About the University of Michigan School of Social Work Technical Assistance Center

The University of Michigan, School of Social Work, Technical Assistance Center (TAC) is a principal partner in the implementation of Good Neighborhoods (GN), a comprehensive 10 year community change effort undertaken by The Skillman Foundation to transform six Detroit neighborhoods into places where children can grow up safe, healthy, educated and prepared for adulthood.

The Technical Assistance Center was created in 2005 to provide technical assistance to the Skillman Foundation, community residents, community stakeholders, and Good Neighborhoods partners. The Center employs a multi-level strategy that focuses on cross-neighborhood and neighborhood-specific technical assistance and response to the needs of the Skillman Foundation and the overall initiative. The intent and purpose of our technical assistance is to build community capacity to sustain community change and inform the change process.

The purpose for our involvement in Good Neighborhoods is driven by the purpose of the profession of social work to create a better society through individual and social change and by a mission that specifically speaks to promoting social and economic justice, ensuring empowerment, and eliminating oppressive social conditions.

Guiding Principles
Within the framework of the values and beliefs of the social work profession, four principles guide the delivery of our technical assistance:

1. Communities have existing assets and can develop to their full potential
   • It is our role to identify, assess, and build upon the strengths of each neighborhood, group, individual, or partner.

2. Knowledge will be built through information and training
   • If our technical assistance is to have an impact, we must always engage in a thoughtful and strategic process of sharing information and knowledge to ensure capacity building occurs.

3. Change will occur systematically across neighborhoods
   • Change will occur at different rates within the neighborhoods as obstacles and assets across neighborhoods vary, but if we continue to provide evidence-based, planful technical assistance, change is more likely.

4. Partnerships must be established to achieve community change
   • The Technical Assistance Center, in itself, cannot create change. Our work must be aligned with the efforts of all partners in this change initiative, and we have an obligation to work consistently toward strengthening and building all of our partnerships.

5. Knowledge gained must be disseminated.
   • Through the process of providing technical assistance, we have an obligation to develop and disseminate knowledge to other professionals who may engage in this work.
What We Do

Research
- We engage in early community assessment of the goals, strategies, and priorities of residents and other stakeholders.

- We engage in an ongoing community assessment of resident perceptions of the systems of supports and opportunities in each designated neighborhood.

- We identify and evaluate the impact of the City of Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program on the positive youth development of the participating youth workforce.

- We have evaluated the various interventions (e.g. Photovoice) on the process of community change.

Training and Technical Assistance
- The TAC serves as a training center providing internships to Masters’ level social work students from the University of Michigan and Wayne State University.

- The TAC serves as a youth employment training site, providing community based research opportunities for young people from the targeted neighborhoods.

- The TAC provides technical assistance to the Skillman Foundation, including technical papers focusing on best practices in comprehensive community change initiatives, strategic thinking and planning, data and research on the Good Neighborhoods, evaluation of community-based change strategies.

- Our focus is to increase the capacity of residents and other stakeholders through special events, workshops, neighborhood based training, individual and team coaching, and data presentations of neighborhood demographic and other factual information.

- We increase community capacity to sustain change through facilitating cross-neighborhood learning communities.

- We increase resident and youth leadership through leadership training.

Communication and Dissemination
- TAC faculty author peer-reviewed articles, books and book chapters and give scholarly presentations at professional conferences and meetings. Community residents, including youth, along with staff from the Skillman Foundation co-present at national meetings.

- The TAC produces technical briefs and substantive data reports for the Skillman Foundation, partners, community residents and stakeholders, and users of the world-wide web.

- The TAC informs professional and community partners about the results of its
research through print, presentations to partners and community organizations and presentations to the community at various special events.