Introduction

Overview
The origin of evidence-based practice is found in medicine, where the goal is “integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research” (Sackett, Richardson, Rosenberg, & Haynes, 1998, p.2). Cournoyer (2004) indicates that the discussion of empirically based social services began as early as 1981. The application of research to social work and to the behavioral sciences accelerated in the 1990s when computing and data management tools became widely available. Evidence-based practice (EBP) has expanded from medicine into the social and behavioral sciences in order to utilize the best possible practices to achieve the best possible outcomes for the client.

View an overview of evidence-based social work by Professor Dorian Traube discussion on YouTube.

This guide is intended to serve as a reference throughout your studies at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work and to instill an understanding of the EBP process that you can depend on to guide you in your future practice and research. The ultimate goal is that you become familiar and comfortable with approaching problems, questions, and social work practice in an evidence-based manner. This guide

- Illustrates how to formulate questions;
- Provides the basic definitions and core materials to be consulted for finding current evidence;
- Provides assistance in formulating the search strategies for seeking literature in the databases;
- Emphasizes the questions related to evaluating current literature;
- Assists in analyzing the articles for applicable tools;
- Provides suggestions for what to do with evaluations of the applications.

Evidence-based social work does not provide a simple answer to all of the questions that social workers will face. Rather, the evidence-based process takes FLAIR:

- **Framing** an empirical question.
- **Locating** data and information relative to the issue.
- **Assessing** best available evidence critically and studying results using strong interpretation skills that are taught within the evidence-based practice (EBP) curriculum.
- **Integrating** the best available evidence in clinical applications or further research studies, **always** in conjunction with professional judgment and client values and circumstances.
- **Reviewing** effectiveness of practice based on evidence. Evaluate the results with an aim to contributing the new information to the evidence-based process.