# The *Grand Challenges* for Social Work Initiative

**Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW**
**Dean, University of Maryland, School of Social Work and President, AASWSW**

**Washington University in St Louis, MO**
**September 15, 2016**

**American Academy**
**of Social Work & Social Welfare**

# Overview

- The How and Why of the Grand Challenges

- The Building of the BUZZ

- Re-Focusing on Policy

- Possible Paths Forward

# AASWSW

- Established in 2009 through combined effort of 6 major social work organizations

    – 6 original members has grown to 99

    – Intended to offer our nation a scientific resource for scholarship on social matters (as a complement to NAS, NAE, and other Academies)
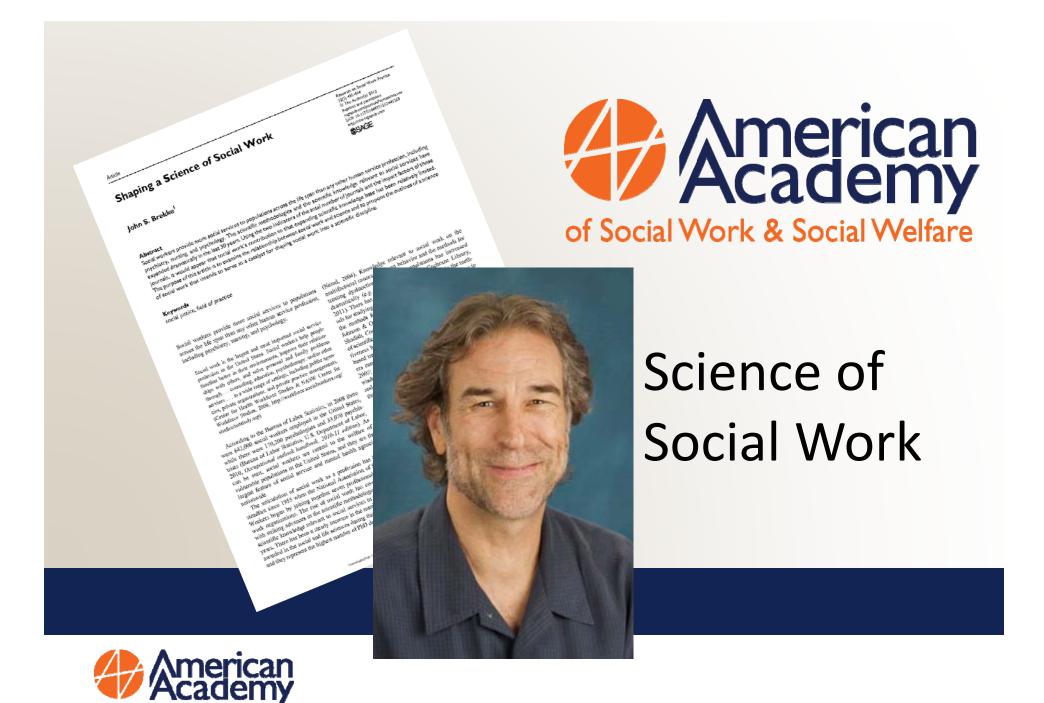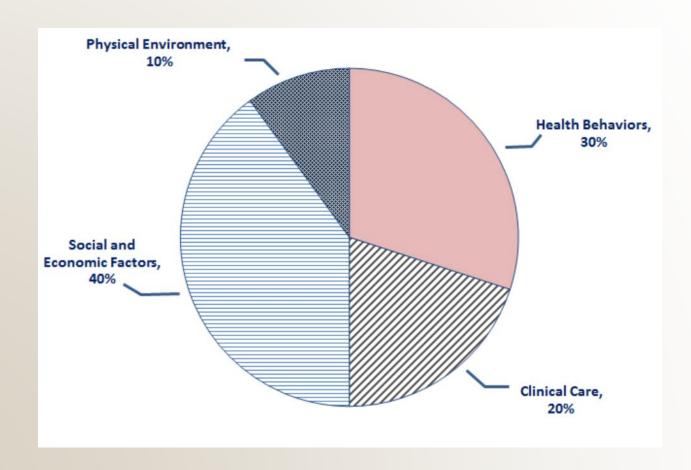
# Grand Challenges is the First Major Initiative

