



International Association for Social Work with Groups

IASWG SPARC Program

November 2021 IASWG SPARC Committee Report and New Awardees

Carol S. Cohen, Brian Kelly, Maria Gurrola & Helene Onserud

The IASWG SPARC Program will enter its 10th year of operation in 2022:

- Since 2013, we have had 18 review cycles, with the IASWG endorsing 65 SPARC projects, 44 of them with funding totaling \$29,912.00. Projects focus on group work in Practice, Education and Research.
- In our 18th review cycle this November, the IASWG SPARC Committee Recommends 5 projects for IASWG Endorsement, with 1 projects for funding of \$350, which would make a 2021 total of \$3,350.00
- The increase in Endorsement Only applications and recommendations is notable, supporting our objective of increasing recognition of the IASWG SPARC Endorsement in terms of stature and value internationally. At the same time, we continue to expect applications for funding to be submitted, and do not see this as an ongoing trend without further evidence.
- This year sees the significant publication of SPARC focused articles for the Special Issue of Social Work with Groups, first published on line. The editorial team (Brian Kelly/leader, Carol Cohen, Maria Gurrola, Helene Onserud, Barbara Muskat and Greg Tully) are working on the Introduction, and the Issue will be published in 2022
- Outreach strategies continue, including E-Blasts to members, Symposium presentation and Website circulation and updates (with news and videos). Suggestions are welcome!
- **The Next IASWG SPARC Deadline for Applications is: May 25, 2022** (more at www.iaswg.org/sparc)

IASWG SPARC Projects Approved by the IASWG Board of Directors in November 2021:

1. *El Trabajo Social Grupal en Formato Virtual (Group Work in Virtual Format)*

Judit Castro Diez, Universidad de Barcelona, España. Approved for Endorsement

Abstract: El propósito general del proyecto es contribuir en el estudio metodológico de intervención grupal desde el Trabajo Social en formato virtual. Se pretende investigar sobre cómo aplicar la teoría existente hasta ahora en el formato online. Sobre todo, en el momento de establecer la vinculación relacional con y en el grupo y la comunicación entre sus miembros, debemos tener presentes las diferencias entre el entorno presencial y el virtual. Es importante plantear estas cuestiones, vivimos en una era digital en la que la tecnología está presente en la esfera profesional y puede contribuir en la mejora de la atención. Cabe destacar, que contamos con pocas investigaciones previas sobre el tema; por ello, la importancia de iniciar una vía de investigación en este sentido. La investigación se propone desde el paradigma cualitativo y la metodología colaborativa. Donde la clave será el diseño y el análisis de dos grupos de soporte online.

(The general purpose of the project is to contribute to the methodological study of group intervention from Social Work in virtual format. It is intended to investigate how to apply the existing theory so far in the online format. Above all, at the moment of establishing the relational link with and in the group and the communication between its members, we must bear in mind the differences between the face-to-face and the virtual environment. It is important to raise these issues, we live in a digital era in which technology is present in the professional sphere and can contribute to the improvement of care. It should be noted that we have little previous research on the subject; therefore, the importance of initiating a path of research in this direction. The research is proposed from the qualitative paradigm and collaborative methodology. Where the key will be the design and analysis of two online support groups.)

2. Group Workers' Experiences in Conducting Social Work with Groups with Survivors of Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Abuse

Noah Pollack, Wurzweiler School of Social Work (Yeshiva University), New York, United States.

Approved for Endorsement

Abstract: This proposed project is a key component of my doctoral dissertation. The focus is the experience of group workers in facilitating groups related to sexual abuse and/or domestic violence. I plan on recruiting my fellow members of the IASWG to participate in this research, through a questionnaire that will entail inquiries pertaining to their experiences leading groups for my population of study. For example: Did they find group work beneficial for this population and if so, what specifically was useful? Were there challenges utilizing group work for this population? Additionally, the study will inquire as to respondents' educational experience to determine if social work school adequately prepared them to provide group work with this population. Hopefully, by hearing the experiences of group workers, it will lay the groundwork for any necessary improvements that need to be made in group work education and social work with groups pertaining to people who have experienced sexual trauma and/or domestic violence.

