



A Survey of Continuing Education Programs Conducted by Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education

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A Survey of Continuing Education Programs Conducted by *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*

Gerald Cochran and Noel Landuyt

Introduction

The needs of individuals and the most effective ways that can be used to help them are constantly evolving. Therefore, social workers involved in helping efforts must continually be engaged in learning and education to stay informed. In order to accomplish this, continuing education (CE) is an integral part of the social work profession. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) encourages social workers to actively seek out CE experiences to ensure the delivery of sound social work practice to clients (NASW, 2003). As social work practitioners are involved in CE, their skill sets can be sharpened and the lives of clients can be greatly improved (NASW, 2003).

As a result of the importance of continuing social work education for professional practice, states and provinces, through governmental authority, have made obtaining CE hours a requirement for maintaining professional competency and skills. However, CE requirements and administration are operated on a location-by-location basis. As a result of this reality, there are different jurisdictions and little connection or coordination in CE program information. If such a connection or coordination existed, programs could learn from one another—potentially replicating successes or avoiding problems others may have experienced.

Therefore, a first step in increasing this coordination and communication is to gather information from the various CE programs. The collection and dissemination of programmatic information would act as a benchmark and a resource for CE program directors, program administrators, and the broader social services community. Also such data would operate as an impetus in shaping future collaboration between programs, which has the potential to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of CE programs.

Methods

In order to gather information on CE programs, a cross-sectional survey of CE programs was designed and carried out by *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*. The mission of this journal is to provide

...Scholarly and relevant articles on continuing education, professional development, and training in the field of social welfare. The aims of the Journal are to advance the science of professional development and continuing social work education, to foster understanding among educators, practitioners, and researchers, and to promote discussion that represents a broad spectrum of interests in the field (Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education, n.d.).

Members of the Continuing Education Network (CENet), a committee within the Council on Social Work Education, were targeted as recipients of the survey. The membership of this committee consists of 90 CE programs within the United States and Canada. Members of the CENet committee were selected because of their work with their own CE programs and their expertise and knowledge of social work CE. The lead administrators of the CE programs and/or those individuals listed as the program contacts received a cover letter introducing the purpose of the project and the survey itself. With these materials, participants were asked to complete and return the survey within an approximate three-week period in the early fall of 2009.

The questions from the survey were conceptualized and designed based on information gathered from discussions with key members of the CENet and the project principal investigators. The survey itself targeted 12 items; however, four of the items were multifaceted and asked for multiple answers. The survey items were both closed

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Figure 1: *Professional Role(s) of Respondent*

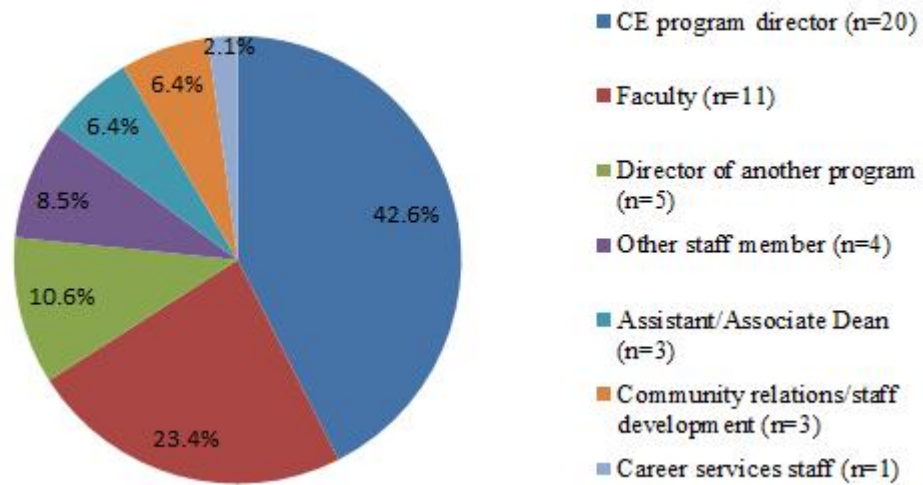


Figure 2: *Number of Years in Current Position*

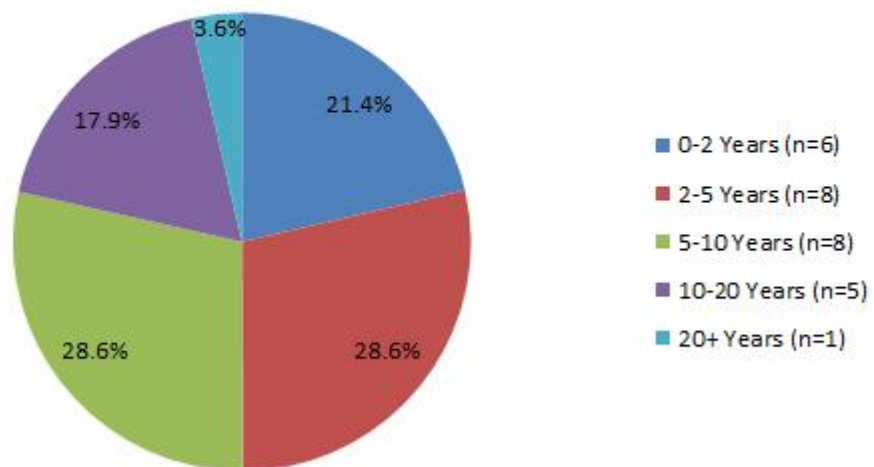


Table 1
BSW Continuing Education Hours

n=19		
Number of CE Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	2	10.5
10	1	5.3
15	1	5.3
20	2	10.5
27	1	5.3
30	8	42.1
40	2	10.5
45	1	5.3
50	1	5.3

