

# Closing the Mental Wellness Gap: Teaching Social Work Students the Art of Aphasia Friendly Service Delivery

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## INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2015 by a development gift from the Foster Family Foundation, **The OSU Aphasia Initiative** was created to provide treatment programs for persons with chronic language disabilities due to acquired brain injury. In addition to speech therapy services, the program is also a clinical training environment for our graduate and undergraduate students in speech and hearing science.

## SERVICE GAP

As the program grew, it was evident that our members were making functional improvement and needed referrals to outside agencies such as transportation, vocational rehabilitation, and driver rehabilitation. Furthermore, members and care partners were requesting support for issues surrounding adjustment, coping, and relationship challenges. As often experienced in community programs such as these, administrators and speech-pathologists were finding themselves completing these case management functions, albeit struggling with others.

**In addition to case management needs, persons with aphasia are 50% more likely to experience depression than stroke without aphasia<sup>3</sup>.**

### Mental Health Providers & Aphasia

In a 2019 survey by Marrow-Oden & Barnes,

- 85% of mental health providers had heard about aphasia 65% could correctly identify aphasia as a language disorder
- Over half had never provided services to a person with aphasia
- Many reported low confidence levels in treating a PWA

*"People living with aphasia who also experience depression and anxiety often do not receive the necessary services to meet their needs. The insufficient attention given to the psychological needs of people with aphasia across the continuum of care has been identified as a gap in service delivery, prompting a call to action to improve services for people with aphasia, specifically with attention to addressing depression and anxiety<sup>4</sup>."*

## PARTNERING WITH PURPOSE

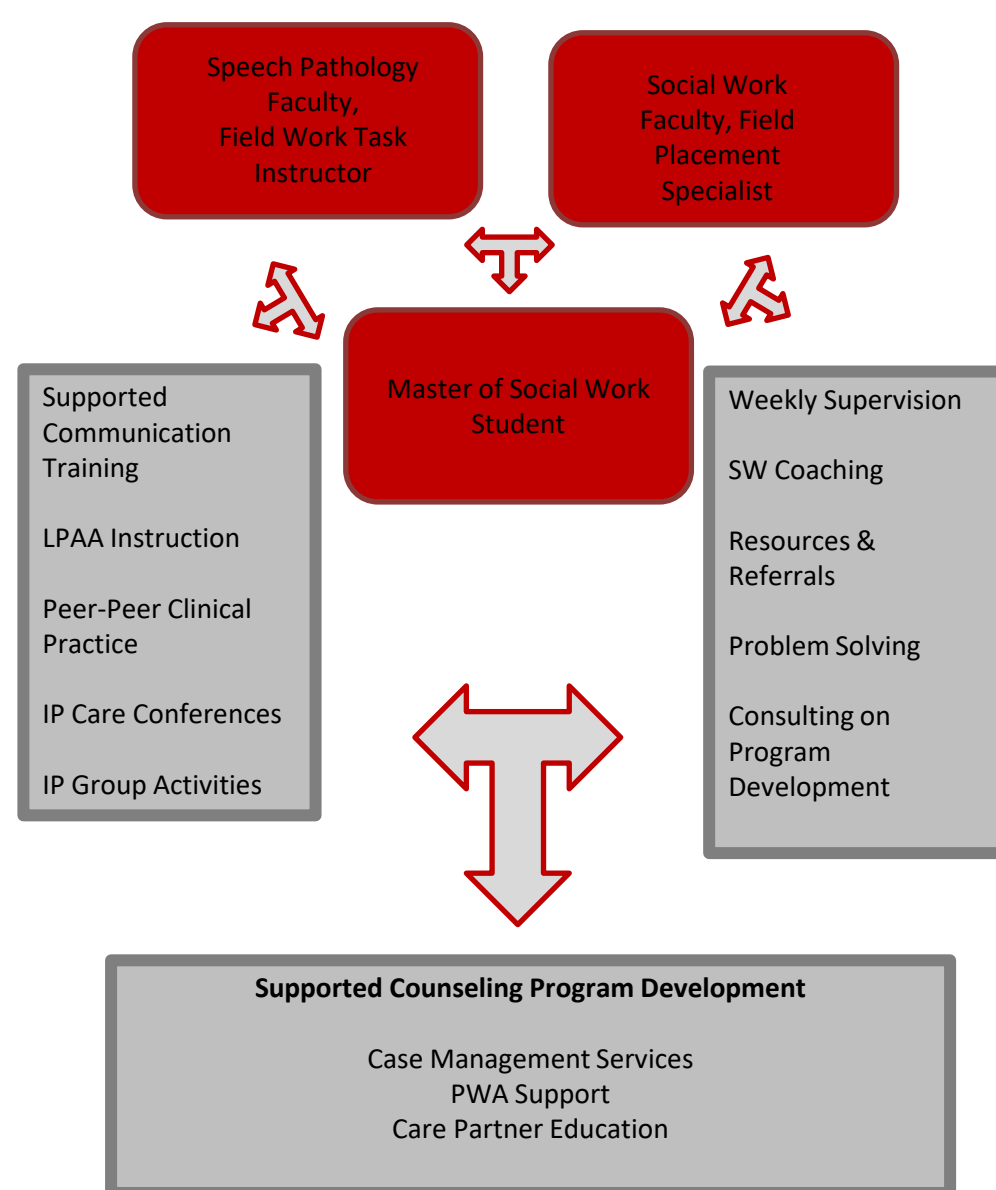
In an attempt to close the mental wellness and case management service gap, the Aphasia Initiative partnered with the College of Social Work to offer a clinical training experience for master's of social work students. This also provided an opportunity for students in speech-language pathology to work alongside master's of social work students during an early stage in their clinical training program. Interprofessional collaboration has been shown to optimize patient care and outcomes. Additionally, the benefits of interprofessional learning experiences in graduate programs have been widely reported<sup>5</sup>.



