



HART Program
Houston Action Research Team
Engaged Research Opportunity
Spring 2022

How the shift to remote work is changing the future of social work

The pandemic fundamentally changed the way social services are delivered. Most social services rely on in-person interactions, but the pandemic forced social workers to provide many services remotely, or cut them entirely. Social workers support individuals, couples, and families with essential services such as counseling, finding housing, and applying for government benefits. Sometimes they work directly in schools, hospitals, and jails. Other times they work for social service organizations such as food banks, homeless shelters, and other nonprofits that provide direct outreach to the community.

January Advisors, a data science and technology consulting firm based in Houston, wants to understand how the pandemic, and the shift to remote work, has changed how social workers do their jobs. January Advisors specializes in nonprofit and public sector clients, working on projects related to technology policy, data strategy, cloud infrastructure, data analysis, and data visualization. They are interested in the emerging best practices and interesting case studies from organizations in Houston regarding the delivery of social services so that they can better serve their clients and share the project's findings and insights to a broad public.

A student team will survey and interview social workers and other social service organizational representatives about the relative effectiveness of virtual and in-person social services. Of special interest will be questions about the effects of virtual delivery on depth and breadth of services, different types of social services, and diverse client populations.

During the Spring semester of 2022, this Houston Action Research Team will:

- Review and analyze existing data on the effects of virtual service delivery
- Design, field, and analyze the results of a survey of social workers and social service provider organizations in Houston
- Design, conduct, and analyze the results from qualitative interviews of social workers and social service provider organizations in Houston
- Identify best practices around virtual and in-person delivery of social services that can help shape the post-pandemic practices of social workers, particularly in the Houston area
- Complete a written report and oral presentation of findings and recommendations for January Advisors
- Write a post for the January Advisors blog that shares study takeaways and best practices with a wider audience

This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Spring of 2022. An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important, skills, knowledge, and experiences, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 10 hours per week on this project between January 11th and May 5th

under the guidance of staff from January Advisors and the CCL and a graduate student team advisor, and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and must coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from **all fields of study** with interests and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

social work, social services, nonprofit organizations, research design, data analysis, qualitative interviewing, professional writing, public presentations, teamwork, community engagement

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Wednesday, January 5th at 11:59pm
To inquire or apply contact Dr. Jessica Khalaf, jkhalf@rice.edu
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>