

From time to time, we take the opportunity to highlight the work of SBW clients, partners and associates. This month we are proud to present an innovative program developed by one of our first clients Carol Kamine-Brown, LCSW, Executive Manager of COHME (Concerned Home Managers for the Elderly). We also include excerpts from two reviews published in *The Gerontologist* 48(6) - one of a book co-authored by Ann Burack-Weiss (SBW Partner) and Frances Coyle Brennan (SBW Associate) and one of a book edited by Patricia J. Kolb (SBW Associate).

AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM

COHME, a small, not-for-profit home health care agency in existence since 1984, recognizes that improving the lives of home health care aides is both a human and business imperative. Recruitment, retention, and the quality of care provided by these vital service providers requires that their own needs be met. Home health aides are, for the most part, low income, minority, and immigrant women struggling to meet survival needs of themselves and their families. Because most of these women are proud of their abilities to cope and would not seek help on their own from the social service delivery system, COHME - with funds from SOFA (the State Office for the Aging) and private contributions - created the part-time position of Social Work Career Specialist. The position is filled by an individual who started out as a home health aide, surmounted many obstacles, worked her way up the career ladder, and now aspires to be a role model for others.

The Social Work Career Specialist offers a variety of on-site services to the aides including: information, referral, and support in applying for benefits such as subsidized housing and food stamps; information, referral, and encouragement in continuing education and career development, particularly in the health care field; counseling, support, and linkage in obtaining social and/or legal services in domestic violence situations. A newsletter for the aides - highlighting their accomplishments and offering tips for better managing work and family responsibilities - rounds out the program. Future plans include development of a peer mentorship program in which experienced aides offer support and guidance to new hires.

Home Health Aides continue to need help with the costs of transportation (especially in the first few months of employment) and cell phones (to have ongoing communication with the office regarding assignment changes and emergencies.) Funding for these modest needs would go a long way toward improving the lives of both the aides and the elders they serve.

BOOK REVIEWS

In their review of *Gerontological Supervision: A Social Work Perspective in Case Management and Health Care* by Ann Burack-Weiss and Frances Coyle Brennan, *The Gerontologist* noted that "Social workers have long been actively involved in gerontological practice but have not had a 'how to' guide for supervisors." The book was identified as a "practical resource", one that "demonstrates in each chapter why this type of book is needed in the field."

Coincidentally, the same review discussed *Social Work Practice with Ethnically and Racially Diverse Nursing Home Residents and Their Families* edited by Patricia J. Kolb (SBW Associate). The review noted that Kolb and her colleagues "fill a gap in the literature on culturally competent practice", and that "Professionals in all stages of their careers will benefit from the rich content of the chapters on elders representing eight ethnic/racial groups."

We look forward to your comments and experiences.

SBW Partners is a fee-for-service firm devoted to advancing social work practice in aging. Services are provided by Dr. Barbara Silverstone and Dr. Ann Burack-Weiss, the firm's founding partners, and a group of associates. For more information, please visit www.sbwpartners.com or call 212.337.2555.