3. The Class as a Group: Groupwork Interventions in Primary Education in the Netherlands

Hilda Baar-Kooij, GISSKID, Netherlands. Approved for Endorsement

Abstract: In the field of education, an intervention to gain knowledge about group dynamics and group development can benefit teachers in the classroom not only in reaching their attainment targets for social skills education but also in dealing with behaviours in the classroom they experience as being difficult. In the research stage of the project, as completed for my EdD degree in 2019, this intervention proved to impact social awareness and reflection on the whole school community including pupils, parents, teachers, and governing bodies. The goal of this project is to move from the research phase towards implementation in the educational practice in the Netherlands. The intervention in primary schools in the Netherlands aims to teach teachers to engage with their class as a group, using group work skills and knowledge, and for children to experience that it "takes all sorts to make a world", thus growing self-esteem, leadership, teamwork, empathy, and resilience for all.

4. Boss Mares: Weekly Group for Adolescent Females

Abigail Wilson, Lone Oak Animal-Assisted Therapeutic and Educational Services. Pennsylvania, United States.

Approved for Endorsement

Abstract: Boss Mares is a weekly, 2-hour group for adolescent females ages 12-15. This builds upon our previous project of a week-long camp. Studies of horses in herds have revealed that these amazing animals have much to teach us about relationships, communication, and leadership. The group is designed from the idea that the boss mare is the herd's female leader that is fierce, confident, loving, and protective (Kohanov, 2013). Boss Mares are leaders of the herd who take care of themselves so they can take care of others. Over the course of the group, the participants will learn these concepts through equine-assisted strategies, groundwork, and handwork (fiber art, wood working, etc.). Other benefits of the group include enhancing confidence and self-esteem, building resilience, introducing opportunities for new relationships, and teaching compassion and empathy. Lone Oak previously hosted a 4-day camp for Boss Mares which received positive feedback and participants have asked to come back. This extension of the project will inspire participants with exposure to women in leadership and an additional networking event for women in leadership and the participants.

5. “My Cancer Story.” Honoring and Witnessing Cancer Narratives.

**Susan McDonald and Molly Piazza, Candy’s Place, Cancer and Wellness Center, Pennsylvania, United States
Approved for Endorsement and Funding**

Abstract: The proposed Narrative Group provides an innovative and creative opportunity for Candy's Place patients to tell their cancer stories in a small group setting. The Narrative Group would meet for 1 ½ hour once a week for six weeks of guided reflective writing and story sharing. The purpose of the Narrative Group begins with recognizing the importance of telling stories, being heard, and the importance of the autobiography. The cancer narrative is told and retold in order to attach meaning to the illness. Objective are: Evaluate the issues of trauma, body, and inter-subjectivity from a Narrative Perspective, and Examine social identity and illness narratives.

Information about IASWG SPARC Program

The IASWG SPARC Program was developed by the IASWG Board and IASWG Commission on Group Work in Social Work Education from 2011-2012, and inaugurated the following year. **Only IASWG members can apply for SPARC endorsement and funding to support their group work related projects, often in partnership with other organizations.** Participation in the IASWG SPARC Program is an IASWG Member Benefit, as an opportunity to advance the IASWG mission and innovations in group work practice, training, research and education. Given the rich history, we continue to explore avenues for further dissemination, publication and utilization of material generated by SPARC endorsed projects.

The IASWG SPARC Committee is charged with reviewing SPARC protocols, outreach, review and follow up. We continue to review all of our documents, and welcome feedback. The IASWG Board reviews and votes on the SPARC Committee's recommendations at their bi annual Board meetings. The two review cycles each year, correspond with these meetings Board Meetings, generally held in June and November.

