



# SENIORS' MENTAL HEALTH POLICY LENS – AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

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## Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens Workshop

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# Using the SMHPL in a Post Secondary Educational Environment

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## *Potential sites for use*

### *Multiple Disciplines -*

- Social Work
- Nursing
- Gerontology
- Health Sciences/Administration
- ...and more....



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## *As a Course Reading....*

- Aging-related courses (practice and policy)
- Disability-related courses (practice and policy)
- Broader range of social policy courses
- Administrative and planning courses

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## *As a Course Assignment...*

- examining/critiquing an existing policy directed at seniors (e.g., assisted living; pension plans, etc.)
- examining/critiquing an existing policy not specifically directed at seniors (e.g., health care policy; public transportation policy, etc.)

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## *As a Course Assignment...*

- Examining/critiquing an existing program designed for seniors (e.g., seniors outreach to connect with seniors in their homes; early stage Alzheimer support groups)
- Examining/critiquing an existing program not specifically designed for seniors (e.g., cancer survivor support groups; women's shelters)




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## *As a Course Assignment...*

- Creating a policy or program – either specifically directed at seniors or a broader program that some seniors will want to access
- Examining/critiquing an entire course or a textbook or set of readings



# An Example from Post-Secondary Education

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*A Social Work Course – Critical Issues in Aging....*

- *Policy/Program Evaluation Utilizing the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens*
- *Using the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens, students will seek out a locally accessible human service or health policy or program, and evaluate it using the policy lens*

# An Example from Post Secondary Education...cont'd

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- *Students present their findings to their classmates including a summary of the program/policy, how it meets or does not meet the lens guidelines and what changes, if any, you would suggest to improve the program or policy.*
- *Feedback from in class discussion about your presentation may be incorporated into the written component of the assignment.*



# An Example from Post Secondary Educational...cont'd

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- *Students will provide ... a report of their findings, including a summary describing the policy/program; an evaluation of how the policy/program meets or does not meet the guidelines of the lens; and a section regarding how the policy/program might be improved or why no improvement is required.*
- *A brief assessment of the usefulness of the lens as a tool for evaluating and/or developing policies or programs should also be included.*



# An Example from Post Secondary Education...cont'd

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- *It is recognized that your assessment will be based on limited experience with the tool.*
- *No referencing is required for this assignment.*
- *The report content is derived from students undertaking a critical analysis of the policy or program using the SMHPL as a guide for analysis.*



# Reflections on this Learning Experience

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Students were able to use the SMHPL to:

- As a guide to reflect on how existing policies and programs address the mental health needs of older adults
- As a guide to their own future participation in the development of policies and programs



# Reflections on this Learning Experience

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Strengths of using the lens include:

- Providing a guide of the kinds of things that were identified from the literature and from seniors about what is important to them in creating policies and programs that they use



# Reflections on this Learning Experience

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- Even in programs and policies developed in progressive, senior-friendly and senior-conscious environments can benefit from a review using the lens – almost as a check list – because we can miss sometimes critical aspects



# Reflections on this Learning Experience

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- Although used within the confines of a post secondary learning environment, students will now have this tool to take into their practice as social workers
- Although focused on seniors' mental health, this tool is valuable in a broader sense because it puts on the table many of the issues that get missed in other types of program and policy initiatives



## Going beyond reflections....

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A small research initiative will be undertaken shortly that will provide interested students (who have used the SMHPL) with the opportunity to formally evaluate their experience with the lens – using the evaluation tool developed in the course of the SMHPL project.

# QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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