

Helen B. Kapiloff

1915-2002



Helen B. Kapiloff was a pioneering social worker in the Veterans Health Administration. She was the daughter of immigrant parents who settled in a small Jewish community in Houston, Texas. She entered Rice University at the age of 16 and majored in Sociology. After completing several field placements in public agencies, she entered graduate school and received her Masters in Social Work from the University of Chicago School Of Social Work Administration. After graduation, she became a medical social worker at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, MD. After working at several agencies including the American Red Cross, she began a long and distinguished career with the Veterans Administration.

Her first job was at the Naval Hospital in Houston which was replaced the Houston VA Medical Center. In the late 1990s, a new VA Medical Center was built in Houston. It has been noted that Helen was the only Chief Social Worker to wear out two hospitals.

Helen's awards and accomplishments were many. She successfully lobbied the Texan Legislature to establish a Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston. During her tenure at the VA, over 600 graduate students from several schools completed their field placement in her department. She was one of the VA's first Social Work Administrative Leadership Training (SWALT) Preceptors and mentored many trainees who later became Social Work Chiefs.

Her many honors included Social Worker of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award from the Houston Chapter of NASW and served as part of the NASW Texas State Delegation to the National Delegate Assembly for several terms. On the national level, she was also a NASW Social Work Pioneer.