San Diego State University
School of Social Work
Fall 2015
SW 791: Applied Social Work Practice Research Seminar

Lance Segars, Ph.D.                                      Section 1, Schedule 23477
Email: lsegars@mail.sdsu.edu                               Mondays: 8:00 – 10:40 am
Office HH-114c                                              NE-173
Hours: Monday       11:00am – 12:00pm
                   Wednesday 11:00am – 12:00pm
                   3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
                   & by appointment

I. Purpose and Description of Course
Developing skills to evaluate program outcomes and/or practice effectiveness is the primary purpose of the course. Practice skills should be based on professional knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics. Students are expected to demonstrate competencies in using research to inform practice.

The course introduces students to the practitioner-researcher role. Students learn how to apply social work research concepts and procedures to social work practice situations. The basic goal of this course is to improve the student's ability to apply research methodologies for evaluating social work practice. The course emphasizes evidence-based practice interventions, including the knowledge and skills required for the systematic search for these interventions and their application to diverse populations and settings.

The course supports the use of research knowledge in making practice decisions that improve the quality of services, initiate change in policy, and improve the delivery of social services. In addition, a major focus throughout the course is on strengthening the skills of students to evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions.

Students will use the process of evidence-based practice to identify, analyze, appraise, and select a "best" practice related to a practice question relevant to advanced practice. In addition, the students will critique measurement instruments that are used to evaluate practice effectiveness. This information will then provide a foundation of knowledge of evidence that will be applied in the advanced practice courses.

II. Learning Outcomes
After completing this course, the student will be able to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1) Ethical and Professional Behavior
a. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.
   i. recognize and clarify conflicting values and ethical dilemmas that interfere in a practitioner’s ability to design research studies in an unbiased manner. [Measured by exams; assignments]
   ii. understand the importance of protecting human subjects in research endeavors. [Measured by exams; assignments]
   iii. demonstrate knowledge of ethical decision making methods and the capacity to apply these in practice, policy, advocacy, and research [Measured by exams; assignments]

2) Diversity and Difference
a. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse client systems.
   i. demonstrate understanding of the researcher’s potential biases in interpreting data and findings [Measured by exams; assignments]
   ii. demonstrate understanding of the need to assess the generalizability of research findings to other diverse groups [Measured by exams; assignments]
   iii. appreciate how different aspects of the research process need to be sensitive to the age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation of the client population. [Measured by exams; assignments]

4) Practice-Informed Research and Research Informed Practice
a. Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and research
   i. analyze a practice situation in terms of the need for an evaluation and the desired outcomes for a target population [Measured by exams; assignments]
   ii. identify a practice-effectiveness question and search for evidence that addresses the question [Measured by exams; assignments]

b. Use and translate research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.
   i. recognize the importance of using research literature in the selection of interventions/programs [Measured by exams; assignments]

c. Engage in critical analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings
   i. describe the principal components of an evaluation plan typically used to assess the effectiveness of a program including specification of an evaluation design, the identification and measurement of target problem(s), and the analysis and interpretation of data [Measured by exams; assignments]
ii. describe selected concepts, strategies, and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of social work programs and practices [Measured by exams; assignments]

9) Evaluation
   a. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes
      i. evaluate the quality of research studies and critically think about applying research findings to the practice situation [Measured by exams; assignments]
   b. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention processes and outcomes
      i. design a plan to gather data for making decisions about the effectiveness of an intervention or program. [Measured by exams; assignments]
   c. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness
      i. critique research methods for conducting evaluations of evidence-based practices in an effort to shape or influence the decision-making related to agency policy and the delivery of services [Measured by exams; assignments]

III. Required Textbook


**Please note that other required readings will be posted on Blackboard or provided in class by the professor.

Recommended:

Courtneyer, Barry. (2004). The evidence-based social work skills book. New York: Allyn and Bacon. **It is highly recommended that students retain this textbook from the first year as a review. The professor will cover relevant material via PPTs.)

IV. Course Assignments

There are three (3) major assignments for this course: 2 objective exams, and a poster presentation of a program evaluation plan. The poster presentation will include an
individual written interpretation and discussion of the program evaluation. In addition, students will complete in-class exercises.

**Assignment** | **% of Course Grade**
---|---
Midterm Exam | 25%
Final Exam | 25%
Poster Presentation | 30%
Individual Interpretation | 10%
Participation/Exercises | 10%

**ASSIGNMENTS 1 & 2: Exams** – 50% of total course grade (2 @ 25% Each) – **October 12 and November 23**

There will be 2 open book/open note exams in a multiple-choice and true/false format. The exams will cover course readings, class discussion, skill building exercises and lectures.

Assigned readings are listed in the syllabus. Students are expected to study all assigned readings, whether or not they are discussed in class. Exams will be posted on Blackboard. You will be given one week in which to complete the exam. No makeup exams will be given.

