



Ethics in Action in the Flint Water Crisis



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MASSW Fall Conference
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C-5/D-5



A Crisis of Epic Proportions

- Man-made
- Massive scale
- Time frame: Not days, but months, and now years
- Extensive Media Coverage
- Political Demonstrations

*The early response was completely chaotic
& disgracefully inadequate*

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Social Work Values & Flint Water Crisis

NASW Code of Ethics

Value: Service

- Primary goal is to help people in need and address social problems. Encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills.

Value: Social Justice

- Challenge social injustice, particularly on behalf of vulnerable & oppressed people.

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MASSW Mission Statement /SSW Role

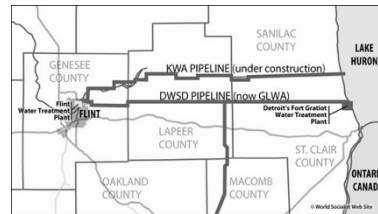
- School social workers assist children and families by examining those factors in the home, school and/or community that are impacting a student's educational success and then *assist in reducing those barriers to learning*.
- Champion the causes of members and clients, and *work to impact legislation* that will improve the delivery of school social work services and enhance the education of all children.
- Communicate information about how factors such as family, culture, socioeconomic status, physical and mental health may affect students' performance

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The Prologue

In April 2014, the postindustrial city of Flint, with a population of 100,000 people, under state-appointed emergency management, changed its water supply from Detroit-supplied Lake Huron water to the Flint River as a cost-saving measure, awaiting a new pipeline to Lake Huron in 2016.

Shortly after the switch to the Flint River water residents voiced concerns regarding water color, taste and odor, and various health complaints, including skin rashes.



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“Hard to Swallow”

<http://www.aclumich.org/article/hard-swallow-toxic-water-toxic-system-flint>



ACLU of Michigan Mini-Documentary
Kate Levy & Curt Guyette
June 25, 2015

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Race & Environmental Injustice: United Church of Christ & ABA

Demographic Characteristics of Communities with Commercial Hazardous Waste Facilities

- Race proved to be the most significant among variables tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities. This represented a consistent national pattern.
- Communities with the greatest number of commercial hazardous waste facilities had the highest composition of racial and ethnic residents. In communities with two or more facilities or one of the nation's five largest landfills, the average minority percentage of the population* was more than three times that of communities without facilities (38 percent vs. 12 percent).

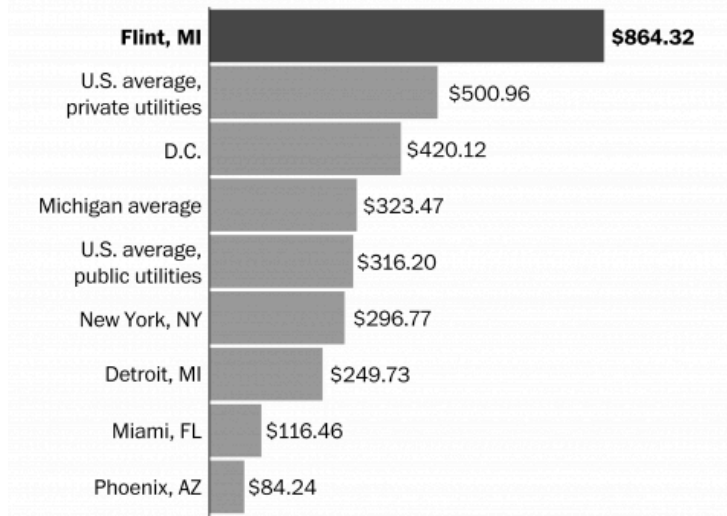
Flint residents who are majority black and among the most impoverished of any metropolitan area in the United States, did not enjoy the same protection from environmental and health hazards provided to other communities.

Governor Snyder's Flint Water Advisory Task Force Report (March 23, 2016)

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Flint's toxic water the priciest in the nation

Average annual water bill as of Jan. 2015, for household using 60,000 gallons a year



WAPD.ST/WONKBLOG

Source: Food & Water Watch

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The Toxic Flint Drinking Water

- Fecal Coliform & Boil Advisories (3) Sept. 2014
- GM stops using Flint Water (corroding parts) Oct. 2014
- Disinfectant byproducts – TTHM Jan.2015 – Sept. 2015)
- High Lead Levels detected and EPA contacted (April 2015)
Lee Ann Walters 13200 ppb (toxic waste)
- Virginia Tech Water Study: Dr. Marc Edwards (Sept. 2015)
Flint River water 19 times more corrosive than the Detroit water

12 deaths from Legionnaire's Disease (June 2015-Nov.2015)

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Virginia Tech Study Water Lead Levels in Flint



- WLL Standards: < 15 ppb actionable
- WLL tests reflect only the levels on the day of the test
- 300 sample kits were distributed and results analyzed by V.T.
- Samples found an average of 158 ppb, 20% of household >15 ppb
- For children ages 1-5 years, every 1 ppb increase in water lead, blood lead increases by 35%.

