Examples of Learning Plan Assignments/Learning Experiences by Core Competency

Adapt or adopt to a range of practice settings

Competency 1: Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

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

Examples of Field Placement Assignments

- Identify and articulate personal values, write them down, reflect upon and discuss with supervisor how they might impact one’s practice, assessment, intervention etc.
- Identify situations as they arise when one’s values are “challenged,” and discuss with supervisor.
- Be proactive in seeking work to do. Offer to assist staff—including clerical staff—if “down-times” arise.
- Become a member of NASW. Be an active member. Share issues, opinions.
- Attend seminars/trainings within community, agency, online.
- Create and maintain an online resource guide for your specific population

Human Services-specific:

- Understand court processes with domestic relations, abuse/neglect, work closely with attorney on a specific case and discuss with supervisor.
- Receive and process referrals from DHS.
- Observe, assist intake process, eventually doing intakes independently and setting up appropriate services.

Concentration Field Assignments

- Continue as a member of NASW. When you no longer are eligible for student discounts, advocate for membership fees to be calculated on a sliding fee scale according to income, citing that social workers are often not paid well and it is important for all social workers to have a voice, thus applying the social work value of inclusion to our own professional membership.
- (DHS) Conduct home visits with families and children. Conduct Child Protective Service Investigations, providing all necessary information to clients in order to clarify misunderstandings and inform them of their rights.
- Attend court hearings.
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.

Examples of Field Placement Assignments
- Identify and discuss with supervisor any ethical dilemmas/issues that might arise and relate to NASW Code of Ethics. Reflect in journal.
- Identify and discuss ambiguity in resolving a specific ethical conflict that arises.

Medical
- Attend at least one Ethics meeting. Identify an issue discussed and review with supervisor.
- Understand what DNR means and explain to a patient.

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. The use of critical thinking is augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information.

Examples of Field Assignments
- Learn about one aspect of service that the agency or hospital provides and consider its implications on social work practice, bridge what has been learned in class with what is learned in placement. Discuss with field instructor.
- Learn and use appropriately terminology/abbreviations unique to the placement, and complete accurate documentation as required by the placement.
- Write and respond to emails, phone messages in a timely and professional manner.
- Attend any care conferences or interdisciplinary team meetings and provide updates and observations appropriately/professionally—and advocate for client as needed, explaining rationale.

School/Youth
- Be sensitive to the various needs of each youth, generate a list of needs and discuss with supervisor.
- When exposed to derogatory comments made by the youth, educate and set limits.
- (Clinical) Learn/practice a play therapy technique and use technique in counsel with child. Discuss level of effectiveness with supervisor, what worked well, what you might do differently.
- Identify an appropriate parenting technique and describe to parents. Follow up as to their evaluation of its effectiveness. Discuss with supervisor.
• Attend IEP meetings and advocate for students’ best interest, clearly explaining rationale. Follow up with teachers to assure IEP is closely followed and implemented.

**Elderly/Alzheimer’s**
• Participate in Eldercare Network. Describe its function and evaluate its effectiveness.
• Attend the Memories in Making training. What is your reaction? What did you learn? How can it be helpful with the clients you are working with?
• Assess how family members are dealing with a recent diagnosis. What are their concerns? How have you addressed them?
• Attend Project Visibility training. Describe how it is practiced within the organization.

### Concentration Field Assignments

• Write a grant request, incorporating appropriate theoretical and research frameworks.
• Read a case study. Consider any diagnoses. Consider, based on documentation, does this appear to be accurate? Or could there be situational/environmental factors impacting the client? Discuss with your supervisor.
• If counseling with a client who has had a previous diagnosis, ask questions. Do you agree with the diagnosis? What meds is the client on? Does he/she believe they are helpful? How long has she been taking them? Is he allowing his dx to define who he is? Discuss with your supervisor.

### 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.

### Examples of Field Assignments
• Participate in meetings at the individual, divisional and organizational level; consider and discuss diversity in these groups.
• Read *Cracks in the Pavement* by Sanchez-Jankowski (or appropriate sections) and relate to practice.
• Be willing to hear client’s perspective in developing an understanding of their situation. Discuss with supervisor how this may have changed your initial perspective.
• Develop a training tool that might be used for staff and/or volunteers to appreciate diversity and to challenge their own judgments.
• Keep a running log of what you are learning from clients.
Elderly/Alzheimer’s
- Understand and identify differences and similarities between generations/discuss with supervisor.
- Visit with a specific client and do a short social history? What was their life when they were your age? (School, family, social environment) What’s similar? Different? What are the threads that connect the generations? What was “easier” then? What was more difficult?
- Describe a cueing strategy you used with a client. Discuss with your supervisor its effectiveness.
- Reflect upon and discuss your own feelings about the elderly. Is it difficult to imagine yourself at 80 years old? What has your experience been with your grandparents/great grandparents? What do you perceive as general beliefs about aging?
- Visit with a specific client diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. How advanced is their diagnosis? What are your reactions in interacting with them?

