



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



FOSTERING CONNECTIONS, CREATING IMPACT
2024 IMPACT REPORT



The 2024 Impact Report is published by the University of Maryland School of Social Work. Thank you to everyone who contributed, participated in interviews, and provided quotes.

Editor-In-Chief

Kelli Johnson, Director, Marketing and Strategic Communications

Contributors

Anita Bryant, Media and Public Relations Manager

Fulvio Cativo, Associate Dean, External Affairs and Development

Neijma Celestine-Donnor, Associate Dean, Access and Strategic Initiatives

Editing and Design Coordination

Joanne Morrison, Julie Bower, Jen Badie, and Lou Cortina, Office of Communications and Public Affairs, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Unity Week/Impact Report Committee

Khalil Bishop
Anita Bryant
Fulvio Cativo
Neijma Celestine-Donnor
Eugena Ferguson
Kelli Johnson
Nickole Scroggins

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DEAN'S WELCOME



Dear Social Work Community,

Thank you for taking the time to read our 2024 Impact Report anchored in the theme “Fostering Connections, Making Impact.” This theme reflects our steadfast commitment to building strategic partnerships and cultivating meaningful relationships that drive our mission: to develop practitioners, leaders, and scholars dedicated to advancing the well-being of populations and communities while championing social justice.

As social workers, we are catalysts for transformative change. Through groundbreaking research, policy advocacy, community building, and clinical care, we create tangible impacts on individuals and systems. This report highlights our significant strides, including efforts to make our Master of Social Work program more accessible, empower the next generation of changemakers through innovative academic and continuing education opportunities, and solidify our reputation as a statewide leader in child and family services.

Internally, the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) has experienced an exciting period of growth and transformation. In 2024, we welcomed four new Board of Advisors members, as well as new faculty and staff who bring fresh perspectives, expertise, and enthusiasm to our exceptional team. These additions have already energized our mission, and I am deeply grateful to our faculty and staff for their resilience, dedication, and flexibility throughout this transition.

This is a pivotal moment for social work, and UMSSW is proud to lead the charge. We recently celebrated the groundbreaking of our future energy-efficient building, slated to open in 2027. Our admissions have surged, with significant growth at the Universities at Shady Grove campus in Rockville, Md., reflecting the increasing demand for our programs. Meanwhile, our research efforts and unwavering commitment to core social work values continue to drive lasting change in Maryland and beyond.

Your support remains essential to our success. Together, we will continue shaping the lives of students, families, and communities, building a legacy of impact and innovation.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judy L. Postmus".

Judy L. Postmus, PhD, ACSW
Dean and Professor

MAKING OUR MSW PROGRAM MORE ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS



The University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) is committed to eliminating barriers and increasing access for students by offering opportunities to make paying for school more affordable, developing flexible programs and curriculums, and cultivating community and connections.

Increasing Access Through Financial Savings

In fall 2024, UMSSW became the first accredited school of social work in Maryland to offer in-state tuition to residents of Washington, D.C. This groundbreaking initiative applies to all three program locations: the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), the Universities at Shady Grove (USG), and the Online Campus. By reducing tuition rates for D.C. residents, UMSSW continues its commitment to addressing the rising costs of earning an advanced social work degree.

“As a school, our goal is to reduce the amount of debt our students carry while ensuring that they receive high-quality education,” said **Amanda Lehning, PhD, MSS**, senior associate dean for academic affairs and associate professor at UMSSW. “We recognize that our students often juggle work, family responsibilities, and financial obligations. By offering this tuition discount and expanding access to fellowships, we aim to alleviate their financial burdens so they can focus on their education and future impact.”

D.C. residents can combine tuition savings with fellowships and scholarships to maximize their financial support. Additionally, UMSSW provides a range of programs to address financial challenges and minimize school-related expenses, including a book-lending program, financial literacy workshops, and a student emergency fund through the Office of Student Services. We have several fellowship programs, stipends, and scholarships to offset some of the costs of students’ education. Over \$3.5 million is set aside to support our students.