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Humanitarian Standards



The Sphere Project: International organization of humanitarian agencies, including Red Cross & Save the Children.

- Average water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene in any household is at least 15 litres or 495 ounces per person per day. Flint households received 1 case or 384 ounces per household per day.
- The maximum distance from any household to the nearest water point is 500 metres or .31 miles. Flint had five water stations for a city of 100,000 with distances of 2-3 miles.

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Standards in Flint Water Crisis

Residents pick up water daily in cars, on foot, bikes or buses.
No systematic distribution of water to vulnerable populations



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Impact of High Blood Lead Levels (BLLs)

Lead in water is not what medicine/public health is “used to.”

Most of the research has been about paint chips/lead in paint

Lead in water disproportionately impacts developmentally vulnerable formula-fed infants

Significant risk to unborn

Children already disadvantaged became more disadvantaged

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Elevated Blood Lead Levels



- BLLs of 5 ug/dl are concerning
 - BLLs increased from 2.4 to 4.9, in some neighborhoods to 6.6 in others (Hanna-Attisha, et. al.)
- “Like the children were drinking through a lead-painted straw”*
- Widespread testing in schools and clinics: BLLs had likely peaked well before they were measured (30 day window)

THESE RESULTS ALL SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERESTIMATE EXPOSURE

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Elevated Blood Lead Levels

Increased likelihood of:

- ADHD Behaviors
 - Restless, Inattentive, Impulsive
- Behavioral, Learning and Memory Difficulties
- Speech Impairment and Hearing Loss
- Delinquent behaviors and arrests (kids in street?)
- Other possible health effects: Hematologic, cardiovascular, immunologic, etc.

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Elevated Blood Lead Levels

Impact on Cognition

- Vast evidence supports likelihood of:
 - An increase in 1 to 4 ug/gI drops mean IQ 3-7 pts.
 - Not a very significant change for any individual child
 - Bigger implications for the larger community
 - A small change in mean IQ, shifts entire population IQ distribution
 - Reduces high achievers (>130) and increases kids with low IQ's (<70)

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Michigan Association of Black Social Workers Statement

The situation in Flint visibly brushes against the physical and mental elements of the crime of genocide through its potential to destroy, in whole or in part, an ethnic or racial group....

The premeditated actions of government officials effectively orchestrated the poisoning of Flint, home to a population of predominantly (57%) African ancestry, permitting unsafe levels of lead and other toxins to flow unabated into Flint's water supply.

State officials and local citizens who tried to report this were rebuffed or ignored. The discounting of those concerns has led to irreversible brain damage in Flint's children, in addition to the future potential for significant bodily harm to all of Flint's citizens.

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The Impact in the Schools



- In at least three Flint Community Schools, children drank lead-contaminated water for up to 16 months.
- Three Flint Community Elementary Schools had water with lead levels more than 15 parts per billion
- At one school, Freeman Elementary, water tests found lead levels of 101 ppb.
- Add this to months of data showing elevated lead levels in homes across Flint.

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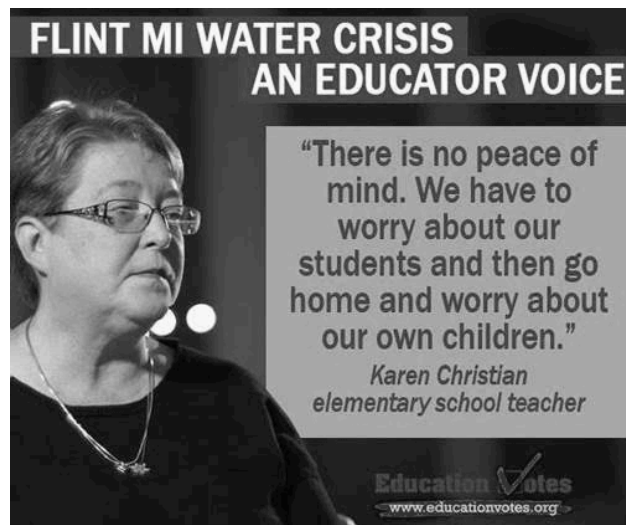
The Impact in the Schools: September 28, 2015

- Flint Community Schools sends a letter to parents asking them to bring water for their kids to drink during the day.
- Superintendent Bilal Tawwab said he knew he couldn't let the kids drink from the fountains once he heard the advisory.

“My first reaction was, what are we going to do? I'm responsible for over 5,000 kids here in Flint.”

- District asks parents to supply bottled water, but acknowledges not every parent can supply this and asks for water bottle donations.

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As often seems to be the case in the early stages of a crisis, schools are left to their own devices.