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This poster will outline a framework for creating interprofessional partnerships between speech-language pathology and social work graduate students within a university clinic aphasia program. Implications for student supervision, community strategy training, and outcomes will be explored.

## SLP & SW Faculty Partnership



## Onboarding Program for MSW Students

- Attend orientation & training alongside SLP students
  - Aphasia Access videos, articles, chart review
- First semester spent attending aphasia group sessions, serving as a communication support partner
- Observe SPARC & HELP support groups
- 1:1 conversation sessions with members
- Transition to SPARC lead/case management duties with support of SLP faculty

## OUTCOMES

- Student Level:** Increase in skill acquisition related to supported communication strategies & techniques. Exposure to services and resources needed by PWA with chronic communication disabilities.
- Client Level:** Increased independence due to access to community resources and support.
- Program Level:** Expanded program & services without increasing personnel costs.



Pre-Partnership	Post-Partnership
Transportation referrals	1:1 Support session
Vocational referrals	Group support sessions
Referral to external stroke support groups	Transportation referrals
	Housing
	Referral and transportation to medical appointments
	Vocational referrals
	Respite resources
	Care-partner education
	Personalized support plans

## STUDENT REFLECTIONS

*"Working with the social work student inspired my capstone project. I am going to interview social workers in acute care at OSU about their comfort level working with persons with aphasia."  
- MA SLP Graduate Student*



*"I had not fully considered the benefit of student to student collaboration during this placement. I love that students from different colleges are working together to provide services to the members!"  
- MSW II Student*



## CONCLUSION

Interprofessional education and practice is a valuable and effective tool in healthcare training settings. This project illustrated a framework for university-based programs to develop and leverage partnerships within academic units to promote optimal outcomes for persons with aphasia.

## DIRECTIONS for FUTURE WORK

- Measure the effectiveness of an interprofessional education experience within an LPAA group setting.
- Develop an elective interprofessional course in supported communication for allied health professionals.
- Examine stress in persons with aphasia who are attending an LPAA treatment group.
- Measure effectiveness of supported counseling program.

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