



Background

- Public libraries are trusted institutions in their communities.
- Libraries provide resources that address the social determinants of health (SDOH).¹⁻³
- Some libraries have hired social workers (SW) to assist with access to healthcare, homelessness, food insecurity, finding affordable legal services, access to mental health services and more.⁴⁻⁶
- Many libraries cannot hire SW due to budget constraints.
- In 2016, the Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare created the Library Social Work Program (LSWP) to address these social needs through field education.
- The library setting is an opportune place for students to learn social work skills, achieve competencies, and understand the importance of social justice work.
- The purpose of this study was to describe the SW related contacts in the library setting.

Methods

- During the 2020-2021 academic year, 16 Bachelor and Master of SW students were placed in 26 libraries on Long Island, New York.
- In the libraries, student interns conduct brief assessments and then spend as much time as necessary with each patron, offering support and linking them to resources.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and library closures, students offered services both in-person and remotely via Google Caller.
- Students documented patron visits via a log in Google Sheets.
- All Google Sheet logs from the Fall '20 semester were coded by author M.D. to create a standardized key to categorize the topics addressed by SW during each patron visit.
- Students used this key when documenting patron visits in the Spring '21 semester.
- 15 public libraries were included in this exploratory preliminary analysis.
- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize student visits using Google Sheets.

Group Supervision and Hours

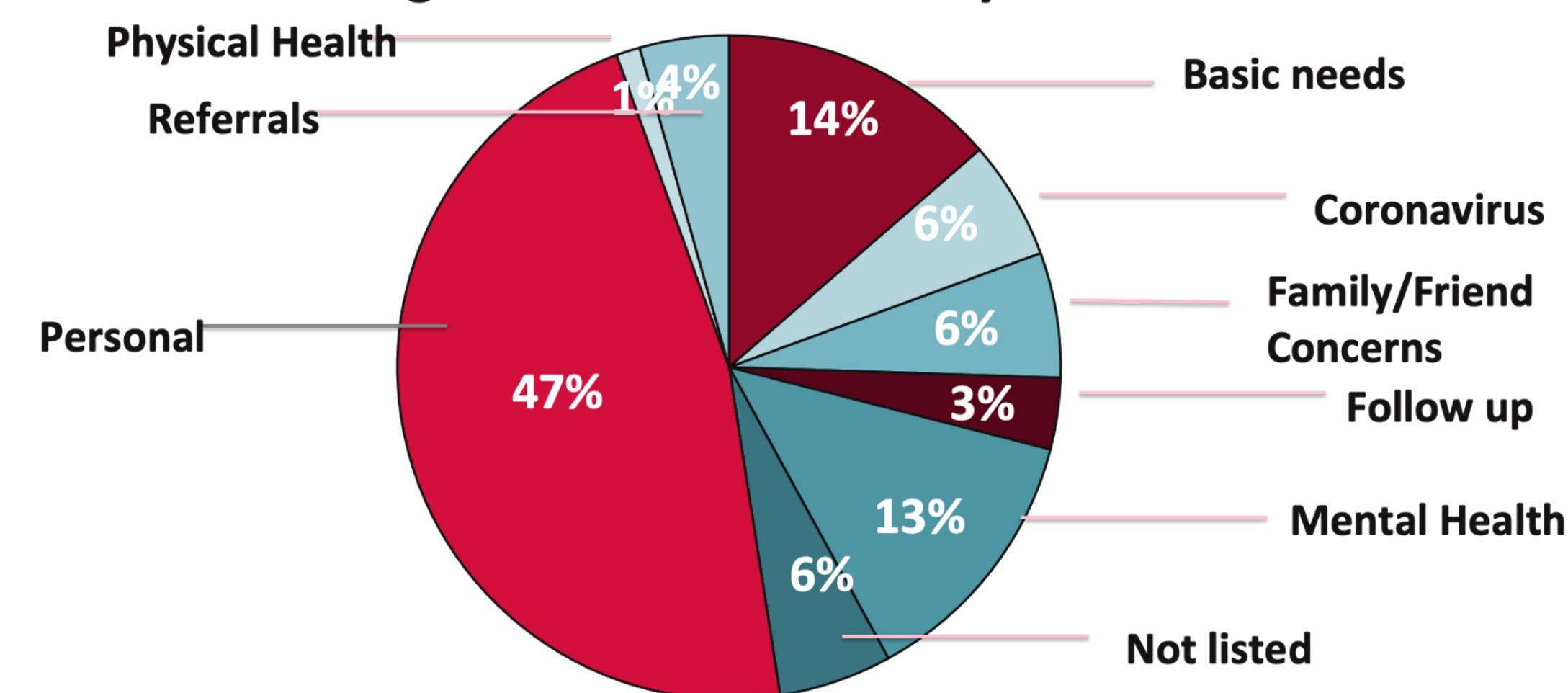
- This field education placement allows students to practice the nine social work competencies.⁷
- Concurrent with interning at a library, each student participates in a weekly group supervision model with other LSWP students and the clinical supervisor to learn the social work competencies, practice new skills, share resources, critically analyze policies and their impact, and problem-solve challenges they encounter in the libraries.
- Students are required to complete these # of hours of field education;
 - BSW (420 hours),
 - MSW (462 or 693 hours).



