

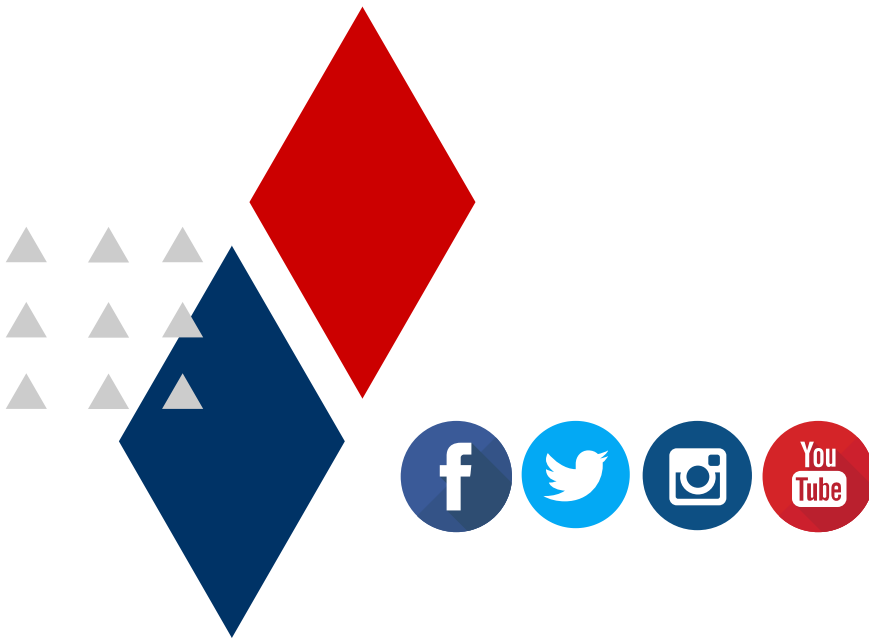


OUR STATEMENT OF  
SOLIDARITY P. 6

INNOVATING AMID  
THE CORONAVIRUS  
P. 12

**FROM FOSTER CARE TO  
FUTURE SOCIAL WORKER**  
BSW alumna and MSW student  
Stephanie Guerra shares her  
inspiring story p.40





## TABLE OF **contents**

|           |                                    |           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| <b>3</b>  | Interim Director Letter            | <b>27</b> | Research Briefs              |
| <b>5</b>  | Responding to Injustices           | <b>34</b> | Events & Happenings          |
| <b>12</b> | Innovating Amid the<br>Coronavirus | <b>37</b> | Student + Alumni Spotlights  |
| <b>17</b> | Transitions                        | <b>43</b> | Alumni Updates + Whereabouts |
| <b>24</b> | Applauding our Faculty             |           |                              |

# FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

Theme of this academic year in a word? **Evolution.**

The theme of this past academic year has been, in a word, evolution. Some of the changes were unexpected and challenging, while others were highly anticipated and extremely exciting. In August 2019, our faculty, staff and students officially moved back into the Social Science building, home to the newly renovated Phyllis & Harvey Sandler School of Social Work, featuring new classrooms outfitted with interactive technology to promote student learning and collaboration, a new modern and welcoming student lounge with shared study and social spaces, and a new multi-use auditorium for guest lectures, professional development workshops and special events. We are ever grateful to the Sandler Family for their ongoing generosity.

In mid-December 2019, we received University approval of our joint proposal with the School of Criminology & Criminal Justice to form a new college – The College of Social Work & Criminal Justice – which was officially born on July 1, 2020. We also welcomed to our school the Robin Rubin Center for Happiness and Life Enhancement, which offers free wellness programming for FAU students, faculty, staff and the community. Additionally, our Office of Professional Development has continued to expand its course and workshop offerings and has already begun offering timely webinars, which you can read more about inside.

Certainly the most unexpected change this year was the arrival of COVID-19, which has forced all of us – our school, university, state, country and world – to pause, orient ourselves to a new normal and navigate our way forward through mounting unknowns and uncertainties. We were saddened to postpone our grand opening celebration, delay our annual MSW Induction, and miss seeing our graduates cross the commencement stage. We have heard stories from our alumni on how client engagement and patient treatment have taken on vastly new meanings during this time.

Additionally, this year we also saw increased recognition of the injustices in our country particularly for black and brown people in our country. We know this time has brought up pain in various communities, but more importantly has brought an awareness to an issue that has long been prevalent in our society. Yet, in true social work fashion, we adapt, we innovate, we remain positive, and we continue to be a reliable source for positive change and hope. You will be able to read about various initiatives already started with in our College and School, but we also recognize that this will be a continued commitment and focus for years to come.

We are pleased to present the 2019-2020 annual school newsletter, filled with beautiful reminders of the tremendous good that can grow out of these truly unprecedented times. Thank you for your far-reaching ambassadorship and much-needed support of our school's mission to inspire and prepare the next generation of social workers.

Sincerely,



Heather Thompson, Ph.D., LCSW  
Interim Director & Associate Professor

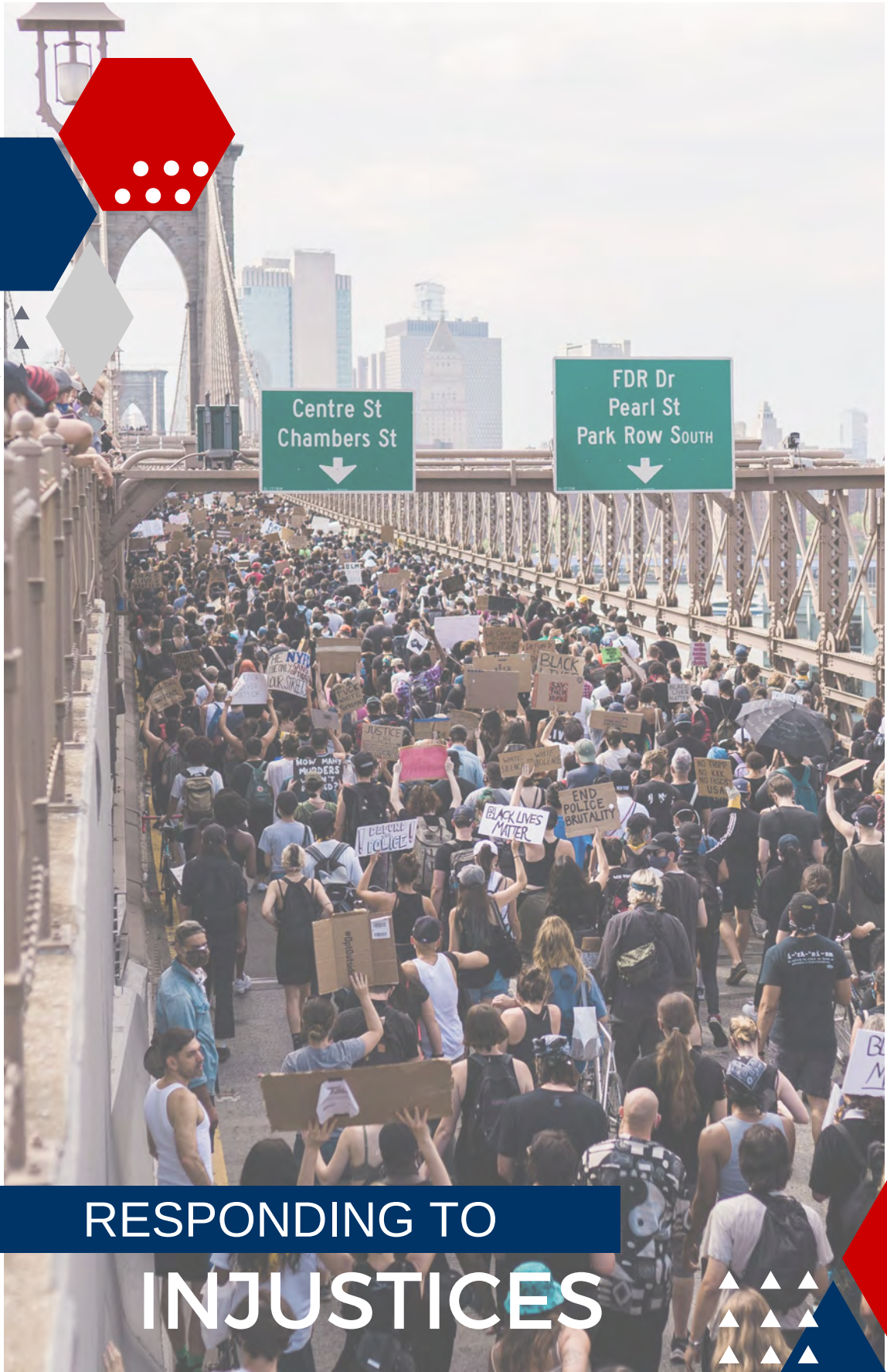


“

If you see  
something that is  
not right, not fair,  
not just, you have a  
moral obligation to  
do something  
about it.

”

Congressman John Lewis



RESPONDING TO

INJUSTICES

The following message was emailed to all of our college alumni, faculty, staff and community partners several days after Mr. George Floyd's death.

Dear CCJ and SW Community,

It is with profound sadness and outrage that we share this message today. While still mourning the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sean Reed and the many other victims of senseless hate – we have now witnessed George Floyd die in Minneapolis as the result of a knee-chokehold. We know that this brings a range of feelings including anger, confusion, frustration and fear. Compounding the pain, these tragedies have occurred amid a global pandemic that has further illuminated racial disparities in our country and the work that must be done. Black and Latino Americans are disproportionately affected by the virus due to socioeconomic and health inequalities in our country. Asian Americans are being unfairly blamed for the origins of COVID-19.

Some of you may be experiencing secondary or vicarious trauma as a result of these events, which may be especially challenging since we are each so closely tied to our core values of justice and human dignity. We want to assure you that there is no place and no tolerance for “isms” of any kind in our College. We must initiate and advocate for the difficult, but meaningful, conversations that are urgently needed.

We have a responsibility to ask ourselves: How are the “isms” in our country affecting our humanity? What can we do to address these injustices? How do we stop the fraying of the rule of law, uphold the ideals of equal protection and protect democratic principles? We must all give careful thought and consideration to these important and challenging questions. We must then initiate – and maintain – conversations surrounding racial bias and our shared mission to promote – and protect – human rights through transformational change. We must also recognize that to achieve effective, sustainable progress, it is imperative that we be thoughtful, strategic and purposeful in our response.

We encourage each of you – faculty, instructors, students, alumni and community members – to engage in conversations about the meaning of these events and the role social workers and criminal justice professionals play when such incidents take place. It is important to see the connections to the ongoing, underlying marginalization of people. The reality is that these recent events reflect a larger discussion that needs to take place in order for persistent, systemic change to occur.

This is our work and commitment as professionals who adhere to justice and to the respect and dignity of every human being. We can help our friends and neighbors address and navigate unacknowledged biases. Through our actions and our service, we can guide our communities toward change. We can be a source of hope. That's what we do. It's who we are. And it's more important now than ever to curb the hate and hasten the healing.

In solidarity,

Dr. Naelys Luna, Dr. Heather Thompson and Dr. Wendy Guastaferro

## **NOW IT'S TIME TO BE THE CHANGE.**

We have begun taking the steps necessary to ensure our values of equality and inclusivity are reflected holistically throughout our college - in our words, our actions and our representation. Interim Dean Luna has initiated conversations with our faculty and staff of color, which have illuminated important takeaways that we have already started implementing.

And we're not stopping there. Our work to be the change has only begun.

## CREATING SAFE SPACES TO SHARE & CONNECT



In early Spring 2020, our classes fully transitioned online and our communities began to reel from the dual pandemics of coronavirus and systemic racism. Our program coordinators recognized the need for students to have a safe space in which to share and process their experiences and the impact of these challenges on their clients, internships, families and communities.



The coordinators established unstructured, 90-minute WebEx conversations, which provide a platform to acknowledge all that is being experienced as social workers, as people of color and as human beings in the midst of so much uncertainty. The school will continue hosting bi-weekly calls throughout the academic year to remain in touch with our students, their thoughts and their most pressing needs.