and open-ended, including answer choices that ranged from “yes/no” “to choose all that apply.” The items in the survey covered the following topics: state or province CE hour requirements, CE program and staff information, resources available, and course topics. Also included in the survey were questions that asked if the CE program would be interested in sharing detailed descriptions of courses offered. Data from completed surveys were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 16.0, and descriptive statistics were applied in order to describe the responses given.

Results

Of those mailed a survey, 29 individuals responded, a response rate of 32 percent. The roles of respondents varied, since many of those who participated in the survey indicated they performed multiple roles within their departments or organizations. As a consequence of this, the following frequencies reporting the roles of individuals are not mutually exclusive and sum to more than 29 total individual respondents. Most respondents acknowledged their role as the director of the CE program (n=20). Following this role, respondents also indicated they were faculty members (n=11),

and/or directors of another program in addition to the CE program (n=5). Four respondents acknowledged being “other” staff members with different responsibilities (e.g., office administration duties). Three individuals were assistant or associate deans, and three were community relations/development staff members. Only one person acknowledged a role as a career services staff member (see figure 1).

In addition to the roles played by the participants within their departments or organizations, the number of years each respondent had worked in their current position was also asked (see figure 2). Of those who responded (n=28), six had worked in their current position zero to two years. Eight respondents worked two to five years, and eight also had worked five to 10 years. Five reported 10 to 20 years, and one person had more than 20 years of experience.

Continuing Education Requirements

BSW. One of the initial survey items inquired about specific CE requirements for social workers at the bachelors, masters, and clinical/advanced practice levels. This question did not ask regarding parameters of time in which the hour requirements at any education level

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Table 2
Ethics Hours Required for BSW

(n=14)		
Number of Ethics Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	3	21.4
3	5	35.7
4	1	7.1
5	2	14.3
6	3	21.4

Table 3
MSW Continuing Education Hours

(n=22)		
Number of CE Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	2	9.1
3	1	4.5
15	1	4.5
20	2	9.1
27	1	4.5
30	11	50.0
40	2	9.1
45	1	4.5
50	1	4.5

Table 4
Ethics Hours Required for MSW

(n=16)		
Number of Ethics Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	4	25.0
3	6	37.5
4	1	6.3
5	2	12.5
6	3	18.8

Table 5
Clinical and/or Advanced Practice Continuing Education Hours

(n=22)		
Number of CE Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	2	9.1
20	1	4.5
27	1	4.5
30	11	50.0
40	5	22.7
45	1	4.5
50	1	4.5

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Table 6
Clinical and/or Advanced Practice Ethics Hours

(n=18)		
Number of CE Hours	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
0	4	22.2
3	8	44.4
4	1	5.6
5	2	11.1
6	3	16.7

were to be met. Therefore, respondents reported total CE hours required, which could encompass more than one year in some cases. For those programs that responded about bachelor-level social work CE requirements (n=19), the average number of hours required was 27. The modal (n=8) response from programs was that 30 hours were required. In addition to the average and modal numbers of required hours, two respondents indicated that no hours were required at the bachelor level while one respondent indicated 50 hours of CE were required (see table 1).

Ethics (BSW). Respondents were also asked to report on the number of ethics CE hours required for BSW level education. Those that responded (n=14) reported the average and modal required hours were three. In addition to the average and modal required hours, three respondents reported that their state or province does not require ethics CE hours, and three individuals reported a requirement of six hours for their respective states or provinces (see table 2).

Additional Requirements (BSW). In addition to CE and ethics hours required by states or provinces for BSW level individuals, respondents were also asked if any additional CE requirements existed. Four individuals included additional requirements. Two respondents reported that three hours of those required had to be in cultural or cultural/social competence. Another individual reported

that one hour of CE credit needed to be in the area of pain management. Lastly, one respondent indicated that one hour every 10 years needed to be in the area of HIV, and all BSWs were required to take a onetime domestic violence course.

MSW. Respondents were also asked regarding CE requirements for masters level social work degrees. The average number of required hours reported by those who responded was 27 (n=22). As well, the modal number of required CE hours was 30 (n=11). Two individuals reported CE hours were not required, and one respondent indicated that 50 hours were required (see table 3).

