

Mandate and Parameters of Service

The School of Social Work, through the work of Dr. Jeff Karabanow, Full Professor, and Ms. Cyndi Hall, Field Education Coordinator, piloted the Dalhousie Social Work Community Clinic in downtown Halifax in June 2014. The Clinic provides a case management platform for those living in poverty or who are marginalized in the community. Coordinated and supervised by graduate level social workers, the Clinic not only works to complement and supplement existing resources in the HRM, but also acts as a training ground for our BSW and MSW students as a field placement option. The Dalhousie School of Social Work Community Clinic includes the strategic interests of student engagement and experiential learning by providing alternative educational opportunities for Dalhousie students to engage in the community while meeting the needs of their academic program.

This initiative has three major objectives: 1) providing an alternative field placement opportunities for Dalhousie students; 2) improving the life circumstances of the clients we work with; and 3) building an important bridge between Dalhousie University and the Halifax community. The Dalhousie Community Clinic provides students with an alternative field placement site that provides interdisciplinary/inter-professional learning opportunities within a community-based setting/clinic that is rooted within an anti-oppressive practice and critical framework. This program aims to support and enhance existing connections between Dalhousie University and the Halifax community by building partnerships and allies with community members and service-delivery agencies while working in collaboration to fill the gaps of support and provide essential services to Halifax's most marginalized individuals. At the same time, this program is designed to work to eliminate some of the responsibility placed on the already operating programs by minimizing waitlists and fostering communication and cooperative case management between agencies. Lastly, our Clinic can respond to the ever-increasing demand and competition for quality field placement sites.

Rooted in the "walking with" approach to practice (also known as the accompanying movement), this program will serve as a resource centre for marginalized individuals who may not fit into traditional support settings or those who are not yet connected to the already existing network of social service agencies in Halifax. Employing a case management model, the community clinic will incorporate system navigation, advocacy, as well as needs assessments. This program seeks to provide complimentary and supplementary supports to the network of social service agencies in Halifax. Further, working in partnership with other organizations, this Clinic works to fill service gaps while working towards the reduction of the high caseloads and waitlists of existing agencies.

Originally structured as a six-month pilot program that has received sustainable funding, the Clinic is dedicated to students and provides them with experiential learning in the area of intensive case management skills. The National Case Management Network of Canada (NCMN) defines case management as:

[a] collaborative, client-driven process for the provision of quality health and support services through the effective and efficient use of resources. Case management supports the client's achievement of safe, realistic and reasonable goals within a complex health, social and fiscal environment. (National Case Management Network of Canada, 2009, p.8)

Case management within the Clinic connects marginalized populations to the formal and informal support systems from which they are often excluded. Case management is a continuous and collaborative process where clients, and their community supports, identify needs and goals. Social workers at the Clinic work to ensure that opportunities for service delivery are appropriate to the needs and goals of clients. Case management within the Clinic involves:

- Intake and individual needs assessment
- Receipt of referrals from community partners; and referrals to their resources and programming
- Case planning
- Coordination of services among community partners
- Increasing client access to services
- Resource Acquisition
- Advocacy
- Supportive Counselling
- Crisis Intervention

Learning objectives of social work students while completing a placement at the Clinic will include development of their case management skills. This development will include:

- Observation/ shadowing of the intake process and individual case plans
- Increasing their knowledge of community resources and programs
- Interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration
- Participation in case planning and coordination of services among community partners
- Advocacy
- Connecting theory and practice