American Academy
of Social Work & Social Welfare

Science of
Social Work

American Academy
of Social Work & Social Welfare

THE SOCIAL IS FUNDAMENTAL

**Modifiable Factors That Influence Health**

# … And Nearly Everything Else

- Climate Change
- Mental Health
- Educational Outcomes
- Peace
- Longevity

- Family Functioning
- Crime
- Opportunity
- Justice
- Brain Development

American Academy
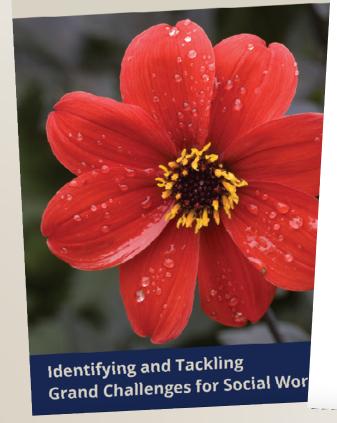of Social Work & Social Welfare

CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO

**American Academy** of Social Work & Social Welfare

**Identifying and Tackling Grand Challenges for Social Work**

# Identifying and Tackling Grand Challenges for Social Work

Edwina S. Uehara, Richard P. Barth, Steve Olson, Richard F. Catalano, J. David Hawkins, Susan P. Kemp, Paula S. Nurius, Deborah K. Padgett, and Michael Sherraden

### OVERVIEW

On August 8-10, 2012, a small group of social work faculty, deans, and leaders of national social work organizations gathered together at the IslandWood Conference Center on Bainbridge Island, Washington, to grapple with social work's role in shaping 21st century society. The first day of the IslandWood roundtable focused on the Science of Social Work. The second day, conceptualized and led by deans and faculty from the University of Washington, moved from a general examination of social work science to a proposal: that of producing a set of grand challenges to galvanize the field of social work (Uehara, 2012). "Grand Challenges" are highly ambitious yet achievable goals for society that mobilize a profession, capture the public's imagination, and require innovation and breakthroughs in science, technology and practice to accomplish (Kalil, 2012; Uehara, Flynn, Fong, & Brekke, 2013 ).

Roundtable presenters reviewed the concept and history of Grand Challenges and discussed possible approaches, benefits, and risks involved in the development of Grand Challenges for Social Work. A recent case exemplar—the National Academy of Engineering's Grand Challenges initiative—was presented and reviewed. Historical examples of social work's "grand accomplishments" were offered, providing evidence of Social Work's capacity to bring science and know-how to bear on tackling seemingly intractable societal challenges. Presenters then described societal problem areas that might lend themselves to the development of grand challenges. The intent was not to build a list of specific grand challenges, but rather to explore the idea's potential to greatly benefit society and propel the field forward.

By the end of the day, participants were in agreement that the creation of a grand challenges for social work initiative might both galvanize the profession and create transdisciplinary communities of innovators who work together on to accomplish shared and compelling societal goals. Grand challenges could capture the interest of the general public while advancing the science and practice of social work. Participants acknowledged that adopting a grand challenges approach has risks: it places demands on individuals and organizations – and success is not guaranteed. Yet the potential benefits may greatly outweigh the risks. The history of social work offers many examples of great achievements, such as the Children's Bureau infant mortality campaign and the Program of Assertive Community Treatment, which can serve as models for addressing contemporary grand challenges. If the practical issues involved in developing grand

GRAND CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE
*Working Paper*

**American Academy** of Social Work & Social Welfare

Social is Fundamental:
Introduction and Context for Grand Challenges for Social

Grand Accomplishments in Social Work

American Academy
of Social Work & Social Welfare

- Big, compelling and important
- Amenable to analysis, assessment, improvement
- Demonstrable progress in a decade
- Cross-sector interdisciplinary collaboration
- Significant innovation

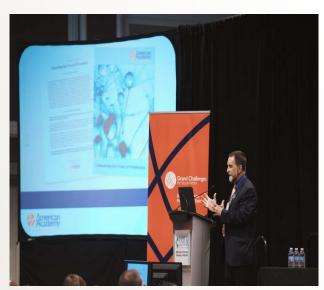| | |
|---|---|
| Ensure healthy development for all youth | Create social responses to a changing environment |
| Close the health gap | Harness technology for social good |
| Stop family violence | Promote smart decarceration |
| Advance long and productive lives | Reduce extreme economic inequality |
| Eradicate social isolation | Build financial capability for all |
| End homelessness | Achieve equal opportunity and justice |

# Successful GCs Launch at SSWR 2016!

# Grand Challenges Progress

After the Launch at SSWR, 2016 - we are **generating a BUZZ**.