To learn more about in-state tuition for D.C. residents and scholarships, stipends, and fellowships available to students, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/tuition--fees/msw-program.

Increasing Access Through Online Learning

UMSSW offers an online MSW program for students in the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia region. The program provides real-time interaction with professors and peers through synchronous courses. This flexibility increases access for nontraditional students, caregivers, and those in rural areas who cannot easily travel to the Baltimore or Shady Grove campuses.



Interview with Nakiya Schurman, MSW, MDE, Director, Online MSW Program

When did the School of Social Work start the Online MSW Program?

We launched this program as an additional campus location in 2023. Our Baltimore and Shady Grove campuses offered online classes that filled up quickly, indicating strong demand. We took our time to research and ensure that we provided the best online learning experience, focusing on synchronous classes to foster a greater sense of community.

What's unique about the Online MSW Program at UMSSW?

We carefully design our online classes to optimize learning. Most classes are synchronous, allowing students to practice clinical skills in real time. Unlike many other online MSW programs where students must find their own practicum placements, our Office of Practicum Education coordinates internship opportunities with agencies, enhancing access to future employers, mentors, and community partners.

What are some plans for the Online MSW Program?

Beginning in fall 2026, we will offer an online option for our 36-credit advanced standing program, which is currently only available at Baltimore and Shady Grove. Additionally, we aim to increase access to fellowship programs to help online students fund their degrees while gaining specialized training and experience.

To learn more about the Online MSW Program, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/admissions/msw-admissions/online-msw-program.

Increasing Access to Community and Connection



As part of UMB, UMSSW is designated as a First-Gen Forward Institution, an initiative of NASPA — Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. This designation recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students.

In fall 2024, approximately 30 percent of MSW program applicants identified as a first-generation student. First-generation college students are those whose parents or guardians did not earn a four-year degree. UMSSW addresses the unique needs of this growing student population through the First-Generation Student Success Program’s programming and community cultivation. The program was started in 2021 to create a

community among first-generation students and is run by the Office of Student Affairs.

“It’s an identity that I feel very proud of. To be the first in our families to get a college degree is worthy of recognition and encouragement from faculty and other students,” said **Michelle Reyazuddin**, an MSW student and First-Generation Lead Scholar 2024.

The First-Generation Student Success Program is one of many student groups at UMSSW that ensures that all students have opportunities to engage and thrive at the school. Programs and activities include community gathering circles, academic and career advising, writing workshops, celebrations, and acknowledgments.

To learn more about the First-Generation Student Success Program, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/current-students/student-affairs/first-generation-student-success-program-fgsp.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Scheduled and managed **208** MSW courses across academic terms:

98 courses (Fall 2023)

89 courses (Spring 2024)

21 courses (Summer 2024)

Hired and onboarded **13** new adjunct/PhD instructors

The MSW program successfully completed a review process by the Council on Social Work Education and was reaffirmed through October 2032.



2024 STUDENT PROFILE



UMSSW consists of a diverse mix of students from across the region. The school provides student engagement, networking opportunities, and a supportive community at two campus locations and through its online programs.

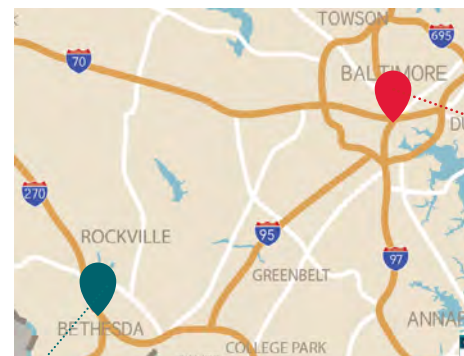
Overall enrollment increase **8.8%***



Diversity Gains*

- 33.3%** increase in Asian students
- 7.2%** increase in Black/African American students
- 6%** increase in students ages 45-64

