

Education

Master of Social Work

(Graduate Certificate – Interpersonal Trauma Studies)
University of Denver, 2011

License

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

CSW.09923429, State of Colorado

BA – Criminology

(Minor – Psychology)

University of Denver, 2009

Clinical, Research, and Education Experience

University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work/Adjunct Professor

January, 2014 – current

- Help students describe and discuss theoretical approaches to trauma intervention and recovery
- Facilitate students' understanding of key contributions and controversies in current empirical research in the areas of traumatic experience, recovery, and effectiveness of trauma interventions
- Aid students in understanding the basics of working with disaster and trauma
- Help students apply principles and skills of intervention in ways that meet the unique needs of each person, couple, family, group, or community
- Encourage students to actively participate in methods of self-care that respect one's limitations in trauma work, recognize the need to find effective supervision and consultation, and use self-evaluation for the effects of secondary trauma
- Help students develop skills in identifying, understanding, and using empirical evidence in support of their social work practice
- Aid students in developing a familiarity with basic research concepts such as research designs, measurement, and sampling so as to critique the utility of evidence for practice
- Engage students in critically examining available evidence for biases and relevance for under-served populations

Denver VA Medical Center/Clinical and Research Social Worker

February, 2012 - current

VISN 19 Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC)

- Conceptualize and develop innovative strategies for researching suicide with the goal of reducing suicidal ideation and behaviors in the Veteran population
- Assist in the dissemination of useful information about suicide prevention in ways that are accessible to Veterans and the community at large, and evaluate strategies to translate research-informed practices into everyday care
- Provide clinical care for Veterans who are experiencing suicidal ideation and/or suicidal behaviors in addition to a wide range of complicated medical, psychiatric, emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial problems by conducting reviews of the medical record, assessments via clinical interview and psychological testing measures, and therapy
- Coordinate clinical research activities and administer study measures to participants who have suicidal ideation and/or suicidal behaviors and who have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or histories of other psychiatric conditions
- Project management including organizing and maintaining study processes and operations including data collection and database management, grant funding, cost allocation tracking, and compliance with study submissions, updates, reporting, and continuing review requirements for Institutional Review Board (IRB) grants
- Consult with medical center staff on a wide variety of clinical research issues related to recruiting and assessing patients

Greenwood Village Police Department/Volunteer

June, 2011 – November, 2012

Victim Assistance

- Deliver clinical crisis interventions when responding to crime scenes
- Provide victim rights information and resources to culturally diverse victims and families
- Utilize strengths based approaches to empathize with, educate, and empower those who have been victimized
- Provide training on clinical skills and working with traumatized populations to current volunteers

Metro Crisis Services/Crisis Clinician

January, 2012 – November, 2012

- Receive incoming calls from clients, families, law enforcement, and other community helpers
- Assess situations and behaviors as presented including suicidality, severe and persistent mental illness, and substance abuse disorders
- Counsel and intervene with callers to defuse crisis intensity and prevent self-harm or harm to others
- Determine and recommend appropriate interventions and deliver clinical crisis interventions including safety planning
- Provide information and referrals to available community programs
- Initiate follow-up calls to check on client welfare and encourage service linkage

Denver VA Medical Center/SW Intern

September, 2010 – June, 2011

PTSD-Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PTSD-RRTP)

- Establish and maintain effective therapeutic relationships with Veterans in the PTSD-RRTP and/or their families
- Work with Veterans who are experiencing issues related to PTSD in addition to a wide range of complicated medical, psychiatric, emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial problems
- Complete thorough psychosocial assessments to determine the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and/or their families
- Actively participate as a member of the interdisciplinary treatment team
- Use of medical and mental health diagnoses, disabilities, and treatment procedures, including acute, chronic and traumatic illnesses, common medications and their effects/side effects, and medical terminology
- Facilitate discharge planning through collaboration with Veterans and their families as well as interdisciplinary treatment team members to ensure that appropriate discharge plans are executed in a timely manner
- Serve as a liaison between Veterans and/or their families and VA and community resources in order to ensure thorough delivery of services.
- Implement treatment modalities, provide individual and group counseling and/or supportive groups for Veterans and families
- Provide consultation and education to Veterans and their families regarding community resources, VA benefits and specialty programs, and advance directives
- Provide consultation to other treatment team and staff members regarding psychosocial needs of Veterans and/or their families and the impact of the identified psychosocial problems on the Veteran's health care planning, compliance with treatment, and discharge planning
- Maintain knowledge of Veteran's benefits and services, community resources, and process for making appropriate referrals to community and other governmental programs or agencies
- Provide case management services to Veterans and their families throughout the continuum of care
- Organize and conduct admissions procedures

