Special commission on macro practice meets at NASW

By Rena Malai, News staff

With the goal to help advance macro social work practice and education, leaders from several major social work organizations met earlier this year at the NASW national offices in Washington, D.C.

Leaders from the Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work, the Council on Social Work Education, the Association of Social Work Boards and NASW met in April to discuss the challenges facing macro social work and to seek ways the organizations can work together to ensure this area of the profession remains strong.

Former NASW president Terry Mizrahi, professor at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College in New York, is co-chairwoman of the Special Commission, which was formed in 2013. She said the meeting opened dialogue about what could be done to balance the macro and micro sides of social work.

Macro practice has been the foundation of social work for more than 100 years, Mizrahi said. Both the Charities Organization Societies and the...
Settlement House movement used macro approaches, delving into the causation of social problems and examining social systems, she added.

“There is a general feeling that the emphasis has (in more recent years) been on the micro side, rather than the macro,” Mizrahi said. “By highlighting this very important minority (macro) within the profession, we can fulfill our mission and demonstrate our uniqueness among helping professions.”

A press release about the meeting says that all participants acknowledged that the profession needs to promote and enhance macro practice in social work education and in the field.

Outcomes of the conversation included agreement that the profession is grounded in the “person-in-environment” perspective and education must prepare practitioners to intervene at all levels of this configuration.

Some action steps discussed at the meeting include:

- CSWE will recognize the importance of macro representation at faculty development institutes, promote macro topics at its Annual Program Meeting and provide resources to programs to support the teaching of macro practice.
- NASW will explore engaging its state chapters to help bring these issues down to a more local yet far-reaching level.
- ASWB will commit to informing its board about the collaborative work of the Special Commission and ASWB staff; clarifying and providing accurate information about current licensure regulations and the ASWB examinations; and participating in discussions on issues of social work regulation relevant to the Special Commission.

In addition to Mizrahi, meeting attendees from the Special Commission included co-chairwoman Darlyne Bailey, dean of Bryn Mawr’s Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research; Linda Plitt Donaldson, professor at Catholic University of America’s National Catholic School of Social Service; and Special Commission staff member Jenifer Norton, MSW. Other attendees included Association for Community and Social Organization Chairman Mark Homan, MSW; ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan; CSWE President and CEO Darla Spence Coffey; and NASW CEO Angelo McClain.

The Special Commission, a national entity initiated by the Association for Community Organization and Social Administration, with support from the Network for Social Work Management, was formed in the summer of 2013 to help rectify the imbalance between micro and macro practice that was described in Jack Rothman’s seminal 2012 report on the state of macro
practice, the meeting release says.


Mizrahi said she hopes the joint meetings will be ongoing.