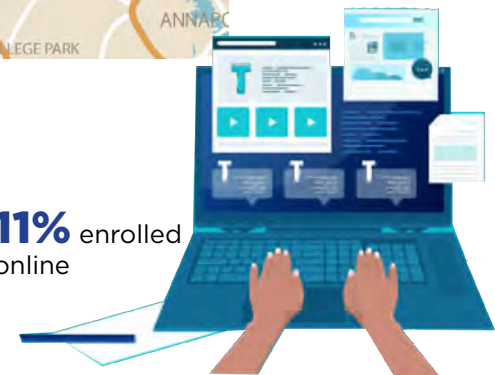
Student Breakdown by Campus Location



60% enrolled at Baltimore

29% enrolled at Universities at Shady Grove

11% enrolled online



*In comparison to 2023 data.

EQUIPPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHANGEMAKERS



UMSSW offers students and social work professionals interdisciplinary opportunities to learn, grow, and develop new skills to help improve the human condition and serve the public good of Maryland and beyond.

Social Work Around the Globe: International Program Options

UMSSW emphasizes global social work through research, teaching, practicum opportunities, and faculty engagement. Faculty like **Corey Shdaimah, PhD**, collaborate internationally to provide students with valuable cross-cultural perspectives.

“We can tell students about what we know from learning in other countries, but really without having firsthand experiences, it’s hard to truly understand what that looks like. It’s a show rather than tell opportunity. Bringing students to another place helps them learn about themselves more,” said Shdaimah, the Daniel Thursz Distinguished Professor of Social Justice at UMSSW.

UMSSW offers international practicum placements with Rajagiri University in India and Greenwich University in England, along with intensive courses in India and Israel. According to **Lynn Michalopoulos, PhD**, director of global initiatives, understanding diverse social work practices enriches learning.

“It’s important to understand the different ways of doing and knowing,” she said. “It’s not always necessary to adopt a Western viewpoint. Social work is structured differently and looks different in different contexts around the world. It’s important to create opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences.”

In summer 2025, UMSSW will pilot an interdisciplinary global experience in Zambia with the UMB schools of medicine, nursing, and pharmacy. This program will focus on sustainable development goals.

Looking ahead, UMSSW aims to increase equity in partnerships, particularly in Zambia, and plans to develop a global health certificate and Spanish immersion programs. Partnerships, like the one with Erfurt University in Germany, offer mentorship and scholarship opportunities for doctoral students.

To learn more about global initiatives at the School of Social Work, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/academics/global-opportunities-at-umb.

Global Courses and Practicum Opportunities

- **India Course:** 19 applications, 11 students accepted
- **Israel Course:** 7 students registered for the course; 6 MSW and 1 doctoral student. Course includes a 3-country partnership with the Fachhochschule Erfurt University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt, Germany
- **Zambia Course:** Developed new interprofessional education course with University of Zambia

International Practicum Placements

- **University of Greenwich:** 8 applicants, 7 selected, 6 accepted
- **Rajagiri University:** 1 applicant

International Partnership

- Established memorandums of understanding with **University of Zambia** and **Max Stern Yezreel Valley College**
- Initiated discussions with **Universities of Florence, West Indies,** and **Costa Rica**

Program Development

- Created strategic plan for global initiatives
- Formed global committee with cross-departmental leadership
- Enhanced web presence and program visibility

Office of Practicum Education

• Placement Impact

- Provided 3 orientations for 331 new MSW students
- Placed 595 MSW students (324 Advanced, 271 Foundation) across 288 agencies in Maryland, nearby states, and other countries
- Placed 25 online MSW students in foundation placements
- Students provided 339,560 service hours
- 31 agencies provided \$230,880 in student compensation

• Training and Development

- Recruited 32 new agencies for practicum placement
- Conducted 5 orientations for 141 new practicum instructors
- Delivered 9 professional development trainings (870 participants)

