

Professor Alissa Mallow and Professor Richard Holody created the following Blackboard assignment for two linked sections of a graduate course in “Social Work Administration,” SWK 729.

Discussion Board Assignment

The instructors began by posting a description of an imaginary social work agency and five special units responsible for different aspects of running the agency. Embedded within each description was a problem unique to that area of the agency. The class was divided into groups of four to five students with each group assigned to a different unit. Each group was asked to name, discuss, and address their unit’s problem in the public forum.

Description of the Agency and Five Special Units:

“Our Agency” located in the Northern Bronx, has an excellent reputation. The strength of Our Agency comes from the leadership and staff, who are hard working and very dedicated to helping the clients transform their lives, fighting social injustice, and continuing staff education. Funding for the agency comes from Medicaid, Medicare, fee-for-service, the Mayor’s office, the Board of Education, and the Federal government. Our Agency has a yearly operating budget of \$15 million. Our agency is licensed and certified by the Joint Commission on Accreditation for Hospitals and Other Organizations (JCAHO), Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), and Department of Social Services (DSS). The following is a description of each of our units. Each of the units has a wonderful tradition of posting their discussions on the Our Agency website (a.k.a. BlackBoard) so that others can see and interact as necessary.

Unit 1: Better Treatment through Advocacy

This unit mobilizes clients to form civic and tenant groups to better the Bronx neighborhoods in which they live. They work in conjunction with local business leaders, local medical/dental services, area schools, and the local police precinct toward this effort. Currently they are having trouble working with the local schools. Recently, the Board of Education, which provided \$1.6 million dollars to fund this program, cut the budget in half leaving them with decisions to make as to how to move forward.

Unit 2: Kids Are Our Future

This unit works with the neighborhood youth centers and runs groups at Our Agency on various issues that effect urban youth. Recently, the leaders of this unit wrote a grant that directed at programming for youth eligible for services at Our Agency.

Unit 3: Adult Day Services

This unit provides psychiatric care, individual, group, and family psychotherapy, and substance abuse counseling to the adults who seek services from Our Agency. This unit, which brings in most of the revenue for Our Agency has recently lost four staff members. They must decide on staffing.