

Social Work Field Education Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors

The School of Social Work Field Education Program addresses each of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors at the Foundation (SOWK 488 and SOWK 588) and Concentration (SOWK 688) levels.

Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. (Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards, Council on Social Work Education, Inc., 2008, 2012).

Core Competency 1

Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession's history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession's enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Advocates for client access to services.
- b. Practices personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development.
- c. Attends to professional roles and boundaries.
- d. Demonstrates professional demeanor in behavior, appearance and communication.
- e. Engages in opportunities that set the stage for career-long learning.
- f. Engages in supervision and consultation to enhance professional performance.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Actively seek out opportunities to advocate on behalf of (or with) clients related to obtaining resources and receiving services.

Core Competency 2

Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant laws.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Recognizes and manages personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.
- b. Makes ethical decisions by applying the NASW code of ethics.
- c. Applies strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.
- d. Tolerates ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Apply social work ethical principles to complex situations utilizing consultation/supervision as needed.

Core Competency 3

Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Distinguishes, appraises, and integrates multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom.
- b. Critically analyzes models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation.
- c. Demonstrates effective communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities and colleagues:
 - Written
 - Oral
 - Electronic

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Critically evaluate theory and evidence-based knowledge when applying it to research and/or unique client situations.

Core Competency 4

Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate 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.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Recognizes the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.
- b. Demonstrates self-awareness to minimize the influence of personal biases and values in working with people.
- c. Recognizes and communicates understanding of the importance of differences in shaping life experiences and applies this understanding in social work practice.
- d. Actively learns about culture from multiple sources, including clients, constituents, communities and organizations to provide culturally competent services and programs.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Adapt and evaluate theoretical frameworks and/or practice interventions with diverse populations.

Core Competency 5

Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Understands the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination.
- b. Advocates for human rights and social and economic justice.
- c. Engages in practices that advance social and economic justice.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Understand the implications of global connectedness in promoting human rights and social and economic justice.

Core Competency 6

Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Understands how practice experience informs the research process.
- b. Uses research evidence to inform practice.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Design, implement, and/or interpret evidence-based social work research.

Core Competency 7

Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Utilizes conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention and evaluation.
- b. Critiques and applies knowledge to understand person and environment.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Critically evaluate the underlying assumptions, values, strengths, and/or weaknesses of these theories for practice.

Core Competency 8

Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know 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.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Evaluates the impact, intended and unintended, of agency and public policies and regulations.
- b. Collaborates with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Evaluate the intended and/or unintended consequences of agency and public policy.

Core Competency 9

Respond to contexts that shape practice.

Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

- a. Continuously recognizes, assesses and attends to the social, cultural, economic and technological changes that impact services.
- b. Provides leadership, appropriate to the student role, in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

Demonstrate the ability to strategically address and respond to the changing context of social work practice.

Core Competency 10

Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

Foundation Level Practice Behaviors

a. Engagement

- i. Substantively and affectively prepares for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
- ii. Uses empathy and other interpersonal skills appropriately.
- iii. Develops a mutually agreed-upon focus of work and desired outcomes.

a. Assessment and Planning

- i. Collects, organizes and interprets *complex* client data from *multiple* system levels.
- ii. Assesses client strengths and limitations.
- iii. Develops mutually agreed-upon intervention goals and objectives.
- iv. Selects appropriate intervention strategies

b. Intervention

- i. Initiates actions to achieve organizational goals.
- ii. Implements prevention interventions that enhance client capacities.
- iii. Helps clients resolve problems.
- iv. Negotiates, mediates, and advocates on behalf of clients.
- v. Facilitates transitions and endings within professional relationships.

c. Evaluation

Critically analyzes, monitors and evaluates interventions.

Concentration Level Practice Behaviors

a. Engagement

Differentially apply engagement strategies based on circumstances and changing practice dynamics.

b. Assessment and Planning

Assess the application and/or psychometric properties of assessment instruments for use with various client systems.

c. **Intervention**

Collaborate with other professionals and stakeholders to develop and/or coordinate interventions.

d. **Evaluation**

Design and apply methods for evaluation of interventions and/or programs.