



Conversation and Commiseration

Board Member Exchange continues to evolve

Just prior to the 2016 Education Conference in Jersey City, New Jersey, social work regulatory board members gathered for a day of learning and conversation about their challenges and successes. “I had the advantage of being at the first two [Board Member Exchanges],” says Richard Gregory, president of the Alberta College of Social Workers. “I was able to see what had worked really well before.”

Gregory, along with Sharon Sorrell of the Missouri Committee for Social Workers, cofacilitated the session. This spring was the third time ASWB has hosted an event especially for regulatory board

members on the day before a major ASWB meeting. Each iteration of the Board Member Exchange (which was originally called a colloquium) has had different facilitators and a different agenda. Developed as a parallel event to the popular Administrators Forum, this April’s Board Member Exchange drew more than 40 attendees from jurisdictions across North America.

Each pair of facilitators for the meeting brings a different perspective and different ideas to the session, always with a focus on helping other board members do their job. “We let it be guided and directed by topics the participants wanted,” Sorrell says. “I saw the



Richard Gregory (AB) and Sharon Sorrell (MO) review discussion topics during a break at the Board Member Exchange. Gregory and Sorrell served as facilitators for the day-long meeting in April.

goals [of the day] as networking, learning from each other—taking away what might work.”

Gregory concurs. “Not all participants are the same,” says Gregory, because the event draws a different mix of jurisdictions at each gathering, often depending on the meeting location. “You have a fairly significant number of new faces at the table each time.” In planning the session, Sorrell and Gregory, along with ASWB Education and Training Senior Manager Jan Fitts, worked to develop a process that would allow input from the group, while also providing some structure for discussion.

Following introductions and an informative talk from Sorrell about telehealth and e-practice in the Veterans Administration, attendees were invited to write discussion topics on post-it notes and place the notes on the back wall of the meeting room. As each participant added his or her suggestions, they placed similar topics close together to give the facilitators a sense of the common threads.

Some topics were so popular that Gregory and Sorrell scheduled two small group discussions on them. Others drew a smaller conversation group, but the conversations proved to be valuable to participants. “Small group discussions were great!” declared one attendee on the meeting evaluation. “Excellent forum to discuss issues among board members,” said another.

“It was enriching,” Sorrell says of the exchange, “learning about other boards’ differences was very interesting,” she continues. “There are some similarities, but also a lot of differences” in policies and operations of regulatory boards.

“We had the opportunity to discuss a lot of topics that were important to people,” says Gregory. “They were the topics that THEY wanted to discuss.”