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Impact in the Schools

- In a crisis, schools become protective of students such as media – difficult to get access/information
- Teachers picked up water from the MEA office for their homes and students. Water from the faucets is only used for hand washing. Children drank bottled water only.
- The only identified “support” provided was training for Flint Community Schools teachers in Psychological First Aid.
- By May, 2016, nine school nurses were finally trained and placed in the Flint Community Schools.
- Funding was increased for Head Start and Early On.
 - Pre-existing participation in those programs was 20-25%

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A message from Flint

I am sorry for the delay in my response. In truth, since I am a Flint resident and working in Flint Schools, I think I have been a bit befuddled myself about the situation.

One thing I think could be helpful is to have training re: the effects of lead, what to look for in behavior. Some ideas about best practices in dealing with these issues, possibly some resources to use with parents in helping to educate.

We also could use some advocacy re: need for social work services in the schools. They are providing additional nursing services but nothing has been said about additional social work, and learning support services.

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Who and Where are Lead-Exposed Students?

- Based on MDE data, students & staff in 90 different buildings/ programs were exposed to lead in their drinking water at home and/ or at school.
- The number of lead-exposed students is estimated to be 15,000.
- Atherton, Bendle, Beecher, Bentley, **Carmen Ainsworth, Grand Blanc, Kearsley**, Mt. Morris, Genesee ISD, 18 charter school academies, 14 parochial schools and the Michigan School for the Deaf Foster children, children visiting relatives
- None of the 12-13 crisis response working groups addressed needs in the schools.

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Impact in the Schools

- Thousands of students were potentially exposed to lead in their water
- ALL of the students experienced emotional/psychological trauma
- Discussion:
Little direct knowledge/information – what do we think the trauma looks like?
Interfere with learning – look at 2015-16 test scores

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Genesee ISD as a Leader

- Hosted “Education” work group of the Red Cross
- Advocated for appropriate, accurate parent “friendly” information
- Discouraged school or community wide testing of children’s Blood Lead Levels (BLL)
- Some schools having “Blood testing carnivals”
- Urged a “universal approach”
 - Assume all children may have been lead-exposed
 - Provide universal interventions



Supplemental Fluoride Treatments

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Ethics: Exposing the Crisis

The people of Flint were betrayed by every single governmental agency that was supposed to protect them.

“I believed them. I gave the water to my children to drink and I bathed them in it.”

When MPR reached out to the MDEQ for comment after initial reports of lead in the water, the Governor’s spokesperson, Brad Wurfel stated,

“Let me start here — anyone who is concerned about lead in the drinking water in Flint can just relax.” (7-13-16)

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Exposing the Crisis: Ethical Heroes of Flint



Miguel Del Toral
EPA Engineer
6-24-15



Dr. Karen Weaver
Psychologist
Mayor of Flint
12-14-15



Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha
Pediatrician
Hurley Medical & MSU Faculty
9-24-15



Dr. Marc Edwards
Engineer
Virginia Tech Professor

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Code of Ethics for Engineers (National Society of Engineers 2007)

I. Fundamental Canons: Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall:

1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.

II a. If engineers' judgment is overruled under circumstances that endanger life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.

c. Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information without the prior consent of the client or employer except as authorized or required by law or this Code.

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EPA Engineer: Miguel Del Toral

"Hello. This is Miguel Del Toral from EPA Region 5, and I'd like to speak with you about problems with the drinking water in Flint Michigan."

Phone call from Del Toral to Lee Anne Walters & Dr. Marc Edwards

One engineer spoke out, others only sent internal emails.

EPA efforts to discredit Del Toral:

"...the report was the work of a rogue employee"

"...Mayor Weaver is making a mistake by citing a letter from one individual staff person who does not speak for U.S. EPA."

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Dr. Marc Edwards

"It was an extremely traumatic experience for me."



Scientists who cared less about facts and scientific truths if it meant protecting their reputation or advancing their agency's agenda.

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Dr, Marc Edwards

Real-world ethical dilemmas are gut-wrenching, life-changing experiences that require you to put yourself in harm's way to do the right thing. What class in ethics is teaching students that fact?



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Crossing the Imaginary Line

Journal of Environmental Science & Technology (Oct. 2016)

- Editorial harshly criticizes the actions of Dr. Edwards.

“The combination of meaningful research, mentorship and a few hours a week of outreach fulfills the needs of the researcher to improve the planet.”

- “Mature” idealists turn to outreach (committees, speeches).
- Facing injustice, an idealistic researcher (Dr. Edwards) might step over “the imaginary line” that separates the dispassionate researcher from the environmental activist.
- This undermines the standing of academics as objective seekers of truth & **jeopardizes funding for research.**

“Call Erin Brokovitch”

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From the desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Sorry kid, our funding is just too precious... no matter how just the cause. Our students might push back someday. Try giving Erin Brockovich another call.

We are worried about the kids in Flint.

Ivory Tower Image by Flickr user Frits Ahlefeldt-Laurvig and used under a Creative Commons license



American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles & Code of Conduct

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

Psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, psychologists seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons and the welfare of animal subjects of research.

Principle D: Justice

Psychologists recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the services being conducted by psychologists.

- Psychologists ... respect differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors....