**ASSIGNMENT 3: Poster Session to Present Program Evaluation Plan** – 30% of course grade (**Due November 30; Poster Session on December 7**)

**NOTE:** Content to be displayed on the poster, as well as each student’s individual interpretation of the results, must be submitted to the instructor by November 30 for evaluation. The poster session will occur on December 7. The poster session will be held in the Park Blvd. Room in the Aztec Student Union.

The purpose of the project is to provide an opportunity for students to understand and appreciate the role that practice-relevant research can play in strengthening the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. This assignment also serves to address the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards related to preparing students to engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

**NOTE:** The instructor may choose to have student groups submit their papers through Blackboard, into the Turn-in.com system. If this method is used, it would be used with all students, and further instructions will be provided.

This assignment may be completed in small groups (with a maximum of 4 members) or individually. **All members of a group will receive the same grade.** It is designed to give the student a near-real experience designing a program evaluation or a related evaluation research activity. Applying their learning from the course, the individual or group will choose a topic, typically, an existing program, service, practice approach, or situation at their internship agency, work organization, or simply from observation of the
community. The topic/program should be one that has not already been evaluated, and the student should be able to specify a unique contribution of his/her evaluation effort in the form of an evaluation rationale.

The evaluation plan will be presented as a 3-panel poster near the end of the semester at a venue on campus where you will answer questions from Dr. Segars, Dr. Mathiesen, invited students, and other faculty. Poster sessions require the synthesis of large amounts of information into brief bullets. **Poster sections usually include: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Recommendations.** However, you will present only the Introduction, Methods and Results sections in the poster; the Discussion/Recommendations section will be submitted as an individually written final assignment (see below under “Individual Written Interpretation of Program Evaluation”). Present your poster in a professional manner that clearly communicates your evaluation plan. Graphics, charts, mock tables, etc. are encouraged.

In addition to a title and author(s), some suggestions for information that may be included in the poster are as follows:

**A. Introduction/Statement of the Problem;** can include:

a. background of the topic or problem
b. rationale for the evaluation, that is, **what unique contribution** does your evaluation make to the knowledge base (e.g., program not yet evaluated, understudied population, better measure)
c. objectives and description of the evaluation—what type of evaluation do you plan to do (e.g., needs assessment, process, formative, outcome/summative, combination)
d. description of the intervention (if any) and its objectives
e. logic model - conceptual framework that shows how the intervention (if any) is expected to achieve its objectives
f. research questions or hypotheses

**B. Methods**

a. evaluation design—describe and graph the program evaluation design, e.g., ABA, SSRD, RCT
b. data collection – what strategies will you use to collect the data (e.g., focus groups, interviews, chart abstraction, surveys, existing agency records).
c. targeted sample size and how you will identify and recruit your sample participants (or obtain existing records)
d. instruments and measures-
   i. e.g., qualitative, quantitative, multimethod, secondary data
   ii. when appropriate, describe the psychometric properties (reliability and validity) of the instruments
   iii. do you have to develop an instrument? If so, how?
e. data analysis plan, e.g., “consult with statistician to assess…”

**C. Results**

a. mock up preliminary graphs or tables
b. what would positive or negative results indicate about the program

D. References, Appendices, and Copies of Instruments
   a. Rather than using poster space, have hard copies available for interested viewers
   b. You must include a copy of your data collection tools. These should be formatted for administration and include an informed consent protocol
   c. References should be organized by topic and annotated (background, instruments, etc.)

A Note for those opting to complete this assignment as a group: All group members are responsible for the content of the poster, and all members are required to participate in its content, creation, writing, and presentation. Students are expected to cooperate in a professional manner and resolve scheduling or workload issues within the entire group. Each member of the group is responsible for everything that the group as a whole produces. All members of the group will receive the same grade. It is expected that group members will attempt to resolve any minor issues within the group by assignment of specific tasks and deadlines. In rare circumstances, this process may not be sufficient. Problems completing the Poster assignment should be addressed as noted below:

   (a) Should a group experience problems with members failing to do their share of the assignment, and the group has been unable to resolve the issues, the group should schedule an appointment with the instructor. All members of the group (including the member(s) of concern) should meet together with the instructor to discuss the situation and negotiate a solution.

   (b) In the event a verifiable emergency (i.e., severe illness, family emergency) interferes with a group member participating with the rest of the group, the member should immediately contact the instructor to explain the circumstances. The instructor will meet with the student and negotiate an alternative individual assignment with that member. The grade of the other members of the group would not be affected.

ASSIGNMENT 4 Individual Written Interpretation of Program Evaluation – 10% of course grade (DUE DECEMBER 1)

Each student will submit a 2-page written final assignment that represents the Interpretation, Discussion, and Recommendation section of your evaluation project. It contributes only 10% to your overall grade, but is a required component for completion of the course.

