

The McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research & The Poverty Agenda

The Silver School of Social Work is undertaking a sweeping initiative to coordinate a range of programs related to poverty and, through the auspices of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research, become a central source for research, education, implementation and dissemination of poverty-related information relevant to New York City-based organizations to inform practice in the field.

The McSilver Institute was founded through the generosity of Constance and Martin Silver with the purpose of better understanding poverty in New York City and developing improved practices to address it. The Institute will study current poverty-related issues and programs, and will pilot interventions in agencies throughout the city, becoming a supportive resource and change agent for agencies working to address poverty in New York City.

In order to undertake this work, the Silver School of Social Work seeks critical input from agency leaders in New York City to help identify needs from the field, which will be integrated into the School's Poverty Agenda. The McSilver Institute and its purposes will be introduced to the New York City community in a lecture with keynote speaker Geoffrey Canada, of the Harlem Children's Zone, on Saturday, October 3, 2009. The School will then convene leaders from across New York City in an all day working conference to help shape the Poverty Agenda on Friday, October 16, 2009.

The School will work with key agencies in New York City to form an active advisory committee which will both partner with the School and inform the School's Poverty Agenda. Selected interested agencies will also be part of a pilot program to integrate the interventions learned into their current practices. Together, the group will develop evidence-based interventions to improve current practices; compile a web-based Poverty Services Provider Database, a Benefits Access Database, and a Poverty Literature Database; and develop the resources to support and connect a larger network of agencies working with poverty and poverty-related issues in New York City.

The Institute has already developed a number of resources including an Economic Empowerment Assessment tool, which is an assessment tool designed to better understand the structural and individual poverty in the lives of low-income people; a financial social work component to the curriculum for students both in the classroom and the field; a specialized field learning opportunity in the area of poverty; and special interventions for women experiencing persistent poverty.

The School received its first foundation funding for poverty initiatives with a generous grant from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation and will continue to build financial support for this exciting initiative.