GUIDE WITH EXAMPLES
MSW Trauma Informed Care Field Placement Student Learning Plan

The learning plan is a document developed by you and your agency instructor within the first few weeks of your field experience. It outlines activities that will enable you to exhibit the 9 core competencies as outlined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) through at least 1 activity for each practice behavior. The examples are a general starting point as the unique agency activities along with your educational and professional goals should shape the activity you identify under each practice behavior.

[Bracketed material are descriptions and examples]

Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors

Competency 1–Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
[Description: 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 interprofessional 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.]

a. Know the social work values, ethics, roles, and interpersonal boundaries necessary for trauma-informed practice.

[EXAMPLES:
• Student work clearly reflects meeting agency standards regarding confidentiality, informed consent, documentation, communication, and timeliness.
• Use effective communication skills (verbal, written, electronic) in establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.
• Apply relevant components of the Social Work Code of Ethics in managing professional boundaries.
• Establish and maintain empathic but clear social work boundaries during intakes, interviews, direct care, discharge planning, etc.]

b. Identify and differentiate the signs and symptoms of secondary traumatic stress/vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

[EXAMPLES:
• Seek out and use supervision to guide practice and self-care.
• Develop and maintain self-care plan regarding exposure to secondary traumatic stress/vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.
• Research best practices of dealing with secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue and burnout, and shares out findings with agency staff.]

c. Know the interplay of culture, spirituality, and ethnicity as they relate to the experience of trauma.
Competency 2– Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
[Description: 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.]
   a. Know that the intersection of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and national origin results in disproportionate trauma exposure, access to services, and social support resources.

[EXAMPLES:
   • Articulate elements in the client's life background that create vulnerability to disparities in treatment and services.
   • Articulate elements in services that create disparities in treatment of clients.
   • Identify the impact of one's own privilege and power on the helping relationship, and how to leverage it to advance the client's well-being.
   • Identify and list further learning needs to advance this practice behavior. Give examples (professional development, professional readings).]
   b. Use knowledge about differences to modify assessment and intervention strategies with individuals and communities.

[EXAMPLES:
   • Tailor assessment practices to identify the diversity strengths and needs of client.
   • Tailor intervention strategies to encourage these strengths and address these needs of client.
   • Write treatment plans documenting these tailored efforts.]

Competency 3– Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
[Description: 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.]
   a. Understand that societal exposure to oppression, social injustice, and denial of fundamental human rights represent a traumatic abuse of power that ruptures expectations of trust and security.

[EXAMPLES:
   • Identify human rights violations that may be contributing to the presenting issues and what you can do with that information.
• Validate feelings of social injustice, identify opportunities for self and social empowerment, and incorporate such opportunities within treatment planning.
• Understanding and assisting client in grievance procedure.
• Participate in a community coalition meetings and identify what role you will take and/or what you will do with the information learned.
• Participate in lobby day and make recommendations based on experience.

b. Recognize the interconnectedness of social justice, human rights, and trauma.

[EXAMPLES:
• Use a trauma lens to articulate how human rights and social justice violations are impacting client functioning.
• Participate on multi-disciplinary teams and state what your role is and/or what you will do with your learnings from these teams.
• Identify how you will share/advocate the social work and human rights perspectives.
• Collect and author clients' life stories, including perspectives about current problems and their vision of justice related to a specific topic (Freeman, 1997) and indentify what you will do with this information.
• Identify and list further learning needs to advance this practice behavior. Give examples of professional development sessions to attend and/or professional readings.]

Competency 4– Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
[Description: 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.]
a. Understand the impact of trauma on brain structures and biological processes, including impairments in memory, cognition, attachment, affect regulation, and long-term somatic responses.

[EXAMPLES:
• Explore and record from the perspective of "what has happened to the client" as compared to "what are the client's problems".
• Document the relevant elements of neurobiology, epigenetics, childhood adversity and resiliency that are at play in this exploration.]
b. Understand that ongoing neurobiological maturation and neural plasticity create continuing opportunities for recovery and adaptive developmental progress.

[EXAMPLES:
• Tailor interactions that expand the client's sense of safety.
• Tailor practice interventions that expand the client's use of healthy coping mechanisms.]
c. Demonstrate how trauma-informed and evidence-based research, that is, neurobiology and resilience, informs trauma practice.

[EXAMPLES:
• Research best practices of trauma-informed care and share out findings with agency staff.
• Share constructive feedback on ways to strengthen the use of trauma informed care best practices in the agency.]

