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**Guide for Students and Agency Instructors for Learning Plans and Field Evaluations**

**Learning Plans:** All students, in consultation with their agency

instructors/supervisors, should have a learning plan completed within the

first three weeks of the semester. This tool is to help guide the development

of the learning plan in that it provides descriptions of the Core Competencies

for better understanding of what social workers value, understand, know and

do. This tool also provides examples of observable field activities that can

be modified/revised to best fit the student's learning plan goals.

**Field Evaluations:** Two evaluation conferences are held with the student during the course of the field experience. For **Undergraduate Social Work** and **MSW Foundation students**, the standard by which a student is to be compared, by the end of the placement, is that of a new beginning-level social worker. For **MSW Specialization students**, the standard by which the student is to be compared is that of a social work professional with advanced practice skills to work with socioculturally diverse populations of individuals, families and small groups.

The nine (9) core competencies specified below were established in 2015 by the Council on Social Work Education. The specific practice behaviors are also listed for each program. Observable examples are provided for each core competency. Students and agency instructors/supervisors will assign their specific field activity to each practice behavior on the learning plan. One example could apply to more than one practice behavior.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevantlaws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, andadditional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.

b. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain

professionalism in practice situations.

c. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, andelectronic communication.

d. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes.

e. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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

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

c. Know the interplay of culture, spirituality, and ethnicity as they relate to the experience of trauma.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Review Social Work Code of Ethics and apply it to a case.

Follow agency policies and procedures.

Maintain confidentiality and obtain consent.

Practice "do no harm"

Demonstrate empathy.

Engage in reflective discussions with supervisor regarding personal conduct

with client, group, family, or professional group.

Maintain boundaries by keeping personal life and professional life separate

from each other.

Dresses appropriately for activity/setting.

Uses appropriate/professional language in oral and written communication.

Punctual/prompt/organized/prepared for client and agency activities.

Maintain client records/files in accordance with agency standards.

Practice self-care.

Proper use of email, online agency procedures, social media and documentation.

Participate in regularly scheduled supervisory sessions to process experiences.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and

difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro

levels.

b. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as

experts of their own experiences.

c. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal

biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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.

b. Use knowledge about differences to modify assessment and intervention

strategies with individuals and communities.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Matching diversity issues and needs to assessments and treatment planning.

Make appropriate community referrals.

Utilize trauma sensitive interventions with client.

Adapt interviewing methods to assess client's pertinent area of diversity.

Engage in activities that assist with learning about diverse issues of client and community.

Share knowledge learned of diverse populations.

Participate in professional development to learn more about diversity issues, needs and supports, and summarize learnings to supervisor.

Provide for client needs at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.

Respect the wishes and practices of clients.

Treat clients with respect, dignity and fairness.

Use appropriate language/terminology with client base.

Recognize and make adjustments when personal biases/privilege may impact/influence ability to serve client.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to

advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and

b. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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.

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

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Articulate knowledge of the impact of oppression and discrimination on client base.

Follow agency, local, state and federal guidelines for addressing oppression and discrimination.

Educate client, agency and community members of client rights.

Implement entitlement programs.

Inform of and provide access to resources for all clients.

Promote self-determination.

Provide prevention education.

Participate in board meetings.

Participate in policy reviews and changes.

Attend and actively participate in agency staff meetings.

Participate in case consultations.

Apply classroom learning to real cases/situations.

Advocate on behalf of client with agencies and other professionals to obtain quality services.

Advocate for social cause important to the agency and client base.

Participate in public relations and fundraising efforts.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research.

b. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative

research methods and research findings.

c. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and

service delivery.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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.

b. Understand that ongoing neurobiological maturation and neural plasticity create

continuing opportunities for recovery and adaptive developmental progress.

c. Demonstrate how trauma-informed and evidence-based research, that is,

neurobiology and resilience, informs trauma practice.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Review case notes to look for trends.

Gather multiple sources of information prior to making decisions and/or recommendations.

Articulate variables that may impact services.

Understand and seek out evidence based practices.

Complete literature review on an agency intervention.

Articulate how an agency chooses what services to deliver.

Engage in evaluation of client progress.

Explore agency practices and how they align with evidence-informed research.