---

**"Every voice raised against racism chips away at its power. We can't afford to stay silent."**

- Reni Eddo-Lodge

---



In response to recent events which amplified attention on societal issues of racism and police brutality, the Office of Professional Development hosted a series of workshops for FAU Social Work and Criminal Justice students, faculty and staff, as well as community partners. On June 23, we hosted a safe-space dialogue featuring special guest **Dr. Suzanne Spencer**, Ed.D., CEO of Living Skills in the Schools. Our time together allowed for individual and group reflection on diversity issues and the impact of secondary trauma on our personal and professional thoughts, assumptions, attitudes and motivations.



We then held two, 3-hour workshops entitled "Moving from Diversity to Justice" on June 26 and July 10. **Crystal Morris**, MS, founder and CEO of One Caring Adult and Director of Indian River Services for Tykes & Teens, Inc. and **Jeffrey Shearer**, ACSW, MCAP, LCSW, adjunct faculty in the Sandler School of Social Work, former CEO of Tykes and Teens, Inc. and private practice psychotherapist, facilitated the workshop to create a safe space for participants to learn about their own personal biases, sit in the uncomfortable feelings that arise and then go forward with changing the way they offer services.



The workshop explored how our world views were constructed and how our social location impacts the thoughts and attitudes we have regarding racial justice. It served as a beginning of the journey towards systemic change that comes from adopting a new mindset, rather than harboring guilt or shame.





## "REDUCING RACIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY"

The Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), founded in 1993, is a non-profit, professional membership organization. SSWR supports social workers, social welfare professionals, social work students, social work faculty and researchers in related fields. The organization's annual conference - "Reducing Racial and Economic Inequality" was held in Washington, DC in January 2020. (L-R) **Dr. Morgan Cooley**, **Marianna Colvin**, **Dani Groton** and **Christine Spadola** represented the Sandler School of Social Work as conference attendees.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

at the Sandler School of Social Work

While we wait for physical distancing guidelines to be lifted, our entire catalog of CEU courses, workshops, lectures and trainings are being conducted **LIVE** and **ONLINE** via Zoom!

**Browse Our Upcoming Courses Today**

[fau.edu/prodev](http://fau.edu/prodev)

EARLY BIRD  
RATES ONLINE



CEUs • LCSW Exam Prep • DBT Certificate • CBT Certificate • and More!



## HIP, HIP, HOORAY!

SocialWorkDegree.org has ranked the **Sandler School of Social Work BSW program** third in the state based on our BSW alumni's monthly earnings just 12 months after graduation. The ranking includes only CSWE-accredited programs and is calculated using monthly salaries deducting student debt payments, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education, to derive median net incomes of our early-career BSW graduates.

"In addition to our high job placement rate, world-class faculty and newly renovated facilities, we are thrilled to have this ranking as yet another reason why future social work students should put the Sandler School of Social Work at the top of their list for a high-value educational experience," said Heather Thompson, Ph.D., interim director of the Sandler School.

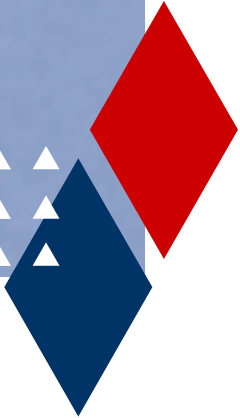
See full rankings + monthly earning projections  
for our BSW graduates

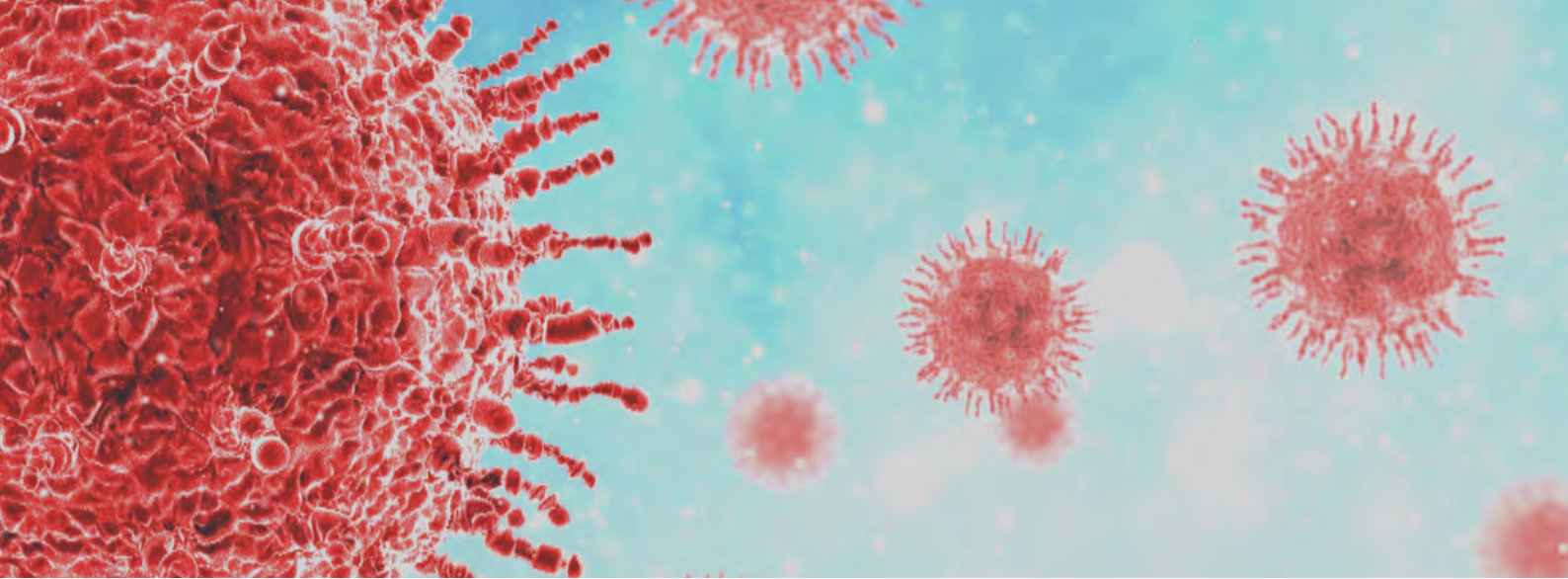




INNOVATING AMID THE

CORONAVIRUS



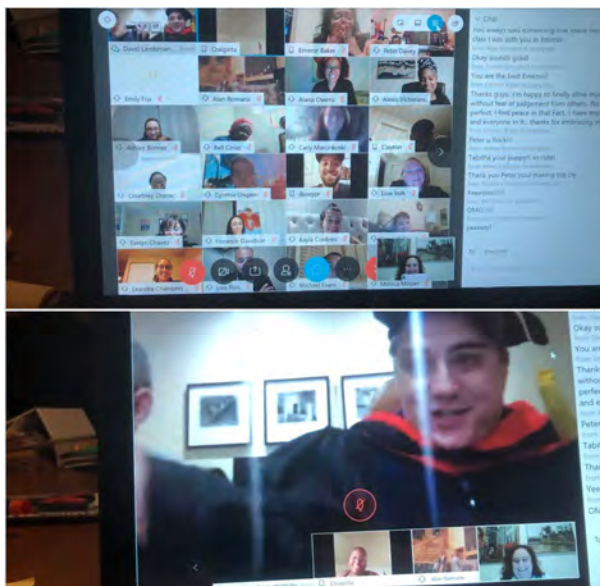


## MSW Students Get Surprise 'Virtual' Send-Off

For his last Family Therapy class of the Spring 2020 semester, **Dr. David Landsman-Wohlsifer** asked his final-year master's students to prepare a performance piece about the impact families have had on them, either personally or professionally, that they would then perform during the virtual class finale. One student wrote a poem.

Another student performed a monologue. Another student shared a self-made song mix that included "Pomp and Circumstance" playing in the background.

Dr. David noticed that many of his students began to cry as they listened. He stopped the class and asked if everyone was okay. They replied that, hearing the famous graduation march song had reminded them that they weren't going to have an in-person graduation celebration this Spring due to COVID-19, and that it made them sad that they were missing out on the age-old tradition. Dr. David dismissed his students for a 10-minute break and told them that when class resumed, he was going to share a

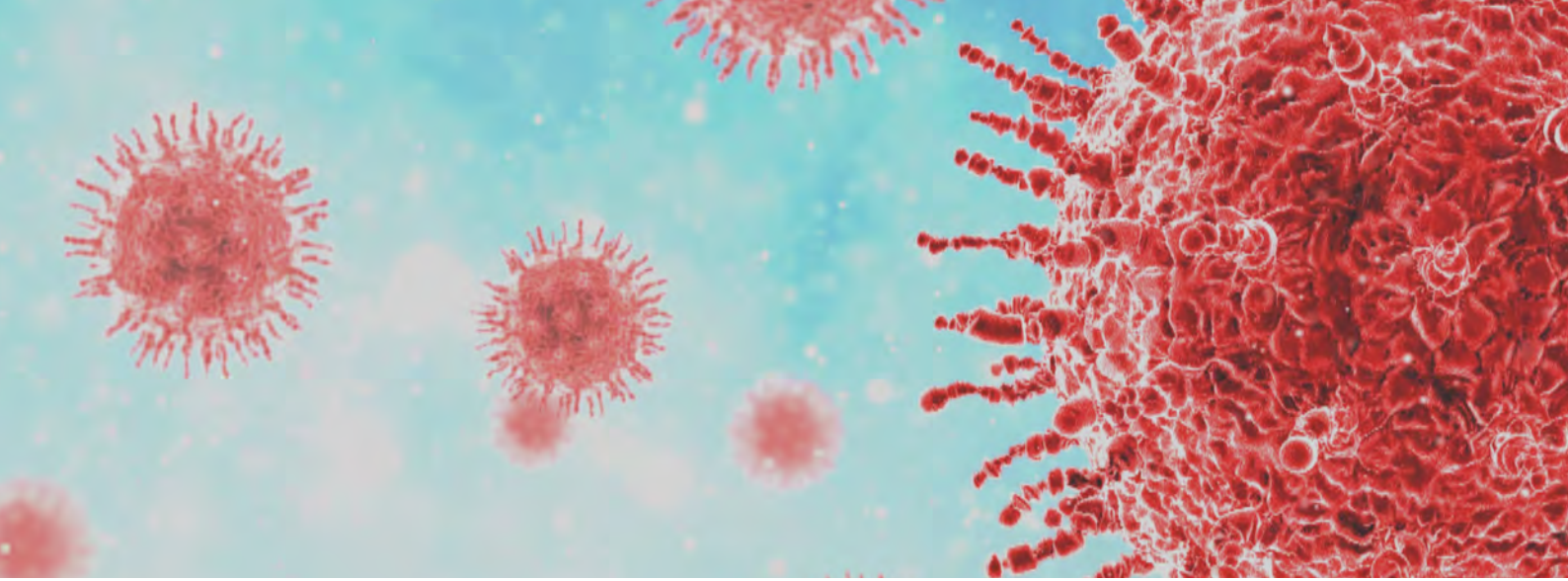


performance piece of his own.

"I wasn't planning to perform, but it occurred to me that my students needed a ritual," Dr. David said. "They needed the closure of commencement." When the students returned to the virtual classroom after the break, Dr. David, was donning his full academic regalia. His

husband, Jeff Landsman-Wohlsifer, LCSW, was seated beside him and wearing an FAU sweatshirt. Dr. David asked the student to please resume playing "Pomp and Circumstance". He then read each students' name, one by one, while Jeff applauded and cheered heartily for each of them.

"My students needed this transition and to celebrate their accomplishment, and it gave me closure, too," Dr. David said. "The FAU student is a special student. We have first-gen students; we have people in recovery; we have people from all corners of the world who never thought they would get a graduate degree, and I didn't want it to go unnoticed."