Ethics (MSW). The number of required ethics hours for MSWs was also asked of survey respondents. Responses indicated (n=16) that the average number of required ethics hours at the masters level was three, and the modal number of required ethics hours was three. The lowest required number of ethics hours reported was zero (n=4), and the most ethics hours reported was six (n=3; see table 4)

Additional Requirements (MSW). Respondents also were asked regarding additional CE requirements in their state or province. Five individuals provided information regarding additional CE requirements. Two of these respondents indicated that three hours of those required had to be in cultural or cultural/social competence. A single individual reported that MSWs were required to

Table 7
Number of staff employed by the CE program

Staff Description	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Number of Responses
FT professional paid staff	2	9	0	20
PT professional paid staff	1	2	0	14
FT Contract/Temporary Staff	<1	4	0	11
PT Contract/Temporary Staff	1	2	0	13
FT TA/ Student Support	<1	2	0	10
PT TA/ Student Support	2	10	0	17

take one hour of pain management CE courses. In addition, one participant reported a requirement of six course hours related to diagnosis and treatment. Finally, a respondent indicated that one hour every 10 years needed to be in the area of HIV, and all MSWs were required to take a onetime domestic violence course.

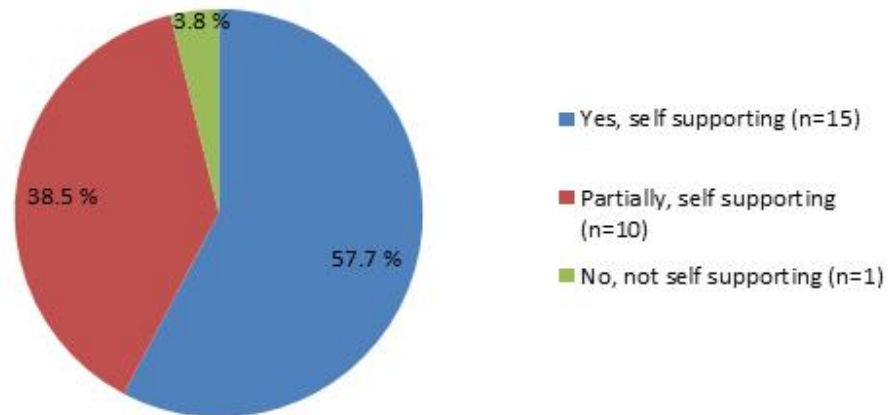
Clinical and/or Advanced Practice. The final category of social work CE requirements asked about was clinical and/or advanced practice. Survey respondents reported that the average number of CE hours required for this level of practice was 31, and the modal number of required hours was 30. The lowest hours reported for clinical and/or advanced practice was zero (n=2), and the highest

number of hours required was 50 (n=1; see table 5).

Ethics (Clinical and/or Advanced Practice). The number of required ethics hours for clinical and/or advanced practice was also asked. The average number of ethics hours reported by respondents was three (n=18), and the modal number of ethics hours was also three. The fewest ethics hours reported was zero (n=4), and the highest number of required ethics hours reported was six (n=3, see table 6).

Additional Requirements (Clinical and/or Advanced Practice). Participants were also asked if there were any additional requirements for clinical and/or advanced practitioners. Five

Figure 3: *Program self-supporting*



Survey of Continuing Education Programs

Table 9
*Fees paid to presenters at half and full day CE courses**

Category	Mean cost (\$)	Mode cost (\$)	Maximum cost (\$)	Minimum cost (\$)	Number of Responses
Half day: Amount paid to presenters	375	300	800	150	24
Full day: Amount paid to presenters	823	1000	3000	300	22

*Fees do not include travel allowances

individuals reported additional requirements. Two respondents indicated three CE hours must be dedicated to cultural and social/cultural competency. A single individual reported that clinical and/or advanced practitioners were required to take one hour of pain management CE courses. One participant reported a requirement of six hours of CEs related to diagnosis and treatment. Finally, a respondent indicated that one hour every 10 years needed to be in the area of HIV, and all clinical and/or advanced practitioners were required to take a onetime domestic violence course.

CE Program Resources and Costs

CE Staff. The survey included items that assessed the capacity of the program to manage and administer the individual workshops. One specific aspect of program capacity about which the survey asked was the amount of staff support available (see table 7). The survey asked participants to report the number of full-time and part-time paid professional staff, contract/temporary/project staff, and teaching assistant/student support. Respondents (n=20) reported that the average number of full-time paid professional staff members was two. This average of two professional staff members was also the highest mean of all categories of full-time staff members reported. In addition to professional staff members, the average number of part-time professional staff reported was one (n=14); the average number of full-time contract/temporary staff members reported was less than one (n=11); the average number of part-time contract/temporary staff members reported was one (n=13);

the average number of full-time student support reported was less than one (n=10), and the average number of part-time student support reported by respondents was two (n=17). This average of two part-time students providing support for programs was the highest average number of part-time staff members reported.

