DISTANCE EDUCATION


WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?
This article offers assessment data on the Pathway Program, a workforce development strategy which provides accredited social work education, beginning with advising and developing an academic plan and leading to BSW or MSW degree through distance learning modalities, to those who are unable to attend on-campus degree programs because of geography or family commitments.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?
Social work programs have had limited success in reaching remote regions and counties. Colleges and universities can no longer assume that long-prescribed campus norms represent equity and best practices for the majority of the potential social work workforce. Through Title IV-E funding, distance education has been offered as an opportunity to address needs of human service agencies to enhance staffing in remote areas.

Starting the program: Initial needs assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers To Education</th>
<th>Main Categories Of Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commute to college campus</td>
<td>Student readiness (assessment tools and preparedness resources)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of financial support</td>
<td>Student orientation (technological, course-related, and university expectations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job and family commitments</td>
<td>Student supports (help with technology, access to online communities, and mentoring programs)</td>
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Implementing the program: Building the infrastructure

Core Elements

| Community outreach | Student recruitment | Faculty advising | Course conversion to online |

Evaluating the program: Future development

Lessons Learned

- Record data on student, faculty, and community member experiences and complexity of tasks
- Communicate and coordinate with participating community colleges
- Coordinate Title IV-E student funding with campus bookstores and tuition fee payments
- Support transfers from community colleges and 4-year institutions
- Identify and refine program procedures and logistics
- Develop curriculum protocols for field placements
- Further faculty development and student mentorship

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?
Technology and web-based tools can make higher education more accessible and redefine a university as not just a physical, campus-based location, but a medium that can deliver education in different settings. While challenging, creating a collaborative, distributed learning environment can deliver the knowledge and skills necessary to improve agency practice and, by extension, the range of services available to support children and families in underserved regions.