## Responding to COVID-19

### 5 Questions with Dr. Heather Thompson, Interim School Director

#### **What changes has the Sandler School undergone since COVID-19 came on the scene?**

As soon as we learned that all university classes would shift online over Spring Break, we proactively shifted our 300 students in field placements to remote internships. This transition was no small feat and required precise coordination between our hundreds of community partners and our Office of Field Education, led by Georgia Brown, and we extended remote internships through the Summer, to prevent graduation delays. It was truly an amazing effort! Meanwhile, our faculty quickly got up to speed on all things Zoom, WebEx and Microsoft Teams, as well as learned how to transition their existing courses fully online in Canvas, thanks to Ricky Langlois, our colleague in Criminal Justice and online master teacher. They had less than a week to prepare, and I couldn't be prouder of the dedication and patience with which everyone rose to the task, including our phenomenal staff who were a tremendous help during the hustle.

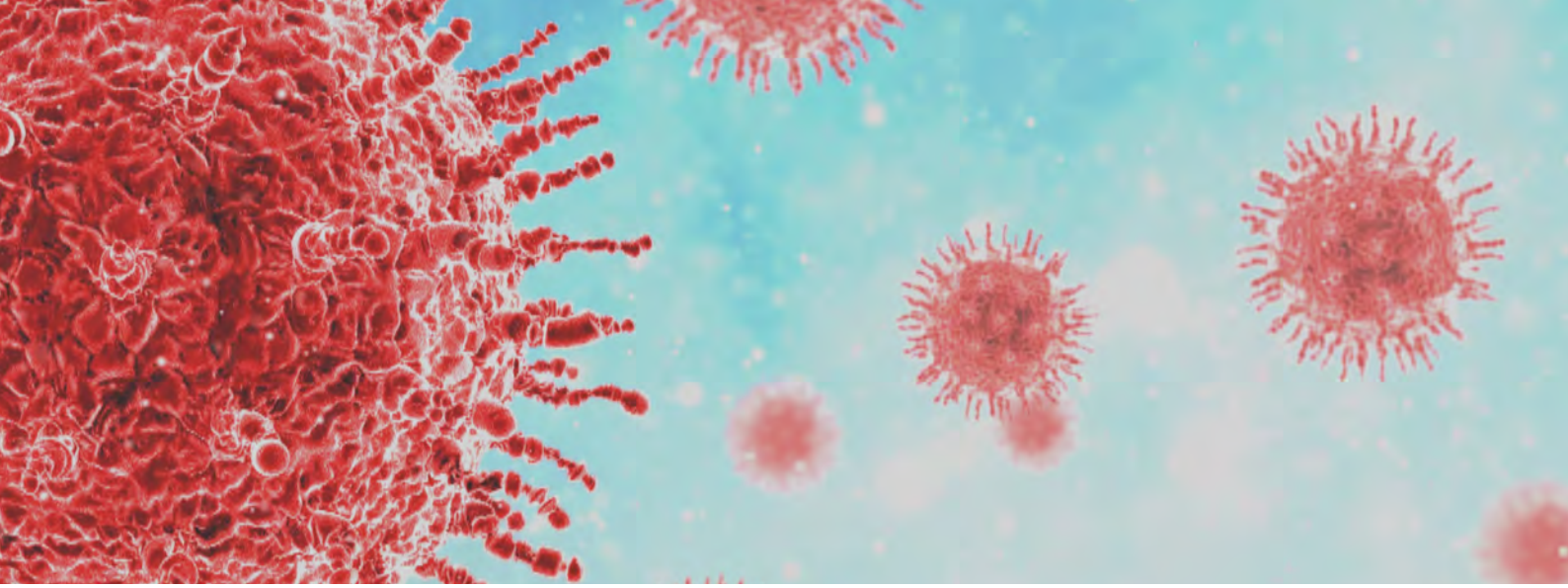
We recently learned that our BSW, MSW and DSW classes will continue via remote instruction through the Fall semester. This required our faculty, who typically enjoy much-deserved downtime during the Summer, to spend significant periods of their off-time

adjusting their classes and learning best practices for online instruction so we can ensure our students continue receiving the highest quality education possible.

#### **How did everyone respond to so many changes?**

We learned rather suddenly in early March that we would shift to a remote format for an indefinite period of time. Our faculty immediately jumped in and developed creative ways for our students to continue learning, and provided the necessary support and flexibility for our students during these unprecedented circumstances. Our students were dealing with a myriad of unanticipated challenges from course format transitions and virtual internships, to possible employment/financial stressors and health and safety concerns. They have been remarkable!

Our Office of Professional Development also recognized the need for our students and the community to be armed with new tools for this unprecedented time. They offered four, free webinars to the community focused on how to maintain ethical practice in a virtual setting, how to respond to clients impacted by both trauma and addiction/recovery amid a pandemic, and the need for practitioners to practice self-care during these challenging times.



**With so much unsettling news these days, what's the good news we can be grateful for?**

Many families have reported feeling more connected due to spending such concentrated amounts of time in their homes together. Those who live alone or away from family and friends have discovered new ways to connect virtually. This communal shift in our nation has allowed us to appreciate our social connections and think creatively about how to maintain them. The pandemic has also helped to, once again, shine a light on health disparities and systemic racism that are still so prevalent in our society. Not only are we able to see the injustices in our healthcare system to people of color, but we are also engaging in conversations and taking action to combat the various forms of injustice against indigenous people and people of color, as well as other marginalized groups.

**What do you know now that you wish you had known in early January?**

I wish we would have all known how strong we really are, individually and collectively.

**What makes social workers uniquely qualified to help others during this time?**

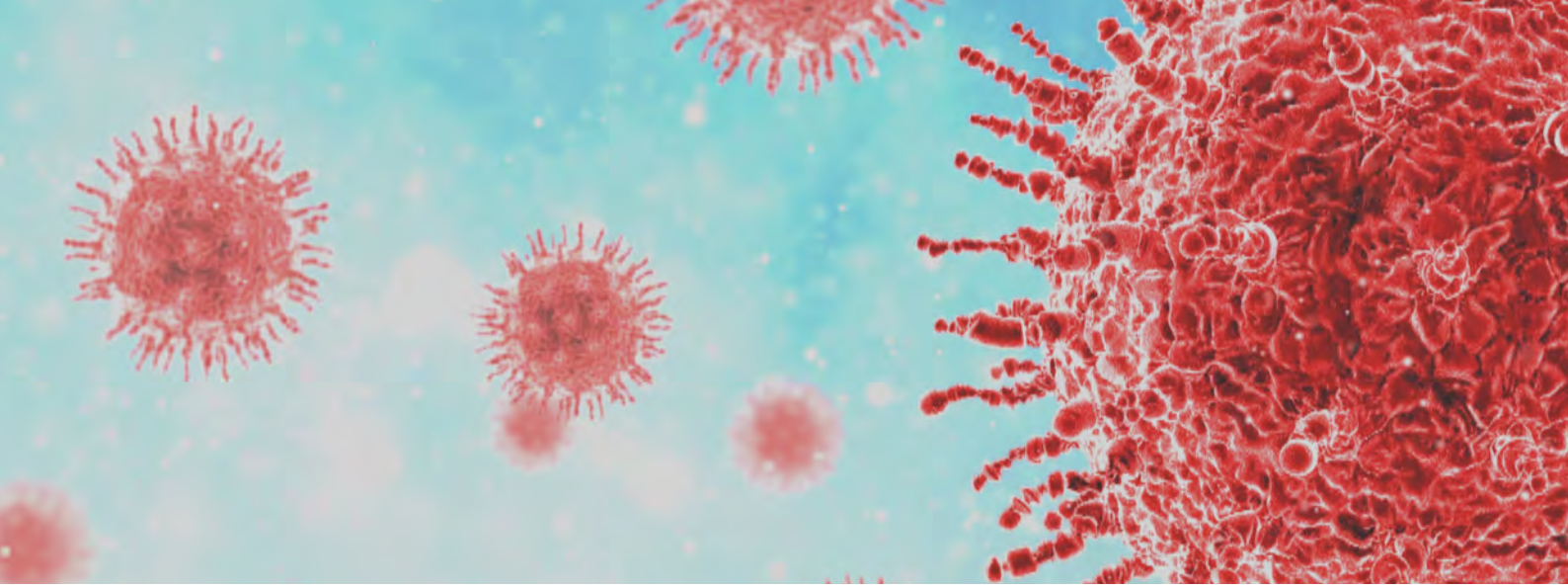
Our medical professionals are so critical during this pandemic, as they are treating the physical symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. Yet, what you often may not see, is there are social workers right along side them! Social workers focus on the

contextual nature of stressors, and this pandemic certainly has impacted individuals and families in so many ways. We are able to engage with clients, assess their medical, relational, social and financial needs, and intervene and provide critical resources to their clients. We understand that we must not solely look at the medical symptoms; rather, we must examine the ways in which policies, access to resources and other factors perpetuate hardship. Our history of direct involvement with grassroots efforts and cross-disciplinary partnerships make social workers ideal change agents and first responders to these crises.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

65.5% of FAU students work to put themselves through school, many in jobs that have evaporated in the pandemic. "FAU Cares" emergency fund provides financial assistance to ease the hardship many of our students are now facing. To help our students to the FAU Cares emergency fund, please [click here](#).

Thank you for your generosity!



**"Unity is strength. When there is teamwork  
and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."**

- Mattie Stepanek

---

- Our Office of Professional Development hosted a series of free webinars to address various coronavirus-related challenges for clinicians across the country.
  - April 1: **Dr. Allan Barsky** presented “Social Work Ethics during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Responses for Prudent Practitioners”. [Watch now](#)
  - May 1: Adjunct Instructor **John Puls**, LCSW, MCAP, offered his expertise in “COVID-19 Impact on Substance use Disorder and People in Recovery”.
  - May 8: Instructor **Donna Drucker**, LCSW, shared “Self Care for Caregiving Professionals during the COVID-19 Pandemic”
  - May 14: DSW candidate **Erin McNamee**, LCSW, addressed issues of trauma in “Navigating Client Trauma in the Time of COVID-19”.
- **Dr. Heather Thompson** and **Interim Dean Luna** filmed a special [video message](#) for all Spring 2020 graduates.
- **Dr. David Landsman-Wohlsifer** is joining colleagues **Dr. JuYoung Park** and **Dr. Laurie Suttenger** to write an article for a special edition of *Clinical Social Work Journal* that will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on social work and clinical practice.
- **Dr. Gail Horton**, **Dr. Precious Skinner-Osei**, **Dr. Joy McClellan** and students **Charkia Sheppard** and **Azhany Haynes** represented the school during several virtual recruiting events for prospective students.
- **Robin Rubin** was [interviewed](#) by Dr. Laura Vernon, founder of FAU Thrive, to discuss her [article](#) "How to Think Like an Optimist During These Unique Times”.





# TRANSITIONS



# IN MEMORIAM



Harvey Sandler  
1942-2020

Our world got a bit dimmer when we learned that Harvey Sandler, family patriarch, devoted philanthropist and our school's namesake, passed away unexpectedly in early January of this year. We are eternally grateful for Harvey's legacy and his family's belief that the world can be a better place by educating and training social workers devoted and committed to the service of those who are most vulnerable.

In 2017, Harvey and Phyllis Sandler generously donated \$7 million to the School of Social Work, thus naming and endowing The Phyllis & Harvey Sandler School of Social Work at Florida Atlantic University. Harvey and his family have continually supported the School with their transformative gift, compassion, kindness and generosity. In addition to naming and endowing our School, the Sandler family has been integral to the funding of students' scholarships through the annual Phyllis Sandler Heart of Social Work event, the School's largest fundraiser. Additionally, students who are actively involved in community service efforts receive direct support from the Sandler Family Scholarship.

Each and every one of our faculty, students, alumni and community partners helps to further the Sandler family legacy of giving and transformation, and we treasure the honor.