Major Social Work Organizations are *on board, and actively supportive* (CSWE, GADE, NASW, NADD, NSWM, SSWR).

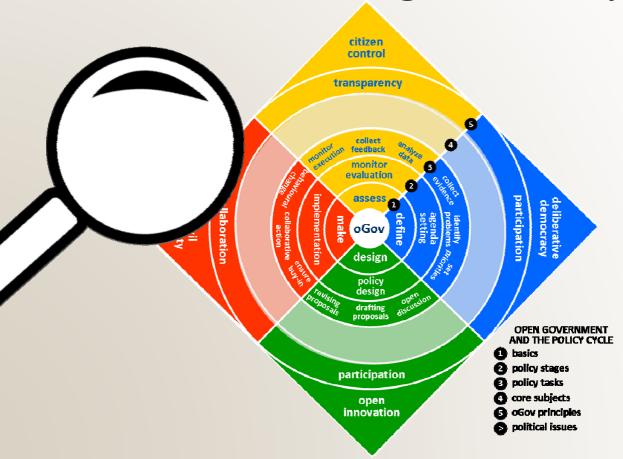American

# Social Change Through Practice

**Initially Practice Focused**

– Inventing New Interventions

– Going to Scale with Existing Interventions

# Re-Focusing on Policy

**Where Are We** and Where May We Be Going?

# SOCIAL INNOVATION *for* AMERICA'S RENEWAL

## Ideas, Evidence, *ACTION*

# Generating Information for Policy Making

# Social Change: Science-to-Policy

Filling Out the Current *Evidence-Based Policy Making* Framework

- Evidence Based Practice Expansion

Analyzing the Strength of Evidence of Solutions in  Comparison to the Sizes of the Problems

Articulating the Risk and Resilience Perspective and ROI of programs

American

# ddress Broad Array of Social Policies

- Age friendly communities
- Climate change and urban resilience
- Unlocking government data to guide prevention
- Prison sentencing and solitary confinement
- Employment creation and wealth building
- Zero tolerance policies in schools

# This Opportunity

1. Begin to articulate a policy agenda that captures our profession's attention (beyond narrower professional interests)
2. Start strategies to engage elected officials and government agencies
3. Communicate to engage external audiences, energize practitioners, and inspire new students to study social work

American

# Broader Set of Policy Tools

Beyond Advocacy Based on SW Values

– Interprofessional coalition building

– Integrated practice, research, and policy networks

– Social media impact for scientific solutions

– Mobilizing social work entities with a new unity of focus

American

That the profession will be unified in recognizing these 12 challenges and in its support for efforts to achieve measurable impact in the next decade!

American

imagine

Social Work is credited for lifting a Social Agenda and championing compelling policy changes
Social Work is organized nationally to advocate and influence the policy process
Social Workers are seen as critical to policy making
Social Work Science gains new respect

American

imagine that Corporations...

