The Merrill Social Work and Human Services Series

8TH EDITION

THE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICUM

PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE

CYNTHIA L. GARTHWAIT

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The Social Work Practicum

Preparation for Practice

Eighth Edition

Cynthia L. Garthwait
University of Montana

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Foreword

The social work practicum lies at the heart of social work education. In practicum, social work students apply the concepts learned in the classroom; challenge the realities of injustice; bear witness to resiliency in action; struggle to resolve ethical dilemmas; collaborate with others to create change; and support wellness in individuals, families, and communities. It is here that students transition from being a theoretical social worker to assuming the mantle of a practicing social worker. In this transition, social work students uncover and identify their place in the profession. This learning process is an adventure, and this textbook provides a guide for that adventure.

Practicum is a unique time in the careers of social work students. They are positioned in both academia and practice, fully planted in neither of these worlds. Straddling the two worlds allows students the opportunity to be intentional and reflective; however, without support the distance between these two realms can seem vast. In my experience as director of field education with the responsibility of managing BSW and MSW practica, students who lack support struggle to make the connection between theory and practice. Translating the didactic experience to a practice environment takes supportive supervision and a structured approach from their field directors, faculty supervisors, and agency field instructors.

The Social Work Practicum: Preparation for Practice is an essential tool to help navigate and enhance learning in practicum. If the learning agreement is the roadmap for a student's practicum, Cynthia L. Garthwait's book serves as the guidebook helping students make connections and integrate learning in a practical and user-friendly way. It

is the academic companion to the social work practicum experience. Much like a traveler's guidebook translates and highlights key features in a foreign country, this text helps students make meaning of their practicum experience by focusing in on key elements of social work practice. Garthwait highlights social work practice themes and Council on Social Work Education competencies and behaviors in a concise and usable way, viewing all of these topics through the lens of practicum. The book is structured in a way that challenges students to think critically and reflexively about their current social work practice—a process that is integral to learning. Garthwait brings the worlds of academia and social work practice together, and her text serves as a guide for students' practicum learning adventures.

This eighth edition builds on the strong foundation and approachable format that characterized previous editions. In this new edition, readers will find significant updates on the use of technology including social media, computer management, and the provision of computer-based services, informed by the best practices and standards of National Association of Social Worker, the Council on Social Work Education, and the Association of Social Work Boards. In addition, the author has expanded and updated information on diversity and working across differences, including a critical analysis of power and privilege. Also included is expanded material on working with involuntary clients, new information on social work theories and models, and additional content on communication skills. Readers will also appreciate the expanded focus on the planned change process. The online version of the text includes links to videos and end-of-chapter questions and quizzes helpful for all students, and particularly relevant to those engaged in online seminars. Through all of these many assets, this eighth edition prepares social work students to practice in the complex and dynamic social, political, and cultural environment.

Thank you to Cynthia L. Garthwait for writing the perfect adventure companion and textbook for field education. This book enhances the social work practicum experience so that students can more easily bridge the worlds of academia and practice, actively learn, critically reflect, and ready themselves to become social work leaders and change makers.

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Program Monitor, Center for Children, Families, and Workforce Development, School of Social Work, University of Montana.

Preface

Social work education is a unique combination of classroom learning and applied experiences, making for an exciting professional journey for both faculty and students. Blending theory and practice is not automatic, however, and a guided structure for this process is needed. Each chapter of this textbook provides students with a method for doing just that. Divided into three major sections, each chapter intentionally moves students from the classroom to the practicum and then gives them tools to move them into professional practice. This structure can provide a rich teaching and learning resource with valuable opportunities for learning and growth.

To provide a developmental and sequential path of professional growth, each chapter focuses on an important area of social work and then leads students through the following three processes:

- **Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum.** This section provides a concise review of classroom content and builds upon that knowledge by offering higher-level content relevant to the pracgticum. This helps students link classroom and practicum in meaningful ways in vital arenas of practice.
- **Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence.** This section requires students to put their knowledge into practice by using it in actual practicum experiences and seeing how actual practice is guided by knowledge and skill both.
- **Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth.** This section moves students beyond practicum and into professional practice by having them identify and analyze practice issues. It shows the need for autonomous professional growth in actual practice using career

planning, continuing education, self-reflection, and use of supervision.

New to This Edition

This edition includes new content on the following topics:

- Legal and ethical guidelines for use of electronic communication (Chapters 7, 9, 10)
- The Grand Challenges of Social Work identified by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (Chapter 8)
- Critical analysis model of social policy (Chapter 7)
- Social problem analysis model (Chapter 6)
- Community dynamics impacting clients and interventions (Chapter 5)
- Cultural humility and diversity in practice (Chapter 13)
- Orienting theories for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (Chapters 5, 12, Appendix A, Appendix B)
- Practice theories for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (Chapters 5, 12, Appendix A, Appendix B)
- Guidelines for practice with involuntary clients (Chapters 9, 12, 14, 15)
- Leadership development related to each chapter's content (Chapter 17)

Significantly revised content on the following topics is included:

- Blocking and building goals of community practice (Chapter 5)
- Professional development beyond the practicum (Chapters 8, 15)
- Strategies to address social problems (Chapter 6)
- Social justice in policy practice (Chapter 7)
- Personal safety (Chapter 14)
- Use of supervision (Chapter 3)
- Principles and guidelines for the planned change process (Chapter 12)

Pearson eText

The Pearson eText provides an extended, interactive learning environment using multimedia features that promote the building of social work competencies.