**"Give and give and give until it feels good." - Harvey Sandler**



*The Sandler Family  
2019 Phyllis Sandler Heart of Social Work Annual Fundraiser*

## THANK YOU, DR. RYAN & DR. HORTON!



**Dr. Ellen Ryan** led our BSW program for more than a decade and played a vital role in growing it into the largest in Florida. After returning to faculty, she taught hundreds of BSW students, supported our field education office, and served on the FAU crisis committee. We are so grateful to Dr. Ryan for shaping our BSW program and so many of our students throughout her career at FAU. She has truly been an asset, and we wish her all the very best in her retirement.



Since joining us in 2004, **Dr. Gail Horton** has published extensive research on substance abuse and mental health, including her latest **book on neurobiology and attachment**. She has been a gifted educator across our degree programs, served on committees of all levels, and after returning from sabbatical, served as our Interim BSW Coordinator. We are so grateful for the many ways Dr. Horton has impacted our school, and we will truly miss her.

## 'DR. O' NAMED NEW INTERIM BSW COORDINATOR



**Dr Precious Skinner-Osei** has been appointed to serve as our Interim BSW Coordinator for the 2020-2021 Academic Year. Dr. O, as she is affectionately known by many students, has been an instructor in the BSW program for the past three and a half years. She has served as a University mentor and was selected as the NASW-Broward Chapter Social Work Educator of the Year.

Dr. O recently published an article in which three BSW students joined her as co-authors - all three of whom continued on in our MSW program! Dr. O has been an avid participant in various recruiting events to attract students to both FAU and specifically our Social work programs. She will make a wonderful leader in our BSW program.

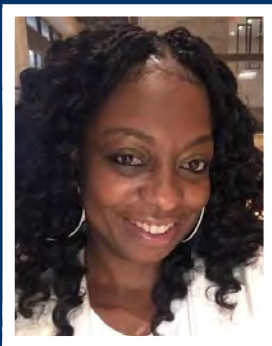
## NEW DEAN'S FELLOW FOR RESEARCH & ACADEMIC EFFECTIVENESS

**Dr. Marianna Colvin** has been appointed as the College of Social Work & Criminal Justice Dean's Fellow for Research and Academic Effectiveness. Dr. Colvin, assistant professor, is a mixed-methods researcher, meaning she combines network analysis and qualitative methods to examine interorganizational human service delivery systems, particularly as they relate to vulnerable children and families.

Dr. Colvin will spearhead the college's research initiatives, guiding faculty in their grant applications and serving as the liaison to the FAU Division of Research. We know she will bring the same level of passion to her work in the Dean's Office as she does to her teaching.



## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST FACULTY MEMBERS



### **ATENSIA EARP BOWEN, INSTRUCTOR**

Atensia has a vast amount of macro experience working with youth, pregnant mothers and adults within the HIV / AIDS population, LGBTQ+, medical social work and homeless populations in the areas of program management and development, supervision, monitoring, quality assurance, case management and training. Her experience spans from South Carolina to Florida, where she moved in 2012. [Read her full bio here](#)



### **ELLEN RONDINA, VISITING INSTRUCTOR**

With 20+ years of social work experience, Ellen's work exists at the crossroads of social justice, art and wellness. She is committed to providing the space, intention, insight and support that allows for people and communities to have conversations that empower each other's wellness and personal growth. Her professional style is a collaborative, social-constructivist, experientially-based approach. [Read her full bio here](#)

Fall 2019 Soar-in-4 Celebration in the  
**NEW STUDENT LOUNGE**  
honoring high-achieving undergraduate students





## **HAPPINESS FINDS A HOME AT THE SANDLER SCHOOL** **Introducing the Robin Rubin Center for Happiness & Life Enhancement**

The **Robin Rubin Center for Happiness & Life Enhancement** opened in January 2020 - realizing a dream longheld by its namesake. Robin earned both her BSW and MSW degrees from FAU and began teaching in the Sandler School in 2010 as a field faculty member and seminar instructor.

As she helped students learn about mental illness, Robin soon realized that it was critical that they also learn about mental and holistic wellness. After all, to help their clients, social workers need to learn the skills and tools to be happy. That's when Robin decided to earn a certificate in applied positive psychology. Then in 2015, she approached the School Director at the time, Dr. Michele Hawkins, and shared her idea of teaching a course in well-being. Dr. Hawkins was completely supportive of the idea, so Robin got right to work building the syllabi for her new course. Social Work and Positive Well Being is now being taught every semester and has a full student roster in every class. The Robin Rubin Center for Happiness and Life Enhancement was established to broaden the reach of Robin's initial goal – to teach the skills and tools of happiness and, more importantly, how to put them into practice. It is a space where students, faculty, staff and community members can enhance and improve their well-being while fostering a culture

of authentic connection. The center seeks to enrich and nurture the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of our students, faculty, staff and community members by offering meaningful opportunities to learn and grow in these four, equally important spheres of life.

The Robin Rubin Center officially opened on November 21 when it hosted the founders of Womaze, a mobile app centered around self-empowerment for women. The event was held in the Sandler School of Social Work auditorium with a packed house of FAU faculty and staff members, as well as many members from the community. The audience engaged with the presenters in a meaningful conversation about how to thrive through the holiday season using self-care techniques.

When it is safe to resume doing so, students, faculty, staff, colleagues and community members can enjoy meditations, yoga classes, lectures, workshops and meaningful conversations free of charge. To learn more about programming, opportunities to become a one-time or recurring session leader and how you can help support the center's mission, please visit the [Robin Rubin Center for Happiness & Life Enhancement website](#).



APPLAUDING

OUR FACULTY





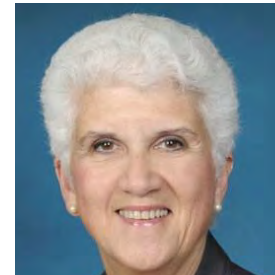
**2020 UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR OF THE YEAR**

**Dr. Allan Barsky**, professor, was awarded the coveted title of 2020 Scholar of the Year by the Office of the Provost in recognition of his outstanding performance. He also received the *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work's* "Best Conceptual Article" award for his article, "Serious Imminent Harm to Nonidentifiable Others: Updated Exceptions to Confidentiality."



**EMERGING MENTOR AWARD**

**Dr. Morgan Cooley**, assistant professor, received the Emerging Mentor Award through the National Council on Family Relations in recognition of her outstanding mentorship record, the meaningful ways she has personally and professionally impacted the lives of the students she's worked with, and her potential for continued contributions to the discipline of Family Science.



**EMERITUS STATUS AWARDED**

**Dr. Diane Alperin** has been awarded Professor Emeritus status after her decades-long service to the University in various high-ranking roles, including Provost. "You have my warmest congratulations on this deserved recognition of your professional service and my deep appreciation for the contribution you made to Florida Atlantic University over many years," Dr. John Kelly, FAU President said.



**GABOR EXEMPLARY EMPLOYEE AWARD**

**Sara Dochterman**, LCSW, assistant director, was named the 2020 Gabor Exemplary Employee Award. "Sara has gone above and beyond her job duties over the past year," said Interim Director, Dr. Heather Thompson. "Additionally, her follow-through on managing the Operations of a school of over 30 faculty and staff alleviates a high level of stress and burden from others. She is greatly deserving of this award."

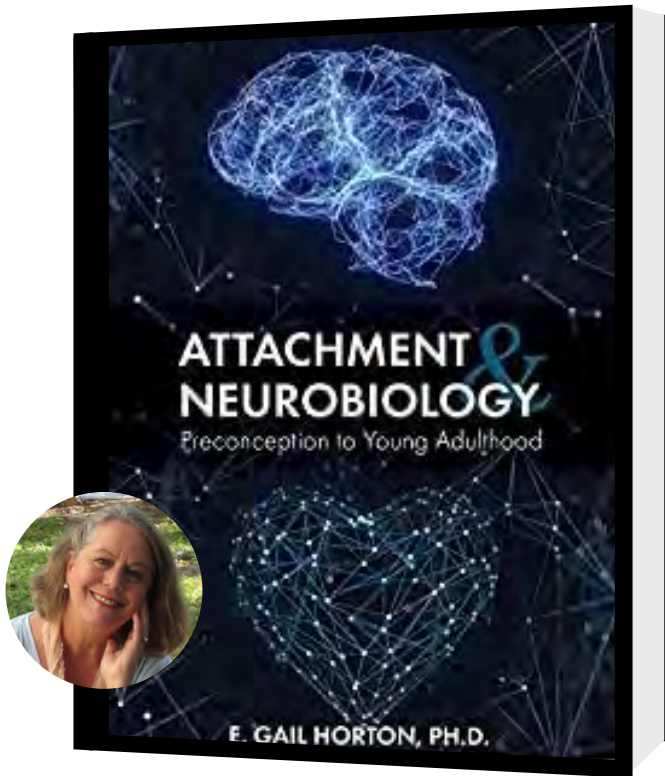


**NASW EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR FOR PALM BEACH, BROWARD AND TREASURE COAST**

(L-R) **Dr. Dani Groton** was named the NASW Educator of the Year for the Palm Beach Chapter. **Dr. Precious Skinner-Osei** was named the NASW Educator of the Year for the Broward Chapter. In addition **Kathryn McCormic**, LCSW, MCAP, was named the NASW Educator of the Year for Treasure Coast. The awards were given in March 2020, national Social Work Month.

**Stay in the Know**  
[fau.edu/ssw](http://fau.edu/ssw)

## 2020 FEATURED TITLES

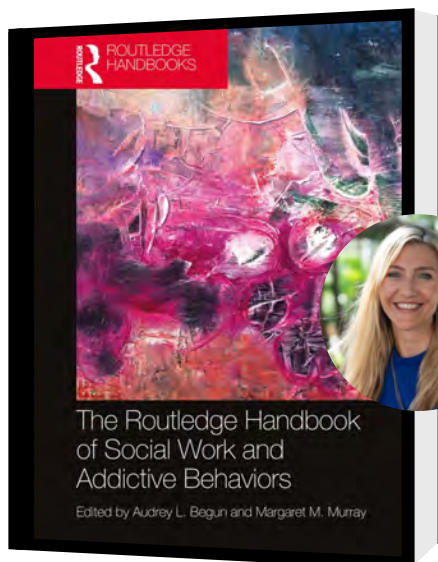


### **ATTACHMENT & NEUROBIOLOGY: PRECONCEPTION TO YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

*E. Gail Horton, Ph.D. (January 2020)*

Gail Horton, Ph.D., retired professor, recently published *Attachment & Neurobiology: Preconception to Young Adulthood*, which illuminates how the brain develops across time and within a social context. This fantastic new resource equips social workers and mental health providers with prevention and intervention solutions for their clients. We're excited to add Dr. Horton's book to our professional toolkit!

[View on Amazon](#)



### **THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL WORK AND ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS**

Christine Spadola, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, co-authored a chapter in the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Social Work and Addictive Behaviors* titled "Addictive Behaviors during Emerging Adulthood". The handbook is the definitive resource about addictive behaviors, emphasizing substance misuse, gambling, and problematic technology use.

[View on Routledge](#)



# RESEARCH BRIEFS

## Notable Press Highlights

---

### HOMELESSNESS:

**Dr. Dani Groton's** research article in the *Journal of Community Psychology* was one of the most downloaded articles in a single month.

### SLEEP:

**Drs. Christine Spadola** and **Dani Groton** were featured by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) Foundation for their work to optimize sleep health in the community by empowering professionals on the frontlines.

**Dr. Spadola's** research on the relationship between caffeine and sleep quality was ranked by the journal *SLEEP* as a 2019 TOP 5 Article based on impact metrics.

### SICK LEAVE:

**Dr. LeaAnne DeRigne's** sick leave research made it all the way into a U.S. Senate Bill to enact a paid sick leave law and was cited by *US News & World Report*.

Her latest co-authored research study suggests that beefing up basic benefits like sick and vacation leave can improve staff retention—and employees could end up with as much as 40 percent more in retirement savings.



# 2019-20 PUBLICATIONS

## BOOK CHAPTERS

**Barsky, A. E.** (in press). Values and ethics in social work with groups: A holistic approach. In C. S. Cohen, M. Macgowan, & R. Toseland (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook on social work with groups*. Routledge.

