



CSWE Comments on the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research Fiscal Years 2016-2020 Strategic Plan

November 11, 2015

On behalf of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) strategic plan. CSWE urges OBSSR to continue to support interdisciplinary approaches to addressing national health-care needs through social and behavioral science and to specifically include social work research as a discipline that bridges basic and applied research. As OBSSR continues to invest in research supporting our evolving health and health-care systems, diverse theoretical and practical perspectives to address topics—such as social determinants of health, mobile health technology, interprofessional care, and precision medicine—are needed to holistically and appropriately respond to individual and population health-care needs.

Investment in multidisciplinary approaches to behavioral and social science research ultimately improve delivery of care models, allowing for health-care providers to navigate and apply new methods of managing diagnostic and treatment protocols. Further, the coordination between provider and patient also improves when diverse perspectives are leveraged. Social workers, for example, are trained to adapt models of care, in real time, to accommodate for diverse backgrounds, familial situations, and other patient-specific needs. This applied knowledge platform complements expanding technologies to ensure appropriate care and health-care management, as well as promotes the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented populations in research and access to care.

Social workers are on the front lines in a variety of settings, and members of interdisciplinary teams in many others, to improve healthcare outcomes and ensure that people are successful in their treatment and care, as well as in research, administrative and policy positions to support comprehensive health care. Social workers touch many Americans' lives through their work in veterans' hospitals, general and special service health care facilities, substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, and gerontological long-term care facilities, in addition to public schools, child protective services, and family service settings.

As OBSSR considers its strategic plan for fiscal years 2016-2020, CSWE advocates for the distinct inclusion of multidisciplinary approaches to social and behavioral science research, complementing the efforts across the Department of Health and Human Services to develop and implement interprofessional health-care models in our rapidly evolving health-care system. Coordinated, yet unique, research and professional experiences ensure adaptable, individualized care.

As you may know, CSWE is a nonprofit national association representing more than 2,500 individual members and more than 700 masters and baccalaureate programs of professional social work education. Social work education prepares students for leadership and professional interdisciplinary



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practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities in a wide array of service sectors, including health, mental health, and gerontology.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in OBSSR's strategic planning process. CSWE looks forward to continuing to serve as a resource to the OBSSR and promoting the impact of federal investment in social and behavioral science research.