pregnancy; (3) the effects of in utero exposure to domestic violence on child developmental outcomes; and (4) the short and long-term impact of exposure to domestic violence during childhood and adolescence on children's social, cognitive, and affective development.

Further, to improve the understanding of the implications of new methods of conceptualizing and categorizing race and ethnicity, NICHD is funding an initiative that will examine the following: (1) How the changing composition and conceptualization of race and ethnicity is changing American society socially, economically, and demographically; (2) How racial and ethnic identity is developed, maintained, and changed; (3) How individual racial and ethnic identification affects-and is affected by-socioeconomic, developmental, and demographic outcomes; and (4) Measurement of race and ethnicity and the implications for the federal statistical systems and for standards of scientific research.

An effort to identify the factors that enable some children to succeed while many others in similar or identical circumstances do not has been implemented. Scientific findings may offer keys to intervention and prevention with language minority children and to the reduction or elimination of the disparity now evident. Further, basic treatments and interventions for mathematical disabilities will be developed via a separate initiative. Also, NICHD is funding a trans-agency initiative on early learning and school readiness to develop and test the effectiveness of interventions for preschoolers which integrate the areas of language, preliteracy, and cognitive, social and emotional development that contribute both to the social and emotional health of preschoolers and prepare them for entry into kindergarten ready to learn to read and write.

## **5. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**

### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

During 1998 and 1999, NIDA sponsored three interactive grant-writing workshops at separate US locations for junior faculty and doctoral students. The Institute also created a mentoring system that led to a number of grant-applications and funded grants. Between 1999 and 2003, NIDA also established the Social Work Research Development Program. Awards have been made to six Schools of Social Work thus far at an average of \$1.9 Million (over five years) to build internal systems supporting multidisciplinary research. As of this report, concrete results

have been one T32 (pre and post doctorate training grant), two F31 (individual post doctoral training grant), two funded (R03) small grants, eight funded (R01) large research grants, and a dozen or so grant applications are awaiting review. Many of the grants focus on social work theory, concepts and intervention contributions.

NIDA efforts to present and host grants making workshops at key social work research meetings are ongoing.

Additional efforts appropriate for social work research currently funded by NIDA include initiatives in the following areas:

- Services research – particularly as related to case management, access and barriers to treatment, and organizational management and interorganizational systems;
- Homelessness and Substance Abuse research – which covers issues from epidemiology, prevention, treatment and services research;
- Co-occurring disorders – the nexus of substance abuse, mental health, and health (HIV) – related treatments, treatment effectiveness, linking systems;
- Substance abusing adolescents – particularly as related to the family, social, and environmental factors;
- Criminal justice – the linking of public health and public safety;
- Welfare – the overlapping and contributing issues of welfare systems and poverty on substance abusing behavior, prevention, treatment and services;
- Self-help groups, support systems, social capital and other socio-environmental effects on substance abuse behavior and treatment;
- Special populations, gender issues, health disparities as applied to the substance abuse field;
- Research to practice- issues in improving utilization of findings and adherence to protocols, based on human services issues; and
- The efficacy and effectiveness of behavioral and social prevention and treatment intervention strategies and models on substance abuse behavior.

### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

Activities targeted for infrastructure building in the field of social work research have been established. Submitted social work infrastructure grants are currently under review. NIDA also continues to fund workshops at key conferences. And, new initiative announcements, PAs, and RFAs are distributed to all schools of social work, to IASWR, to NASW's Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs section, as well as to our entire active grantee list.

## **6. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

The NIMH had a Social Work Research Meeting on June 10-11, 2002. This was a forum for highlighting existing social work research in mental health and defining where the field needs to grow. There was consensus that two directions needing emphasis were intervention development and studies of social work practice. The dialogue with the field on this topic was continued with attendees at the 2003 IASWR meeting, with a similar consensus developed. These areas are in keeping with the goals and mission of NIMH. It is planned that technical

assistance will be provided, individually and possibly in workshops, to assist social work researchers to develop applications in these areas.

