

# Public Health Social Work & the Nation

With the boom in information and new media, it has become harder for program planners to find the most relevant information for their particular needs. Public health social worker **Vicky Marchand** (SSW '93, SPH '94) helps states, coalitions and communities not only find this information, but use it to see the big picture.



Vicky Marchand

For the past six years, Vicky has worked on the Pathways Mapping Initiative ([www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org)). Vicky and colleagues assemble "Pathways" integrating information about what contributes to outcomes, such as school readiness, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and successful young adulthood. In addition to digging through publications and websites, they use a technique called "Mental Mapping" to learn from the experience and expertise of policy makers, practitioners, advocates, and researchers from seemingly disparate fields, but who are working on similar or related issues. The resulting Pathway provides a framework and knowledgebase incorporating research, policy, practice, and advocacy to inform strategic action that improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Shares Vicky, "It's hard for people to make the space for collaboration, and to take the time for the big picture approach because you're so focused on your little piece [of the solution]. I enjoy when I sit down with folks and the discussion results in little 'ah ha!' moments that make new connections and validate what they already know. In these mental mapping meetings with researchers, practitioners and advocates, all in the same room, they always learn something from each other, and they leave having had a valuable experience."

Ever increasing access to information and the struggle to act on what we know has emerged as an increasing trend in Vicky's work. Based in Washington, D.C., she is working also as an independent consultant with The Finance Project ([www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org)) that provides technical assistance to leaders focused on financing and sustaining for strategies that benefit children, families, and communities. By combining external expertise with local wisdom, Vicky hopes the impact of her work is to inspire results-oriented community action on public health issues across sectors. "We talk about how to put the pieces together and what connections can be made both fiscally, and across disciplines, to get the best return on investment. . . with our help, folks think and, eventually, act differently."

The Campaign for Public Health Social Work  
[www.publichealthsocialwork.org](http://www.publichealthsocialwork.org)

She acknowledges that her interdisciplinary training has launched her to where she is today. "My work is focused on the world beyond programs. I look at how we build infrastructure and create new norms that support families at the population level. I couldn't have done my work [without my MSW/MPH.] By putting the pieces together, I can engage an audience to think more broadly and plan holistically. When you say 'social work' people automatically think 'clinical', but it is far beyond clinical."

