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## Letter From the Editor: Collaboration and Purpose

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Our initial introduction to COVID-19 was a distressing time for many of us. The world, as we knew it, came to a stop. Replacing known daily activities was a new system of interaction. We began exploring what it meant to live in a hybrid world, and even now, years later, we continue to evolve. Our systems have changed. Our communication has changed. Our lives have changed, and the options are often paralyzing and overwhelming. We can choose to push back against these realities or accept the data for what it is and work to move forward with our profession's initiatives, goals, and values. How will we continue to serve our community? How will we address massive social problems when we're not even sure what our place is in the world? How will we move toward our goals and mission in concert with our interprofessional colleagues? These and many more questions have been presented to us in forensic social work.

For the Journal, we have embraced these questions. When the economic costs were too formidable, we refused to stop. We found solutions to continue our mission. We found a way to live in our purpose. The Journal exists so that we can all share information and help each other to achieve our individual and collective goals. The Journal is here to provide a shared space for scholars and practitioners alike to examine the phenomenon of our communities in the context of the values and ethics of our profession. Becoming open access has not been done without struggle, and in all truthfulness and transparency, we expect many lessons are left to learn. Nonetheless, the Journal of Forensic Social Work will continue to evolve and provide spaces for dialogue and the distribution of information that can assist all of us in our efforts to collaborate and move toward our purpose of creating safer communities.

One of these lessons was learned in Volume Seven, Issue One. We decided to move toward a rolling publication cycle for that issue, and while this proved to be an interesting author-centered practice, some latent challenges presented, particularly related to logistics, organization, indexing, and the like. Therefore, starting with Volume Seven, Issue Two, the Journal will return to a biannual publication cycle in a more traditional bundled format. We may adjust again as resources expand, but this development is a natural part of our growth process and essential. We must do what it needed to retain our goal of avoiding article processing charges and ensuring this is a genuinely free and open-access dissemination point for forensic social work.

Since our last letter from the editor, we have also had an exciting development. Last year, we instituted a process to recognize our highest-impact article of the calendar year. This award is based on article access metrics and is established to celebrate contributions to the

Journal that have made a far-reaching impact over a fixed amount of time. Our Article of the Year award for 2022 was given to Dr. Susan McCarter and Ms. Tierra Durant for their publication, [\*Disproportionate Minority Contact \(DMC\) to Racial and Ethnic Disparities \(RED\) in Juvenile Justice: What Does it Mean and Does it Matter?\*](#)

The analytics also provide evidence the Journal of Forensic Social Work is thriving. Over the past 12 months, readership has moved into the tens of thousands, and people worldwide are accessing new and old articles. Our most accessed article in the past 12 months is a piece on ethics from 2011 authored by the late and beloved Dr. Rob Butters and our esteemed colleague, Dr. Viola Vaughn Eden. Our second most accessed article during this time is a 2023 piece from Dr. Frederick Reamer, also exploring ethics in forensic social work. These analytics speak to multiple points. The first of these is that readership is finding use in both recent and historical scholarship. The second is that we are in a season where explorations of ethics in forensic social work appear to be an essential topic. Three of the top seven articles accessed most over the past twelve months have explicitly focused on investigating ethics in forensic social work practice. As we move forward, it may be necessary for the Journal to build an explicit expectation for how ethics will be addressed in all of our pieces. This topic is typically present in most social work scholarship, but perhaps it would be important for this Journal to formalize its existence more explicitly.

In Volume Seven, Issue Two, we bring a collection of scholarship with several themes for consideration. Multiple articles will address the complexities of infusing social work practice into law enforcement environments, and courtrooms. These are not simple tasks. Our authors have employed scientific measurement to explore these concepts in great detail, and we feel fortunate for the opportunity to bring these to our readership. We also have pieces on international work and work with diverse clientele, not to mention specific research and guidance related to technological advances in clinical social work delivery systems. As we move into a more hybrid world where digital and traditional interaction spaces merge, forensic social workers need to explore these topics across multiple spectrums. What are the best practices for interaction, how do these best practices fit into the realities of our legal systems, and what can we learn about improving access to interaction with clients of all sorts?

The Journal of Forensic Social Work continues to evolve. And as we do, we have been developing new policies and procedures to better serve our purpose. In the coming months, we will work with editorial contributors to improve how our editorial team functions and further democratize vetting contributions to the Journal. In short, we believe it's essential to support and incorporate the voices of many to reap the total rewards of our collective knowledge. We also continue to look for people interested in submitting their work and those who continue to serve as reviewers. Be on the lookout for extensive policy updates and a website revision, which will help detail and outline the purpose and policies of the Journal and the ways we can all efficiently interact in the process. Thank you for being part of our team. We are excited about all this issue has to share and eager to move forward and grow into the future.