• Training Participation

- Supervising LGBTQIA+ Social Workers (123 participants)
- Therapeutic Alliance-Building (126 participants)
- Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice (113 participants)
- Family-Centered Interventions (84 participants)
- Effective Supervision Strategies for Skill Development (106 participants)

The UMSSW Office of Practicum Education thoughtfully connects students with practicum opportunities. Practicum is a critical part of the MSW experience. During practicum, students work directly with the communities in which they will serve as social workers. The Office of Practicum Education works closely with students to find placements based on academic and professional interests, providing opportunities to engage and connect with various populations and professionals.

For more information, visit sww.umaryland.edu/practicum.

Meeting the Growing Demand for School-Based Social Workers

Najuma Louison, an Advanced Standing MSW student at UMSSW, is driven by her personal experiences to become a school-based social worker after her graduation in spring 2025. Reflecting on her journey, Louison said, “UMSSW’s Center for Restorative Change has helped me tremendously.” As a School-Based Mental Health fellow, she benefits from a tuition scholarship, a monthly stipend, and comprehensive licensing preparation and training.

The UMSSW School-Based Mental Health Fellowship, a collaborative initiative between the school’s Center for Restorative Change, Coppin State University, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, aims to address the critical need for mental health providers in K-12 school settings. This fellowship offers tuition scholarships, stipends, licensing preparation, and training, creating new pathways and opportunities for immersive learning experiences and intensive support.

Since its inception a year ago, the fellowship has supported over 50 School-Based Mental Health fellows with almost \$400,000 in aid and plans to expand the program over the next four years. This initiative has provided significant financial aid to students and has notably increased licensing pass rates:

- Graduate-level licensing exam pass rate: 81.8%
- Percent of fellows hired by a high-need local educational agency (LEA): 90.9%
- Percent of partner LEA leaders who said the program improved their mental health service provider worker pipeline: 90%+
- Percent of partner LEA leaders who would recommend this program to other high-need LEAs: 90%+



To learn more about the School-Based Mental Health Fellowship, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/crc/fellowship-for-school-based-mental-health.

Professional Development Series Highlighting Emerging and Innovative Psychedelics Therapy

UMB has launched an innovative continuing interprofessional education (CIPE) series on psychedelic science and therapeutics, bringing together the expertise of UMSSW and the schools of nursing and pharmacy. This groundbreaking initiative, spearheaded by **Megan Meyer, PhD, MSW**, associate professor at UMSSW, aims to prepare health care professionals for the rapidly evolving field of psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) in mental health treatment.

Funded by a grant from UMB's Center for Interprofessional Education, this series addresses the growing need for education in psychedelic medicines and their therapeutic applications. As the field of psychedelic research experiences a renaissance, with promising results for treating conditions such as depression, PTSD, and addiction, it's crucial that health care providers are equipped with foundational knowledge in this area.

The interdisciplinary nature of this initiative reflects the complex and multifaceted approach required in psychedelic therapies. By bringing together social workers, nurses, and pharmacists, UMB is fostering a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of PAT. This collaborative effort not only enhances the quality of education but also promotes a more integrated approach to mental health care.

As we look to the future of mental health treatment, initiatives like this CIPE series play a vital role in preparing health care professionals to navigate the emerging landscape of psychedelic therapies. By providing this education, UMB is positioning itself at the forefront of innovation in mental health care, ensuring that the next generation of providers is well-prepared to incorporate these promising approaches into their practice.



To learn more about the series on psychedelic science and therapeutics, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/psychedelic-series.

To learn about other continuing professional education opportunities, visit umbsswcpe.ce21.com.

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS, CREATING IMPACT ACROSS SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

UMSSW translates research to practice by leading several initiatives to serve children and families across the state and region.

