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ARMENIA

SUCCESS STORY

Community Connections

New Partnership Strengthens Social Services Training and Outreach



Khachatryan discusses his collaboration with Greta Mirzoyan

Theme: Social Work

From: Yerevan, Armenia

Dates of the Program: June 11 – July 2, 2009

Host Organization: Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA)

Training Location: Winchester, Massachusetts

Success

Artak Khachatryan, Head of the Social Work Department at Yerevan State University (YSU), is undertaking major improvements in social work internships for his students. An alumnus of the June 2009 Community Connections Social Work program, Khachatryan spearheaded a first of its kind collaboration between Yerevan State University and the Ministry of Labor and Social Work Affairs. The partnership will diversify and expand existing internship opportunities by providing placements at the Ministry of Labor and Social Work Affairs and its regional social service agencies. In turn, Khachatryan will train social service providers for hosting a college intern. The arrangement is already helping bridge gaps between academia and practitioners, giving interns a strong balance of theory and practice.

Overview

During the CC program, Khachatryan and nine social work professionals from Armenia were hosted by the Yerevan Cambridge Sister City Association (YCSCA) in Boston, Massachusetts. Participants met with experts in the field to learn new methods of management and delivery of social services. Of particular importance were visits to the Simmons College School of Social Work and the Children's Hospital in Boston, where a dedicated team of skilled social work interns from Simmons College help patients and families deal with a range of psychological issues. The partnership between the two institutions ensures valuable internship placements for students and free services to the hospital's patients.

The collaboration inspired Khachatryan and two fellow group members from the Ministry of Labor and Social Work Affairs to initiate a similar program between Yerevan State University and the Ministry. The program provides opportunities for YSU students to serve as interns in the Ministry. Khachatryan's counterpart in the Ministry is Greta Mirzoyan, Deputy Head of the Social Assistance Department and an alumna of the same CC group.

"These are just the first steps of the initiative, but I am sure we will soon see positive outcomes," noted Khachatryan. "The trip to the US not only helped us gain new knowledge and skills, but also spurred cooperation between different agencies involved in social work in Armenia, which is a prerequisite for success," he said.