- Self-Check multiple-choice quizzes in each chapter give students the opportunity to check their understanding of the chapter.
- Video Application Exercises present topical videos accompanied by short-answer questions to encourage reflection and critical thinking.
- Chapter Review essay quizzes allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the major concepts in the chapter. Feedback for the correct answer is provided to help developmental and scaffolded learning.

Acknowledgments

The creation of this textbook is a result of many years of social work experience in varied settings as well as social work education with BSW and MSW students. The lives, struggles, accounts, and triumphs of my clients over time, combined with my teaching experience with students who want to address the needs of people seeking better lives, has resulted in what I consider to be a valuable resource. My hope is that you will use this book in a way that balances realism and hope, theory and practice, and the professional and personal lives of social workers. Your professional calling requires a commitment to enhancing social functioning with enthusiasm, commitment, knowledge, and skill. This book can accompany you on that career-long trajectory of competent service to which you have dedicated yourself.

Thanks to Gary, who appreciates and supports my calling to the education of students and the clients they will serve.

I would also like to thank the following reviewers for their input on revising this eighth edition: Carlene A. Quinn, Indiana University; Renee Michelsen, University of Southern California; Thomas A. Artelt, University of Georgia; and Erika Galyean, Indiana University.

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Purpose and Expectations for Practicum

Learning Outcomes

- Understand how student, university, agency, and client expectations for practicum will result in a positive practicum experience.
- Identify individual practice strengths that can be built upon during practicum.
- Assess oneself developmentally on a skill building continuum.
- Assume responsibility for preparing for social work practice.

Chapter Outline

Structure of Chapters

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Stakeholders' Expectations for Practicum

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Skill Building Across Your Social Work Career

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Structure of Chapters

Your practicum, although organized according to your university's guidelines and requirements, will be unique and individual to you. In consequence, although the chapters in this book are numbered in the conventional manner, you do not necessarily need to move through the book sequentially, one chapter after another. Rather, the book is structured so that chapters build upon each other and at times can be reviewed in conjunction with each succeeding chapter. It is expected that you will move back and forth between sections and will revisit the same section several times as you gain experience in the practicum and begin to look at various questions and issues from new perspectives. The chapters may also be read in a different order to accommodate the structure and outline of your school's program.

Each chapter begins with a list of **Learning Outcomes** designed to help you focus on competencies and your efficacy as a social worker in specific practice areas. Each chapter contains a section titled **Chapter Preview**, which presents a short capsule of the chapter content and reasons why the focus of the chapter is essential. It also describes the relationship between this chapter and previous ones while also linking it to the chapters that follow. The first major section of each chapter, **Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum**, presents selected concepts and principles related to the topic addressed by the chapter. The concepts and definitions presented in this section are not a substitute for a textbook devoted to that topic, but rather review key ideas you have already learned that now set the stage for what follows. The ideas in the **Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence** section of each chapter will stimulate creative thinking and raise important questions that need to be considered as you work your way through the practicum and develop competence in social work. These sections offer general suggestions, guidance, advice, and sometimes a few specific "dos and don'ts" intended

to encourage and facilitate learning in relation to the chapter's objectives and particular focus.

Several pages of each chapter have been cast into a format that requires you to complete an activity that is entitled **Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth**. These activities point you to practice beyond practicum and offer information and suggestions about professional development over time. You will be asked to integrate knowledge, skills, and values needed for the professional competencies of social work practice. A number of challenging **Critical Thinking Questions** in each chapter require you to analyze and synthesize what you learned. A section titled **Suggested Learning Activities** lists several specific potential tasks and activities that provide additional opportunities and experiences for learning.

The **References and Recommended Readings** section at the end of each chapter lists books, articles, and links related to the topics addressed in the book. These references and suggestions serve as resources for additional information and encourage a more in-depth examination of the topics presented. Using textbooks and readings from courses you have taken as reference guides will also help you understand how social workers continue to build on their previous knowledge and skills, as they are expected to develop more advanced practice over time.

The **Appendix** contains examples of the planned change process at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels to illustrate how the phases of the planned change process are interconnected, including engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. They demonstrate the ways in which theories and models are utilized in actual social work practice situations. In addition, the Appendix contains a listing of orienting theories commonly used in the engagement and assessment phases, and a listing of practice theories commonly used in the intervention phase.

Finally, a **Glossary of Terms** defines and clarifies terms related to the practice and profession of social work.

Chapter Preview

Congratulations on your entry into the practicum phase of your social work education. To maximize the challenging experiences ahead of you, this introductory chapter presents the concept of practicum as a unique learning experience. Before you jump into actions, assignments, and activities, it is vital that you learn how to think about your practicum. You will have a much more productive experience if your approach to learning is both thoughtful and as applied as you can make it. Key considerations include (1) **what you want and need to learn**, (2) **what your school needs you to experience**, and (3) **what your agency wants and needs**. Think about yourself moving from the status of student to professional, even if you have already practiced social work at the entry level. Another part of your thoughtful approach to practice is to understand the importance of planning your practicum and to recognize that you will no doubt have numerous unexpected learning experiences. Thinking hard about how to maximize your practicum time also includes developing a model and method for integrating theory and practice. To do so, you will have to review what you have learned and put it into practice. This book is designed to help you do just that. Your practicum will offer you the opportunity to review academic classroom **knowledge**, integrate this knowledge with the **skills** required in the social work profession, and support all your interventions with the **values** of the social work profession. This book will help you bring those three components of practice together.