**Barsky, A. E.** (in press). Gender and sexual orientation matters. In P. Salem & K. Olson (Eds.), *The family dispute resolution handbook*. Oxford University Press.

**Barsky, A. E.** (2019). Narrative ethics in social work practice. In S. Marson and McKinney, R. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of social work ethics and values* (pp.53-57). Routledge. ISBN 9781138343931

## PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

**Barsky, A. E.** (in press). Heterosexual- and cisgender-normative genograms in social work: An ethics perspective. *Journal of Social Work Education*.

**Barsky, A. E.** (in press). Reporting and other ethical obligations of automated clinical interventions. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 17(2).

**Barsky, A. E.** (2020). A question of justice. *Internet Journal of Restorative Justice*. ISSN (online): 2056-2985.


**Barsky, A. E.** (2019). Cultural humility, microaggressions, and courageous conversations. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 25(1), 4-10.

**Barsky, A. E.** (2019). Technology and boundary concerns in social work field education. *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning in Health and Social Care*, 16, 81-98.

Benevolenza, M. & **DeRigne, L.** (2019). The impact of climate change and natural disasters on vulnerable populations: A systematic review of literature. *Journal of Human Behavior and the Social Environment*, 29(2), 266-281.

Besser, L. M., Brenowitz, W., **Park, J.**, Tolea, M., & Galvin, J. (2020). Intention to be screened for Alzheimer's disease by residential locale. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 1-11.

**Colvin, Marianna L.** & Miller, Shari E. (2020). The role of complexity theory and network analysis for understanding child welfare service delivery systems. Advance online publication *Children & Youth Services*. Advance online publication,1-28.



**Colvin, Marianna L., Thompson, Heather M., & Cooley, Morgan E.** (2020). The 'cost' of collaborating and other challenges in inter-organizational child welfare practice: A mixed-methods analysis. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*. Advance online publication, 1-41.

**Colvin, Marianna L. & Thompson, Heather M.** (2020). Exploring the experiences of child welfare-focused therapeutic service providers. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research, 47(1), 86-101*.

Collins, C., Sage, P., **DeRigne, L.**, & Fischer, R. (2020). Sense of self, empowerment, and interpersonal skills among African American teens in Cleveland, Ohio. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 37(2), 137-152*.

**Cooley, Morgan E.**, Newquist, J., **Thompson, Heather,** & **Colvin, Marianna L.** (2019). A systematic review of foster parent preservice training. *Children and Youth Services Review, 107, 104552*.

**Cooley, M. E.**, & Petren, R. E. (2020). A qualitative examination of coparenting among foster parent dyads. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Advance online publication.

**Cooley, M. E.**, Womack, B., Rush, J., & **Slinsky, K.** (2020). An exploratory study of foster parent reported adverse childhood experiences, resilience, and fostering outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Advance online publication.

Collins, C., & **DeRigne, L.** (2020). Losing Hold of the American Dream: A Qualitative Exploration of Foreclosure's Psychological and Physical Health Impact on Families. *Journal of Family Issues*. Advance online publication.

**DeRigne, L.** & Stoddard-Dare, P. (2019) The role of paid sick leave in employee and public health. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 20(1)*.

**DeRigne, L.**, Stoddard-Dare, P., Collins, C. & Quinn, L. (2020). A report on the distribution of selected employment benefits of older workers. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 88, 23-27*.

**DeRigne, L.**, Stoddard-Dare, P., Collins, C., Quinn, L. & Fuller, K. (2019). Working U.S. adults without paid sick leave report more worries about finances. *Journal of Social Service Research, 45(4), 570-581*.



**González, M.J.** and Rosenthal Gelman, C. (2019). A centennial of Mary Richmond's Social Diagnosis: A celebration and contemporary assessment of a seminal work. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 100(3), 233-247.

González-Ramos, G., Cohen, E.V., Luce, V., & **González, M.J.** (2019). Clinical social work in the care of Parkinson's disease: Role, functions, and opportunities in integrated health care. *Social Work in Health Care*, 58(1), 108-125.

Gomory, T., Gromer, J., **Groton, D.**, Groff, S., Ellsworth, M., Duncan, & M., Harris, R. (2019). What clients report about services offered at an innovative one-stop service center for people experiencing homelessness: A case study. *Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 21 (3-4)

**Groton, D.B.**, & Radey, M. (2019). Employment among unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 28 (2), 1-9.

**Groton, D. B.**, & Radey, M. (2019). Social networks of unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47(1), 34-48.


**Groton, D.B. & Spadola, C.S.** (in press). Variability, visuals, & interaction: online learning recommendations from social work students. *Social Work Education*.

**Howard, H.**, Clark, K., & Piltch, M. (2020). Support for mothers who are incarcerated: Impact of mutual aid support groups. *Journal of Urban Social Work*. Advance online publication.

Jacobs, R.J., Caballero, J., Parmar, J, & **Kane, M.N.** (2019). The role of self-efficacy, flexibility, and gender in pharmacy students' health information technology readiness. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 11(11), 1103-1110.

Jacobs, R. J., **Kane, M.N.**, & Sklar, E. M. (2020). Psychosocial and behavioral correlates of internalized homonegativity in midlife and older Gay and bisexual men. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 39(5), 527-535.

Jacobs, R. J., Sklar, E. M., & **Kane, M. N.** (2019). Sexual behaviors and perceptions of HIV risk in a multiethnic U.S. sample of women who have sex with women. *Journal of Social Services Research*, 44(5), 614-623



**Johnson, D., & Barsky, A. E.** (2020). Preventing gun violence in schools: Roles and perspectives of social workers. *School Social Work Journal*, 44(2), 26-48.

**Kane, M. N., Jacobs, R. J., & Sherman, D.** (2019). Forgiveness and gender between friends and co-workers. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 21(1), 37-54.

**Meskin, Leslie, Colvin, Marianna L., & Hart, Laura** (in press). A pilot trial of Confident Body, Confident Child in the United States. *Families in Society*, 1-36.

Messiah, S. E., Vidot, D. C., **Spadola, C.**, Joel, S., Dao, S., Daunert, S., ... & de la Cruz-Muñoz, N. (2020). Self-reported depression and duodenal cortisol biomarkers are related to weight loss in young metabolic and bariatric surgery patients. *Bariatric Surgical Practice and Patient Care*. Advance online publication.

Mihalec-Adkins, B. P., & **Cooley, M. E.** (2020). Individual-level risk and protective factors for school engagement among adolescents in foster care: Behaviors, self-esteem, and social skills. *Child & Family Social Work*, 25, 256-266.

Miller, J., **Cooley, M.**, Segress, M., Niu, C., Bowman, K., & Fletcher, J. (2019). Virtual

support groups among adoptive parents: Ideal for information seeking? *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 37, 347-361

Miller, J., **Cooley, M.**, Segress, M., Niu, C., Bowman, K., Fletcher, J., & Littrell, L. (2019). Support, information seeking, and homophily in a virtual support group for adoptive parents: Impact on perceived empathy. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 101, 151-156.

Newquist, J., Ladd, L. D., & **Cooley, M. E.** Processing the removal and managing the moves or removals of foster children: A qualitative exploration of foster parents' experiences. *Child & Adolescent Social Work*. Advance online publication.

Opalinski, A., D'Avolio, D., Stein, N., **Groton, D.** Fox, V., Saiswick, K., & Newman, D. (2019). Psychometric Testing of the Human Connection Scale with People Experiencing Homelessness. *International Journal for Human Caring*, 23(3), 205-212.

**Park, J., Howard, H.**, Tolea, M., & Galvin, J. (2020). Perceived benefits of using nonpharmacological interventions in older adults with Alzheimer's disease or dementia with Lewy bodies. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 46(1), 37-46.

**Park, J.**, Krause-Parello, C. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2020). A narrative review of movement-



based mind-body interventions: Effects of yoga, tai chi, and qigong for back pain patients. *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 33(6), 3-23.

**Park, J., Sherman, D.**, Agogo, G., Hoogendijk, E., & Liu, Z. (June 2020). Frailty modifies the intervention effect of chair yoga on pain among older adults with lower extremity osteoarthritis: Secondary analysis of a nonpharmacological intervention trial. *Experimental Gerontology*, 134, 110886.

**Park, J.**, Tolea, M., Besser, L., & Galvin, J. (2020). Intention to be screened for Alzheimer's disease in nondemented older adults: Integrated behavioral model and self-efficacy as mediation effect. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, No pagination.

**Park, J.**, Tolea, M., **Sherman, D.**, Rosenfeld, A., Arcay, V., Lopes, Y., & Galvin, J. (2020). Feasibility of conducting nonpharmacological interventions to manage dementia symptoms in community dwelling older adults: Cluster randomized control trial. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, 35, No pagination.

Rottapel, R. E., Zhou, E. S., **Spadola, C.E.**, Clark, C. R., Kontos, E. Z., Laver, K., ... & Bertisch, S. M. (2020). Adapting sleep hygiene for community interventions: a qualitative investigation of sleep hygiene behaviors among racially/ethnically diverse, low-income adults. *Sleep Health*, 6, 205-213.

**Spadola, C.E.**, Guo, N., Johnson, D. A., Sofer, T., Bertisch, S. M., Jackson, C. L., ... & Redline, S. (2019). Evening intake of alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine: night-to-night associations with sleep duration and continuity among African Americans in the Jackson Heart Sleep Study. *Sleep*, 42, zsz136.


**Spadola, C.E.**, Rottapel, R.E., Zhou, E. S., Chen, J.T., Guo, N., Khalsa, S. B.S., ... & Bertisch, S.M. (2020). A sleep hygiene and yoga intervention conducted in affordable housing communities: Pilot study results and lessons for a future trial. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 39, 101121.

**Spadola CE**, Varga LM, Fernandez SB, Clarke RD, Morris SL, Wagner EF, Hospital M. (2020). A qualitative investigation to inform yoga intervention recruitment practices for racial/ethnic minority adolescents in outpatient mental health treatment. *Explore*, 16, 21-25.

**Skinner-Osei, P.**, Mangan, L., Liggett, M., Kerrigan, M., & Levenson, J.S. (2019). Justice-Involved Youth and Trauma-Informed Interventions. *Justice Policy Journal*, 16(2), 1-25.

**Stahnke, B.**, Blackstone, A., & **Howard, H.** (2020). Lived experiences and life satisfaction of childfree women in late life. *The Family Journal: Counseling and therapy for couples and families*. 28(2), 159-167.





Stoddard-Dare, P., **DeRigne, L.**, Collins, C., & Quinn, L. (2019). Retirement savings among U.S. older adult male workers by paid sick leave, flexible work, and vacation benefit status. Published online. *Community, Work & Family*.

### **OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

**Barsky, A. E.** (in press). Ethics alive! Elections in light of social work values. *The New Social Worker*, 27(3), 4-5.

**Barsky, A. E.** (2020). Ethics alive! The challenge of “tainted” donations. *The New Social Worker* (feature article).

**Barsky, A. E.** (2020). Ethical exceptions for social workers in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing. *The New Social Worker*, 27(2), 4-5.

**Barsky, A. E.** (2020). Ethics alive! Responding to NASW’s professional review process. *The New Social Worker*, 27(1), 4-6.

**Barsky, A. E.** (2019). Ethics alive! When you have ethical concerns: Initiating NASW’s professional review process. *The New Social Worker*, 26(4), 4-6.

**Barsky, A. E.**, Sehgal, M., Latif, J., & Wiese, L. (2020). How to conduct a SAGE visit. *Interprofessional Education and Practice, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL* (videos).

Congress, E.P. and **González, M.J.** (Eds.). (2021). *Multicultural perspectives in practice with families: A handbook for the helping professions*. 4th Edition. New York: Springer.

**González, M.J.** (2021). Evidence-based practice with ethnically-diverse clients. In E.P. Congress and M.J. González (Eds.), *Multicultural perspectives working with families: A handbook for the helping professions* (pp. 69-80). 4th Edition. New York: Springer.