A. Discussion/Recommendations - what conclusions can be drawn based on the type of program evaluation you propose, e.g.,
   - what next research steps, or service/policy changes would you recommend based on the results of your evaluation
   - what are the strengths and limitations of the program evaluation plan
   - what ‘flies in the ointment’ might you anticipate
“So What?” What are the implications of your evaluation?

Class Participation and Exercises 10% of course grade

The expectation:
- Attending all classes with no unexcused absences,
- Completing all class worksheets, evaluations and/or exercises

V. Class Policies

Office Hours:
The instructor will maintain office hours as listed on the first page of this syllabus, and may be available at other times by appointment. To make the best use of the office hour time, the instructor encourages students to schedule appointments when possible. The instructor also welcomes questions from students via email.

Student Expectations:

1) Students are responsible for reading all assigned readings. Assignments cover all lectures and assigned readings.
2) The NASW Code of Ethics is an academic standard for any student majoring in social work.
3) Students are responsible for collecting their final assignments from the instructor.
4) Students are expected to respect each other and the professor during class. Talking when others are talking, leaving class early or coming late (without a legitimate reason), sleeping in class, browsing the internet, or reading the Daily Aztec during class and the like is unprofessional, unfair to other students and will not be tolerated. (See Student Discipline and Grievance Policy, Section 41301).
5) All assignments must be turned in on time. Late work will only be accepted in the case of legitimate, verifiable emergencies (illness, accidents, etc.). The instructor may require documentation to support the legitimacy of an emergency. Please note: having multiple assignments due on the same day or computer problems is not a legitimate emergency.
6) NOTE: The instructor may choose to have student groups submit their papers through Blackboard, into the Turn-in-in.com system. If this method is used, it would be used with all students, and further instructions will be provided.
7) Please turn off cellular telephones in class.
8) Please do not bring pets or children to class (animal assistants are allowable). This interferes with the learning environment and is not fair to other students.

Students failing to conform to the above policies may be asked to leave the class, receive a reduced grade in the course, and/or be referred to the department or SDSU officials for disciplinary action.
VI. Graduate Grading Guidelines

1. Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work that not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content, but also shows that the student has (a) undertaken complex tasks, (b) applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or (c) demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The degree to which the student demonstrates these skills determines whether he/she receives an A or an A-.

2. A grade of B+ is given to work that is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-satisfactory understanding of the material being tested, and has exceeded expectations in the assignment.

3. A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on the assignment and meets the expectations of the course.

4. A grade of B- denotes that a student’s performance was less than satisfactory on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and is below expectations.

5. A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.

The instructor will evaluate students’ written work in accordance with the graduate grading guidelines. Completion of all components of a written assignment/presentation would result in a grade of B. As per the guidelines above: “A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on the assignment and meets the basic expectations of the course.”

Grading will begin with the assumption that the student has met the requirements of the assignment, and all papers/presentations will begin with a score of 85%, slightly higher than a mid-range B. Areas of the assignment that are judged to demonstrate more-than-satisfactory understanding of the task will receive additional credit, and marked with a “+” (plus). Areas that are less than satisfactory effort, including omissions or reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations, will have credit deducted, and marked with a “–” (minus).

Grades between C- and F denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in a student’s performance on the assignment.

The course grade is based on grades earned for 2 Exams (25% each=50%), Poster Session Presentation (30%), the written Interpretation, Discussion and Recommendations (10%) and in-class assignments (10%). The following grading scale will be used:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-95</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>94-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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Written Assignments. Students are expected to write at a graduate level and produce clear, well-organized papers with correct grammar and spelling. Proper citation of source material is required, whether in a written paper or on a visual presentation, such as posters, power points, etc. Written work should be carefully proofread. It is to be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Font size should be a 12-point font, and the print should be clear and legible. Group papers will be returned to the first team member listed on the final paper, and the team is responsible for supplying a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. If no envelope is supplied, the paper may be retrieved from the instructor at the end of the semester after grades have been submitted. Materials will be held for up to one semester following the end of class.

Written assignments should follow the stylistic guidelines suggested by most recent edition of the APA manual. Students should pay particular attention to APA guidelines regarding expression of ideas (i.e., writing style, grammar, and guidelines to reduce bias in language); reference citations in the text; reference list; margins; page numbering and headings.

Policy on Late Papers. All papers are to be submitted on the due dates listed in the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted unless the student has obtained prior approval from the instructor. Approval will be granted only if the student is able to demonstrate unanticipated/extenuating circumstances that prevent completion of the assignment. (Computer or printer problems will not be accepted as excuses for late papers). To receive credit for a late paper, the student must meet with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the reasons for the lateness and to establish a plan and time frame for completion of the work. A penalty of ½ letter grade (e.g., from A to A-) will be assessed for papers that are late for any reason other than a verifiable emergency (e.g., illness in self or family, death of a family member). If the student still fails to complete the paper within the extended time frame negotiated with the instructor, the penalty for lateness will be increased to one full letter grade (e.g., from A to B). A paper that is more than 2 weeks late will not be accepted, and the student will receive a zero.