Also covered in this chapter are the **expectations for practicum** held by the school, the practicum agency, your clients, and you as a student. You will learn how these expectations converge and how to clarify, understand, and meet them all. This chapter provides a tool entitled **Student Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths**, which you can use now and at the conclusion of your practicum to identify and build upon the

strengths you bring to the social work practicum. Finally, content on the **skill building continuum** experienced by all social work students and social workers will assist you in placing yourself developmentally along this trajectory and planning for professional development throughout your career.

You are to be commended for embarking on the exciting social work practicum experience and applauded for reaching this stage in your professional education. You have been approved for a practicum based on your academic achievements and your professional readiness for this experience. The practicum is a unique opportunity to apply what you have learned in the classroom, expand your knowledge, develop your skills, and hone your use of professional values. It is time for you to move from the role of a student to that of a professional social worker. This book is designed to provide you with guidance and structure during the social work practicum. If used in a thoughtful manner throughout the practicum, it will help you make the best of whatever your practicum setting has to offer. It requires a real commitment and willingness to invest time in the learning process.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

The practicum experience is almost universally described by bachelor of social work (BSW) and master of social work (MSW) social work students as the single most important, challenging, significant, and powerful learning experience of their formal social work education. It is during the practicum that the concepts, principles, theories, and models discussed in the classroom come to life as they are applied with real people in real-life situations. During the practicum, students have the opportunity and the responsibility to use and enhance the skills and techniques they previously rehearsed in classroom role-playing and simulations. It is also during the practicum that students make considerable progress in developing self-awareness and come to a better understanding of their individual strengths and limitations as well as the influence of their personal values, attitudes, and life experiences on their practice. The practicum can and should be a time when classroom theory is integrated with social work practice and when students apply the values and fundamental principles of their chosen profession. Integrating theory and practice is not automatic, however. It is up to you to bring your classroom learning to bear on real social work practice. This book is designed to help you do just that.

Video Application Exercise 1.1

This Interactive exercise will help you consider both the challenges and rewards of social work as you enter your practicum.

You may not have thought about all the different parties and stakeholders involved in your practicum, but you will quickly learn that a variety of **stakeholders have expectations for you and your practicum**. Both clients and professionals with a variety of points of view, experiences, and roles to play will have a stake in your learning. This group includes you as the (1) **practicum student**, your (2) **university social work program**, your (3) **agency**, and your (4) **clients**. Even though you are still a student, it is helpful to understand what those expectations are. This combination of people and organizations that have a stake in your learning is similar to actual social work practice, in which there are also many stakeholders with an investment in the performance of social workers.

The specific objectives associated with a practicum can be found in your school practicum manual, in official descriptions of your social work curriculum, and in other documents issued by the social work program. In addition, your faculty supervisors will guide you through the process of meeting your program's expectations for the development of competency. Agencies will have their own expectations of students, and so will clients.

Given the fact that you are in the process of learning to become a social worker, you must consider how your lack of skill and experience might affect your clients and the quality of the services provided to them. Even though you are a student, you will have a great deal to offer your clients.

When the work expected of you is beyond your level of knowledge and skill, however, you must be prepared to consult with your agency field instructor for guidance and suggestions. Review your classroom learning, drawing upon theory and any skill-building exercises in which you have participated. The clients served by a student social worker should be made aware that they are being served or assisted by a student. Even so, most clients will see you as a developing professional and will be cooperative and trusting of you, your knowledge, and your skills.

Compare the views of all the stakeholders regarding what your role should be, how you should be prepared and trained, how your work should be organized, what supervision will consist of, and how you will be evaluated. This insight can help you understand the varied perspectives on your learning and the services you will provide as a practicum student. As can be expected, you and your university will see your **primary role as a learner** and your **secondary role as a service provider**. In contrast, the agency and its clients will tend to view your primary role as a service provider and your secondary role as a student. Although these differing perspectives make sense to all parties involved, the multiple viewpoints may seem complex to you. Work hard to meet all the expectations for your practicum, and work to understand how this same set of varying perspectives is applied to the work of professional social workers.

As a **student**, you will expect to have a quality learning experience in your practicum. You have worked and studied a long time in preparation for this experience with real clients, and no doubt you have hopes that this experience will prepare you well for professional social work practice. Your **university social work program** has invested itself in developing curriculum, designing learning experiences, and building a partnership with your agency. The program has an obligation to ensure that its graduates are competent to practice social work and views the practicum

as an opportunity to demonstrate this competency. The program's goals are in line with its overall goals in education, particularly social work education. Your **agency** also has goals for your time in practicum. In fact, it has much at stake in your experience because it serves real clients in real-life situations and with real-life challenges. Your agency field instructor has probably engaged in training offered by your university about social work supervision, which entails a significant commitment of the instructor's time. He or she expects you to engage in activities with those clients that are ethical, professional, and effective. Although your **clients** do not yet know that you will be working with them, they expect to receive high-quality professional services from you and your agency, and anticipate that you will be prepared to help them address their needs and concerns ethically, under supervision, and with respect. In many ways, their expectations may be the most important of all, because their lives and concerns are at the center of your practicum. If you are working with a client system on a larger level, this family, group, organization, or community will have the same expectations.

Stakeholders' Expectations for Practicum

Review this table regarding the various expectations for you and your practicum. Discuss the idea of varying expectations with your agency field instructor and ask him or her how to meet all of these expectations.