Dr. Karen Weaver: Flint Clinical Psychologist

Dr. Karen Weaver served on a number of Boards in the Flint community, including the Board of Managers of the Hurley Medical Center.

"I sat at that Board meeting and heard that the Blood Lead Levels of our infants had doubled, tripled and even quadrupled. As a clinical psychologist, I just couldn't sit back."

"I decided that I had to put some skin in the game"

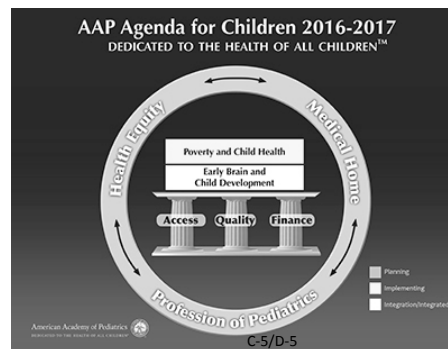


Although a "political novice" she became the first woman mayor of Flint on November 9, 1915.

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American Academy of Pediatrics College of American Physicians: Values

"Health and human rights are interrelated. When human rights are promoted, health is promoted... Physicians have an important role to play in promoting health and human rights, and addressing social inequities." *Ethics Manual*, Sixth Edition.



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Hurley Pediatrician Holds Press Conference

“This is the job of the pediatrician - to be the voice of the voiceless”



Dr. Hanna-Attisha knew she had a moral obligation to inform the public right away. She was met with fierce scrutiny. The state and their researchers denied the results and accused her of causing hysteria. A week after attacking her reputation, the state reversed course and admitted she was right. Only then did Governor Rick Snyder announce a plan to reconnect Flint to the Detroit water supply.

Institutional Ethics: Role of the Universities?

IS THE WATER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-FLINT SAFE?
The University of Michigan-Flint has taken all necessary measures to ensure drinking water on campus — in all facilities including classrooms, residence halls, childcare, and cooking facilities—is safe, filtered, and regularly tested.

The University began water testing in the fall of 2014 in response to a “boil water advisory” from the city of Flint. The University was not within the geographic area impacted by the advisory, but it raised concerns about water quality in the Flint water system. The University responded by proactively instituting regular, independent testing of water quality across campus.

Our testing found elevated lead levels in January and February 2015 in the Northbank Building, which is primarily used as an office building and is one of the oldest buildings on campus. Problem water fountains were removed and water filters were installed throughout the building. A secluded water fountain in the Central Energy Plant also had high lead levels in February 2015 and it was removed.

Testing also found a kitchen sink in a library break room with elevated lead levels in June. That sink — and other similar model sinks — were replaced. These were all isolated instances of elevated lead levels and all were addressed quickly and thoroughly.

Water filters have now been installed across campus and the University is continuing ongoing testing to ensure water quality. The most recent tests were in October 2015, which found the water filters installed throughout campus were working and that campus water is safe.

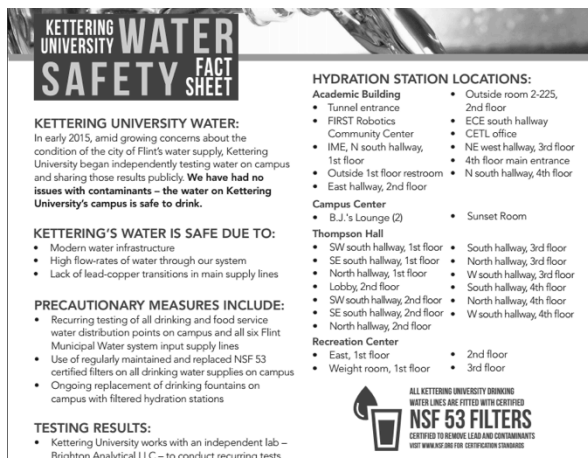
WHAT KIND OF WATER FILTERS DOES UM-FLINT USE?
The University uses NSF 42 and 53 certified water filters. Fountains and faucets throughout campus have “Filtered Water” stickers affixed to them so you can be sure your water is filtered. For a complete list of campus filtered water locations see the campus water information page.
Source: UM-Flint Environmental Health and Safety

HOW IS UM-FLINT HELPING THE COMMUNITY?
In this time of crisis, the University has both the opportunity and the obligation to be of service. Part of the central mission of the University of Michigan-Flint, as a regional comprehensive university, is to contribute to the wellbeing of our community. The University is working in partnership to identify needs and contribute to a greater education and awareness. In fact, the University’s faculty, staff and students are involved in the water crisis at every level.

