

SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE INDICATORS
COUNSEL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

ADVANCED LEVEL OF PRACTICE
CLINICAL CONCENTRATION STUDENTS

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

- Recognize and manage personal biases as they affect professional behavior and judgement;
- Recognize and navigate incongruities with inter-professional relationships;
- Apply ethical decision-making framework and skills to issues specific to clinical social work;
- Understand and identify professional strengths, limitations and challenges; engage in reflective practice;
- Demonstrate professional use of self with client(s) including clinical reasoning, boundaries, self-disclosure and self-care;
- Communicate professional judgements to other social workers and to professionals from other disciplines.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

- Apply critical thinking to issues of diversity and anti-oppressive practice;
- Appreciate multiple ways of developing knowledge and discern differences between knowledge and research;
- Identify and use practitioner/client differences from a strength based perspective; seek participation from marginalized perspectives;
- Research and apply knowledge of diverse populations and intervention approaches to enhance client well-being.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- Use knowledge of the effects of oppression, discrimination, and historical trauma on client and client systems to guide treatment planning and intervention;
- Promote social and economic justice for client systems through bridging policy and practice;
- Work collaboratively with clients and promote interpersonal collaboration to effect system change.

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:

- Use research methodologies from varied perspectives to evaluate clinical practice effectiveness and/or outcomes;
- Evaluate, select and implement appropriate multidimensional assessment, intervention, and practice evaluation tools;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations;
- Participate in the generation of new clinical knowledge through research and practice.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

- Communicate the implication of policies and policy change in the lives of clients to stakeholders;
- Use evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence to advocate for policies that benefit the social and economic well-being of clients and improve the effectiveness of services.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness.

Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- Develop a culturally responsive therapeutic relationship; Create responsive collaborative relationships with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities through anti-oppressive practice;
- Attend to the interpersonal dynamics and contextual factors that both strengthen and potentially threaten the therapeutic alliance;
- Identify and use knowledge of relationship dynamics, including power differentials;
- Establish a relationally based process that encourages clients to be equal participants in the establishment of treatment goals and expected outcomes.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

- Use multi-dimensional bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment tools;
- Assess clients' readiness for change;
- Assess client coping strategies to reinforce and improve adaptation to life situations, circumstances, and events; including principles of trauma-informed care and strength-based practice;
- Select and modify appropriate intervention strategies based on continuous clinical assessment; and use differential and multiaxial diagnoses.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

- Critically evaluate, select, and apply best practices and evidence-based interventions, make practice-informed interventions explicit;
- Demonstrate the use of appropriate clinical techniques for a range of presenting concerns identified in the assessment, including crisis intervention strategies as needed;
- Collaborate with other professionals to coordinate treatment interventions.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- Contribute to the theoretical knowledge base of the social work profession through practice-based research;
- Use clinical evaluation of process and outcomes to develop best practice interventions for a range of bio-psycho-social-spiritual conditions.