Stakeholder	View of Student Role	Supervision Process	Evaluation Process
Student	Primary role as student and learner Secondary role as professional providing services	Integration of theory and practice supervised by university Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor	Academic grade assigned by university Ongoing evaluation done by agency field instructor
University	Primary role as student and learner Secondary role as professional providing services	Integration of theory and practice supervised by university Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor	Academic grade assigned by university Ongoing evaluation done by agency field instructor
Agency	Primary role as professional providing services Secondary role as student and learner	Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor Integration of theory and practice supervised by university	Ongoing evaluation done by agency field instructor Academic grade assigned by university
Client	Primary role as professional providing services Secondary role as student and learner	Not aware of supervision process but expects high-quality services Not aware of supervision process but expects high-quality services	Not aware of evaluation process but expects accountability of agency Not aware of evaluation process but expects accountability of agency

In addition to the expectations just listed for you as a new professional social worker, several other organizations outside your university and agency place great emphasis on the practicum as one of the highlights of social work education. Both the **Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)**, the accrediting body for all social work programs in the United States, and the **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)**, the professional organization of social workers in the United States, value the practicum as integral to quality social work practice and a hallmark of social work education. All parties to the practicum are expected to adhere to the NASW **Code of Ethics** as well as the expectations and requirements for social work programs accredited by the CSWE. Both organizations share a commitment to both students and their

eventual clients and view the practicum as a way of ensuring the following:

- **Basic competency** for BSW graduates
- **Advanced competency** for MSW graduates
- **Quality services** to clients and client systems
- **Accountability to the profession** of social work
- **Accountability to the organizations** and institutions for whom graduates work
- Continual and ongoing **enhancement of social work knowledge and practice**

Most practicum students find the experience to be very positive and meaningful, but occasionally the practicum can fall short of expectations. The quality of every practicum experience can be enhanced if students are provided with guidance in identifying and making use of learning opportunities. A practicum structure that helps students to examine and analyze their settings in ways that build on their prior classroom learning is of critical importance. In addition, some of the most meaningful learning occurs as a result of having to deal with unexpected events and frustrations during the practicum. This book is designed to be a tool to structure, support, and maximize the time spent in practicum—because the next step is real-world social work.

As you work toward actual social work practice, you will come to recognize that professional experiences such as practicum require you to **strike a balance** in numerous areas by seeing the connections between them. To ensure a positive learning experience and minimize the chances of having negative experiences, you should think of the practicum as a bridge and a balance between the concepts described in **Table 1.1**. The

ability to bring together and **bridge what might seem as conflicting learning experiences** is a sign of professional growth, because learning is multidimensional, sometimes planned and often unplanned. You are fortunate that you have varied, multifaceted, and interesting experiences ahead of you.

Table 1.1 **Bridging Dimensions of Learning**

Dimensions of Learning	Advantages of Each Dimension of Learning	
Academic knowledge versus real-life application	Academic preparation offers theoretical foundations for practice, social work identity, faculty supervision, and preparation for practicum.	Real-life application offers opportunities to apply academic learning, integrate theory with practice, and analyze the differences between classroom and real-life practicum experiences.

Dimensions of Learning	Advantages of Each Dimension of Learning	
Structured and planned versus unplanned learning	University learning agreements and plans are based on their commitment to helping students acquire competencies, and to ensure a broad and comprehensive experience related to social work.	The realities of agency work bring unexpected learning experiences, both positive and negative, both of which enrich the practicum. Often, unplanned learning brings increases in self-awareness.

Dimensions of Learning	Advantages of Each Dimension of Learning	
Student professional goals versus agency and university goals	Students enter practicum with specific professional goals for themselves as social workers and have ample opportunities to integrate them into their learning plan.	Agencies and universities have goals for student learning, and they provide the basis for generalist social work practice upon which students can build.
Responsibility to provide services versus role of a student	Students are expected to function as professional social workers, are given assignments tailored to their level of knowledge and skill, and are supervised by both the university and the agency.	Students are recognized as persons who are entering the profession, are not expected to function independently at a high level of competency, and are allowed to learn from their mistakes.

Dimensions of Learning	Advantages of Each Dimension of Learning	
Generalist training versus specialization training	Generalist learning experiences are broad, varied, and targeted toward preparing students for working at multiple levels, playing a variety of social work roles, and utilizing an array of theories and models for practice.	Specialization training allows students to pursue their professional interests in one area in more depth while also focusing on generalist practice as a foundation.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

The quality of your practicum will be based on your ability to maintain your focus and complete your learning plan. Think now about your practicum as an opportunity to accomplish the following goals:

- Identify and enhance the knowledge, skills, and values you already possess
- Gain experience in areas in which you have no previous experience
- Begin to develop a professional social work identity
- Gain basic-level competencies required for practice
- Practice ethical decision-making processes
- Secure exposure to diverse clients, programs, and methods
- Understand the various contexts of practice that influence your work, including organization, community, legal, and social policy arenas

Social workers acquire many skills needed to play various social work roles, develop competence at all levels of practice, and design interventions based on a broad range of perspectives, theories, and models. This is a very high professional expectation. You will not be expected to possess these skills at the outset of your practicum, but will be taught, trained, monitored, and supervised as you acquire them through the process described in the workbook activity at the end of this chapter. The table in the workbook section of this chapter follows the process of skill building through increasingly challenging levels of learning, including didactic classroom learning, rehearsal of skills, observations of others performing the skills, attempts to develop the skill under supervision, reflection on performance, successive attempts at performing the skill, ongoing skill development, and advanced skill

performance. Not only do practicum students use this process as they develop skills, but professional social workers also go through a similar process each time they acquire a new skill. Refer to this table often throughout your practicum experience to help you see the progress you are making.