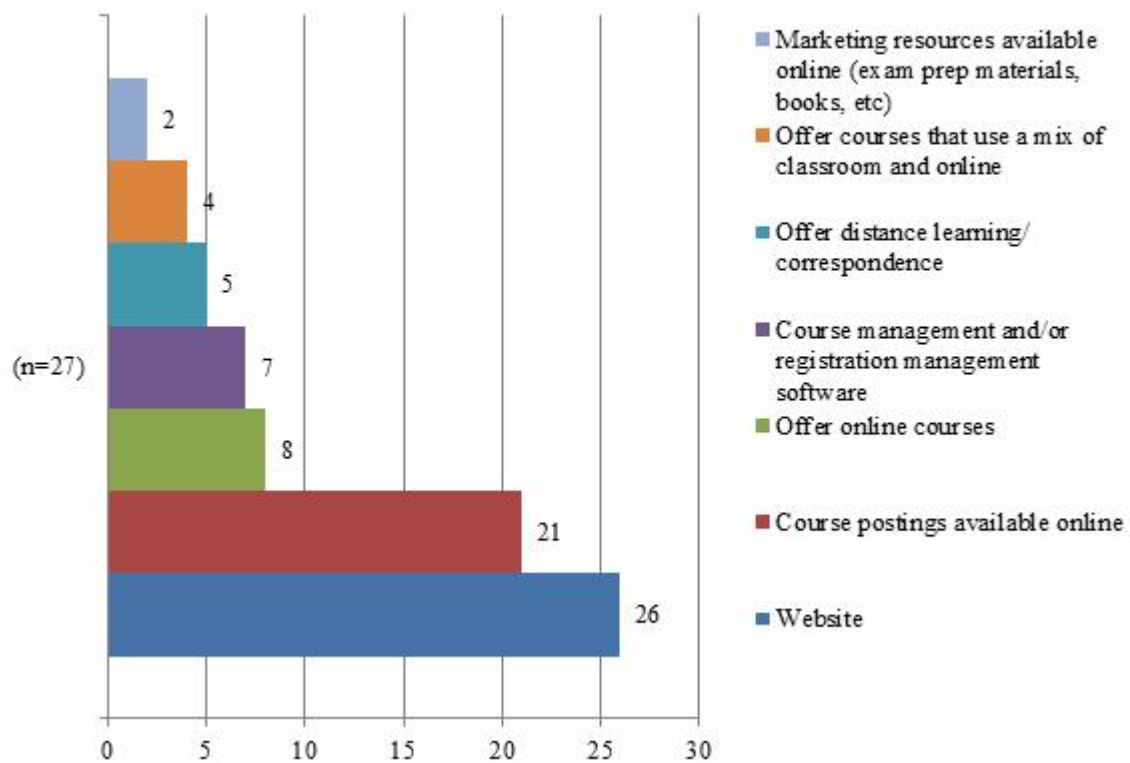
In addition to the average number of staff members working for each program, the maximum and minimum number of staff members working for each program is also of interest (see table 7). The most staff reported to be employed at any level and working for a program was 10 part-time teaching assistants or students. Following this high mark, the second largest staff reported to be employed in a CE program was nine full-time professional paid staff members. On the other hand, the least number of employees reported in each category was zero.

However, the above quantitative depictions of programs' staffing resources do not capture some of the staffing realities reported to exist with program descriptions. For instance, one CE program's staffing situation was described as a partnership between the university and the local chapter of the NASW. In this partnership, staff members from each entity have a specific number of hours dedicated to operating the CE program. Other programs' circumstances are similarly collaborative. One program's staffing is designed as a committee within an academic department, and committee membership is an assignment from within the department. Another program's design consisted of one full-time staff member, two part-

Table 10
Numbers of workshops and attendees each year

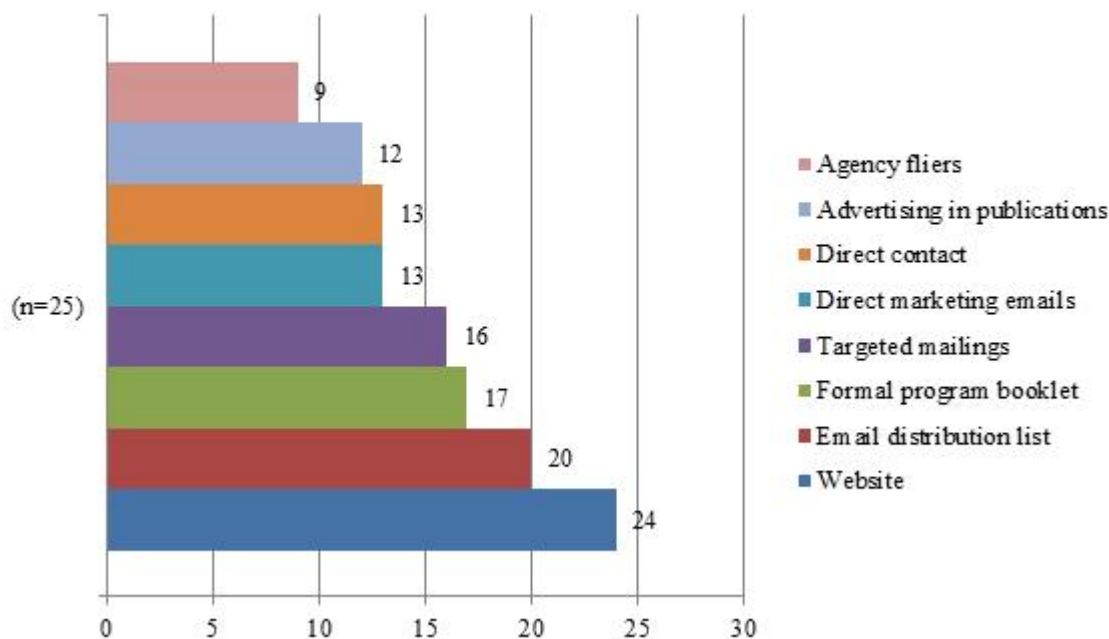
Question asked	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Number of Responses
How many half day workshops do you offer per year?	41	300	3	18
How many full day workshops do you offer per year?	54	280	1	21
How many half day attendees do you have per year?	1050	7000	60	16
How many full day attendees do you have per year?	1594	9000	100	18

Figure 4: *Technological resources available to programs*



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Figure 5: Marketing/advertising approaches used by CE programs



time contract staff members, and a part-time program director who is a faculty member of the university granted a course release to accomplish the duties pertaining to the CE program.