School/Youth
- Learn about IDEA laws/regs and discuss how they impact a specific child.
- Work with the parents of a specific child to develop an IEP.
- Familiarize yourself with various bullying interventions and discuss with supervisor why one might appeal to you more than another.

Clinical:
- Familiarize with Seeking Safety treatment model and use in counsel under supervision as appropriate.
- Assist client in recognizing/listing strengths, setting goals, and breaking goals down into attainable steps.
- Learn about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and use in counseling under supervision

Concentration Field Assignments

School/Youth
- Evaluate various bullying interventions and identify root causes as they relate to differences.
- Lead a social skills group for students with emotional disabilities.
- Research practice interventions that are culturally sensitive and appropriate for a specific client. Discuss with your supervisor.
- Develop a presentation that raises awareness and appreciation of the value of diversity. (This may be related to MLK day, Cinco de Mayo, or other events.)
- Given the prevalence of bullying in schools, develop an intervention that might be utilized.
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, and 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.

Examples of Field Assignments

- Continue to educate self about causes of poverty and the systems and environments of poverty. Discuss with supervisor.
- Identify and discuss at least two forms of discrimination you’ve observed that have been directed to the specific population you are working with.

Concentration Field Assignments

- Familiarize self with NCSL. Check site for discussions that are relevant to your area of practice. Attend if possible. Share your professional knowledge/concerns as appropriate.
- Listen to/understand client concerns and barriers to success. Discuss with your supervisor. What are the root causes? A policy or procedure? Is there anything you can do to initiate change?
- Be alert to national and international events that relate to the lives of the specific population with whom you work. Share information in individual and group supervision. Discuss. Are there any actions you can take?
- Attend community meetings with clients to encourage them to speak out in order to help get their needs met.

School/Youth

- Attend district-wide and PLC meetings. Help identify and work towards potential solutions in regards to the needs of at-risk students and their families.

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.

Examples of Field Assignments

- Read journal articles/review websites pertaining specifically to the agency/organization or area of practice. Choose 2 main points. Discuss with supervisor; relate to placement.
- Develop and implement a simple research project within your placement as approved by your supervisor. (Example: A pre-test of knowledge of resources of clients at intake--a post-test at discharge. Pre/post tests before/after you teach a class, etc.).
- Research and put together a presentation on a topic involving the specific population with whom you work.

**Schools/Youth**
- Learn the No Child Left Behind Act and create a survey for teachers to complete that will inform re: pros/cons of the Act from their perspective.

**Concentration Field Assignments**
- Critically examine a research article and share your critique with your supervisor/staff at placement.
- Develop a research project that includes clients and ask them to participate.
- Design an outcome measurement tool for a certain aspect of your placement. Assess if it is helpful in: determining whether the program is effective; if it is not effective, what changes might be made.
- Examine a recent research article that is applicable to the population you serve. How can you use it to inform your practice? Discuss with supervisor and also share with other like-minded agencies.

**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.

**Examples of Field Assignments**
- Choose a specific theory and discuss with your supervisor how it applies to a specific client within your work setting.
- Describe how different systems are affecting a specific client through mapping.
- (Clinical) Learn about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and use in counseling under supervision to improve skills.

**Concentration Field Assignments**
- Critically evaluate underlying assumptions, values, strengths/weaknesses of a specific theory for practice that you have employed during sessions with clients.
- Attend DBT training; when practicing assign the use of diary cards appropriately and evaluate with supervisor effectiveness.
- Study MI; when successful in facilitating client’s verbalization of ambivalence to change, outline with supervisor how you were able to “draw out” client’s own motivation for change.
- When appropriate, provide psychoeducation to family members regarding how best to support client.
Competency 8: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Social workers 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.

Examples of Field Assignments

- Discuss how a policy may have been detrimental to a specific client. Determine whether there is a possibility for you to advocate on behalf of that client.
- Evaluate and discuss how policies set forth by DHS affect the day to day operations of the setting in which you work.

Elderly/Alzheimers

- Become familiar with Medicaid and Medicare and how it applies to the elderly. Describe a specific client. Are the policies surrounding these programs beneficial for that client? Is there a policy/regulation that is making access to services more difficult?