Video Application Exercise 1.2

This interactive exercise can help you think about how social workers think and act when clients ask them what to do.

Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths

Social workers are committed to taking a strengths perspective on their clients, helping them to address their problems and enhance their social functioning by building on their strengths. A strengths perspective can also be invaluable to social workers when evaluating their own work. By applying the strengths perspective to your own abilities and professional growth, you can use your strengths and assets as building blocks for acquiring the professional skills you will need. The following exercise will help you take a strengths perspective on yourself as you begin practicum and again when you have completed it.

In the Pre-Practicum Self-Assessment column, assess yourself and your strengths, checking whether you have these strengths now, believe they are in progress, or do not yet possess them. Take note of the most significant strengths that you bring to the practicum. Identify the strengths needed for practice that you do not yet possess, and think about how you can acquire these strengths through practicum learning experiences. You will be prompted to assess yourself again at the completion of your practicum using this same tool. Ideally, you will recognize significant professional growth in all areas from the outset of your practicum to its completion.

	Pre-Practicum Self-Assessment			Post-Practicum Self-Assessment		
	Yes	**In Progress**	**No**	**Yes**	**In Progress**	**No**
Motivation to Learn						
1. Open to new learning experiences						
2. Willing to assume new responsibilities						
3. Open to developing self-awareness and professional competence						
4. Adequate time and energy to devote to the practicum						

5. A sense of calling to the profession						
6. Committed to using supervision						
Attitudes and Values						
7. Empathetic, caring, and concerned for clients						
8. Personal values, beliefs, and perspectives that are compatible with the agency's mission						

9. Personal values, beliefs, and perspectives that are compatible with the NASW *Code of Ethics*						
10. Committed to achieving social justice						
11. Respectful of diversity among clients and communities						
12. Nonjudgmental toward clients and colleagues						
General Work Skills						

13. Writing skills (reports, letters, professional records, using technological tools)						
14. Able to process information quickly, understand new concepts, and learn new skills						
15. Able to receive and utilize supervision and feedback for professional growth						

16. Able to organize, plan, and effectively manage time						
17. Able to meet deadlines and work under pressure						
18. Able to follow through and complete tasks						
Social Work Skills						
19. Able to listen, understand, and consider varied views, perspectives, and opinions						

20. Able to communicate verbally with a variety of people and groups						
21. Able to make thoughtful and ethical decisions under stressful conditions						
22. Assertive and self-confident in professional relationships with clients and colleagues						
23. Able to identify a need and formulate a plan to meet that need						

24. Able to solve problems creatively and effectively						
Knowledge						
25. Self-awareness of how one's values, beliefs, and experiences impact work and other persons						
26. Knowledge of how laws, rules, regulations, and policies of agency impact practice						

27. Knowledge of assessment tools, methods, and techniques						
28. Knowledge of theories and models of social work						
29. Understanding of the process and steps of planned change						
30. Knowledge of how the community context impacts agency function						

Prior Experience Related to Practicum						
31. Experience in a setting similar to the agency						
32. Experience with clients or client systems similar to those served by the agency						
33. Experience applying theory to practice						
34. Experience working with professional teams						

35. Experience playing social work roles						
36. Training in professional skills related to those needed in practicum						

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to **recall and integrate classroom knowledge about expectations** into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to **apply your knowledge of expectations in your practicum setting**. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to **prepare yourself for the expectations for professional practice**. Following is an exercise designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Skill Building Across Your Social Work Career

Examine this table, and consider how the professional levels of practice build upon each other over time. Think about how each domain of skill building evolves over time for social work students and practitioners alike. Make a plan for your social work career development, beginning now.

Skill-Building Domains	Levels of Practice			
	BSW Student	**MSW Student**	**Entry-Level Practitioner**	
Learning context of professional development	Classroom and practicum as learning context	Classroom, practicum, and previous experience as learning context	Agency practice as context for professional development	
Theory base of professional development	Understanding and beginning application of orienting and practice theories	Understanding, critiquing, and application of orienting and practice theories	Application of orienting and practice theories and measuring the effectiveness of practice theories	

Skill-Building Domains	Levels of Practice			
	BSW Student	**MSW Student**	**Entry-Level Practitioner**	
Level of experience in using a skill or practice behavior	First attempt at using a skill	Building on previous experience in using a skill	Using a skill for entry-level practice, independently but with supervision	
Value base of professional development	Identification and acquisition of professional and personal values	Deepening understanding and use of professional values	Ongoing examination, development, and use of professional values	
Evaluation of professional development	Supervisor and faculty evaluation with self-evaluation encouraged	Supervisor and faculty evaluation with self-evaluation encouraged	Supervisor evaluation with self-evaluation required	