- Campus hosted the first large-scale community filter distribution in October, giving out 3,000 filters in a single day.
- UM-Flint’s GIS mapping center is the primary organization analyzing Flint’s water infrastructure and identify its problems.
- Public Health and Health Sciences is providing a course on the Flint water crisis free of charge to the community.
- Nursing faculty and students are committed to providing free lead screening until 100 percent of at-risk children are tested.
- Our expert health and safety staff as well as faculty serve on a number of community boards that have been leading voices in identifying and now responding

The University began testing its water supply in the fall of 2014 in response to the “boil water advisories.” They found elevated lead levels in Jan and Feb 2015 and removed sinks & water fountains and installed filters. This Fact Sheet was published 1/2016. The University protected its campus water supply. ~~What~~ did they do to protect/communicate with the community?

Institutional Ethics: Role of the Universities?



KETTERING UNIVERSITY WATER SAFETY FACT SHEET

KETTERING UNIVERSITY WATER:
In early 2015, amid growing concerns about the condition of the city of Flint's water supply, Kettering University began independently testing water on campus and sharing those results publicly. **We have had no issues with contaminants – the water on Kettering University's campus is safe to drink.**

KETTERING'S WATER IS SAFE DUE TO:

- Modern water infrastructure
- High flow-rates of water through our system
- Lack of lead-copper transitions in main supply lines

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Recurring testing of all drinking and food service water distribution points on campus and all six Flint Municipal Water system input supply lines
- Use of regularly maintained and replaced NSF 53 certified filters on all drinking water supplies on campus
- Ongoing replacement of drinking fountains on campus with filtered hydration stations

TESTING RESULTS:

- Kettering University works with an independent lab – Brighton Analytical LLC – to conduct recurring tests

HYDRATION STATION LOCATIONS:

Academic Building

- Tunnel entrance
- FIRST Robotics
- Community Center
- IME, N south hallway, 1st floor
- Outside 1st floor restroom
- East hallway, 2nd floor

Campus Center

- B.J.'s Lounge (2)

Thompson Hall

- SW south hallway, 1st floor
- SE south hallway, 1st floor
- North hallway, 1st floor
- Lobby, 2nd floor
- SW south hallway, 2nd floor
- SE south hallway, 2nd floor
- North hallway, 2nd floor

Recreation Center

- East, 1st floor
- Weight room, 1st floor

Outside room 2-225, 2nd floor

- ECE south hallway
- CETL office
- NE west hallway, 3rd floor
- 4th floor main entrance
- N south hallway, 4th floor

Sunset Room

- South hallway, 3rd floor
- North hallway, 3rd floor
- W south hallway, 3rd floor
- South hallway, 4th floor
- North hallway, 4th floor
- W south hallway, 4th floor

ALL KETTERING UNIVERSITY DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES ARE FILTERED WITH CERTIFIED NSF 53 FILTERS CERTIFIED TO REMOVE LEAD AND CONTAMINANTS OFT MENTIONED IN THE CREDIBLE CHANGE.

Kettering began testing water “because of growing concerns” in early 2015 and the campus water was safe. First communication with parents and community was apparently 9.16.15. What did they do regarding safety of their off-campus students?
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NASW Code of Ethics

6. SOCIAL WORKERS ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY

6.01 SOCIAL WELFARE

Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels. Social workers should **advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs** and should promote social, economic, political and cultural values

6.02 PUBLIC EMERGENCIES: **Social workers should provide appropriate professional services in public emergencies to the greatest extent possible.**

6.03 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION:

(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources and opportunities **they require to meet their basic human needs** Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order **to meet basic human needs** and promote social justice.

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NASW Code of Ethics

SOCIAL WORKERS' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROFESSIONALS

4.06 MISREPRESENTATION:

a) Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the s.w. profession, a professional s.w. association or the social worker's employing agency.

b) Social workers who speak on behalf of professional s.w. organizations should accurately reflect the official and authorized positions of the organization

1.0 COMMITMENT TO CLIENTS:

Primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients..... However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised.

1.05 CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND DIVERSITY

Thanks to John Moradian, Ph.D, LMSW, Associate Director, MSU School of Social Work

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The Crisis Response Social Work Heroes of the Flint Water Crisis



Michael Hood & Laurie Carpenter
Crossing Water



Kenyetta Dotson
Genesee Health Systems
WOW



Allan Wachendorfer
NASW
Crossing Water



Ella Greene-Moten
MABSW



Senator Debbie Stabenow
Water Resources Development Act



Elizabeth Burch
Genesee Health Systems



Beverly Davidson
Crossing Water Volunteer
Blogger



Bryanna McGarry
Policy Analyst at Michigan
Senate Democrats

The Very Significant Involvement of our Profession Expected and Unexpected

A perhaps surprising number of social workers were involved in the roles of legislator, legislative staff, lobbyists, agency administrators and staff at the local, state and national levels

Many social workers from around the state, as well as from the Flint community, as employees or volunteers were part of the dialogue, advocacy and relief efforts.

Grassroots organization formed or joined by social workers in response to the crisis the crisis (Crossing Water).

Social workers displayed their expertise in facilitating dialogue and problem-solving when stakeholders gathered.