SPARC information and application review is available in English, French, German and Spanish. Information is posted at www.iaswg.org/sparc. The IASWG SPARC webpage includes information on applications, the review process, agreements, project reports and videos of SPARC Awardees speaking about their projects and the application process. IASWG SPARC information continues to be distributed widely, including through conferences, EBlasts and IASWG Group News. We welcome suggestions for expanding our outreach.

Each year, we have presented an IASWG SPARC Workshop at the annual IASWG Symposium. This past Symposium session was Friday, June 11, 2021. At this and previous sessions, members of the SPARC Committee and SPARC Awardees describe the program, present their SPARC projects, answer questions and encourage applications.

The Special Issue of the *Social Work with Groups* focusing on projects of the IASWG SPARC Program is proceeding, with expected publication of a Double Issue in 2022. Many accepted articles are already posted online. The Special Issue’s Editorial Team is Brian Kelly (leader), Carol Cohen, Maria Gurrola, Helene Onserud, Barb Muskat and Greg Tully. A terrific group of additional reviewers were recruited, and joined small teams.

History of IASWG SPARC Endorsement and Funding

2013: June 2013/Cycle 1: 4 Projects were Endorsed, 3 with Funding (\$2500.00 expended).

November 2013/Cycle 2: 5 Projects were Endorsed, 2 with Funding (\$700 expended)

Total 2013: \$3200.00 (9 Endorsed, 5 with Funding)

2014: June 2014/Cycle 3: 2 Projects were Endorsed, 1 with Funding (\$695.00 expended).

November 2014/Cycle 4: 3 Projects were Endorsed, 2 with Funding (\$2160.00 expended)

Total 2014: \$2855 (5 Endorsed, 3 with Funding)

2015: June 2015/Cycle 5: 2 Projects were Endorsed, 1 with Funding (\$1250.00 expended).

November 2015/Cycle 6: 8 Projects Endorsed, 5 with Funding \$3675.00 expended)

Total 2015: \$4925.00 (10 Projects Endorsed, 6 with Funding).

2016: June 2016/Cycle 7: 4 Projects were Endorsed, 2 with Funding (\$1500.00 expended).

November 2016/Cycle 8: 1 Project was Endorsement and Funding (\$1000.00 expended).

Total 2016: \$2500 (5 Projects Endorsed, 3 with Funding)

2017: June 2017/Cycle 9: 1 Project was Endorsed with Funding (\$1000.00 expended)

November 2017/Cycle 10: 3 Projects were Endorsed with Funding (\$2075 expended)

Total 2017: \$3075.00 (4 Projects were Endorsed, 4 with Funding)

2018: June 2018/Cycle 11: 5 Project were Endorsed, 4 with Funding (\$2530.00 expended)

November 2018/Cycle 12: 4 Projects were Endorsed, 3 Proposals with Funding (\$1480.00 expended)

Total 2018: \$4010.00 (9 Projects for Endorsement, 7 with Funding)

2019: June 2019/Cycle 13: 4 Projects were Endorsed, 3 with Funding (\$2100.00)

November 2019/Cycle 14: 3 Projects were Endorsed, 2 with Funding (\$1,447.00 committed, \$900 expended). Total 2019: \$3,000.00 (7 Projects for Endorsement, 5 with Funding)*

*Note: Total is adjusted --Due to the COVID19 pandemic, one of the projects endorsed and funded in November 2019 was not able to be implemented and \$547.00 was not expended.

2020: June 2020/Cycle 15: 1 Project was Endorsed with Funding (\$1000.00)

November 2019/Cycle 16: 4 Projects were Endorsed, 3 with Funding (\$2,060)

Total 2020: \$3,060.00 (5 Projects were Endorsed, 4 with Funding)

2021: June 2021/Cycle 17: 6 Projects were Endorsement, 5 with Funding (\$2,807.00).

November 2021/Cycle 18: 5 Projects Endorsed, 1 with Funding (\$350.00)

Total 2021: \$3,350.00 (11 Projects were Endorsed, 6 with Funding)