Program Support. A second question asked regarding resources of CE programs was whether or not the program was self-supporting. The meaning of this question was to inquire whether or not funds to operate the CE programs were generated by the programs themselves, whether they came totally from an external source, or whether programs were partially self-supporting (see figure 3). Most respondents (n=15, 57.7%) reported that their program was totally self-supporting. Following this response, many respondents indicated (n=10, 38.5%) that their program was partially self-supporting. Lastly, there was a single program that reported to not be self-supporting (3.8%).

Cost of Program. In connection with program financing are the costs paid by practitioners to attend CE courses (see table 8). The average cost of attending a half day course was just over \$80 (n=22), and the average cost for attending a full

day course was just under \$190 (n=26). However, some half day courses were as much as \$300 but as low as \$45, and some full day courses cost as much as \$1600 and as little as \$62.

One important aspect of providing CE courses is offering classes by individuals who are experts in the topic areas. The costs to compensate presenters were also asked (see table 9). Respondents reported that the average fee paid to presenters for a half day course was \$375 (n=24). Respondents also indicated the average cost paid for a full day presenter was \$823 (n=22). However, the maximum fee paid to a presenter for a half day course was \$800 and minimum fee paid was \$150. For a full day presenter, the maximum cost was \$3000, and the minimum was \$300.

Number of Workshops

The numbers of workshops offered and the total number of attendees each year was also asked (see table 10). The average number of half day workshops reported to be offered in one year was 41 (n=18), and the average number of full

Table 11
Hot Topics and reasons why they were offered

Topic	Frequency Mentioned	Reason (Blanks indicate no reason given)
Ethics	9	License requirement
License exam review	5	Licensing required
Supervision	5	Needs for licensure
Motivational Interviewing	3	Effective EBP - short film, program evaluation outcomes are positive in regards to instructor's delivery style and content
Cognitive behavioral therapy	2	Pressure and growing evidence base
Trauma and related issues	2	Continued popularity
Clinical practice, law, and social work	2	
Veterans issues and mental health	1	Many soldiers are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan
Child sexual abuse treatment	1	
Spiritual assessment	1	
Boundaries and ethics	1	Mandated in State; instructor receives outstanding program evaluations
Latino conference	1	Changing demographics
Spirituality, adolescents, and leadership	1	
Child and adolescent psychotherapy	1	
Doing more with less	1	
Solution-Focus	1	Popular method... plus very active
Spirituality in social work	1	Program evaluation show attendees like the instructor's curriculum and experiential style. High attendance.
Diagnosis and treatment, i.e. attachment disorder	1	Highly requested by social workers
DSM	1	Not taught in regular curriculum...as an elective
Addiction, child and family therapy, disability	1	
Pain management	1	Required for licensing
Clinical topics and supervision certificate	1	
Drug/alcohol treatment	1	
Intimate relationships for seniors	1	
Animals and human health	1	Growing field
Cultural Competence	1	Required
Self-Care/Burnout	1	Ranked #1 on survey of CE needs
Mental health and older adults	1	
PTSD	1	Social workers working with veterans, people in trauma due to job loss, etc
Dialectical behavior therapy	1	Effective EBP - short film
Assessing parenting capacity	1	Required in some sections
Comprehensive review of clinical social work	1	Reputation for course
Neuroscience and psychopharmacy	1	
Clinical issues in Adoption	1	
Grant writing	1	More people need it

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Table 12
New Topics for 2009 and Reasons Why They Were Offered

Topic	Frequency Mentioned	Reason (Blanks indicate no reason given)
Trauma and related issues, e.g. PTSD	4	Immense areas of concern and growth population
Spanish for social workers	3	Growing interest, increasing population, to increase interaction/understanding in health care settings, needed for employment
Topics related to aging	3	
Spirituality in social work/services	3	Increased interest
Financial social work/literacy	2	The downturn
Substance abuse	1	Volunteer teaching
Cultural competencies	1	Increased diversity in state
Ethics and boundaries and in-home services	1	Customer survey showed demand
Ethical guidelines addressing spirituality	1	License requirements and market driven
Hypnosis	1	
Supervision	1	LPC board requirement
The neurosciences and psychotherapy	1	Presenter/practitioner interest
Women are leadership	1	
Evidence-based practice	1	Faculty mission to encourage evidence based practice
Workplace violence	1	Layoffs high in our metropolitan area
Co-occurring disorders	1	
All postlicense workshops	1	Required to keep LCSW
Disorders of attachment	1	Expressed interest
Intro to world religion	1	Increased diversity in state
Infant/early childhood mental health certificate	1	
Contemporary approaches to dementia care	1	Customer survey showed demand
Assessment and Tx of non-suicidal disorders	1	License requirements and market driven
TBI, children of deployed soldiers, etc	1	
Build a community at work	1	
Play therapy techniques	1	Requested for an agency on-site program
Leadership samples, series for beginners	1	Experienced managers
Medical insurance debate	1	
Licensure preparation	1	Expressed Interest
Webinar	1	First time offering
Prescription drug abuse	1	Increased incidence of Rx drug abuse in state
Boys and girls at risk	1	
Cyber Bullying	1	
Helping children with trauma, crisis, and grief	1	License requirements and market driven
How to tell when people are telling the truth	1	
Grief and trauma counseling	1	
Mutual story telling techniques	1	Faculty member with this expertise
Illness	1	
Therapeutic milieu	1	Economic collapse, foreclosures, etc. have increased housing needs and therefore improved services
Yoga, meaningfulness, and journaling as interventions	1	The stress
Autism	1	
Educational debt relief	1	To help people with their education student loans