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Social Work Participation: Organizational

- NASW-MI Ad Hoc Task Force
 - Allan Wachendorfer facilitates weekly conference calls of social work stakeholders
 - Task Force Statement and Recommendations
 - Michigan Association of School Social Workers
 - Resolution Statement – widely distributed, on Flint Water Study website
 - Letters of Support: MASSW and SSWAA, Testimony at hearings
 - Education Workgroup & Flint Coalition
 - Two large crisis response groups:
 - Community Resilience Group: Genesee Health Systems (CMH)
 - Red Cross Community Partners
- Crossing Water: Grass roots social work organization

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Code of Ethics: Social & Political Action

6.03 (b) Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, ***with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.***

(c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that ***demonstrate cultural competence***, and promote policies that ***safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.***

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Code of Ethics National Association of Black Social Workers

As Black social workers we commit ourselves, collectively, to the interests of our Black brethren and as individuals subscribe to the following statements:

- I regard as my primary obligation the welfare of the Black individual, Black family, and Black community and will engage in action for improving social conditions.
- I give precedence to this mission over my personal interest.
- I adopt the concept of a Black extended family and embrace all Black people as my brothers and sisters, making no distinction between their destiny and my own.

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Code of Ethics (NABSW)

- I hold myself responsible for the quality and extent of service I perform and the quality and extent of service performed by the agency ... as it relates to the Black community.
- I accept the responsibility to protect the Black community against unethical and hypocritical practice by any individual or organizations engaged in social welfare activities.
- I stand ready to supplement my paid or professional advocacy with voluntary service in the Black public interest.
- I will consciously use my skills, and my whole being as an instrument for social change, with particular attention directed to the establishment of Black social institutions.

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Many Cultural and Socioeconomic Issues

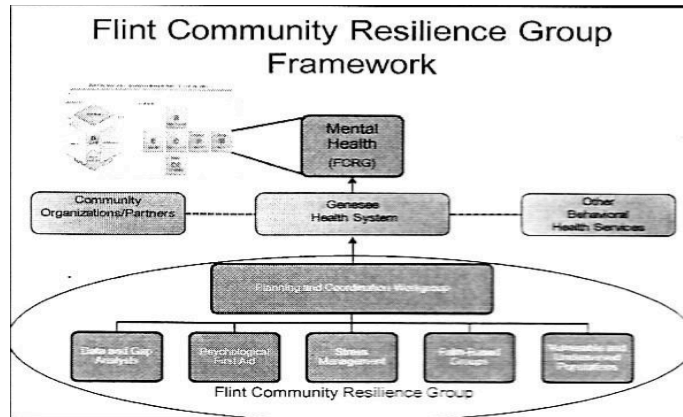
- Pre-existing lack of trust
- Division between the plans of state/local agencies and interests of Flint citizens, grass roots/community groups
- Bureaucracy & the hierarchy of decision making
- Concern with allocation of resources to people of color
- Pre-existing stigma regarding mental health services & interventions, i.e., about just being “drugged up”
- Providing culturally sensitive information, i.e., foods & nutrition
- Lack of internet access, transportation

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Community Resilience Group Mtg. 2/26/2016

Concerns with the “partnership,” trust, cultural sensitivity.

Why is there a dotted line for us and not an arrow?



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Trust

Just don't let kids drink the bath water?

Bathing: What about the skin rashes?

THE FACTS

- **DO NOT BATHE IN THE WATER.**
- **DO NOT USE THE WATER TO BRUSH YOUR TEETH.**
- **DO NOT CONSUME ANY ICE MADE FROM THE WATER.**
- **BOILING THE WATER DOES NOT DECREASE THE AMOUNT OF LEAD.**

#FLINTWATERCRISIS

VS.

Hey Flint! It is safe to wash!

Lead in bath water will not soak into your skin fast or at high levels.

Unfiltered warm tap water is OK for showers & baths.

Just don't let kids drink the bath water when they play in the tub...YUCK!

For you AND your kids!

If you want to get your water tested, please call the City of Flint Water Plant at 810-787-6537. If you have questions about Flint water and your health, please call MDHHS at 1-800-648-6942.

C-5/D-5

Social Work Speaks

No Words by Beverly Davidson, LMSW January 31, 2016

The city was eerily quiet, with a myriad of In and Out marts, gas stations, bars, vacant lots, run-down houses, and churches.

I wondered where all the water trucks were, where the National Guard were, where are all the governmental leaders?

This city has its entire water distribution destroyed, and all we could see were private volunteers at churches and businesses handing out cases of bottled water to people through a make-shift assembly line.

Where are the temporary water systems that our government could set up? Where are the military personnel and trucks who could deliver cases of water and filters to people who have no resources nor transportation?

Folks are supposed to go to a local fire station, pick up a filter, a test kit, some water, and then return the test kit to the fire station for testing? That's the plan? Seriously? In 2016, that's the plan?