Promoting Social Justice for Babies

The research of **Lisa Berlin, PhD, MS**, the Alison L. Richman Professor for Children, Youth, and Families, UMSSW, and an MPower Professor, focuses on early child-caregiver attachment as well as programs and policies to support early parenting and child development. A major thrust of Berlin's research agenda concerns the extent to which attachment-based programs can add value to publicly funded services designed to support early parenting and child development.

Currently, Berlin directs *Compañeros en la Salud de los Niños/Partners in Children's Health (CSN)* in collaboration with Natalie Slopen, ScD, MA, of the Harvard School of Public Health and Tania Caballero, MD, MHS, of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Centro SOL (Salud/Health and Opportunity for Latinos). Funded by the National Institute for Child Health and

Human Development, the CSN study is a five-year randomized trial testing the effects of an attachment-based parenting program on toddlers' emerging health outcomes in low-income Latino families in Baltimore.

"At UMSSW, I focus on social justice for babies," Berlin said. "I study relationships between infants and their first caregivers and test programs designed to support these relationships. I would like to see the best of these programs disseminated as widely as possible, to become part of the fabric of our social safety net, our public health systems. This to me is prevention at its best."

Berlin also is the editor of the *Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report*, a journal dedicated to leveraging child and family research to support evidence-based policy development.

To learn more about research at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/research--centers.

FISCAL YEAR 2024 UMSSW RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 164 total publications (158 journal articles)
- 102 articles focused on access and social justice (62 percent of total)
- Seven journal editors-in-chief serving on faculty
- Successfully submitted 114 proposals
- Total awards: \$30,399,079 (5 percent increase from FY23)
- National Institute of Mental Health elevated to third largest funder (from sixth in Academic Year 2023)

Providing Resources to Children and Families in the Community

In 2024, the Rise Early Learning and Support Center, under UMSSW’s Center for Restorative Change (CRC), announced the opening of its new location in the Upton/Druid Heights neighborhood in Baltimore. The center partners with community organizations and families to provide resources in a safe and welcoming space. Grounded in the SHARP framework, a lens to understand and address the oppressive root causes of trauma and poverty, the Rise Center houses multiple programs under one roof that will allow families at all stages to overcome systematic obstacles as they have their day-to-day needs met.

Located at 940 Madison Ave., the Rise Center is a transformative program that embodies the core values of UMB. The center’s success is the result of the courageous leadership and visionary work of **Wendy Shaia, EdD, MSW**, executive director of the CRC, and **Dean Judy L. Postmus, PhD, ACSW**. They deeply understand the long-term benefits of early education when coupled with formal parent education classes, forming a solid foundation for families.

At its heart, Rise is a preventive program that partners with families every day to improve their overall outcomes. The center is committed to supporting parents and children alike, creating lasting change and self-empowerment. As part of the Center for Restorative Change ecosystem, collaborative efforts with other CRC programs including Family Connections Baltimore, B’more for Healthy Babies, and the Positive Schools Center further enhance the support offered to families.

For more information or to schedule a visit, please contact Rise’s director, Tyrone Roper, at tyrone.roper@ssw.umaryland.edu.

One of Rise’s greatest strengths is its ability to bring parents closer to their children. The center creates opportunities for parents to engage with their children’s development and growth, which in turn fosters their own personal growth as parents. This shared journey of growth is what makes the work so impactful.

Feedback from parents reflects the true power of the Rise Center and serves as a testament to the lasting relationships and outcomes created.

“My experience at Rise has been life-changing,” said parent **Brittany Brinkley**. “They give me and my child support and comfortability along with a safe place to come that is similar to home. The staff are so helpful as well as the other moms. This has been a great space for my mental health as they have helped me see the better in what is to come. This is the place I can bring my child to and know that she is in good hands.”

The Rise Center offers three early learning classrooms, a communal kitchen area, lactation room, and a family room for respite and workshops. The center also includes colorful artwork and murals painted by Creative Nomads, a community partner. Since the opening of the new location, the Rise Center has served over 40 families.

CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE CHANGE 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Overall reach: 15,000+ children, youth, and adults across all programs
- Community engagement: 5,000+ community members via Positive Schools Center initiatives
- B’more for Healthy Babies: 320+ families served
- Partnership development: 130+ community partnerships
- SHARP anti-racism training: 250+ individuals trained



A Full Spectrum of Evidence-Based Practices Supporting Youth and Adolescent Service Providers

UMSSW's Institute for Innovation and Implementation (The Institute) works to improve outcomes for children and families who are interacting with public systems through research, training, and data analysis. This work includes connecting children involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems to an array of research-informed programs and ensuring that these programs are working to improve youths' lives and keeping them in their communities.

The Institute partners with agencies like the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to provide data support, data analyses, and technical assistance on an ongoing basis to ensure that the right youth and families are getting into the right programs — and that they are receiving high-quality supports and services right away that target their individualized needs and bolster their strengths. As an example, The Institute convenes quarterly implementation meetings with state and county child welfare and juvenile justice stakeholders to review key data trends for evidence-based interventions such as multi-systemic therapy.

“We go over how things are going,” says **Michael Schlossman, PhD, MPhil**, research assistant professor at The Institute. “We assess how many kids are in the program, if the programs are being utilized, and if the programs are being implemented as they are designed. We do a lot of strategizing about how to improve programs for children and families.”

Aaron Betsinger, PhD, MA, research assistant professor, notes that The Institute is focusing in the year ahead on better incorporating the voices of those with lived experience with the juvenile justice system into these activities and other DJS projects. Betsinger was recently appointed to the Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging & Best Practices and is co-chairing the workgroup on Youth Rehabilitation Services. He is also a member of the Public Education and Narrative Change workgroup.

The work of The Institute crosses the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Institute serves as a connector to how these different agencies serving children and families can make improvements that will have a larger, more holistic impact.

Amy Greensfelder, LCSW, the new executive director of The Institute and a UMSSW alumna, explains the unique benefit of supporting evidence-based practices for multiple agencies and systems.

“We are in a position to see ways that these state-level systems are all working to improve outcomes for kids and families,” she said. “The agencies we work with are dedicated to specific missions, and as an outside group working with multiple agencies, we can help identify pain points affecting multiple agencies. Because our work evaluates and supports these systems, we sometimes have something new and different to offer and see things in a unique way because we are not as siloed. We can help with the overlap of information and see issues that may be affecting multiple agencies and make recommendations.”

To learn more about The Institute for Innovation and Implementation, visit ssw.umaryland.edu/institute.



The Institute for Innovation and Implementation Initiatives and 2024 Accomplishments:

Child Welfare Accountability Act

- Analyzed 113 child welfare cases
- Completed 500 stakeholder interviews
- Conducted focus groups with 80 stakeholders
- Analyzed 700+ surveys from family team decision meetings

Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center

- Initiated a \$1.5 million federal grant to study the long-term effects and cost-benefit of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Awarded a \$205,000 contract to inform Maryland's Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board on education policy impacts
- Received a \$1.5 million grant focusing on diversifying Maryland's teacher workforce
- Strengthened partnerships with the Maryland Department of Human Services and Department of Public Safety for data integration and policy impact analysis
- Chaired an advisory council and supported research on DEI topics, including organizing six presentations for the MLDS research series

SAMHSA Subcontract

- Completed a Community Needs Assessment and Disparities Impact Statement per Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) requirements
- Developed data dashboards for submission tracking and program evaluation
- Provided training to three providers on data collection processes and SAMHSA's National Outcome Measures

Prince George's System of Care for Transition Age Youth

- Supported four mental health providers with data collection and cleanup
- Produced monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to guide program implementation

Evidence-Based Practices' and Programs' Key Outcomes

- Functional Family Therapy: 96% of participating youth remained in the community, and 99% of participants experienced no legal issues
- Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams: 90.5% of children stayed with family or caregivers at discharge
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy: Notable improvement in behavior and parenting skills upon program completion

