

# Ten Competencies of Social Work Practice

---

Council on Social Work Education

Ethical and Professional Behavior

---

# Competency 1

# Identify as a Professional Social Worker

---

- Advocate for client access to the services of social work
- Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development
- Attend to professional roles and boundaries
- Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, communication
- Engage in career-long learning
- Use supervision and consultation

## Apply Social Work Ethical Principles to Guide Practice

---

- Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice
- Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics
- Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts
- Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Profession's history, mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession
- How personal experiences and affective reactions influence professional judgment
- Distinction between personal and professional values
- Role of other professions when engaged in interprofessional teams
- Value-base of the profession and ethical standards; relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels
- Frameworks of ethical decision-making, how to apply principles of critical thinking to frameworks in practice, research, and policy
- Importance of lifelong learning and commitment to updating relevant and effective skills
- Emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice

Diversity and Difference in Practice

---

# Competency 2

# Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

---

- Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
- Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
- Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
- View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants

# Apply Critical Thinking to Inform and Communicate Professional Judgments

---

- Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom
- Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues

# Social Workers Understand

---

- How diversity and differences characterize, shape the human experience, and are critical to formation of identity
- Dimensions of diversity understood as intersectionality of factors, including 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
- Life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation, as well as privilege, power, and acclaim
- Forms and mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, and recognition of 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 Understand (cont.)

---

- Regardless of position in society, every person 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 they are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights
- 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

Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

---

# Competency 3

# Advance Human Rights and Social and Economic Justice

---

- Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
- Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
- Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice

# Social Workers Understand

---

- 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
- 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
- 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

Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

---

## Competency 4

# Engage in Research-Informed Practice and Practice-Informed Research

---

- Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
- Use research evidence to inform practice

# Apply Knowledge of Human Behavior and the Social Environment

---

- Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation
- Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating practice
- Principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge
- Evidence that informs practice derives from multidisciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing and processes for translating research findings into effective practice

Engage in Policy Practice

---

# Competency 5

# Engage in Policy Practice

---

- To advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective services
- Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being
- Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action

# Social Workers Understand

---

- 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
- History and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development
- Role in policy development and implementation within practice settings at micro, mezzo, and macro levels and actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings
- Recognize the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy
- Policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation
- 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
- Value the importance of human relationships

Engage With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

# Competency 6

## Engage With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

- Substantively and effectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
- Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness
- How their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies
- Value principles of relationship building and interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate

Assess With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

# Competency 7

# Assess With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

- Collect, organize, and interpret client data
- Assess client strengths and limitations
- Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives
- Select appropriate intervention strategies

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- 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
- 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
- How their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making

Intervene With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

# Competency 8

# Intervene With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

- Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals
- Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities
- Help clients resolve problems
- Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
- Facilitate transitions and endings

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Intervention is an ongoing component of dynamic and interactive process of practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies
- Methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals
- Value the importance of interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and interorganizational collaboration

Evaluate With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

# Competency 9

# Evaluate With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

---

Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

# Social Workers Understand

---

- Evaluation of practice is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness
- Theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes
- Qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness

Develop as a Social Work Leader

---

# Competency 10

# Respond to Contexts That Shape Practice

---

- Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services
- Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

# Social Workers Develop

---

- Importance of vision in leadership and can apply theories of leadership to the development of a personal vision statement based on self-assessment
- Principles of the problem-solving process, teamwork, and collaboration
- Value professionalism, a strong work ethic, honesty, and integrity, and take pride in their work
- Open-minded, and can quickly incorporate and adapt to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles in approaching and solving problems
- Ability to think critically and systemically to know when to comply, when to negotiate, and when to advocate
- Innovation and steps toward action