Video Application Exercise 1.3

This interactive exercise will stimulate your thinking about how self-care will need to start now and continue throughout your career.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Although you are just beginning your practicum, it is important to develop the ability to engage in personal reflection. Using your skills of self-reflection, what can you do to acquire the strengths listed in the Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths feature?
2. What is your plan for drawing on the knowledge you gained through classroom experience to use in real-life situations? How can you organize yourself in such a way as to bring the two together?
3. Which questions can you ask of your agency field instructor to help you apply the NASW *Code of Ethics* to all practice situations, thereby making sure you understand how the code applies to practicum?
4. What are the ethical implications of a student providing services to real clients?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Collect the textbooks you used in your social work courses and use them to help you integrate your classroom learning with your practicum experience.
- Conduct a cursory examination of each chapter in this book. Note the topics addressed and how the content is organized. Try to identify the links between chapters, since they are designed to build on each other.
- Read your school practicum manual. Pay special attention to the descriptions of what is expected of the practicum student.
- If there is a job description for social work practicum students, read it carefully to understand what your agency expects.
- Carefully examine the practicum evaluation form and specific criteria that will be used to evaluate your performance so that you can see what level of performance will be expected by your university social work program.
- Talk to former students who have completed a practicum in your agency. Ask them for advice and guidance on what to expect and about learning opportunities available. Also ask if they have any suggestions for you that will enhance your practicum.

Chapter Review 1.1

How does the variety of expectations for practicum resemble the various expectations of professional social workers? What can you learn from this comparison and how can you meet them all?

References and Recommended Readings

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Chapter 2

Implementing a Learning Plan

Learning Outcomes

- Develop an individual learning plan designed to acquire generalist competencies.
- Describe the relationships among professional knowledge, skills, and values.
- Develop the ability to integrate academic theory with professional practice.
- Identify and build upon professional social work behaviors.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Supervisor Thoughts About Beginning Students

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Contributors to Intervention Outcomes

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Learning from Feedback

Self-Monitoring of Competency Development

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter offers a framework for understanding how a practicum **learning plan** can help to structure and enhance the **integrative learning experience** that practicum is designed to offer and, in so doing, begin the process of professionalization. It outlines a set of **generalist competencies** that serve as a template for a learning plan that shapes the practicum. It provides an introduction to **using supervision** and training for professional growth, and it allows for reflection on how your reaction to supervision parallels the reaction of clients to engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. The chapter explains the process of **integration of theory and practice**, which is a fundamental goal of practicum experiences. Finally, it offers a **tool to monitor the development of professional skills and behaviors**.

Students who have good practicum learning experiences find that this success usually results from a carefully planned learning experience. For the most part, a good practicum experience is one that has been well conceived and outlined. However, you may also have some very valuable unplanned learning experiences, which will never appear in your learning plan in written form. You will increase your overall chances of success if you design a clear learning plan, but you will also do well if you watch for opportunities to participate in learning opportunities that present themselves along the way. You may also encounter some challenging and possibly even negative experiences. Although you might wish to avoid negative learning experiences, you should recognize that they may very well be some of your most powerful teachers.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Your practicum is a time of both excitement and uncertainty. In fact, it closely resembles starting a new job because there is much to learn, digest, understand, and respond to as a professional. There are many new people to meet and much to learn, and the first few weeks can feel overwhelming. Entering an unfamiliar organization is akin to entering an unfamiliar culture where you encounter a set of norms, rules, and customs that you do not yet understand but will be required to learn. Practicum students commonly experience anxiety and a sense of wondering whether they are truly prepared, largely because they are not yet sure they have the necessary knowledge and skills. You may wonder if you will be able to perform competently. To address these initial thoughts and concerns, you can take a number of concrete steps now to make certain that your practicum gets off to a good start.

As you begin to plan your practicum, it is important to list your **desired outcomes for learning** and then identify and arrange activities and experiences that will help you reach those goals. It is important to include experiences that will help you acquire the professional behaviors identified by the profession. This chapter provides a guide for developing your learning plan, as do the **generalist social work competencies** identified in the next section of this chapter.

Your learning plan will incorporate educational goals and anticipated outcomes from three sources: the university school of social work, the practicum agency and its agency field instructor, and the student. The goals for each of these stakeholders will usually fall into three categories:

knowledge, **skills**, and **values**—all of which contribute to your competency as a social worker.

Social work **knowledge** comprises an understanding of professional terminology, facts, principles, concepts, perspectives, and theories. No doubt you have spent many hours learning about individuals and families, communities, research, and social policy. All of this knowledge will be used in the practicum as you learn to apply it in real-life situations. In addition, you can gain much new knowledge about practice if you apply yourself to not only observing, but also working hard to understand what is being done in your agency and why.

Social work **skills** are the behaviors of practice. Social workers use these techniques and strategies to bring about desired change and enhance the social functioning of clients or the social systems with which clients interact. For the most part, skills are learned by watching and following the lead of skilled practitioners. Your practicum experience will afford you the opportunity to acquire and enhance your social work skills. You will have ample opportunity to practice these skills yourself, so take advantage of them.

A **value** is a strong preference that is rooted in your deepest beliefs and commitments, and that affects your choices, decisions, and actions. Social work values (e.g., service, commitment to social justice, and integrity) are usually combined with social workers' personal values and, ideally, will be consistent with them. Practicum will undoubtedly be a time for you to clearly understand what your values are, and you will also begin to see how your values may at times be in conflict with the values of others, including the values of your clients.

Acquiring, honing, and blending social work knowledge, skills, and values will help establish the three **foundations of practice** you need for

professional practice. The relationships among these three foundations can be described as follows: Skill grows out of knowledge and professional values; in fact, the possession of social work knowledge and values is of little use unless both are expressed in the demonstration of skills. Knowledge and skills can, however, be used to harm or manipulate clients unless they guided by an ethical value base of services to clients.

