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# **Multicultural Mental Health Training Program: A Comprehensive Training Program for Ethnic Diverse Students**

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**“Focusing on the need of continued effort to bring more minority students into postgraduate standing and scholarship, implications of the present program are explored.”**

While higher education is not a single sufficient condition for improving mental health services to minorities, it is argued that given the historical and persistence disadvantage of race in US society, educational investment is mandatory for minorities. Minorities remain underrepresented in graduate and professional degree attainment, particularly in the fields of mental health and human services. Those minority students who have attained degrees in mental health have done so at a limited proportion of colleges and universities and fields.

Despite the efforts of existing programs to affect significantly the disproportionate representation of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native Americans in the field of mental health services and research, minority professionals are underrepresented at all levels. The percentage of minority students who choose mental health careers is disproportionately low compared with the number of students in the general who choose these careers. This may be due in part to the fact that minority students are not provided with educational skills training, role models, advanced academic training and financial incentives to enter behavioral sciences. Focusing on the need of continued effort to bring more minority students into postgraduate standing and scholarship, implications of the present program are explored both in general and with respect from a study of the programs impact on minority student education. Policy implications and recommendations are suggested for further development of minority mental health researchers.

The Multicultural Mental Health Training Program (MMHTP) recognizes the importance of increasing the number of minority mental health professionals who are dedicated to understanding and studying the behavioral health needs of our increasing ethnically diverse populations, communities and families.

The MMHTP is a program for ethnic minority students and professionals specializing in the delivery of culturally relevant mental health. It was established in 1989 by the Florida Legislature under the actions of Representative Douglas Jamerson. The MMHTP is housed at the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, a division of

the University of South Florida.

The goal of the MMHTP is to provide ethnically diverse students with training in mental health fields and promote their understanding of needed skills for careers in mental health. The project focuses on core curriculums pertinent to developing students' advancement in mental health careers: (1) career development, (2) computer skills, (3) research library skills, (4) behavioral research, (5) professional development, and (6) cultural diversity. The presentation will highlight the field sites with faculty members who provide practicum experiences and mentoring and competency-based curriculum modules used in training students in the educational seminars designed specifically to improve mental health related skills of minority students.

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Richard Briscoe** is an assistant professor in the Department of Child and Family Studies at the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI), University of South Florida. He conducts research, training and dissemination activities that address mental health issues involving children from the pre-kindergarten level through adolescence, and their families. He earned his bachelor's degree in Psychology from Florida A&M University, his master's degree and Ph.D. from Florida State University in School Community Psychology. Dr. Briscoe has experience as a psychologist and researcher in developing and implementing intervention programs for "at risk" youth and families. Dr. Briscoe also serves as the director of the FMHI's Multicultural Mental Health Training Program (MMHTP) which provides comprehensive learning experience for ethnic minority graduate and undergraduate students. He is also director of the Department's Multicultural Child and Family Development Project (MCFDP), a series of community-oriented services to meet the needs of ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Tampa. Dr. Briscoe is active on many community board and agencies, and is a recognized spokesperson for minority mental health concerns. He has also published articles and given national presentations in the areas of children's mental health services, parent involvement, multicultural mental health, juvenile justice and correctional education.

**Aaron Smith** is an associate professor of Social Work and chair of the graduate program in the School of Social Work at the University of South Florida in Tampa. He earned a B.A. in Psychology from Florida A&M University, a M.S.W. degree in social work from Howard University, a M.P.H. degree in public health from the University of California-Berkeley and a Ph.D. in medical sociology from the University of California San Francisco. He has courtesy adjunct appointments in the College of Public Health, the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Africana Studies and the Department of Criminology. Dr. Smith was an adjunct professor of social work at San Jose State University School of Social Work, San Jose, California for five years. His main scholarly writing and research interests are high risk mothers who are addicted to crack cocaine and the impact of this addiction process on their vulnerable children; the intergenerational care-giving tasks of grandmothers as "parents" to their crack cocaine addicted/exposed grandchildren; and the macro/micro aspects of intergenerational care-giving upon African-American families. Dr. Smith is also interested in chronic illnesses and their psycho-social manageability within the family context; the impact of poverty and ethnicity on health and illness behaviors. His current research is centered on mothers and

grandmothers who are HIV-positive and their decision-making processes as they relate to planning for their children's future. Dr. Smith has been on the Editorial Board of the Health and Social Work Journal; was on the clinical faculty at Stanford University Medical School for 20 years where he served in many capacities, including associate director of the Department of Clinical Social Work and Discharge Planning; and chief clinical research social worker in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and renal transplantation. Dr. Smith has served in numerous consultant positions with a variety of state and national organizations, including Westinghouse, Job Corps, Planned Parenthood-World Population, and the American Cancer Society.

**Lawanda Ford** is a program fellow with the Multicultural Mental Health Training Program. She is a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of South Florida in the department of Counselor Education. Her career goals include a future in counseling troubled youth. Ms. Ford hopes to work in both the public school and university settings. She believes guidance counseling is essential to the educational system and is an integral part of the academic and emotional growth of youth. Ms. Ford has extensive experience in counseling diverse groups. She has worked with substance abuse population, criminal offenders and juvenile delinquents. It is her goal to guide young adults academically and morally, helping .with their pursuit of higher education and encouraging them to be well-rounded individuals.

**Mesmin Germain** is a program coordinator for the Multicultural Mental Health Training Program. He is a second year master's student in the College of Public Health at the University of South Florida in the department of Health Policy and Management, focusing on international health. Mr. Germain was a 1996-97 MMHTP fellow and a 1996-98 McNair Scholar at the University of South Florida. Last summer, he was one of two students selected from the University of South Washington Center for Internships Program. As an MLFP Fellow, he had the opportunity to intern at the National Institute of Health in the Laboratory of Developmental Psychopathology. Mr. Germain's aspiration is to eventually earn a doctorate degree as an international health specialist. He would like to conduct research relevant to the Caribbean region and/or Africa.