**González, M.J.** and Acevedo, G. (2021). Practice with Hispanic individuals and families. In E.P. Congress and M.J. González (Eds.), *Multicultural perspectives in social work practice with families* (pp. 181-194). 4th Edition. New York: Springer.

Hendricks Ortiz, C. and **González, M.J.** (2021). The multicultural triangle of the child, the family, and the school: Culturally Competent Approaches. In E.P. Congress and M.J. González (Eds.), *Multicultural perspectives in social work practice with families* (pp. 117-136). 4th Edition. New York: Springer.

**Park J.**, (2020, October). Movement-based mind-body therapies for older adults with dementia and chronic pain: Perspective paper. *Alternative and Complementary Therapies*.



EVENTS +

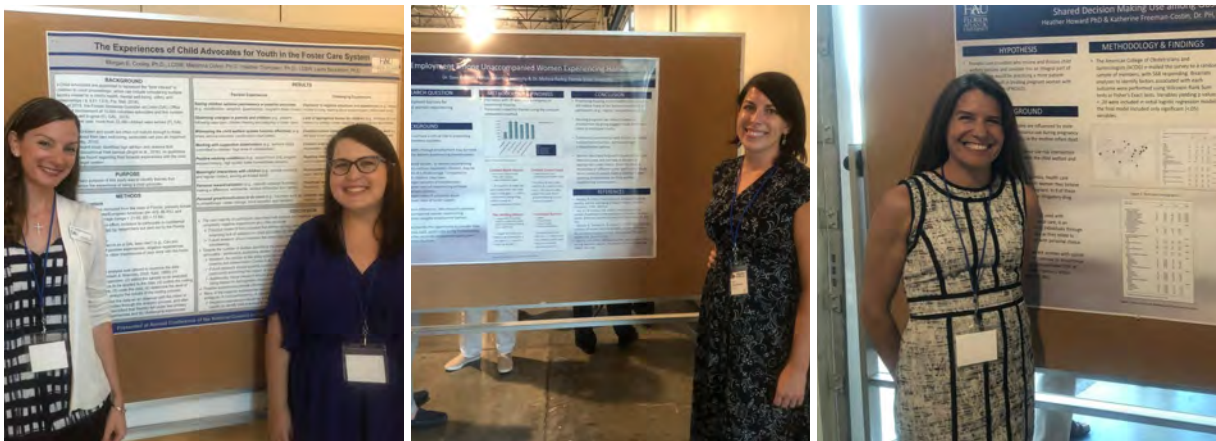
HAPPENINGS





## FAU RESEARCH SHOWCASE

September 27, 2019 - Dr.'s Heather Howard, Morgan Cooley and Dani Groton participated in the poster session of the FAU Research Showcase and were able to speak with other researchers and community members about their research. Unbeknownst to the participants, the research posters were being evaluated by various judges, and Dr. Groton's research on Employment Among Unaccompanied Women Experiencing Homelessness was identified as the poster winner for our college.



*(L-R) Dr. Heather Thompson, Interim Director of the Sandler School of Social Work; Dr. Morgan Cooley, Assistant Professor; Dr. Dani Groton, Assistant Professor and Research Poster Winner; and Dr. Heather Howard, Assistant Professor*

## DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS WEEK

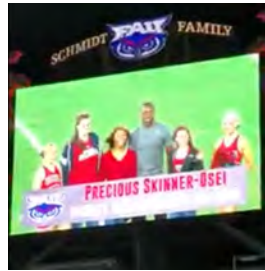
October 3, 2019 - As part of Dating Violence Awareness Week, more than 20 students attended a film showing hosted by members of Phi Alpha, the Social Work Honor Society. The film, "Telling Amy's Story", prompted insightful discussions about dating and domestic violence and even encouraged several audience members to share personal past experiences. A special hats off to Deanna Bryant, Phi Alpha President, and Sabrina Castellanos, former FAU Victim Advocate, for partnering to promote this meaningful event!





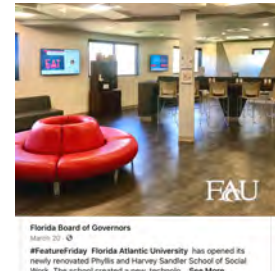
### **NASW WEBINAR PRESENTER**

This past October, Dr. Allan Barsky, Professor, presented a webinar for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), titled "Ethics in Private Practice: Pitfalls and Possibilities."



### **'COACH' O HONORED AT FOOTBALL GAME**

Dr. Precious Skinner-Osei, Instructor, was nominated by MSW Advanced Standing student Dante Cousart to be the "Faculty Guest Coach" at the November 9, 2019 FAU football game. Dr. O was recognized mid-field and given special sideline access during the game. [Play Video](#)



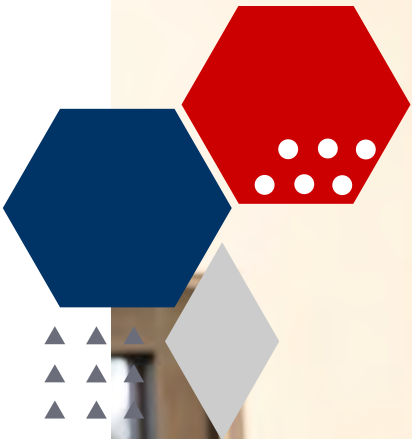
### **BOG SOCIAL MEDIA SHOUT OUT**

The FL Board of Governors featured our school in their #FeatureFriday social post, touting our new renovations and the new Robin Rubin Center for Happiness & Life Enhancement. [See Facebook Post](#)



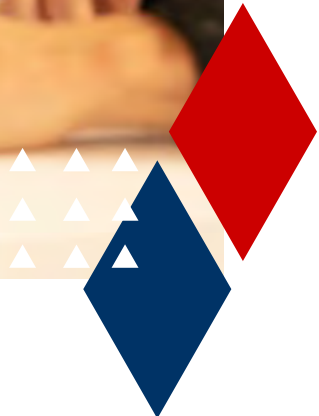
### **LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION AND ACTION DAY (LEAD) 2020**

Nearly 60 BSW and MSW students – along with faculty sponsors Dr. LeaAnne DeRigne, Associate Professor, and Dr. Dani Groton, Assistant Professor – visited Tallahassee for Legislative Education and Advocacy Day 2020 (LEAD Day). The annual road trip gives students the opportunity to stand up and speak out on important issues facing our profession in today's legislative arena. Upon their arrival, they toured The Kearney Center, a 24-hour emergency homeless service center where Dr. Groton previously worked, and also attended the NASW's LEAD training at Florida State University. Students also participated in a rally on the steps of the Capitol.



STUDENT & ALUMNI

SPOTLIGHTS





**"At this very moment, there are individuals only **you** can reach, and differences only **you** can make in their lives."**

- Mike Dooley

---

- MSW student **Cynthia Wilks** was awarded a CSWE Master's Minority Fellowship! Cindy hopes to become a therapist who uses decolonizing narrative therapy to affirm the dignity of Latinx people, promote healing from contemporary and historical trauma, and enhance their wellbeing in and self-fulfillment.
- DSW alumna **Dr. Kristie Slinksey** and Dr. Morgan Cooley cowrote the article "Adverse childhood experiences among foster parents: Prevalence and association with resilience, coping, satisfaction as a foster parent, and intent to continue fostering" which has been accepted for publication in Elsevier's Children and Youth Services Review journal.
- DSW candidate **Rebecca Marcus Wheeler** and **Bridget Schneiderman Tuttle**, under the faculty guidance of Dr. Morgan Cooley, for their first research presentation at the 2020 Society for Social Work and Research annual conference. Their poster was titled: "A Mixed Methods Study of Vicarious Trauma Among Mental Health Professionals".
- BSW student **AJ Ortiz** and MSW student **Leneesha Nash** spoke at the 2020 Diversity Symposium for faculty and staff about the experiences at FAU and within our school in regards to diversity and inclusion.
- MSW Coordinator **Dr. Joy McClellan** and four of her fellow DSW classmates - **Drs. Karen Baldwin, Brandy Hughey, Kristie Slinsky** and **Brittany Stahnke** successfully defended their capstones projects this year.
- MSW student **Craig Robinson** had his Letter to the Editor published in the *Palm Beach Post*.



- MSW student **Susana Coxaj** was named NASW-FL Student of the Year for the Treasure Coast Chapter.
- MSW student **Evan Kotler** had his article "Recovery options during these difficult times" published on the Palm Beach State College Counseling Center webpage.
- BSW alumnus and current Master of Social Work student, **Sevonte Miller**, recently published his first book, *Metamorphosis: Overcoming Adversity and Unleashing the Best Version of You*. Space Coast Daily recently interviewed Sevonte about his book during a broadcast on **Facebook Live**.
- BSW student **Neal Sinha** wrote a letter to the editor in the Social Work Today publication about specific non-smoking policies in treatment centers.
- MSW student **Connie Pavlik-Zamora** was awarded the Social Work Intern of the Year Award for 2020 by Broward County School Social Work Association.
- MSW alumna **Haidee Cano** traveled to Boston in Fall 2019 for a prestigious Social Work fellowship with Boston Children's Hospital. She was awarded the "Leadership Education in Adolescent Health" Fellowship.
- MSW alumnus **Dre Johnson** and Dr. Allan Barsky co-published "Preventing gun violence in schools: Roles and perspectives of social workers" in the *School Social Work Journal*.

## LET'S CONNECT

[Join our Students of Social Work Group](#)  
[Join our Alumni Society Facebook Group](#)  
[Make a Donation of Support](#)





# FROM FOSTER CARE TO FUTURE SOCIAL WORKER

**BSW alumna and MSW student Stephanie Guerra shares her story**

## **Can you share with us about your experience in foster care?**

It was terrifying at first because I had no idea where I was going to end up. I was happy to be removed from my abusive childhood home, but I did not know if I was going to end up in a safe place or in an even worse situation. It was hard to stay positive because most of what people hear about the foster care system is dreadful.

I lived at SOS Children's Village in Coconut Creek from ages 15-18. I stayed in an all-girl 5-bedroom home. I experienced living with various house parents and roommates. It was difficult to form attachments because of how often people came in and out of my life. I also worked with a lot of different social workers. Some business factors were added to my life which included paperwork, court appearances, and home visits. I had to come to terms with the fact that I was a case. The living situation was not ideal; however, SOS Children's Village and the social workers at ChildNet made me feel safe and loved. I never experienced either of those two things in my childhood home.



Overall, I had a good experience and I am grateful for it. I learned how to be very self-sufficient and adaptable.

SOS Children's Village works hard to ensure that all the children who live there are comfortable. They arranged transportation for me to stay at my high school all the way in Sunrise and worked it out so that I could continue all the sports and activities I was involved in before being placed with them.

The Village strives to provide a sense of normalcy for their children. It is easy to feel alone and neglected when being part of "the system", but SOS Children's Village does their best to make you feel like you are part of a family. The Village always planned activities for us to partake in, especially around the holidays. They even put together a mentoring program for the younger kids which I got to be a part.

## **What was it like entering foster care as a teenager?**

The transition was definitely not easy. I feel like part of your high school years are for finding yourself and thinking about your future. I had so much going on at once that I felt like my head was going to explode. It was a huge adjustment and at the beginning I was doubtful about everything because up until then I was so used to living in a very toxic environment where I was deemed unworthy.

I am thankful for the workers at SOS Children's Village, ChildNet, and Piper High School because they were understanding of my situation and worked





with me to help create balance. My friends, teammates, and coaches were also very supportive. I have always been a good student, but I never thought college was going to be an option for me because of how controlling my father was. Once I was separated from him and put into the foster care system, I was introduced to so many great opportunities. For the first time in my life, I saw the possibility of a bright future.

**You mentioned that ChildNet played an important role in your transition to independent living. Can you talk us through that?**

Upon transitioning, ChildNet assigned me to an Independent Living Specialist, Maleah Bourda. Maleah helps to ensure that I am doing well in school, living comfortably, and always brings new opportunities to my attention. She is compassionate about her work and provides me with a safe space to talk about how I am doing and what I am feeling. She motivates me to stay focused and makes me feel like I can accomplish anything.

