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## Social Work Field Instructor Orientation at GSU

University Park, IL, September 24, 2008 – More than 50 social work field instructors from agencies throughout the metropolitan Chicago area met at Governors State University recently to discuss the parameters of their work as field instructors of students in the university's social work program.

"Our field instructors guide, mentor, and teach our social work students during their field placement. Their work helps our students apply what there are learning in the classroom in the field" says Jo Anne Smith, Director of Field Education for the School of Social Work at GSU.

Students in both undergraduate and graduate level programs are required to apply their knowledge in two different off campus placements over two years. Social workers in the community volunteer their time to serve as field instructors and are an integral part of the program. GSU students gain practical experience working in social service agencies, within the juvenile and family court system, at hospitals, in schools, and at counseling centers. They work with communities, groups, families, adults, and children.

"Our field supervisors guide students in the practical world of social work. The field experience becomes a bridge from classroom to the community for our students. To be effective as future social workers, it is important that they learn on site in a supervised setting. It is a progressive process. As they experience more, they become more adept and able to move to the next level. The field instructor's guidance and supervision is invaluable," says Smith.

According to Abigail Lawson-Archer, Supervisor, Foster Care at Easter Seal Joliet Region, "The real world does not always work the way students learn in the classroom. In the field, they learn to work with different people, in complex systems, in difficult situations. They learn that what they plan for the client may not be the only plan."

During the orientation, the field instructors heard a presentation by Kathleen Bankhead, Chief of the Juvenile Justice Bureau for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Bankhead praised the field instructors' dedication to the social work students and encouraged them to continue their important work in the community in her presentation, "Anchoring Families: Securing Our Own Future."

A panel response to her presentation by Gerri Outlaw, Chair of the Department of Social Work at GSU; Ray Mosby, a field instructor from Aunt Martha's Youth Services; and Michelle Cuebas, a field instructor from Rite of Passage in Merrillville, Indiana, generated a discussion concerning the struggles faced by social workers in their work to help anchor families in the community.

"You know what is right for families. You know what is right for kids. Think of how they can be helped," added Bankhead. "These may be helpless individuals, for personal or societal reasons, and they are counting on you to help them survive."