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Social Work Responds: Crossing Water

Concerned social workers have a conversation:

- In reflecting on the hardships imposed on Flint residents, the initial conversation between social workers led to brainstorming intervention options, discussing strategies and a combining of resources. Technology, such as email lists and Sign-up Genius facilitated a successful effort to make a difference
- Michael Hood, social worker and MSW student who has become the “face” of Crossing Water along with Allen Wachendorfer of the NASW created a model for crisis response which has evolved in response to the crisis as lessons were learned

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Social Work Responds: Crossing Water

Addressing Gaps/Meeting Basic Needs

Providing critical information on large and small scale

Combatting misinformation/restoring trust

Needs of the undocumented, older adults, those with disabilities, deaf and blind communities and other vulnerable groups.

Community canvassing & resident requests used to determine distribution of resources

*“We’re not from the government,
we’re here to help”*



C-5/D-5



My Social Work Volunteer Experience

- First visit in February/March
- Wide variety of volunteers including many social workers, social work students (some from out of state), educators, state employees, retired folks, church affiliated folks, individuals primarily from mid-Michigan
- Initial need to deliver water and spread the word about the water problems was the main focus
- The challenge of the neighborhoods and feeling safe
- “Is the water safe for showering?”
- As a school social worker, not too surprised by what I saw
- The push/pull of making multiple trips: an ethical dilemma

C-5/D-5

Structure of Crossing Water Crisis Response (RRSTs)

Rapid Response Service Teams include mental health teams:

- 2-3 people, at least one of whom has mental health experience; 4-6 hour shifts
- Two hour orientation for all volunteers before any home visits
- Safety paramount: never alone, calling in to headquarters when changing location, training includes assessing safety at each stop
- Teams visit only homes who have been determined to need assistance
- Data sheet on each home before deployment
- Data updated with each visit, data sheet evolves to reflect needs
- Debriefing and food at the end of each shift

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Leaving home base, we were prepared to:

- Deliver water
- Provide and install faucet filters, replace expired filters. identify homes with faucets not compatible with water filters
- Distribute hand sanitizer, baby wipes (waterless bathing), later adding diapers, food, bus passes
- Information sheets as needed for resources, understanding and surviving the water situation (legal, nutrition, food pantries, water access sites, medical, water testing etc.)
- Ask questions and assess mental health status/vulnerability of residents
- Take new referrals from residents we encountered
- Listen & try

C-5/D-5

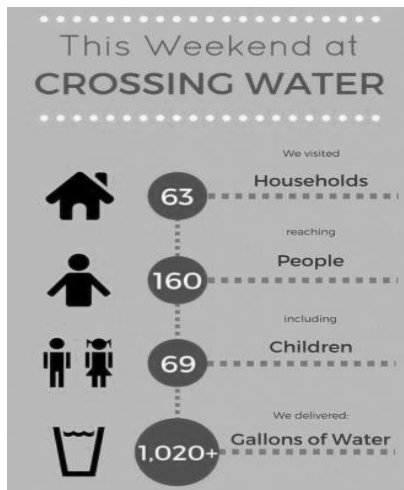


Crossing Water: Unanticipated Learning

- People already in multigenerational poverty losing more ground with the loss of fresh water
- Results of long term “under-education”
- Social isolation that exists “under the radar”
- Anger and conspiracy theories expressed by residents:
 - “They want to get rid of us”
 - Funding for new pipeline financed by Flint residents?
 - “If our neighborhoods were white and wealthy, we wouldn’t have to live like this”
- Deep need to be heard and to not be “invisible”
- The complexities of the erosion of trust

C-5/D-5

Crossing Water



TONIGHT'S QUIZ:
If the water filters in up to 75% of low income homes in Flint, visited by Crossing Water RRST crews, are either hooked up improperly, been deactivated by improper use, have non-working cartridges, are still in the box, or their faucets are incompatible with the filter adapters, your water filter program is:

- A) An excellent program and a model for all future disasters
- B) A solid working program that needs a little tweaking around the edges
- C) The wheels have come off and the program is in a shambles
- D) I don't care because I own stock in a bottled water company

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Crossing Water: Memorable Experiences

- Families with many children
- Man living with no heat or water
- Isolated seniors, disabled individuals/couples with no transportation
- People with skin rashes of unknown origin
- Dogs who did not want us in their yard, even to deliver water
- Fears associated with letting strangers in their homes
- Visits that led to concerns about the welfare of children or older adults
- Anxiety prompted by fear of running out of water (“water hoarding”)
- Challenges with non-English speakers
- Examples of unexpected survival skills in response to crisis

C-5/D-5



Crossing Water: Last Thoughts

Crossing Water has been succeeding due to dedicated individuals, determination and some serendipity

- Conscious effort to acknowledge volunteers; social media
- ‘Care and feeding’ of repeat volunteers
- The power of the group and of leadership: the pull to return and how you feel on the drive home
- The Starfish

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More Questions than Answers-Next Steps:

- Will there be an 'end' of the crisis and what might that look like?
- Who will determine when to stop intervening?
- Social work intervention will evolve from crisis response to helping with adjustment to the 'new normal'. Who will define that?
- Will the ongoing social/emotional recovery be staffed and funded in a way that is 'ethical'?
- When will trust be restored?
- Many Flint residents remain afraid to drink tap water, even with a filter.
- Flint State Senator Jim Ananich comments on trust issues.