Partnering for Success: Baltimore County Department of Social Services (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Plus)

- Completed a fourth training series, certifying 83% of child welfare participants, with some attrition among mental health clinicians due to agency staff turnover

Evaluation and Technical Assistance for Juvenile Justice

- Continued validation of assessment tools and provided 85+ technical assistance meetings, 462 coaching sessions, and reports for juvenile justice services

Parent, Infant, and Early Childhood Team

- Launched Maryland's first Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Internship Pathways Program and trained 36 new Pyramid Model trainers
- Piloted Pyramid Model implementation at five sites, offering coaching and leadership support

Child Welfare Academy

- Provided preservice training for 243 new child welfare professionals (50%+ increase from previous year), with positive feedback on knowledge and skills acquired
- Conducted 150+ in-service training sessions, attended by over 3,000 professionals, on topics such as mental health, trauma, and LGBTQ+ competency
- Enhanced supervision training for new child welfare supervisors, resulting in significant knowledge and skill improvements
- Delivered 78 training sessions to resource parents, including regional conferences, with high satisfaction and expected positive impact on care quality
- Expanded the Coach Approach framework with 17 development sessions, learning circles, and an Adaptive Leadership cohort, resulting in 18 certified Coach Mentors

ALUMNI AND DONOR IMPACT

MSW Alumna Establishes Endowed Fund to Support UMSSW Center for Behavioral Health and Well-Being Research



UMSSW is pleased to announce the establishment of the Focused Solutions Endowment, the first endowed fund dedicated to providing programmatic support for UMSSW’s Center for Behavioral Health and Well-Being Research (BHWell).

BHWell is a groundbreaking research center dedicated to addressing the critical challenges of mental health, substance misuse, violence, and well-being research conducted with and for the community.

Donor **Janet Hosford-Lamb, MSW '00, LCSW-C, LCSW, SAP**, president and founder of Focused Solutions LLC, made the commitment to establish this fund, inspired by her own work on the front lines of community and workplace mental health and by seeing how BHWell’s research is leading the way to inform solutions through research in this critical work. BHWell’s inclusion of the workplace as a critical environment in which behavioral health and well-being education, intervention, and recovery services can and should be offered, helps to close the gap in reaching people where they are and where they spend the majority of their time — in the workplace.

“Given the ever-changing global landscape of mental health needs, it’s imperative for social workers and other mental health practitioners to work in tandem with research. It’s truly a joy to have relationships with the School of Social Work so that we can keep that momentum going forward,” Hosford-Lamb said.

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“What we do at Focused Solutions is not only supporting workplaces as part of our service line, but we also support our communities by seeing at least 1,000 clients a month, so we are truly excited to partner with BHWell helping our good work in the future.”

Jodi J. Frey, PhD '04, MSW '98, LCSW-C, CEAP, BHWell’s founder and faculty executive director, is grateful for Hosford-Lamb’s continued support and investment in helping to translate behavioral health and well-being research into practice. She notes that “this fund will start a funding stream that will support training offered to the community, including the workplace, new research partnerships, and students interested in getting into the field.”

About Focused Solutions LLC

Focused Solutions is a nationally recognized behavioral health and workplace consulting organization committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care to individuals of all ages and organizations of all sizes. With a focus on evidence-based practices and individualized treatment plans, Focused Solutions offers a wide range of services, including individual therapy, family therapy, and group therapy. Focused Solutions is known for its expertise in executive and leadership consulting and customized workforce development plans resulting in positive workforce development and employee well-being.

For more information about Focused Solutions, visit [focused-solutions.com](https://www.focused-solutions.com).

About the Center for Behavioral Health and Well-Being Research

The Center for Behavioral Health and Well-Being Research (BHWell) at the University of Maryland School of Social Work is committed to developing, implementing, and disseminating collaborative research, training, and education. The center seeks to foster equity by advancing behavioral health and promoting well-being among individuals, families, and communities within and around Baltimore, the state of Maryland, and globally.