NIMH will continue to participate in the annual NIH technical assistance workshop at IASWR/SSWR, including ongoing technical assistance for those interested in submitting applications. This year, a technical assistance workshop specific to services research at NIMH was added. Additionally, NIMH will continue to send IASWR all research development activities (PAs, RFAs, workshops and meetings) for posting on its listserv for social work researchers. Further, support for the four currently funded Developing Center grants and the three T32 grants that are at schools of social work will continue.

In the past, NIMH had contacts with deans and directors of social work schools to continue to develop a research culture within social work higher education; the Institute will continue such efforts, as needed.

Via the IASWR listserv, the grantee mailing lists, staff contacts, and social work researchers have been invited to participate in a Services Research Career Awards workshop scheduled for March 13, 2003. Also, two social work researchers will be presenting their data at the annual NIMH Services Research meeting in March 2003.

Two social work researchers are currently on the standing scientific review committee for services research at NIMH. Several others consistently participate as ad hoc reviewers. Attempts are being made to recruit a mental health social worker to the NIMH National Mental Health Advisory Council.

### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

All of the above will be continued in the effort to integrate social work researchers in the mainstream of NIMH research development activities and mechanisms. NIMH is interested in NIH-wide outreach activities to Deans and Directors of Social Work Schools and Programs. The Institute would be interested in developing an NIH-wide summer research institute to provide technical assistance to social work researchers interested in developing applications for submission to the NIH.

## **7. National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)**

### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

The NINR shares some areas of scientific interest with social work researchers, who might find recent NINR PAs relevant to their research concerns. For example, the NINR-led trans-NIH initiative on Long-Term Care Recipients: Quality of Life and Quality of Care Research (PA02-162) solicits research on improving the quality of life, health, functional abilities, and health outcomes for residents of long-term care institutions such as nursing homes, extended care, and assisted living facilities. Another recent initiative sponsored by NINR focuses on health disparities (Community-Partnered Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities, PA02-134) by inviting applications that emphasize partnerships with the target community(ies) throughout all phases of the research process.



### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

Social work researchers and other health professionals are encouraged to submit investigator-initiated applications related to the mission of NINR. In addition, applicants are encouraged to monitor the ongoing publication of program announcements and requests for applications for topics that would be relevant. The NINR website provides information on the annual special areas of research opportunity and contact information for the areas of science.

## **8. Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center (CC)**

### ***Existing Efforts/Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

In order to effectively capture patients at high risk for psychosocial distress across a spectrum of needs (e.g., psychological, financial, and interpersonal, and substance use, etc), the NIH Clinical Center's Social Work Department initiated a research project. This social work research project endeavors to establish psychometric properties for a rapid psychosocial screening tool (called the Profile of Adaptation to Life-Clinical, or PAL-C) to be utilized with medically ill patients seen in clinics and inpatient units at the Clinical Center. The tool is self-administered and easy and efficient for staff to score. Results on the reliability and validity of this tool were obtained, and will be submitted for publication to a social work research journal.

The Social Work Department is also researching the efficacy of a psycho-educational group offered at the NIH Clinical Center for thyroid cancer patients residing in the community. This is an ongoing effort. Further, the Center is researching the use of bioethics consults by allied health professionals in various hospital settings in the U.S. This project, which began a year ago, is also ongoing.

### ***Currently Planned Activities in or Appropriate for Social Work Research***

For the PAL-C project, discussed above, follow-up activities that are planned include testing for validity with the "gold standard" Standard Form-12 screening tool. This follow-up activity is planned for 2003. Subsequently, the Social Work Department will research the tool's cultural sensitivity with a Spanish-speaking population of patients at the NIH Clinical Center.

## **IV. Proposed NIH Activities in Social Work Research**

The previous section shows that NIH support for social work research extends across different components of the NIH. Although some NIH Institutes and Offices, such as NIDA, NIMH, NCI and the OBSSR have been particularly active in social work research, the preceding section illustrates other NIH Institutes have made or continue to make significant contributions as well, including the NIA, NIAAA, NICHD, and others.

Further, despite these testimonials to NIH's overall support for social work research, the SWR Working Group, nonetheless, recognized that if NIH is to improve its support of social work research, a number of proactive measures should be undertaken. The specific proposals generally fall within three broad categories identified by the group as important areas that should receive attention for the overall success of social work researchers at the NIH.