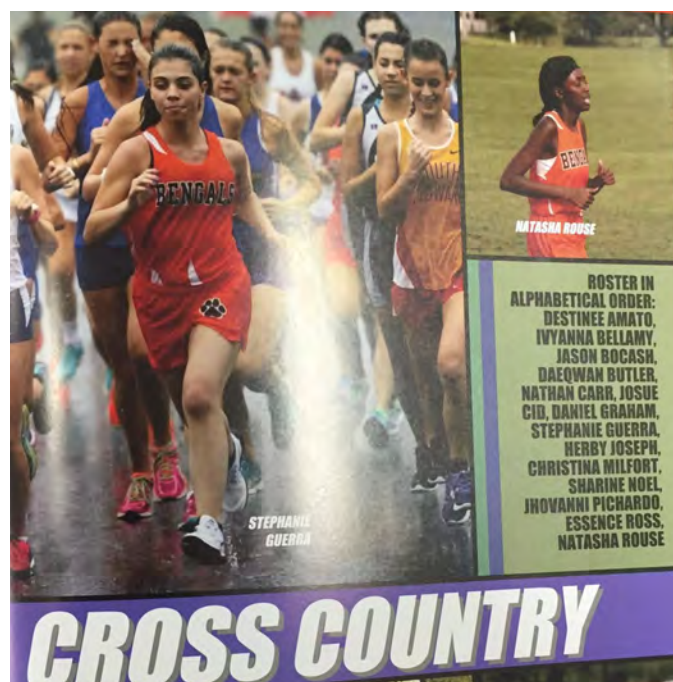
LaShonda Cross at SOS Children's Village also play a huge role in my life. She has known me since I first entered the foster care system and continues to support me as I continue my journey through adulthood. She understands the hardships I face not having a family of my own and has always treated me like I am a part of hers. LaShonda knows how to bring out the best in me. She provides me with resources and keeps me connected to the Village letting me know that I'll always have a place to call home. I consider her to be one of the most dependable people in my life.

**What role did team sports play in your personal growth process?**

Team sports gave me an outlet, taught me life skills, and provided me with a sense of community. I had a safe space to express myself and made amazing friends who are still a part of my life now.

**Where are you currently in your academic journey, and what's your next step?**

I received my BSW in May and shortly afterwards was accepted into FAU's Advanced Standing MSW program. I am doing the program full time and will graduate next May. I am currently finishing up my first semester and I am proud to be ending it with straight A's. I have two more semesters to go and I will be starting an internship with the School Board of Broward County in September.





### **After you receive your MSW degree, what are your plans?**

I plan to work in child welfare. I want the opportunity to give back to children who are or may be at risk of being removed from their homes. I have been considering either becoming a child protective investigator or working with the school board. Both of those organizations played a huge role in getting me to where I am today. If it weren't for the collaboration of the school board and DCF, I would not have been saved.

### **What are common misconceptions about the foster care system?**

That the children do not get a proper education; that at the age of 18, children lose access to all support and resources; that they are left to fend for themselves; that they end up being trafficked, pregnant, or on drugs; and that all foster parents are only in it for the money.

While there are some instances of these situations taking place, it is unfair to use them to define the foster care system in its entirety. There are foster parents, social workers, and volunteers who are actively working to ensure that children in the foster care system are properly cared for. I am one success story and I know that there are many others out there.

### **What is your advice to children currently in foster care?**

Your past does not define you! Use it as motivation to do better for yourself. Also, when times get tough try to remember that you are not alone. There are resources out there and social workers who are devoted to making life easier for you.

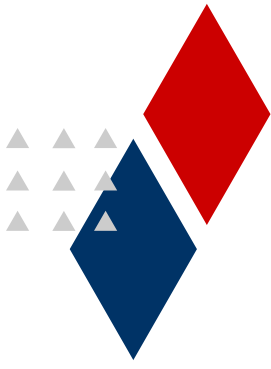
### **What's the best thing about your experience at FAU thus far?**

My favorite professor at FAU is Seth Densen. He is a phenomenal social work professor and continues to be an inspiring mentor in my life. Professor Densen is passionate about teaching and is a great advocate for his students. His class prepared me for real life situations out in the field and I am immensely grateful for his support. The knowledge he gained from working for DCF made it easy for me to open up to him about my experience with the foster care system. He inspired me to pursue my master's degree and helped me realize that I am fit for a career in child welfare. ##



ALUMNI UPDATES +

WHEREABOUTS



# SSW Alumni: Where are They Now?



JOIN OUR  
FACEBOOK GROUP:  
**FAU SSW Alumni Society**

See you there!

## 1990s

**Natalie Lendak, LCSW** (BSW '99, MSW '08) has been in private practice since 2010.

## 2000s

**Jaye Anderson, LCSW** (BSW '04, MSW '06) is in private practice in West Palm Beach, FL.

**Krystal (Kane) Boulton** (BSW '06, MSW '07) has a telehealth private practice (KrystalBoulton.com) but recently had her second son and has mostly stepped away from her practice to focus on parenting.

**Sara Dochterman, LCSW** (MSW '07) is the Assistant Director of Operations and Finance of the FAU Sandler School of Social Work and has a private practice in Boca Raton.

**Shemair Dorelus, LCSW** (BSW '04, MSW '06) spent 10 years working in community mental health before joining the St. Lucie County School District as a school social worker in 2016.

**Belcida Encinosa, LCSW** (BSW '05, MSW '08) is the Director of Community Health Initiatives with *Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies* where she works to improve birth outcomes for babies born in Palm Beach County. She has worked to develop and implement new programs and initiatives to address maternal health needs, and also supervises interns.

Marie Garcia (Mariposa Duque) (BSW '09) has been a client advocate at the Lord's Place since 2009

and a Volunteer Online Mentor with *Focus on The Family* since 2018. She is also an ESL Teacher with Qkids P/T and received her MSW from FSU in 2019.

**Roxanne Grobbel, JD, LCSW** (MSW '04) is a national trainer for Basic Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and the advanced EMDR and Children course. She is also working with **Rachael Starr** (MSW '13) at 11th Hour Trauma Retreat in Denver, providing 5-11 day, one-on-one intensives for complex trauma.

**Taryn M. Jaramillo** (MSW '09, DSW '19) works at the Department of Veteran Affairs-Miami VAMC Healthcare System.

**Shlomit (Shelley) Karasik, LCSW** (MSW '06) has been working for non-profit agencies for many years in both direct clinical social work and supervisory positions. Most recently, she joined a private group practice in West Boynton Beach called Reflections Creative Therapies, where she enjoys working with children and families. She also assists with facilitating adult social groups at FAU CARD.

**Liorah Alter Karni** (MSW '07) lives in Israel and was promoted to Director of the "Warm Homes" program for at-risk teenage girls in Central Israel. She is finishing her second masters in nonprofit management in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

**Jennifer Nelson, LCSW** (MSW '07) is in private practice in Highland Village, Texas, specializing in grief and loss, trauma and addiction. She lives with her two children and a cat. They love to spend time in nature, riding bikes, hiking, walking and being outside. Jennifer enjoys continuing to learn and grow in life and with knowledge in this ever-changing and growing field.

**Erin Madden** (MSW '06) LCSW is the Clinical Director Wavelengths Recovery, Luxury Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Huntington Beach, California and is an EMDR/Trauma Specialist.

Sharon Mahoney, LCSW (BSW '04 and MSW '06) is employed by the VA Medical Center in West Palm Beach, FL and recently became a qualified supervisor.

**Sharon Mahoney, LCSW** (BSW '04 and MSW '06) is employed by the VA Medical Center in West Palm Beach, FL and recently became a qualified supervisor.

**Kate (Williams) McCormic, LCSW, MCAP** (BSW '03 and MSW '05) is employed by FAU as an instructor in the field department within the Sandler School of Social Work.

**Alison Palombi, LCSW** (MSW '07) started a private practice in 2011, Turning Point Counseling Services, Inc. in Stuart, FL working with adults and adolescents. In addition, she is a mother of three.

**Ryan Potter, LCSW, MCAP** (BSW '09) is the Clinical Director for Voyage Recovery Center in Jupiter, FL. Ryan is a qualified LCSW supervisor and field instructor, and serves on the Board of Professional Development for Sandler School of Social Work.

**Stefanie Raifman** (MSW '07) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and works as a school behavioral health professional with the School District of Palm Beach County.

**Cindy Sterne** (BSW '03, MSW '04) is the Administrator of Outpatient Services at BARC, an Adjunct Instructor with FAU, teaches and supervises group work with the Florida Institute for Group Facilitation, provides supervision and consultation and has a small private practice.

**Odetta Ware, LCSW** (MSW '07) is a senior social worker with the VA in the HUD/VASH program out of West Palm Beach, FL. In addition to being a Master Trainer in PMDB (prevention and management of disruptive behavior) and a qualified supervisor, she is a boxer, an OCR racer and raising a family.

**Diana Wilches** (MSW '07) has moved to Houston, Texas.

**Mary Wright, LCSW, BCBA** (BSW '06 and MSW '07) is retired after spending several years working with at-risk youth and then going on to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst with a focus on early intervention. She is currently living in Palm City, FL with her husband.

## 2010s

**Betty Acierno, LCSW** (MSW '12) retired after spending several years as a grief counselor with Treasure Coast Hospice and is now working part-time as a therapist through Betterhelp.

**Sonia Alvarez** (MSW '18) is a Neighborhood Support Specialist with the Broward Sheriff's Office.

**Danielle Barone** (MSW '19) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is in the process of starting a private practice (Waves Therapy) in Boca specializing in trauma and PTSD with adults and adolescents.

**Erin Bell, LCSW** (MSW '17) works full time for Trustbridge Hospice and has a part-time private practice.

**Kelly Bizarro** (BSW '14, MSW '15) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and currently a PHP Lead Therapist at Discovery Counseling & Wellness Center.

**John Blasi, LCSW** (MSW '15) is a Clinical Social Worker with The Department of Veteran Affairs.

**Deb Brooks** (MSW '14) is an Associate Director of Finance and Human Resource Information Systems at FAU and a volunteer therapist at Family Promise of South Palm Beach County, as well as the Farmworker Coordinating Council.

**Carly Brown, LCSW** (MSW '14) is in private practice Rise and Thrive Therapy, proudly serving children, families and adults through equine-assisted psychotherapy, traditional and Rapid Resolution Therapy in Palm Beach County: RiseAndThriveTherapy@gmail.com

**Rayssa Buldain** (MSW '18) works at the West Palm Beach VA medical center where she previously completed her MSW internship in the hospital's psychiatric inpatient unit.

**Tabitha Bush, LCSW** (MSW '18) is a primary therapist with Lighthouse Recovery Institute.

**Haidee Cano Suarez** (MSW '19) is a social work Fellow at Boston Children's Hospital in adolescent mental health through the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health Program (LEAH).

**Mariana Caro, LCSW** (BSW '16, MSW '17) is the Manager of Clinical Services at 4KIDS. She works with children and families involved in the foster care system, manages their training and intensive programs, and supervises staff. She is also EMDR Certified and an EMDR Consultant-in-Training (CIT).

**Laura Carson, LCSW** (MSW '17) is in private practice in Morganton, North Carolina and is a rostered provider of TF-CBT with the NC Child Treatment program. She and her husband are looking forward to welcoming their baby social worker in August.

**Danielle (Ciago) Collins** (MSW '17) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and works as a Child Protection Investigator with the Broward Sheriff's Office.

**Megan (Hamerdinger) Casabe, LCSW** (BSW '12, MSW '14) is the Asst. Director of Outpatient Services at St. Mary's Medical Center and Palm Beach Children's Hospital, Clinical Social Worker for Palm Beach Children's Hospital, West Palm Beach and opened a private practice in Boynton called Buena Vida Wellness.

**Nichole (Chromiak) Cruz-Torres** (MSW '15) is a primary therapist at Retreat Behavioral Health and is a certified clinical trauma professional and in cognitive processing therapy.