... adopt **_Grand Challenges_**

END HOMELESSNESS

American

*imagine*

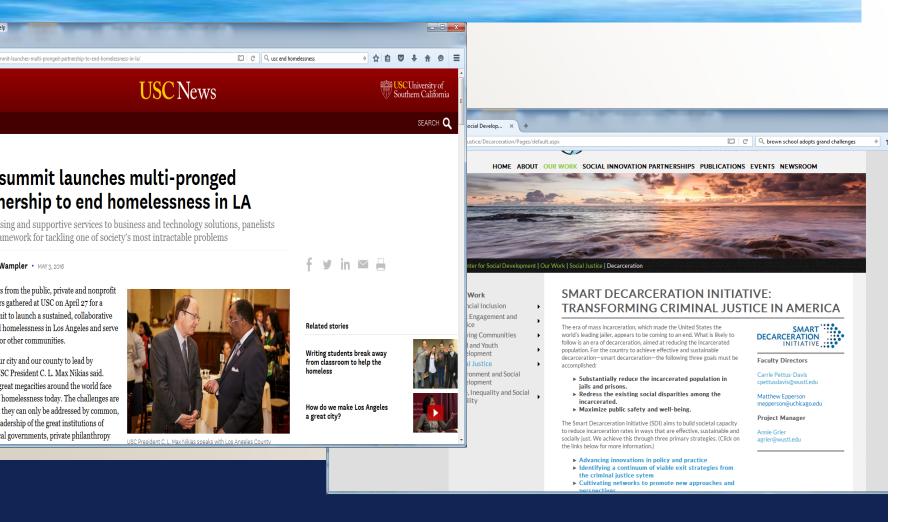## Strong National Practice Networks Emerge

GC Network Leads

Webinars will be scheduled with each Network presenting research and sharing best practices

***Thread Through*** strategy with events at SSWR, CSWE, NASW, GADE, and in regions

American

# Campuses and Centers Adopt Grand Challenges



American

# Curriculum to Recruit New Students

# Accelerated Knowledge Building

FAMILIES
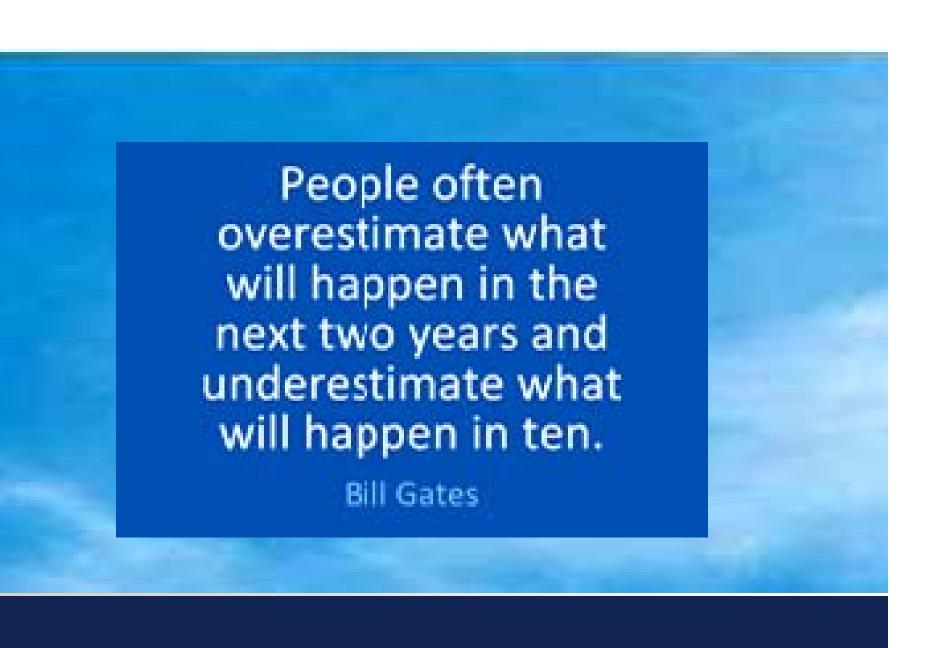N SOCIETY

Strengthening social work and those it
serves through research, practice, and
theory that propels lasting positive change
with families and their communities.

## ENDING HOMELESSNESS: A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR TRANSFORMING PRACTICE & POLICY

American

People often overestimate what will happen in the next two years and underestimate what will happen in ten.

Bill Gates

# Steps From Imagining to Success

Visualize the Steps to Take

- Networks
- Policy Development
- Policy *Action*
- Communication

American

# Networks

- Differentiation of Roles
- Mini-Strategic Plans
- Operations
- Integration with Other Organizations

American

# Policy Development

Expression in Policy Framework Terms
- Equity of Purpose and Result
- Efficiency of Ideas
- Enhancing Liberty
- Security & Safety

American

# Policy Action

Mobilize Rights and Facts

Anticipate Next Moves

Build on Existing Platforms (NASW, CSWE, CRISP)

Partner with Influentials

American

# Communication

- Existing Networks and Tools

- 