day workshops reported to be offered was 54 (n=21). The maximum number of half day workshops offered in one year was 300, and the minimum offered was three. The maximum number of full day workshops offered in one year was 280, and the fewest number was one. As for numbers of attendees to these workshops, the average total number of individuals to half day workshops per year was 1050 (n=16), and the average total attendees reported to full day workshops was 1594 (n=18). The highest number of annual attendees to half day workshops in a year was 7000, and the fewest was 60. The highest annual total of attendees to full day workshops was 9000, and the least was 100.

Technology

The survey also included questions regarding

other resources available to programs. In particular, participants were asked to report on the availability of technological resources. To respond, participants marked all the approaches available to them (see figure 4). The most common technological resources available to programs were websites (n=26) and the ability to make course postings available online (n=21). Online courses (n=8), course management and/or online registration (n=7), distance or correspondence learning (n=5), a mixture of online classroom courses (n=4), online marketing resources (n=2), and webinars (n=1) were all reported less frequently.

Marketing

To learn about the marketing and advertising methods used to publicize workshops and courses, participants were asked to mark whether or

Table 13
CE Courses cancelled and reasons why

Topic	Frequency Mentioned*	Reason
Grant writing	3	Lack of interest
Conflict Resolution	2	Low Attendance, done for many years, taking a break from it
Topics on aging	2	
Money and Empowerment	1	
Group work	1	
Couples therapy	1	Low attendance
Death	1	Low attendance
Domestic violence	1	Low attendance
Research update in interpersonal violence	1	Low attendance
SW administrative management	1	Too many other options for social workers
Information technology for nonprofits/managers	1	Lack of interest
Suicide assessment and intervention	1	
Health disparities	1	
Strategic fundraising	1	
Disruptive behavior disorders in children	1	Had to cancel twice
Family caregivers	1	Low attendance
SW practice with Asian families	1	Low attendance
Creative professional practice	1	Lack of interest
Supervision	1	
Resistant clients	1	Had to cancel twice
Ethics with children	1	Offered too many times recently
Leadership skills	1	Lack of interest
Macro content	1	Unsure if need is present

Table 15
Willingness of respondents to share details of hot topics

(n=23)		
	Frequency of Response	Valid Percent
No	8	34.8
Yes	9	39.1
I'd like more information	6	26.1

not they had employed certain approaches. To respond, participants marked all the approaches they had used (see figure 5). The most common marketing mediums used were posting information to an internet website (n=24) and distributing information via email distribution lists (n=20). Other methods used with some regularity were program booklets (n=17) and targeted mailings (n=16). Methods used less were direct marketing emails (n=13), direct contact (n=13), and advertising in publications (n=12). The approach used the least was agency fliers (n=9).

In addition to these methods, respondents reported other marketing and advertising approaches used. One individual mentioned using Twitter to communicate available workshops. Another person indicated that when courses are offered in partnership with other organizations that class information might be posted to the partner's website.

Course Topics

One of the central purposes of the survey was to ask respondents regarding the course topics offered by the CE programs. Participants were specifically asked what "hot topics" their programs offered (see table 11). Each respondent was allowed to report three hot topic classes. The most frequently mentioned hot topic was an ethics course (n=9). The second most frequently reported hot topics mentioned were licensure review (n=5) and supervision courses (n=5). Following these courses were motivational interviewing (n=3); cognitive behavioral therapy (n=2); trauma related issues (n=2), and clinical practice, law, and, and social work (n=2). The remaining hot topics mentioned were

only mentioned once each.

In addition to hot topics, new topics being offered by CE programs were also asked (see table 12). Each respondent was allowed to report three new topic courses. The most frequently reported new topic reported was trauma and related issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (n=4). Following this response, survey participants also reported that new course topics were Spanish for social workers (n=3), topics related to aging (n=3), and spirituality in social work (n=3). Two respondents reported financial social work and financial literacy were also new courses their programs offered. The remaining new topics reported were mentioned once each.

In addition to hot and new topics, the survey also asked participants to report topics cancelled and a reason why the course was cancelled (see table 13). Each respondent was allowed to report three courses that were cancelled. The most commonly reported course that was cancelled was grant writing (n=3). Courses on conflict resolution (n=2) and topics on aging (n=2) were also reported to have been cancelled. The remaining course cancellations were each mentioned once.