Curricula for BSW programs and the first year of MSW programs are built around the concept of **generalist social work practice**. Thus, the practicum is expected to reflect a broad range of experiences to prepare students for generalist practice. Both BSW and MSW students must learn the generalist skills of practice. After completing their education, they may engage in generalist social work, or they may move into practice that is specialized in a particular way. Either way, a sound generalist foundation provides the framework for a career in social work. The practicum can provide broad experiences in generalist social work as well as more focused experiences that prepare graduates for a practice specialization. The second year of MSW programs allows for additional emphases, sometimes going beyond generalist practice. Even if your program has specialties or emphases in the second year, generalist competencies form the basis for all social work practice. Thus, it is incumbent upon all students to make certain that they prepare themselves as generalists.

The **generalist perspective on social work** is a way of viewing and thinking about the process and activities of social work practice. This set of ideas and principles guides the process of planned change at all levels of practice, in a wide variety of settings, and in a number of social work roles. One unique characteristic of the generalist social worker is the ability to adapt his or her approach to the needs and circumstances of the client or client system, rather than expecting the client to conform to the methods of the professional or the agency. The generalist avoids selecting

an intervention method or approach until he or she has collaborated with the client to complete a careful assessment of the client's concern or problem. The generalist designs interventions only after having considered various ways in which the client's problem or concern can be defined, conceptualized, and approached. Finally, the generalist is prepared to draw on and use a wide range of intervention techniques and procedures; that is, he or she is not bound to a single theory or model.

Keeping this description of generalist social work in mind, **Table 2.1** lists seven generalist competencies common to all entry-level practitioners and most advanced practitioners. The table provides a rationale for the use of each generalist competency in social work and a list of specific skills required for the demonstration of that competency.

Table 2.1 **Generalist Competencies for Social Work Practice**

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Practices at multiple levels (micro, mezzo, and macro) both separately and simultaneously and moves between systems and levels of practice based on client/client system needs, resources, and likelihood of success to enhance social functioning and facilitate social change.	Practices at multiple levels because of the complex nature of social problems, and because social functioning, social change, and social justice are supported by interventions at all levels of practice.	Uses interpersonal helping skills, communication skills, relationship building, and interviewing (micro). Engages in coordination, group facilitation, advocacy, education, consulting, and mediation (mezzo). Engages in planning, community development, program management,

		research, social policy formation, and administration (macro).

Generalist Competency 2 Play a Range of Social Work Roles		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Plays a broad range of professional roles individually and simultaneously to promote social justice, enhance social functioning, and promote social change. Generalist social workers may play several roles in any given situation and can move between these roles as needed.	Plays a broad range of professional roles because of the variety of client/client system needs and resources, as well as to enhance social functioning, promote social justice, and promote social change at multiple levels of practice. Sees the connections between professional roles and understand the importance of using them prescriptively, matching roles with need.	Selects the social work role based on the client/situation needs, conceptualization of the location of the problem being addressed, and targets for change. Plays roles at all levels of practice, including some roles specific to one level of practice as well as others that can be played at all levels of practice.

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Generalist Competency 3 Use a Variety of Professional Perspectives		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Uses a variety of discrete yet interacting lenses, conceptual frameworks, and paradigms to guide practice, including the strengths, ecosystems, and diversity perspectives.	Understands that clients, groups, organizations, communities, and social systems cannot be understood in isolation, and that understanding the interaction between these entities is essential to effective interventions.	Incorporates a variety of professional perspectives into all phases of the helping process. Uses professional perspectives to identify targets for enhancing social functioning and improving the fit between clients and social systems.
Generalist Competency 4 Use a Range of Orienting Theories		

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Uses a variety of orienting (explanatory) theories to guide practice, including human development theory, group theory, social systems theory, organizational theory, community development theory, social movement theory, and social development theory.	Understands the development of individuals, families, social systems, groups, organizations, and societies as part of an effort to comprehend the social conditions faced by clients and to implement effective interventions.	Incorporates orienting (explanatory) theories into all phases of planned change (engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation at all levels).
Generalist Competency 5 Use a Variety of Practice Theories and Models		

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Uses a variety of practice theories and models to guide practice and address client needs and resources, including task-centered casework, crisis intervention, client-centered casework, empowerment model, family systems model, mutual aid model, structural model, organizational development model, community organization model, and social change model.	Uses practice theories and models to design individualized interventions that are empirically based, grounded in best practices, methodologically sound, creative, and matched to the situation at hand. These theories and models provide practitioners with a versatile repertoire of techniques, help them avoid limiting themselves to a single approach, and afford the opportunity to combine approaches for effective interventions.	Incorporates practice theories and models into interventions at all levels of practice based on client need and resources. Combines practice theories and models creatively to address multiple social issues faced by clients and client systems.