Results

- SW students met with patrons 330 times.
 - Of these, 180 (55%) visits were with new patrons.
- About 45% (n=150) of the visits were with returning patrons (2+ visits).
- Visits were either in-person (n=150), remote (n=171), or unreported (n=8).

Presenting Problem Addressed by SW Students



Presenting Problems Description:

Personal: concerning employment, education, legalities, insurances

Basic Needs: food, housing/homelessness, clothing

Mental Health: mental health provider access, understanding diagnosis, symptoms, concerns

Physical Health: doctor's appointments, counseling services, tests/screenings, health information

Coronavirus: testing, results, symptoms, quarantine

Family/Friend Concerns: concerns regarding family or friends

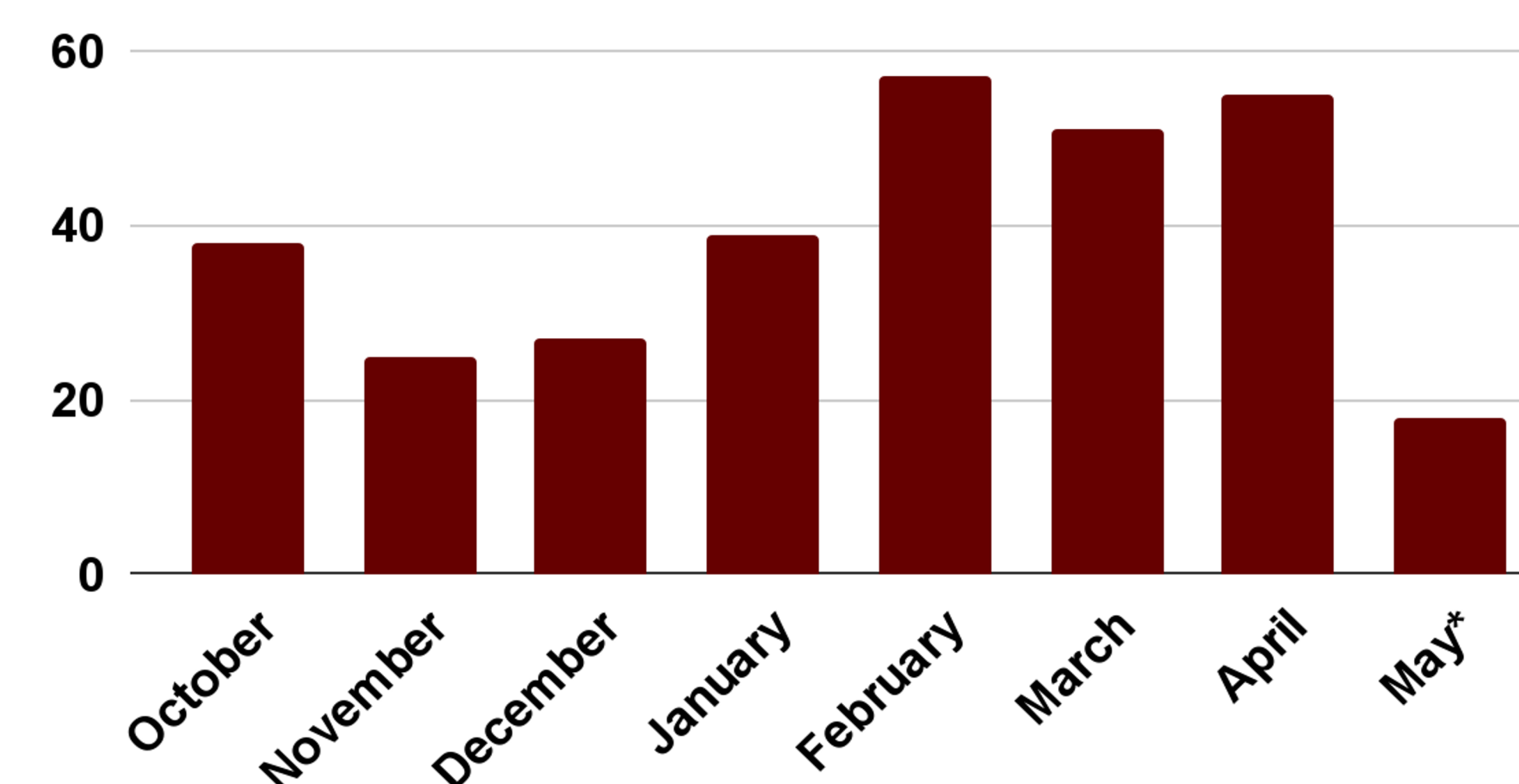
Not Listed : presenting problem undocumented

Referrals: Giving clients any contacts or sources to seek out, and seeking out more information

Follow Up: Meeting with a previous patron on the same issue or checking in on an unresponsive patron

Results

Total SW Student/Patron Visits per Month



* Students participated in the LSWP for the first two weeks of the month or less.

Across the 15 public libraries:

- minimum # of visits = 1
- maximum # of visits = 114
- mean # of visits = 22
- median # of visits = 17.

Discussion

- Library patrons present to libraries with complex psychosocial issues that SW are uniquely able to help them resolve.
- SW students can connect patrons to community resources and create a repository for the community to use.
- The most sought-after services were those addressing personal issues such as employment, education, and insurances.
- Close to half of the patron visits were with returning patrons, demonstrating that the SW students performed case management.
- The # of patron visits increased the longer the SW students were on-site, demonstrating that the SW intern becomes a part of a library's culture, offering services that the community comes to rely on.
- Limitations: Student visit logs were not complete, some visits were missing documentation. The logs were not patron specific.

Conclusion

- Library field placements offer SW students experience working with patrons with diverse health and social needs.
- SW students offer public librarians and patrons expertise in intervention and referral while addressing the SDOH.
- As public libraries hire more SWs, field placements such as these will become increasingly important.
- The LSWP has collaborated with the Stony Brook Medicine Healthy Libraries Program, where SW students work as part of an interprofessional team with students in nursing, physician assistant, and public health to provide blood pressure screenings, evidence-based health information, and case management to library patrons.⁸

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Contact Information

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- If you are interested in learning more about the Stony Brook Medicine Healthy Libraries Program, contact: healthy_libraries_program@stonybrookmedicine.edu or visit: https://publichealth.stonybrookmedicine.edu/healthy_libraries_program

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