

Need of More Social Work Students to Work in Aging Fields

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Abstract : Social work programs are grappling with changing students' attitudes about working with older adults. Our study aimed to understand whether adding a guest speaker working in the field into weekly content would influence students' attitudes about working with older adults. We conducted an exploratory study using a cross-sectional design with a pre and post-test to answer our question. Eighteen MSW students were enrolled in the 'Social Work with Older Adults' course, and 17 students completed the pre-posttests. Willingness to work with older adults was measured using the 'Willingness to Work with Elderly People Scale (WEPS)'. Guest speakers were recruited from local area agencies on aging. A significant finding was a statistically significant ($t = -3.31, p < .01$) increase from pre- ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.54$) to post-test ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.22$) scores for the item, 'My professors advise me to consider aged care career.' In addition, there were statistically significant pre to post-test differences for all items of 'Perceived Behavioral Control' and 'Intention toward working with older adults' reflecting competence, training, skills, and capabilities to work with older adults, suggesting guest speakers may play a crucial role as influential sources to positively shape students' attitudes and intentions toward working with older adults.

Keywords : guest speakers, workforce, aging, students

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