Competency 5– Engage in Policy Practice
[Description: 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.]

a. Recognize that the deleterious effects of trauma across populations and stages of life are sufficiently pervasive to constitute a public health crisis that requires significant local, state, national, and international policy responses.

[EXAMPLES:
• Assess the impact of the agency's policies as to their positive and/or negative influence on trauma informed care practices/principles (holistic focus, self-care, strengths perspective, collaborative planning, nonjudgmental manner). Explain what you will do with these findings.
• Assess the impact of the community/local policies as to their positive and/or negative influence on trauma informed care practices/principles. Explain what you will do with these findings.]
b. Promote the application of trauma-informed practice in advocating for justice for victims and perpetrators.

[EXAMPLES:
• Research and share model trauma informed care policies relevant to agency practices.
• Research and share model trauma informed care policies relevant to community/local practices.]

Competency 6—Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
[Description: 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 interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.]

a. Synthesize and apply relevant theories of trauma and recovery in therapeutic relationships, organizational culture, and systems of care.

[EXAMPLES:
• Identify any concerns clients have about their safety and provide concrete ways they can strengthen their safety.
• Describe behavioral issues in a nonjudgmental manner that acknowledges and incorporates understanding of trauma history.
• Use of the S.E.L.F. framework to identify the safety issues, emotional management issues, what has to be given up for change to occur, and what is the vision we are moving toward.]
b. Mobilize the strength of clients and systems to enhance individual, family, and community resilience.

[EXAMPLES:
• Develop individualized lists of positive social supports.
• Make connections to and expand positive social supports.
• Utilize universal trauma precautions, such as assuming that the person you are working with is coping with the effects of trauma.]
Competency 7– Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

[Description: 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 interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.]

a. Assess organizational policies for their potential to strengthen trauma-informed evidence-based programs and practices and evaluate organizational readiness to engage in such change.

[EXAMPLES:
• Identify ways in which the agency implements the 7 Sanctuary Commitments (Open Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Social Learning, Nonviolence, Democracy, Growth and Change, Social Responsibility). Explain what you will do with these findings.
• Identify ways in which the agency implements the key principles of the Trauma Informed Approach (Safety, Trustworthiness, Transparency, Peer Support, Collaboration, Mutuality, Empowerment, Voice, Choice). Explain what you will do with these findings.]
b. Know the impact of trauma on coping behaviors and risk and protective factors in conducting assessment and diagnosis.

[EXAMPLES:
• Engage in formal assessment of the trauma experienced by those you are serving.
• Articulate the impact of the trauma experience when participating in diagnostic formations.]

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

[Description: 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 interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and interorganizational collaboration.]

a. Use strategies to establish a sense of safety for a collaborative therapeutic relationship.

[EXAMPLES:
• Identify and implement concrete ways to expand healthy self-soothing and self-regulating behaviors and coping strategies.
• Identify possible signs of re-traumatization and take steps to help the client manage the emotions and stress effectively.]
b. Implement concepts of trauma-informed social work practice into organizational culture.

[EXAMPLES:
• Identify ways to strengthen the capacity for choice by engaging in positive new behaviors rather than repeating old patterns.
• Recognizing and validating what must be given up for change to occur while reinforcing positive and new coping strategies.]
c. Know the range of empirically supported trauma treatments and know the differential selection and application of evidence-informed research across populations.

[EXAMPLES:
- Devise a safety plan based on the client's trauma history.
- Develop a treatment plan informed by client's trauma history incorporating recommendations/referrals for trauma specific treatment when warranted.
- Apply empirically supported trauma informed interventions and models (Motivational Interviewing, Seeking Safety, Solution Focused Therapy, Mindfulness, etc...)]

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

[Description: 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.]

a. Recognize the key characteristics of a trauma-informed organization.

[EXAMPLES:
- Conduct an agency analysis to compare and contrast findings with the characteristics of a trauma informed care organization (required Field Seminar assignment) and share out with agency.]

b. Know evidence-informed indicators of trauma recovery.

[EXAMPLES:
- Identify the outcomes articulated in the treatment plan.
- Assess the extent to which the treatment outcomes advance safety (physical, psychological, social, moral), positive emotional self-soothing and self-regulating practices, and positive coping strategies.
- Identify the gaps and recommend revisions to treatment outcomes to further strengthen trauma recovery.]

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