Consequences for Plagiarism. Students who are found plagiarizing the works of others will be subject to standards set forth by the University (see Graduate Bulletin). This may include failing the assignment, failing the class, or expulsion from the University.
# Course Topics and Outline

**Please note:** The professor may change dates as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and via Blackboard. It is the student’s responsibility to regularly check the Blackboard site for materials and announcements. Students are responsible for all required readings, whether they are covered in class or not.

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<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/ Assignments (due that class)</th>
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</table>
| Week 1          | Course Introduction  
August 24  
Review syllabus including  
Poster Assignment  
Revisit Basic Principles of  
Conceptualization and Measurement  
Single-subject Design Methodology |                                                                                                      |
| Week 2          | Introduction to program evaluation  
August 31  
Review of Evidence-Based  
Practice Process | Royse Ch. 1: Introduction: Why evaluate programs?  
Royse Ch. 2: Ethical Issues in Program Evaluation  
BB – Smyth and Schorr, 2009  
Drisko 2014  
A1 Three Evaluation Articles |
| Week 3          | NO CLASS- LABOR DAY  
Sept. 7  
UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY |                                                                                                      |
| Week 4          | Needs Assessment  
Sept. 14 | Royse Ch. 3: Needs Assessment  
A2 Article Summaries  
Research groups |
| Week 5          | Logic Models: Causal models and theories of change  
Sept. 21 | BB – Enhancing Program Performance With Logic Models  
Section 1 What is a Logic Model?  
Logic Model Activity (in class) |
| Week 6          | Qualitative Evaluation  
Sept. 28  
Logic Models Part II | Royce Ch 4: Qualitative & Mixed Methods in Evaluation  
Create a logic model (in class) |
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<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/ Assignments (due that class)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Formative Research and Process Evaluation</td>
<td>Royce Ch 5: Formative and Process Evaluation</td>
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<td>Oct.  5</td>
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<td>Project Logic Model</td>
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<td>Process Evaluation Exercise (in class)</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Single System Research Designs (SSRDs)</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 6: Single System Research Designs (SSRDs)</td>
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<td>Project Update</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 7: Client Satisfaction</td>
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<td>Oct.  19</td>
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<td>Royse Ch. 8: Sampling</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SSRD Exercise</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Group Research Designs</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 9: Group Research Designs</td>
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<td>GRD Skill Builder (in class)</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Measurement Tools and Strategies for Evaluating Programs</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 11 &amp; 12: Measurement Tools/Strategies; Selecting Evaluation Instruments</td>
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<td>Nov.  2</td>
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<td>Royse Ch. 11 &amp; 12: Measurement Tools/Strategies; Selecting Evaluation Instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Messy Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 13: Pragmatic Issues in Evaluation</td>
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<td>Nov.  9</td>
<td>Data Analysis and Statistical Significance</td>
<td>Royse Ch. 14: Data Analysis</td>
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<td>Finding Tools</td>
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<td>Project Review</td>
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<td>Week/Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings/ Assignments (due that class)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
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<td>Review Royse Ch. 13 and 14&lt;br&gt;Review Royse Ch. 15: Writing Evaluation Proposals, Reports, Journal Articles for project (Ch. 15 will not be included in Exam 2)&lt;br&gt;Data Analysis Exercise (in class)</td>
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<td>Nov. 16</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Review Sampling&lt;br&gt;Review Group Designs&lt;br&gt;Putting it all together</td>
<td>Continue to work on poster presentations&lt;br&gt;EXAM #2: covering all materials (except Ch. 15) from Oct. 20 - Nov. 17</td>
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<td>Nov. 23</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Open discussion to address issues concerning your projects</td>
<td>Continue to work on poster presentations&lt;br&gt;Content of poster and Individual written summary/ integration of program evaluation assignment due</td>
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<td>Nov. 30</td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
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<td>Poster Session Location: Park Blvd. Room in the new Aztec Student Union Bldg.</td>
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<td>Dec. 7</td>
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Bibliography

(NOTE: These works are intended to be supplements to the assigned course readings and may be used in group presentations and/or to augment student understanding of course concepts.)


Campbell Collaboration. Available at: http://www.campbellcollaboration.org

Cochrane Collaboration. Available at: http://www.cochrane.org/index.htm


Evaluation Center. Available at www.tecathsri.org/


Grinnell, R. M. (2001). Social work quantitative research & qualitative evaluation
approaches. Itasca, IL: E. Peacock.