**Candice Davids** (BSW '18, MSW '19) works at Broward House in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

**Marcus D. Davis** (BSW '15, MSW '18) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is a School Behavioral Health Professional (SBHP) for Palm Beach Gardens Elementary School. He works with the students and faculty on social-emotional learning and positive behavior change both individually, in small groups, and school-wide. His focus is his practice with the students and staff on mindfulness-based approaches, teaching the relationship between neuroscience and thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, teaching calming & relaxation exercises and techniques.

**Heather Deecken, LCSW** (MSW '17) is in private practice (Awakening Hope).

**Brian DeNoto** (MSW '19) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is working as a Primary Therapist with Banyan Treatment Center.

**Kelly Dowd** (MSW '17) is a full-time therapist at Community Partners in their Safe Schools division. She has completed courses to become Red Line Certified (easier access to therapists for firefighters and other first responders) and TF-CBT (pending exam!) and will begin transitioning into a part-time private practice in the Fall once she has obtained licensure.

**Nicole Farshchian, LCSW** (MSW '17) is in private practice but is working on transferring her license to CA where she will be working as a Palliative Care Case Manager.

**Megan Garvey, LCSW** (MSW '13) moved to Orlando and is working remotely. She was admitted to the Ph.D. program at UCF but is delaying entry until next year due to Covid-19.

**Cheryl S. Hallett** (MSW '17) is a Primary Therapist with Inspire Recovery (LGBTQ Substance Use) in West Palm Beach, FL.

**Angela Hosey** (MSW '19) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is working at a boutique residential mental health facility as the lead and primary mental health therapist.

**Arlene Jiminez** (BSW '18) finished her MSW at Fordham in '19, is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is currently working with the Drug Abuse Treatment Association in their school-based mental health program.

**Beatrice Johnson Thomas, LCSW** (MSW '16) is a Qualified Supervisor and is working for Cleveland Clinic as a Transplant Social Worker, mainly for heart transplants, as well as kidney and liver transplants.

**Sumer Luna, LCSW** (MSW '14) is a mental health social worker at the VA, providing individual, family, couples and group psychotherapy in one of the community-based

outpatient clinics. She has received specialized training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. She is also a Certified Yoga Instructor.

**Ariel Mantzoor** (MSW '19) is working as the Community Outreach Coordinator and Therapist at Ruth and Norman Rales Jewish Family Services in Boca Raton, FL.

**Sara Matsuzaka, Ph.D., LCSW** (MSW '14) graduated in May 2020 from Fordham University with a Doctor of Philosophy. Her dissertation involving secondary data analysis was entitled, "The Role of Sexual Identity: Associations Between Minority Stress with Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health."

**Nancy McConnell** (MSW '18) is co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Rebel Recovery FL.

**Tara McDonnell, LCSW, RPT** (MSW '16) is the co-founder and a Child & Family Therapist at the Center for Mindful Families in West Palm Beach ([www.CenterforMindfulFamilies.com](http://www.CenterforMindfulFamilies.com)).

**Shannon McMullen** (MSW '17) lives in NJ and is finishing the requirements for her LCSW. She works as a social worker/therapist at CFG Residentials, a residential center for kids and teens struggling with emotional and behavioral challenges. This is the highest level of out-of-home care for kids in New Jersey.

**Erica Mitchell** (BSW '17) received her MSW from FIU in 2019 and works at Memorial Regional Hospital as a medical social worker.

**Sarah Morris** (BSW '16, MSW '19) is one of two medical social workers for a hospice center in Roanoke, VA.

**Ananda Nelson** (MSW '19) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and works in private practice in Deerfield Beach, FL.

**Ana Newman, LCSW** (MSW '15) is in private practice (Alabaster Center) and provides individual therapy for adults (18+) with depression, anxiety, relationship issues and/or habits and addictions. Specialties include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Mindfulness and Christian Counseling. Her office is located in Sunrise, Florida.

**Samantha Ordovery** (MSW '17) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and has been working at Chrysalis Health for more than six years, during which she has served in various roles such as a learning, development and branding ambassador as well as an outpatient therapist.

**Lauren Patterson** (BSW '11, MSW '12) is the Social Services Coordinator at Broward Health Imperial Point in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

**Jennifer Perigny** (BSW '10 & MSW '13) is a Social Worker for Visiting Angels Home Care in Anchorage, AK.

**Jeffrey Philippe** (MSW '13) is a Clinical Liaison with Kindred Healthcare.

**John Puls, LCSW, MCAP** (BSW '16, MSW '17) is a primary therapist at Immersion Recovery Center and the Director of Case Management for Guardian Recovery Network. He also has a small private practice and is an adjunct professor at the Sandler School of Social Work.

**Brianna Rae** (MSW '14) is a Regional Certification Trainer with the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program. She is onboarding and training new staff from Indian River County all the way down to the Florida Keys. She also teaches the certification curriculum for the Child Advocate Managers who will be certified through the Florida Certification Board.

**Heather Sandala, LCSW** (DSW '19) is the Director of Intake at Community Partners of South Florida and an adjunct instructor with both FAU and PBSC.

**Jamie Salsberg, LCSW, CAP** (MSW '13) has spent seven years with Transformations Treatment Center in Delray Beach, FL and currently serves as Clinical Director. In addition, she is the mother of two.

**Carlos O. San Inocencio LCSW, MCAP, QS** (MSW '14) is currently working at Origins Behavioral Health - Hanley Center and has started his private practice at Reflections Creative Therapies.

**Abbey Stagliano, LCSW** (MSW '16) is a Licensed Clinical Program Supervisor with the Children's Home Society in Daytona Beach, FL.

**Lillian Sheldon-Reece, LCSW** (MSW '11) is currently working part time, with the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue and home health care. This varied schedule allows her to spend time at home with her family.

**Stephanie (Goldstein) Siegel** (BSW '15 and MSW '16) is seeking licensure in Georgia and working at Northside Hospital in Atlanta providing resources, coping skills and referrals to inpatient psychiatric hospitals.

**Katie Stafford, LCSW** (BSW '16, MSW '17) is a Behavioral Health Professional for The Palm Beach County School District and a per diem Social Worker at Jupiter Medical Center.

**Tori Stetzer** (BSW '16 and MSW '18) is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and working as a crisis clinician at Henderson Behavioral Health.

**Jodi Taylor** (MSW '18) is a police officer for Palm Beach Gardens, a role in which she also serves as a hostage negotiator.

**Kirk Tracey** (MSW '17) will retire from federal service in August 2020. He works at the VA in West Palm Beach and

says he plans to continue to advocate for Veterans in 2021 and beyond.

Daniela Tullio, LCSW (MSW '14) is in private practice in West Palm Beach with a group practice called Therapy Partners of the Palm Beaches.

**Chrystal Yau, LCSW** (MSW '15) is working at Broward Healthy Start focusing on maternal health.

**Kim (Acheson) Zinser, LCSW** (MSW '17) is working as a medical social worker with Broward Health.

## 2020s

**Evan Kotler** (MSW '20), is a Registered Clinical Social Work Intern and is currently a private contractor- educator and therapist: Specializing in the art of psychoeducational group facilitation in Boca Raton, FL.



### JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP: **FAU SSW Alumni Society**

Get the latest news, announcements, job opportunities, upcoming prodev courses, and more - right to your feed!



The Phyllis & Harvey Sandler School of Social Work is committed to maximizing human potential, alleviating human suffering, enhancing the vitality and caring capacity of communities, and promoting the ideals of a humane and just society. Social workers combat many of America's great challenges, such as mental health, addictions, child welfare, veterans' concerns and human distress. The country's 650,000 social workers are the mainstay of preventive, crisis intervention and psychotherapeutic services in public and private organizations.

Since 1970, the Sandler School of Social Work has been a part of Florida Atlantic University. The school is proud to be home to an ethnically and culturally diverse student population, offering small class sizes, building strong student and faculty relationships and providing numerous community-based research and clinical field internship opportunities to our students. Our school has a nearly **98% job-placement rate** within three months of graduation.

Your support helps us develop world-class practitioners dedicated to serving those individuals, couples, families and groups who are most vulnerable in our communities.

SANDLER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
**POINTS OF PRIDE**

More Than

**250**

Social Work Students  
Intern Every Semester

2018-19

In over

**200**

Agencies in the  
Tri-County Region

Interns Pursuing their Bachelor's and Master's  
of Social Work Degrees Contributed

**181,000**

Hours of Service to the Community During the  
2018-19 School Year, Estimated Value of

**\$7,650,000**

Based on a rate of \$35-\$45 per hour  
2018-19

With More Than

**600**

Declared  
Social Work Majors,  
FAU's Bachelor of  
Social Work (BSW)  
Program is the  
Largest in Florida

2018-19

The School Received a

**\$7M**

Transformational Gift  
from the  
Sandler Family to  
Name the  
Phyllis & Harvey Sandler  
School of Social Work

**DEGREE PROGRAMS**

**Bachelor of Social Work**

- Educates competent and compassionate social workers for entry-level practice
- Offers optional certificate programs in child welfare and healthy aging

**Master of Social Work**

- Prepares graduates for advanced clinical social work practice with children, adolescents, adults, elders, couples, families, and groups
- Offers optional certificate programs in child welfare, healthy aging, and addiction

**Doctor of Social Work**

- Trains clinical scholars equipped to assume positions of leadership in myriad roles and settings, such as clinical practice, academia, and administration
- Launched as Florida's first Doctor of Social Work program





## PHYLLIS AND HARVEY SANDLER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FUNDING PRIORITIES

Investing in FAU's people and purpose positions the School of Social Work to maximize its impact on our community — our paradise.

### NAMED SPACES

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Auditorium .....                                | \$500,000 |
| Student Lounge .....                            | \$350,000 |
| Administration Suite .....                      | \$200,000 |
| Multipurpose & Video Conference Classroom ..... | \$100,000 |
| Classroom (5) .....                             | \$50,000  |
| Conference Room .....                           | \$30,000  |
| Office (31).....                                | \$25,000  |

### FACULTY & STUDENT SUPPORT

|                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Chair (Director).....           | \$250,000                      |
| Professorships .....            | \$150,000/each                 |
| Addiction                       | Mental Health/Health Promotion |
| Children & Families             | Military & Veteran Affairs     |
| Gerontology/Healthy Aging       | Trauma                         |
| Homelessness                    |                                |
| Doctoral Fellowship (2) .....   | \$50,000                       |
| Master's Fellowship (3) .....   | \$25,000                       |
| Undergraduate Scholarship ..... | \$25,000                       |
| Certificate Programs .....      | \$100,000/each                 |
| Addiction                       |                                |
| Child Welfare                   |                                |
| Healthy Aging                   |                                |



*“My passion in life is to help individuals become the best versions of themselves despite what may have happened to them in their lives. I strongly believe that anyone can come out of any lifelong issue that has held them down if they have the resources. Social work empowers students like me to equip others with the tools they need to thrive.”*

— Bell Monika Cirius  
MSW Student

*“My intent is to prepare my students to become agents of social change, by teaching them sound, ethical decision-making skills and instilling in them an unwavering passion for learning and justice.”*



— Marianna Colvin, Ph.D.  
Asst. Professor and Director of the Child Welfare Institute,  
2018 NASW-FL Social Work Educator of the Year

**To explore these and other opportunities, including endowments and planned giving, please contact:**

Alyson Warner, Dir. of Development  
(954) 762-5349 | warnera@fau.edu

**FAU**  
PHYLLIS AND HARVEY SANDLER  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
College of Social Work and Criminal Justice  
Florida Atlantic University



HELP BRING OUR **FUTURE INTO FOCUS**

[sw-cj.fau.edu/ssw/giving](https://sw-cj.fau.edu/ssw/giving)



**Phyllis & Harvey Sandler School of Social Work**

FAU College of Social Work & Criminal Justice

777 Glades Road, SO 308, Boca Raton, FL 33431

(561) 297-3234 | [fau.edu/ssw](https://fau.edu/ssw)