The SWR Working Group recommends that the NIH should:

### ***Social Work Research***

1. Establish a SWR Committee as a standing internal committee composed of IC representatives that continues to monitor the state of affairs in the field of social work practice and research as it relates to health and the NIH research agenda. The committee would meet regularly to assess and initiate activities aimed at fostering social work research at the NIH.
2. Expand outreach activities to encourage the submission of investigator initiated research projects focused on studies of social work practice and concepts relevant to missions of each of the NIH Institutes.
3. Propose a new PA entitled *Developmental Research on Social Work Practice and Concepts in Health*. The goal of this PA will be to provide the impetus and resources to fully incorporate social work's unique concepts and perspectives (e.g., person-in-environment across levels, client-centeredness, etc.) into the NIH research portfolio and to build the scientific base to be used by allied health professionals.
4. Implement a competitive supplement for current R01 grantees patterned after the minority supplement mechanism. Social work researchers would be added to existing research projects to increase mentoring, advanced research training, and improve competitiveness for NIH funding. This program would also increase interdisciplinary approaches to alcohol research studies, adding the unique perspective of social work.

### ***Research Infrastructure/Training***

5. Develop and implement an NIH Summer Institute on Social Work Research offering new researchers intensive exposure to issues and challenges in the field of social work research. New researchers are defined as those who have received a doctoral level degree, and are at the beginning stages of a research career, and demonstrate a capacity or potential for highly productive independent research. The doctoral degree may be from Schools of Social Work or in other behavioral or social sciences. The program of the Summer Institute would include lectures, seminars, and small group discussions in research design relative to social work as it relates to health. Discussion sessions will focus on methodological approaches and interventions. The program would also include consultation on the development of research interests and advice on preparing and submitting research grant applications to the NIH.

### ***Information dissemination and Community Outreach***

6. Plan a meeting at NIH, involving all interested ICs and an invited group of Deans from Schools of Social Work with Doctoral Programs. There are 67 such programs in the U.S. The purpose would be to explore the needs of the social work research community and share information about the NIH grant process, highlight areas of research appropriate for social work researchers, and identify the kind of support faculty would need from school administrations in order to be successful in applying for and conducting NIH funded research.

7. Explore the possibility of a joint effort between NIH and social work research organizations to host a conference on the topic of advancing the social work research agenda. This effort would help train social work leaders who would work to build the knowledge base in regard to effective psychosocial interventions to best optimize the well being of individuals and their families.
8. Plan a trans-NIH conference showcasing social work research results relevant to health.
9. Develop and implement coordinated outreach efforts to universities that would include training on writing grants and provide information about research opportunities. This activity could include regional seminars to bring NIH staff to universities and assure that social work researchers are aware and knowledgeable about relevant research training opportunities sponsored by NIH Institutes, Centers and Offices. Further, these efforts could establish a trans-NIH means of regularly communicating relevant research activities and opportunities to the social work research community and ensuring that social work organizations and community agencies relevant to NIH's mission, in addition to those mentioned above, remained informed. The NIH and social work research organizations could jointly sponsor this proposed activity.

## **V. Conclusion**

This report responds to a mandate from the Congressional Appropriations Committee outlined in Senate Report 107-216, Page 155. Specifically, the Committee urged the NIH to develop a social work research plan that outlines research priorities, as well as a research agenda, across NIH Institutes and Centers to be reported to the Committee by April 1, 2003.

The OBSSR was charged with developing the report. To that end, OBSSR convened a Social Work Research Working Group composed of representatives from NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices. The SWR Working Group held a series of meetings to consider the state of social work research at the NIH. While the SWR Working Group along with the Congressional Appropriations Committee recognized that NIH has contributed significantly in this area of research, it was nonetheless clear that additional work remained to be done. Hence, the SWR Working Group advanced a series of proposals in this report for consideration broadly grouped under three main areas of concern: (1) social work research, (2) research infrastructure and training, and (3) information dissemination and community outreach.