**Competitive Innovative Research (CIR) Award for**

***Exploring Financial Capability Needs in Participants of Maryland Drug Courts***

Christine Callahan, PhD, LCSW-C (research faculty for UMSSW’s Financial Social Work Initiative) received a UMSSW Competitive Innovative Research (CIR) Award for a project entitled “Exploring Financial Capability Needs in Participants of Maryland Drug Courts.”FSWI Steering Committee member Anthony Carter, MSW (2018 from UMSSW) and current MSW student Julie Cronan will be joining Dr. Callahan in this year-long project as research team members. This project runs from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

The purpose of this proposed study is to explore the financial capability needs of individuals participating in Maryland drug courts. There has been only a small amount of research done on these issues within the overall criminal justice system. Yet their financial needs may be significant, especially as they seek to resolve issues within their lives and get on a more stable financial and psychosocial track. Research has shown that with fewer opportunities for employment and reduced, more precarious financial stability, recidivism in this population is high; people tend to return to crime out of desperation (Berg & Huebner, 2011).

In order to better understand the financial needs and realities of these individuals, this project seeks to answer the research questions described next through qualitative methods. These research questions: 1) What do those participating in Maryland drug courts see as their financial needs? 2) What is the financial history of those participating in Maryland drug courts, and what is their current understanding of financial well-being? 3) What challenges do they see in achieving their financial well-being? 4) What do they view as helpful with respect to their financial well-being? 5) How would they characterize financial stress in their lives?Maryland drug courts are a unique and valuable setting in which to explore questions around financial need. For more information on these courts, see <https://www.courts.state.md.us/sites/default/files/import/opsc/dtc/pdfs/manuals/familydependencydrugtreatmentmanual.pdf>).

Maryland drug courts are also touted by the state of Maryland in the above website as providing a “dynamic alternative” and a non-traditional approach to addressing eligible drug-type cases and to relieving the backlog of drug-related cases in the criminal justice system, and presently they are operational in over 36 Maryland districts with more in the planning stages. In addition to addressing drug charges and ensuring treatment, they also integrate psychosocial and case management services into the cadre of comprehensive service provision, and these include such important items as AIDS Counseling; Life Skills Training; Anger Management; Mediation or Yoga; Childcare; Money Management; Cognitive Behavior Therapy; Parenting Skills Training; Community Support Programs; Self-Help Groups; Educational Training; Sexual, Emotional, Domestic Abuse Counseling; Family Counseling; Social/Athletic Activities; Housing Assistance; Vocational Training and Placement; and Legal Assistance. The Money Management component of services, however, has not been fully fleshed out and integrated and presently may not provide robust financial education at a helpful, effective level.

Exploring financial needs within this population is warranted not only to better understand drug court participants’ self-perceived needs, priorities, constraints, and strengths, but also to bolster services within the Money Management realm.

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