Colorado Department of Corrections/SW Intern

September, 2009 – June, 2010

Mental Health Department

- Triage presenting mental health issues
- Conduct brief and rapid assessments and/or full biopsychosocial evaluations of offenders
- Intervene accordingly by providing crisis intervention, individual psychotherapy, and referrals

- Recognize and appreciate the special needs of an adult correctional population
- Assess and develop treatment plans for individual offenders
- Develop negotiation and moderation skills to help ensure the provision of appropriate mental health services
- Intervene with and stabilize offenders experiencing emergency mental health needs
- Maintain electronic health records

Rape Assistance and Awareness Program/Volunteer

2007 – 2008

Sexual Assault Hotline

- Receive incoming calls from primary and secondary survivors of sexual trauma
- Assess presenting situations and behaviors including trauma responses and suicidality
- Counsel and intervene with callers to provide support and defuse crisis intensity
- Provide information and referrals to available community resources and encourage service linkage

Publications and Presentations

Nazem, S., Billera, M., & Wortzel, H.S. (2015, January). *Therapeutic Risk Management*. 2015 VA/DoD Suicide Prevention Conference, Dallas, TX.

Billera, M. (2014, December). *PTSD, Substance Use, and Suicide Risk*. Oral presentation for Mental Health Partners, Boulder, CO.

Billera, M. (2014, September). *Suicide in Military and Veteran Populations: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning*. Video teleconferencing presentation for The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Matarazzo, B.M., Farro, S.A., Billera, M., Brenner, L.A. (2014, September). *Evaluating the Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) Program: Preliminary Findings*. Poster presentation at the 2014 Colorado Psychological Association Conference, Copper Mountain, CO.

Billera, M., Gerard, G.R., Pease, J.L., Clemans, T.A., Davidson, C.L., & Olson-Madden, J.H. (2014, July). *Seeking Safety for Suicide Prevention: An Interventional Pilot Study for Veterans with Suicidal Ideation, PTSD, and Substance Use Disorders*. Poster session presented at NASW 2014 National Conference, Social Work: Courage, Hope and Leadership. Washington, DC.

Billera, M. & Bahraini, N.H., (2014, June). *The Self-Directed Violence Classification System: Utilizing a common language to facilitate recovery*. 2014 22nd Annual PSRANM Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Homaifar, B.Y. & Billera, M. (2014, May). *Introduction to conceptualizing suicide risk in those with TBI*. Video teleconferencing presentation for Vet Centers, Denver, CO.

Homaifar, B.Y. & Billera, M. (2014, May). *Introduction to conceptualizing suicide risk in those with TBI*. Video teleconferencing presentation for VA Social Work Lunch and Learn, San Antonio, TX.

Billera, M., Gerard, G.R., Clemans, T.A., Pease, J.L., Davidson, C.L., & Olson-Madden, J.H. (2014, April). *Seeking Safety for Suicide Prevention: A Pilot Study*. Poster session presented at VA Research Days, Denver, CO.

Matarazzo, B.M., Farro, S.A., Billera, M., Brenner, L.A. (2014, April). *Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME): A Model for Assisting Suicidal Veterans with the Transition from Inpatient to Outpatient Settings*. Poster session presented at VA Research Days, Denver, CO.

Homaifar, B.Y., Billera, M., Barnes, S.M., Bahraini, N., & Brenner, L.A. (in press). Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide Through the Lens of Executive Dysfunction. In G. Sullivan, L. James, & B. Bongar (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Suicide in Military and Veteran Populations*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Matarazzo, B.B., Farro, S.A., Billera, M., Brenner, L. (2014, April). *Home-based mental health evaluation (HOME): A model for assisting suicidal Veterans with the transition from inpatient to outpatient settings*. Oral paper presentation at the 47th Annual American Association of Suicidology Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

Homaifar, B.Y., Billera, M., & Bahraini, N.H. (2013, November). Conceptualizing suicide risk in traumatic brain injury. *DoD/VA Clinical Approaches-System Dynamics Summit*. Washington, DC.