For more information about BHWell, visit bhwell.ssw.umaryland.edu.





Change Is on the Horizon: New School of Social Work Building Underway

In October 2024, UMSSW celebrated the groundbreaking of a \$120 million state-of-the-art, six-story building, set to open in late summer 2027. The ceremony, attended by about 200 community members, featured speeches from Maryland Comptroller **Brooke Lierman**, state **Sen. Antonio Hayes**, University Student Government Association President **Courtney Fullwood**, Family Support Network Director **Karen Brown**, UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, and Dean **Judy L. Postmus, PhD, ACSW**.

This new building will consolidate the school's Master of Social Work and Doctor of Philosophy programs, which are currently spread across three locations, into a modern, flexible space at 600 W. Lexington St.

Postmus remarked, "The new University of Maryland School of Social Work building will be more than just a place to develop the next generation of social workers, leaders, and scholars — it will be a vibrant community hub where students, faculty, and local partners come together." Reflecting the University's commitment to innovation and sustainability, this building is set to be the first certified operational net-zero emissions building in the University System of Maryland and downtown Baltimore.

Scan the QR code to read a recap and see photos of the new building groundbreaking ceremony.



ACCESS, COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND STRATEGY



Data-Driven Strategies Strengthen Recruitment, Retention, and Student Success

Over the past year, the office that oversees strategic initiatives, engagement, and access, led by Associate Dean **Neijma Celestine-Donnor, JD, MSW**, and supported by **Julia Scott** and **Shekinah Davis**, has delivered measurable, transformative impact at UMSSW. This team isn't just part of the school — it is pivotal to UMSSW's progress.

Since 2020, the office's data-driven strategies have strengthened recruitment, retention, and student success as well as faculty and staff engagement. The team's impact is undeniable: 552 students have benefited from the Book Lending Initiative, reducing financial barriers to academic success, while the newly launched Bridge Scholarship will provide critical support for students pursuing licensure, accelerating their pathways into the social work profession.

The numbers tell a story of sustained excellence. Through 150-plus workshops, trainings, and presentations, this team has created transformative learning spaces that foster growth and inspire change. The LEAD Training Institute has engaged over 400 participants, delivering more than 60 hours of professional development. In 2024, the office hosted its first annual summit, bringing together over 150 leaders from 25 organizations to focus on coalition building and legislative advocacy — 70 percent of attendees reported the summit as pivotal to their professional development.

The team's reach also extends globally. In partnership with the Office of Global Initiatives, it secured grant funding to increase access to international learning opportunities, launching the Global Virtual Learning Series with lectures led by eight international scholars. Programs like affinity spaces have fostered deep connections within the UMSSW community — 81 percent of participants reported meaningful relationship-building outcomes.

The team's commitment to building a vibrant, connected community is reflected in initiatives that honor contributions and cultivate a culture of belonging. In 2024, the annual JEDI Awards recognized the contributions of over a dozen community members committed to a just society, while the Gratitude Project engaged over 300 UMSSW members in recognition and appreciation across the school.

Every initiative and data point reflect this team's commitment to access, impact, and a just society. The office doesn't just support UMSSW's mission — it also amplifies it, ensuring that every student, staff member, and community partner benefits from its impactful work.

FACULTY AND STAFF ACCOLADES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Congratulations to UMSSW faculty and staff for over 175 mentions in the Laurels section of the 2024 *President's Message* newsletters, including awards, panel discussions, presentations, promotions, and publications.

Scan the QR code or visit ssw.umaryland.edu/unity-week/ssw-laurels to learn more about our work.







Consider supporting the University of Maryland School of Social Work to help us make an even greater impact on student success, community outreach, pioneering research, and engaging initiatives that make our learning community a better place for everybody.

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