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Human Services

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Human Services

The Human Services Program began at DMACC in 1969 in response to a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant, which funded the program for the first five years. An advisory committee was formed to assist the college in designing the curriculum and assisting in placement of graduates. This committee continues to function and meet in the fall and spring semesters. The committee is comprised of Human Service agency representatives, faculty, members of four-year academic institutions, and a DMACC student representative.

Originally there were four separate programs: social services, mental health, alcohol and drugs, and developmental disabilities. The college parallel/career option programs were designed as part of a national initiative to provide a mid-level of workers to fill the gap between workers with a high school education or less and those with graduate degrees, who typically were hired to serve clients in these areas. Career ladders were established so that workers with the associate degree could go to work in the field, continue their education at DMACC and transfer the courses into a human services bachelor degree program. Continuing education, as well as working in the field, has always been a strong emphasis of the program.

In 1975, the four separate programs were consolidated according to NIMH guidelines into one broad Human Services Program with options for specialization in each of the four areas. A competency-based curriculum was developed, using nationally established programs and course competencies. Iowa Department of Education certification was received for the program for the first time.

Originally, the program was offered on three DMACC campuses. The day classes were at Ankeny, the evening classes were at Urban, and there were mixed offerings at Boone, based upon the availability of instructors. The Boone program closed in the late 1970s because of low enrollment. In 1994, the program began at Newton and graduated its first student in Spring, 1997. Currently, Human Service courses are offered on most DMACC campuses, and the program can be completed at the Ankeny, Urban and Carroll campuses. In recent years student enrollments have increased steadily with over 400 enrolled in the program in FY 2015, making it one of DMACC's largest programs.

Presently, most of the Human Service courses are either web-enhanced or web-blended, helping students to learn technology and adapt to this change within the field. The program emphasizes skills needed in working with clients such as interviewing, determining eligibility for

services, making appropriate referrals and assisting with counseling. A supervised internship allows students to apply their skills in a work setting. Currently, chemical dependency is the only emphasis within the broader Human Services degree that is offered at DMACC.

In 2005, Roselea Johnson retired from DMACC and Ilima Young-Dunn became the second program chair in the history of DMACC Human Services program. Ilima immediately recognized the need for Human Service workers to be culturally competent and added a diversity requirement to the program. In 2007, Jeanie McCarville Kerber joined the Human Services faculty.

In 2011, the DMACC Human Services advisory group recognized the change in hiring practices in the chemical dependency field. Chemical dependency agencies were increasingly hiring professionals with a bachelor's degree instead of those with associate's degrees plus a chemical dependency certificate. It was decided to ensure all educational requirements could be met at DMACC and students could continue to advance their education while meeting the experience requirements on their own. Students with an associate degree from DMACC meet all educational requirements to become a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) in the state of Iowa.

Demand for program graduates has been steady throughout its history. A high percent of students are employed in the field upon graduation. Many students find employment in a wide variety of settings, including public and private social services agencies, treatment centers, group homes, and supported living.

Recently an increasing number of graduates transfer to a senior college or, if employed, enroll in courses as a part-time student to earn their bachelor's degree.

The DMACC Human Services program continues to grow and is increasingly a viable option for students interested in working in Human Services. Articulation agreements have been developed with Grand View University, Upper Iowa University and University of Iowa, allowing students to transfer easily to these institutions for a bachelor's degree. The Human Services program has strong support from community agencies and is highly regarded for its program rigor.