Lastly, participants were asked if they would be willing to share the details of their hot topic CE courses by filling out a description sheet to be featured in, *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*. Twenty-three individuals responded to the question—eight (34.8%) indicated they would not like to share information on their hot topic; nine (39.1%) reported they would like to share their hot topic information, and six (26.1%) said they

would like more information (see table 15).

Limitations

One limitation with respect to the above reported data analysis should be noted. Due to the fact that this survey was exploratory, the formatting of the survey instrument allowed respondents to write in open ended answers to some questions, including those that asked quantitative answers. As a result of this flexibility, a few respondents provided answers to questions in numerical ranges. For instance, when asked what participants pay for attending CE workshops, one respondent reported \$0-300. In order to calculate and report statistics of central tendency (e.g. means, modes, etc.), the midpoint of this response was entered in as the amount that participants paid for courses. That is, \$150 was entered in as the cost of the workshop to the dataset. In those few other cases where ranges were reported by participants, similar midpoint estimations were inputted for calculation purposes.

Discussion and Implications

CE programs are filling a need within the social work community. As was noted in the above introduction, many social workers are required by their respective states and provinces to attend CE courses in order to maintain professional competency and skills. Despite this importance, there is a certain amount of variation in these requirements from each state or province, as is evident from the survey results that range from no required hours to 50. This disparity seems to indicate that some states and provinces place a greater emphasis or need for CEs than do others. Nevertheless, in spite of this wide variation, survey results also showed that BSWs and MSWs are required to take an average of 27 hours each, and advanced or clinical practice social workers were required to attend an average of 31 total hours, which likely could indicate an important investment of time for social work professionals in skill building and retention.

CE Staffing

As a result of the necessity of these education hours, many individuals are at work within CE programs to provide learning opportunities. The leadership of the CE programs surveyed is com-

prised mostly by directors (n=20) and faculty members (n=11). However, nearly half of respondents also acknowledged wearing more than one hat within their institution. Fortunately though, CE program leadership also reported having a number of years of experience in their positions, with about half of respondents having more than five years in their current position. So, the heavy responsibilities of their jobs are likely on capable shoulders. In connection with work responsibilities, program leadership also operates with a relatively small number of staff for the most part. Despite one program who indicated employing nine full-time professional staff members, the average number of full-time staff members working in CE program surveyed was two.

What is noteworthy is that in spite of these programs operating with somewhat limited staff members—more than half of those who responded to the survey reported to be entirely self-supporting (n=15, 57.7 %) or partially self-supporting (n=10, 38.5%). Such a model of self-sustaining program operation could certainly carry with it a large workload. In fact, this high volume of work was reflected in the number of courses reported to be offered by programs each year. Respondents indicated that the average number of full day program attendees each year was 1594, and the average number of full day programs offered each year was 54. Similarly, survey respondents also reported that they had an average of 1050 half day course attendees each year, with an average of 41 half day workshops annually. This pace of classes offered equates into running nearly two courses every week of the year. The courses offered by CE programs also appear to be reasonable in terms of the costs participants pay in order to attend classes. The average cost for a full day workshop is \$189, and the average cost for a half day workshop is \$81. However, full day workshops can be attended for as little as \$125 or \$75 for a half day course.

Presenter Cost

Delivering content is often not just a matter of making the decision to offer courses and then scheduling and providing them. One of the most important aspects of offering courses is the indi-

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vidual who is responsible for teaching or presenting on the assigned topic. The average fee paid to presenters for a full day course was \$823, and the average fee paid to presenters for a half day course was \$375. However, some fees for full day courses were as low as \$300 and as high as \$3,000. Fees for half day presenters were as low as \$150 and as high as \$800. Therefore, providing high-quality information with regularity could represent a significant cost for CE program administration.

Technology

In addition to expenses for presenters, resources and teaching tools available to programs also have a large impact on how programs may be able to deliver instruction. One of the most important mediums today for the delivery of education is technology. The CE programs surveyed in this project reported some availability of technology. For instance, many respondents (n=26) reported to have websites and online course postings (n=21). But, beyond those means, only a small number of participants offered courses online (n=8) or had the ability to do course management and/or course registration management electronically (n=7). Only one respondent indicated to have webinars available as a means to take courses. With limited technologically-based tools for delivering and managing CE hours, programs may be hindered in being able to cater to social workers looking to engage in online learning environments as well those who might prefer to make course arrangements via the internet. It is likely that as programs continue to develop and utilize technological means, they may be able to draw the interest of more social workers in enrolling in courses.

Marketing

Many survey respondents indicated that it is through such electronic means that they market their programs. In particular, 24 participants reported to use their program websites as a means to market/advertise their courses and workshops. Similarly, 20 individuals reported to have some form of email list through which they distributed information about their course offerings. Fewer respondents indicated to use paper-based methods for advertising and marketing, such as booklets

(n=17), targeted mailings, and direct marketing mailings (n=13). One important aspect which was not asked in this survey was which means of publicity were most effective in drawing in participants. With such information, it is possible that programs could more easily identify the most effective methods for attracting participants.