Matarazzo, B. E., Farro, S., Barnes, S. M., Billera, M., & Brenner, L. (2013, March). *Home-based mental health evaluation (HOME): A novel in-home suicide prevention strategy for high risk Veterans*. University of Colorado School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Junior Faculty Poster Presentation, Denver, CO.

Farro, S.A., Matarazzo, B.B., Barnes, S.M., Billera, M., Brenner, L. (2013, February). *Home-based mental health evaluation (HOME): A novel in-home suicide prevention strategy for high risk Veterans*. Poster presentation, 2013 Rehabilitation Psychology Conference, Jacksonville, FL.

Research Support

(Bahraini) 10/1/2014 – current

Veterans Health Administration, Office of Rural Health

Suicide Prevention for Rural Veterans: A Community Based Approach

This is a 3-year multiphase pilot project that is aimed at integrating individual and community-based strategies into a comprehensive suicide prevention program that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual rural communities. It is designed to enhance VA and community partnerships to decrease suicide risk among rural Veterans by improving access to both VA and community-based care, resources and support services. Grant # N19-FY15Q1-S1-P01432.

Amount: \$424,799

Role: Co-Investigator

(Matarazzo) 10/1/2014 – current

Veterans Health Administration, Office of Rural Health

Home Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) Program with Rural Veterans at Risk for Suicide

The purpose of the project is to conduct and evaluate a feasibility clinical demonstration project of the Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME) program in order to mitigate suicide risk and enhance mental health treatment engagement with some of the most underserved and at-risk Veterans within the VISN 6 catchment area- rural Veterans recently discharged from a psychiatric hospitalization. Grant # N06-FY15Q1-S1-P01327.

Amount: \$285,554

Role: Co-Investigator

(Billera) 4/1/2014 – 9/30/2014

Office of Mental Health Services, Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office

Partnering with Law Enforcement to Reduce Risk and Facilitate Treatment Engagement among Justice Involved Veterans

This is a multi-phase suicide prevention outreach program. The project consists of training members of the law enforcement community to identify, deescalate, and use discretion in interacting with at-risk Veterans with the

goal of treatment engagement as opposed to arrest and incarceration. The project includes curriculum development, training implementation and program evaluation.

Amount: \$14,158

Role: Principle Investigator

(Billera)

11/11/2013 – current

Veterans Integrated Services Network 19 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center

Seeking Safety for Suicide Prevention: A Pilot Study

The purpose of this pilot project is to examine the acceptability and feasibility of a modified version of Seeking Safety, an evidence-based, dual diagnosis treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders (SUDs). The modification includes safety planning and a focus on reducing suicidal ideation and behavior in addition to reducing symptoms of PTSD and SUDs.

Amount: No salary support

Role: Principle Investigator

(Matarazzo, Oslin, Ganzini, Adler)

9/21/2013 – current

U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command MOMRP

Military Suicide Research Consortium

Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME): A Multi-Site Trial

This is a multi-site, effectiveness and implementation trial of the HOME program, which aims to increase treatment engagement with aftercare and decrease suicidal ideation following psychiatric hospitalization.

Primary Award: W81XWH-10-2-0178

Amount: \$1,516,055

Role: Co-Investigator

(Matarazzo)

3/01/2012 – 9/30/2013

Office of Mental Health Services, Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office

Home-Based Mental Health Evaluation (HOME): A Model for Assisting Suicidal Veterans with the Transition from Inpatient to Outpatient Settings

The purpose of this pilot project is to examine the effectiveness, acceptability and feasibility of the HOME program, which aims to increase treatment engagement with aftercare and decrease suicidal ideation following psychiatric hospitalization.

Amount: \$379,600

Role: Project Study Coordinator

(Brenner, Holloway, Brown, Stanley, Currier, Knox)

2/13/2012 – 9/30/2014

U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command MOMRP

A Brief Intervention to Reduce Suicide Risk in Military Service Members and Veterans

The goal is to evaluate the efficacy of the safety planning intervention on suicide ideation, suicide-related coping, and attitudes toward help seeking for hospitalized military personnel at high suicide risk.

Primary Award: W81XWH-09-2-0129

Amount: \$305,152

Role: Site Study Coordinator

Current Professional Memberships

- National Association of Social Workers
 - American Association of Suicidology
 - International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
 - Crisis Intervention Teams Association of Colorado
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Professional Contributions

Conference Planning Committees

- 2015 – Annual DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference. Dallas, TX.

Reviewer for Conferences

- 2015 – 48th Annual American Association of Suicidology Conference. Atlanta, GA.