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Flint: November, 2016

- Filtered water is declared by MDE/EPA as "safe to drink"
- Dissent of Genesee County Medical Society.
 - Pregnant and nursing mothers and children under six years should use bottled water
- Reports continue to emerge from Flint residents re: lead levels spike unpredictably in Flint homes
- RRST teams continue to find homes who have not accessed resources and residents don't understand the water problems (isolation)
- Residents continue to struggle with the challenges of using water filters

C-5/D-5

Flint Area Schools: November 2016

- Grant funding announced for Flint Community Schools for “counselors” in addition to nurses
- Little apparent assistance for the other 10,000 students.
- School staff expected to increase efforts despite being impacted by the crisis in their own lives
- Assume increased demands on all staff to “just work harder” to meet the learning and emotional/behavioral needs of lead-exposed students
- Lack of clarity regarding the time frame for emergence of symptoms
- Special education students may have compounded effects of high BLLs and existing difficulties with learning.
- Need for mental health providers, expanded MTSS
- Increased needs for assessment and services.

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“Looks for the Helpers”

“We will need funding for medical homes, school nurses, school social workers, teachers and programs to provide as many safe grown-ups as we can find to let these children know that “it’s ok to feel scared, it’s ok to feel sad, and it’s ok to be who you are because you did nothing wrong. And, I will take care of you.” These children will need helpers in every developmental stage of their life.”

Beverly Davidson, LMSW

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What can you do?

- Advocate/educate about the need for increased social work services in Flint and across Michigan
- Be mindful of our ethical principles and values
- Volunteer if you can and/or donate if you can:
<https://www.crowdrise.com/crossingwaterworkingforflint>
- Support legislation addressing the Water Crisis, i.e. S.B. 979
- Pay your dues! Your MASSW dues help pay for advocacy and lobbying efforts at the state level for Flint and for all of MASSW's mission and goals.

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The Need Continues

Crossing Water Social Worker Michael Hood



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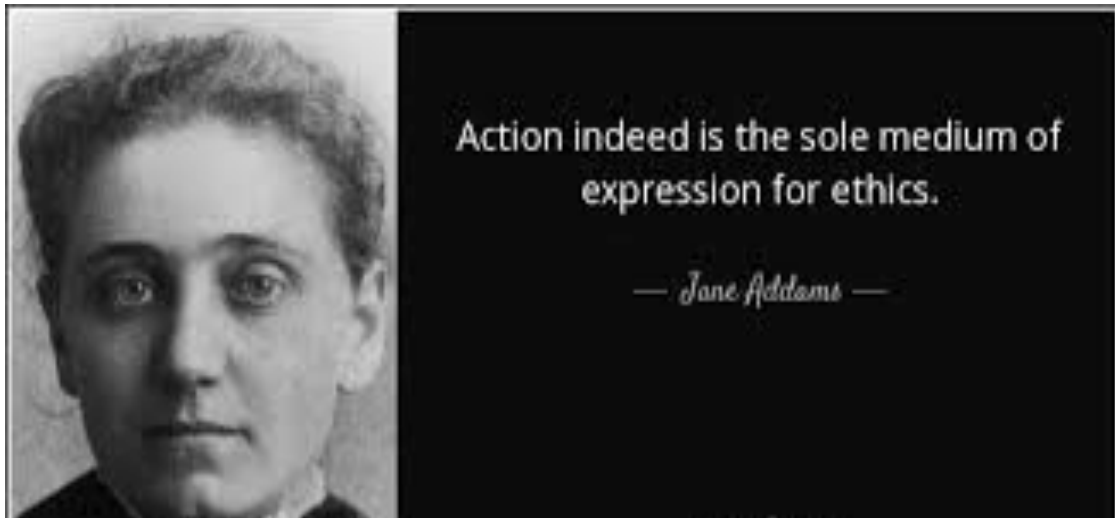
Maintaining Hope

This could be seen as a unique opportunity to be proactive, to build a model public health program to buffer the impact of exposure

Over time, the cumulative impact of positive experiences and coping skills can shift the fulcrum's position, making it easier to achieve positive outcomes.

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-resilience-series/>

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C-5/D-5

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C-5/D-5

Videos

ACLU: Hard to Swallow

<http://www.aclumich.org/article/hard-swallow-toxic-water-toxic-system-flint>

What Life is Like in Flint: 3 Years into the Water Crisis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tL6nBcsHgVM>

VT Professor's Opening Statement re: Water Crisis in Flint, MI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5B1YKM0ndE>

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha Press Conference

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Hurley+doctor+recommends+switching+back+to+Flint+river

Crossing Water: Deployments 8.27.16

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kB-5q0Wkfk>

C-5/D-5