ExCEL in Social Work

Excellence in Cancer Education & Leadership

ExCEL in Social Work Awards APOSW Members: Stephanie Borer and Kristin Frazier
By: Shirley Otis-Green, MSW, ACSW, LCSW, OSW-C
Stephanie Borer, LCSW and Kristin Frazier, LCSW



ExCEL in Social Work has completed its third year of preconferences and would like to thank all those who attended in Minneapolis, MN. We had an amazing group of dedicated professionals and are looking forward to hearing many more ExCEL success stories in the coming years. Each year we recognize participants from the past year's pre-conference who demonstrate outstanding goal achievement. The Award of Excellence is presented at the APOSW Conference with a plaque and \$1,500. The ExCEL 2013 APOSW honorees are Stephanie Borer and Kristin Frazier.

Stephanie and Kristin are both social workers at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Stephanie graduated from New York University, and has worked with children and families with chronic illnesses for 8 years. She follows their solid tumor population.

Kristin graduated from University of South Carolina after spending time in the Peace Corps in West Africa. She has a background in child and adolescent mental health and hospice. She currently follows the leukemia lymphoma population.

Shirley Otis-Green: Can you tell me more about your ExCEL institutional-change project?

Response from Stephanie Borer & Kristin Frazier: We decided we would like to examine implementing a distress screening tool in our setting at the Aflac Cancer Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. We decided on using the Psychosocial Assessment Tool, a screening tool developed by CHOP. Our main areas of interest included examining whether or not staff knowledge of the family's distress level help increase the family's adherence to the medical treatment plan, and whether or not families feel more satisfied with the level of care received.

SO: How were you able to accomplish your goal after attending the ExCEL course last year?

Response from SB/KF: We spent lots of time working together to break our goal down into manageable pieces, and spent time pursuing administrative "buy in" to make sure we have support when we need it from management. Then we reached out to our nursing and allied health research office, who encouraged us to develop our research questions, look at the latest literature and apply for grant funding for our efforts.

SO: ExCEL is a leadership development program. Tell me more about your leadership activities this year. **Response from SB/KF:** Through taking on this research project, we have had the opportunity to learn from and interact with professionals in the hospital that we would have otherwise not crossed paths with. We are leading one of the very few psychosocially-oriented research projects happening in our institution at the moment, and have gotten great feedback from physicians and administration in our endeavors. We are also more consistently taking on leadership roles in other areas including sitting on committees, student training, etc...

SO: In what ways was participation in ExCEL useful?

Response from SB/KF: It really inspired us to go beyond our day to day tasks at work, and think outside of the box about changes that we can make within the institution that improve the care we provide every day. It also renewed our own personal sense of growth and development. Having to report back to our ExCEL mentor provided accountability that helped motivate us to push our project even further than we originally imagined.

SO: What do you see for your future?

Response from SB/KF: More distress screening! Ha ha, no we would like to publish our results to share what we learn with the community, and find ongoing ways to incorporate ExCEL leadership skills into our work.

SO: We asked for self-nominations for this award. How was that for you?

Response from SB/KF: We have learned that you really have to be your own biggest fan and cheerleader, and are reaping the benefits. We strongly encourage everyone not to be shy and to toot your own horn about the great work you are all doing every day!

SO: Thanks! We're so proud of your accomplishments and look forward to your upcoming publication!

The ExCEL in Social Work courses will be offered again next year in Philadelphia, PA (April 21-22) and Baltimore, MD (May 26-27)) immediately preceding the APOSW and the AOSW Annual Conferences for the last time, so don't miss your chance to attend! For further information browse the ExCEL in Social Work website and contact ExCEL @coh.org