Concentration Field Assignments

- Examine placement’s policies to determine: are services being delivered effectively; is delivery of services done in a way that is empowering to clients
- Attend your placement’s Board meetings. Contribute to any discussions regarding policy. Be able to share your rationale for the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of specific policies.
- Write about issues specific to your placement/population in agency/placement newsletters in order to educate. Write editorials in local newspapers as a means of sharing information/education of the general public.

School/Youth

- Explore the policies around bullying in the school setting in which you’re working. Compare it to other districts in your state; other policies in the country. Evaluate them. Discuss with your supervisor.

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.

Examples of Field Assignments

- Visit community agencies. Develop simple resource guide that is specific to the placement populations with whom you work.
- Read current community news sources and bring one relevant article each week to discuss with supervisor.
- Consider how technology is affecting the social environment of your clients, ie, Facebook, texting, etc. Discuss with your supervisor.
Concentration Field Assignments

- Speak in public at appropriate venues to educate community about needs of the specific population with whom you work.
- Collaborate with outside agencies to address changing context and need in relation to the population with whom you work.
- Research medications your clients might be on. What are the side-effects? Contraindications? Discuss with supervisor.
- Participate in Community Mapping in order to keep well informed as to the latest trends in social work practice and the activities of the other agencies that work with like population.
- Discuss with supervisor how the use of texting with clients has influenced your work with them. Outline how texting has affected a client in his/her personal life, ie., important life issues “discussed” via texting, rather than face-to-face, etc.) What is the best way to address this?
- Collaborate with other helping professionals involved in the client’s life. Identify conflicts/hardships that might be imposed upon the client by contradicting “assignments” or expectations from various professionals. Get Release of Information and work with all involved on client’s behalf so that all are on the same page.

School/Youth

- Develop informational presentation for parents and families about the technological impact on the social environment of their children, ie., Facebook, cell phones, texting etc. Discuss cyber-bullying, how it may impact their children, “symptoms” to be aware of.

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.

Examples of Field Assignments

Relationship Building/Engagement

- Identify strong personal reaction experienced when engaging with client, group, organization or community. Discuss with your supervisor how you managed.

Interviewing/Intervention

- Identify specific use of reframing, discuss effectiveness with supervisor.
- Identify specific use of clarification. Discuss how information received became more detailed and how it may have changed your original perception.
- Describe how remaining silent facilitated client’s ability to share more information. Discuss how it felt for you to remain silent.
• Discuss a specific opportunity when it was appropriate for you to use self-disclosure. How did the client react?

Assessment
• Articulate client strengths, capacities, and difficulties.
• Identify and discuss with supervisor what factors in systems at all levels are contributing to a specific client’s difficulties/vulnerabilities.
• Describe a conflicting expectation and reality of a specific client in contracting. Discuss how you worked through the process to formulate an acceptable agreement.

Evaluation
• Describe effectiveness of a specific approach or intervention. How was it effective? How was it not effective? What might you have done—or do—differently?
• Describe a policy or procedural change that might make practice more effective—or might simplify a specific process for clients.
• Describe specific feedback from a client and how you used it to evaluate/change your practice.

Group Skills
• Design and put into practice an activity that assists a group in building trust. Discuss with supervisor.
• Describe what you did to facilitate group members to use one another’s resources as well as their own.
• Describe a specific situation within a group that became emotionally difficult. Share how you dealt with it.
• Describe a situation of conflict within a group and how you were able to facilitate the group using positive problem-solving/conflict-resolution techniques.

Community Development
• Describe the community as a “client,” i.e., what is the percentage of poverty? Is it more heavily populated with blue collar workers? Is there a university? Who are the decision makers?
• What makes the community you’re working in unique? What are the specific needs of the community as you’re able to ascertain? How does the community at large view a smaller community within, i.e., a mobile home park, a certain low income housing area, etc?

Concentration Field Assignments

Relationship Building/Engagement
• Discuss with supervisor and team about strategies used/modified over time. Understand why these changes have occurred and what the current state of practice is.
Assessment

- Familiarize with GAF scales, Depression indexes and other assessment tools and use as appropriate within your placement. Discuss with supervisor effectiveness of use.
- (Medical) Understand how mental health concerns may be related to a medical diagnosis. Discuss with supervisor. Explore with patient.
- (Clinical) Familiarize with DSM-IV and demonstrate ability to use effectively to determine most applicable diagnosis. Discuss with supervisor.

Evaluation

- Design and implement an evaluation tool to determine the effectiveness of interventions.
- Review assessment tools currently being used in your placement and identify whether they are able to fully measure the desired outcomes at different system levels.
- If working with a client who has previous records, read and research records and identify goals set by the client and social worker in earlier meetings. Were the goals realistic and attainable? Have they been met? If not, discuss with client if the goals are still desirable and if so ways to reach or modify them.