Share with agency staff/community partners evidence-informed practice(s)/programs.

Assist with exploring, obtaining and/or maintaining grants.

Describe specific agency program using logical model format (theory of change).

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well

being, service delivery, and access to social services.

b. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and

access to social services.

c. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that

advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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.

b. Promote the application of trauma-informed practice in advocating for justice

for victims and perpetrators.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Apply federal, state and local policies to agency practices.

Participate in reviewing and revising agency policies and procedures.

Make appropriate community referrals.

Provide outreach services to reach client base.

Implement entitlement programs.

Contract services for clients.

Adapt services to meet client needs.

Practice various assessments (gender, age, disability area, etc.).

Engage in discussions/activities that improve service delivery.

Participate on multi-disciplinary teams and/or community coalitions.

Participate in agency accreditation activities.

Analyze policy and draft a policy briefing.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in

environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with

clients and constituencies.

b. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse

clients and constituencies.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

a. Synthesize and apply relevant theories of trauma and recovery in therapeutic

relationships, organizational culture, and systems of care.

b. Mobilize the strength of clients and systems to enhance individual, family, and

community resilience.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Articulate micro-mezzo-macro levels of influence on client needs and treatment planning.

Identify, engage in and document indirect services on behalf of clients (brokering, advocacy, systems change, planning).

Utilize ecological system theory and apply it to a case.

Participate in community meetings with stakeholders.

Conduct home visits.

Conduct interviews in client-centered environments.

Articulate how socioeconomic factors impacting functioning.

Utilize different techniques to engage clients.

Review client files prior to meeting them.

Interview clients for social histories.

Make follow up contacts with client and family.

Engage in intake activities.

Participate in crisis management supports and services.

Participate in interagency/interdisciplinary meetings.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information

from clients and constituencies.

b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in

environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of

assessment data from clients and constituencies.

c. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the

critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and

constituencies.

d. Elect appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research

knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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.

b. Know the impact of trauma on coping behaviors and risk and protective factors

in conducting assessment and diagnosis.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Correct use of agency assessment tools.

Conduct initial intakes, screening and assessment interviews with client.

Correct interpretation of data gathered from assessment tools (client, program, community).

Write social histories.

Conduct child studies.

Collect data from multiple sources.

Document correctly.

Interview clients and families.

Interview community partners.

Engage appropriately with clients or stakeholders to reach consensus on goal(s).

Align results of assessment data to appropriate interventions and/or referrals.

Review agency quality improvement/assurance practices.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and

enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;

b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in

environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions

with clients and constituencies.

c. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice

outcomes.

d. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and

constituencies.

e. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on

goals.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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

relationship.

b. Implement concepts of trauma-informed social work practice into organizational

culture.

c. Know the range of empirically supported trauma treatments and know the

differential selection and application of evidence-informed research across

populations.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Implement agency/community interventions and supports with clear timelines and measurable objectives.

Engage in joint planning with the client or stakeholders.

Supervise implementation of treatment plan.

Implement case management services.

Make appropriate referrals.

Co-facilitate skill building/psychoeducational sessions.

Co-facilitate group sessions.

Participate in agency and client staffings.

Participate in case consultations.

Provide crisis management services.

Advocate for clients during meetings.

Engage in progress reviews.

Modify goals and interventions as needed.

Participate in closing out of services.

Network with other agencies and professionals.

Apply theories of intervention to treatment planning.

**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.

**Undergraduate Social Work and MSW Foundation Practice Behaviors:**

a. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes.

b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in

environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation

of outcomes.

c. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes

and outcomes.

d. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo,

and macro levels.

**MSW Specialization Practice Behaviors:**

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

b. Know evidence-informed indicators of trauma recovery.

**What Does This Competency Look Like in Practice?**

Report out on agency statistics regarding clients served, services provided and/or outcomes.

Correct use of agency evaluation tools.

Articulate uniqueness of each client when evaluating progress.

Collect data to determine progress.

Review client progress and make recommendations.

Review components of treatment plan.

Seek least restrictive options when appropriate.

Collection of agency data.

Correct interpretation of agency data.

Sharing out of agency data.

Create action plans based on agency data.

Participate in a program evaluation project.

Revised June 2018