Hot Topics

Notwithstanding the level of importance of publicizing CE courses and workshops to participants, the topics offered within these classes could arguably be one of the most significant factors in drawing in those who might participate. Respondents to the survey were asked to share hot topics for their program. Among the responses provided, the hottest topics offered were on ethics (n=9), license review classes (n=5), and supervision (n=5). The popularity of these workshops could likely be explained by that fact social workers take these courses in connection with obtaining or maintaining licensure. Therefore, clearly aligning workshops and classes with licensing requirements could be a practical and logical pursuit for CE programs. Classes based on such requirements could likely stimulate attendance and remove some doubt as to whether offered topics will be appropriate or relevant.

In addition to hot topics coordinated with licensing, programs also mentioned offering other hot topics. Motivational interviewing (n=3) and cognitive behavioral therapy (n=2) were also mentioned in this category. One reason given as to why these particular courses were offered was because they are evidence-based practices. With the growing fervor within the field of social work to deliver evidence-based interventions, it is possible that practitioners would be interested in education that might enhance their ability to provide such research based modalities. In connection with approaches to treating clients, two survey participants mentioned trauma and related issues as hot topics, and one respondent mentioned veterans' issues and mental health as a hot topic. Looking at these topics conjointly, issues relevant to troops returning from war who have experienced trauma could continue to be increasingly popular due to rising needs.

New Topics

Beyond hot topics, survey respondents also were asked about new topics offered in 2009. Of the many responses given, the most commonly reported topic in this category was that of trauma and related issues, such as post traumatic stress disorder (n=4). As was discussed in the previous section, the need for information on this topic seems to stem from the growth in concern and need for services to individuals experiencing this trauma, such as returning troops. Other new topics reported were Spanish for social workers (n=3) and topics related to aging (n=3). Like trauma related issues, it seems likely that momentum for this CE workshop lies within the increasing populations of individuals who speak Spanish and the large swell in the numbers of elderly persons in the North America.

Also mentioned by more than one respondent was spirituality in social work and social services (n=3). Spirituality has gained substantial support in the fields of social work and social services over the past years (Canda, 2009; Tirrito, 2002), and this finding is consistent with that trend. Lastly, financial social work and financial literacy (n=2) were also mentioned as a new topic being disseminated in CE programs. This particular issue is highly relevant as a result of the global economic crisis. Social workers could be one line of assistance for those individuals who have lost homes, employment, and savings as a result of the economic meltdown (Birkenmaier & Curley, 2009; Simmons, Butterfield, Soska, Chisanga, & Harding, 2009).

Discontinued Topics

In contrast to popular or cutting edge topics, participants were also asked to report which topics they were discontinuing. Such information could be valuable to other programs contemplating whether or not to test out a topic but do not know if the social work community will be receptive. The most commonly reported topic reported as being discontinued was grant writing (n=3). Some respondents indicated there was a lack of interest in this course from social workers. Such a lack of interest from social workers for this particular course could stem from the fact that clinicians or

those seeking direct practice skills might be those most interested in CE courses for licensure. Because grant writing could be viewed as more of an administrative function of agencies or other organizations, social workers pursuing direct practice skills might not have great need or interest in attending such mezzo-level courses.

Conflict resolution was another topic that respondents (n=2) cited as cancelled. While there was mention of the discontinuation of this class due to a lack of interest, one participant also reported the course had been offered for many years, and the CE program was simply taking a break. With this explanation, one might infer that offering such a course could be a good idea due to its apparent consistent offering in one location over years, and that it was the program who was taking a break from the course rather than some other issue related to disinterest from practitioners.

Lastly, two individuals reported cancelling courses on aging related topics. This is a somewhat interesting report in light of the growing need for gerontological services in North America and the above report that other programs are offering this class as a new topic. Such discord in the data from this survey underscores the potential need for communication among CE programs. It is certainly likely the programs planning to offer new courses on aging could benefit from a discussion with those abandoning the topics. Such conversations could help new programs avoid pitfalls or issues that made offering a course on aging unsuccessful. Likewise, such a conversation could benefit those programs leaving the aging course behind, as they could use information from other programs to potentially revitalize courses.

Conclusion

Continuing education for social workers is an important part of maintaining and enhancing the quality of social work education and services (NASW, 2003). The importance of such educational experiences is made evident by the fact many states and provinces require CE hours for maintaining professional competency and skills. As a response to this, organizations offer a variety

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of CE courses to social workers. However, despite the great amount of work that goes into operating these programs and providing CE opportunities, CE programs are not aware of what others in their field are doing and how others manage their CE programs. Because of this disconnection, *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education* carried out a survey of social work CE programs affiliated with CENet. The results of this survey portray that CE programs accomplish a great deal of work with modest (and meager in some cases) resources. However, notwithstanding this challenge, classes offered are reasonable in cost and compensate presenters adequately. As well, some programs have technological resources available for offering classes, while others provide more traditional learning opportunities. CE programs also offer a number of highly relevant and useful courses to social workers for licensing purposes, skill enhancement, and to inform about increasing population needs.

As CE programs learn more about the operation and practices of their colleague programs, it is likely they will be able to build upon the services they currently provide and train social workers in years to come to a higher more proficient level. In turn, social workers with these enhanced abilities will better be able to provide services for the needs of their communities and clients.

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