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Generalist Competency 6 Use the Planned Change Process at all Levels of Practice		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
In partnership with client systems, uses the planned change process of assessment, planning, intervention, termination, and evaluation at all levels of practice.	Uses the planned change process to enhance social functioning and promote social change, because a sound assessment creates the basis for an intervention plan that can be implemented and evaluated based on identified goals and objectives.	Engages clients, builds productive professional relationships, assesses client problems and strengths, designs sound intervention plans, implements effective intervention plans, and evaluates outcomes.
Generalist Competency 7 Use NASW's *Code of Ethics*		

Generalist Competency 1 Practice at All Levels		
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Competency Description	**Rationale for Competency**	**Skills Related to Competency**
Is guided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*, incorporates social work values into interventions at all levels, and uses a process for ethical decision making and resolving ethical dilemmas.	Understands how personal and professional ethics and values underlie codes of conduct, client choices, community development, societal attitudes, definitions of social problems, development of social policy, and research.	Incorporates social work and client values into all interventions. Uses NASW *Code of Ethics* in ethical decision making and to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Generalist Competency 4 Use a Range of Orienting Theories		
Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
Uses a variety of orienting (explanatory) theories to guide practice, including human development theory, group theory, social systems theory, organizational theory, community development theory, social movement theory, and social development theory.	Understands the development of individuals, families, social systems, groups, organizations, and societies as part of an effort to comprehend the social conditions faced by clients and to implement effective interventions.	Incorporates orienting (explanatory) theories into all phases of planned change (engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation at all levels).
Generalist Competency 5 Use a Variety of Practice Theories and Models		
Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
Uses a variety of practice theories and models to guide practice and address client needs and resources, including task-centered casework, crisis intervention, client-centered casework, empowerment model, family systems model, mutual aid model, structural model, organizational development model, community organization model, and social change model.	Uses practice theories and models to design individualized interventions that are empirically based, grounded in best practices, methodologically sound, creative, and matched to the situation at hand. These theories and models provide practitioners with a versatile repertoire of techniques, help them avoid limiting themselves to a single approach, and afford the opportunity to combine approaches for effective interventions.	Incorporates practice theories and models into interventions at all levels of practice based on client need and resources. Combines practice theories and models creatively to address multiple social issues faced by clients and client systems.
Generalist Competency 6 Use the Planned Change Process at all Levels of Practice		
Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
In partnership with client systems, uses the planned change process of assessment, planning, intervention, termination, and evaluation at all levels of practice.	Uses the planned change process to enhance social functioning and promote social change, because a sound assessment creates the basis for an intervention plan that can be implemented and evaluated based on identified goals and objectives.	Engages clients, builds productive professional relationships, assesses client problems and strengths, designs sound intervention plans, implements effective intervention plans, and evaluates outcomes.
Generalist Competency 7 Use NASW's *Code of Ethics*		
Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
Is guided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*, incorporates social work values into interventions at all levels, and uses a process for ethical decision making and resolving ethical dilemmas.	Understands how personal and professional ethics and values underlie codes of conduct, client choices, community development, societal attitudes, definitions of social problems, development of social policy, and research.	Incorporates social work and client values into all interventions. Uses NASW *Code of Ethics* in ethical decision making and to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Video Application Exercise 2.1

This interactive exercise builds on your understanding of generalist competencies by focusing on external influences on you and your clients.

The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation (2015, 3–7) also identify the following **professional behaviors** for social workers:

All social work schools must demonstrate that their students have acquired these behaviors, and your practicum evaluation will demonstrate to what degree you have achieved this goal.

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.
9. Evaluate individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

The list of generalist competencies in **Table 2.1**, in combination with the professional behaviors of the Council on Social Work Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (2015, 3–7), can guide the structure of your practicum. Work to identify ways in which you can acquire those competencies and behaviors considered vital to the practice of social work. A discussion of these competencies is woven into this book in multiple ways, showing you how they are acquired over time and in a variety of ways. Work to integrate them into your professional repertoire. Remember that **acquiring competencies is a process** that begins in

practicum and continues throughout practice. Social workers are expected to continually learn new skills, refine their existing abilities, be innovative practitioners, commit to professional development, and engage in reflection, supervision, and evaluation. You may have heard professionals and educators talk about **mastery of skills and knowledge**. The term mastery also suggests ongoing professional development over a career, rather than something that can be definitively achieved in practicum. As a social worker in training, you now have the opportunity to begin that process.

When beginning a new experience such as a practicum, during which you will be expected to learn, grow, and demonstrate professionalism, remember that **initial experiences are pattern setting**. If the first days and weeks of contact with a new student are positive for an agency field instructor and other agency staff, these persons will likely conclude that the student can be trusted and given responsibilities. In contrast, if these first contacts give the agency field instructor cause to doubt whether the student is capable and responsible, he or she may hesitate to assign meaningful work to the student. It is good to anticipate how you as a student might be perceived by the agency field instructor and what that instructor might be thinking and feeling about your presence in the agency.

Supervisor Thoughts About Beginning Students

Agency field instructors are very busy with the demands of their work, so when they agree to supervise students, they hope that those students will be well-prepared, mature, and competent. They may also have concerns about the supervisees' performance. Read each of the following enthusiastic and cautious thoughts your agency field instructor may have about you. Prepare yourself for practice by forming a response as if you and your agency field instructor were engaged in a conversation that includes these supervisor thoughts. What would you say to show your understanding, appreciation, commitment, and professionalism?

Enthusiasm About Supervising a Practicum Student	Your Response
“I look forward to having a student. Practicum students are enthusiastic, and they tend to look at the work of this agency from a fresh perspective.”	
“The student can help ease the workload of our staff, so we will give them tasks right away.”	
“I like student questions because they encourage me to think critically about what I do and why.”	
“I remember how important practicum supervision was to me, and I want to pass this good experience on to another student.”	
Reservations About Supervising a Practicum Student	**Your Response**
“This student better catch on quickly, because I don’t have a great deal of time to supervise.”	

Enthusiasm About Supervising a Practicum Student	Your Response
“I hope this student is ready for a dose of reality, because real social work is different than the theories taught in the classroom.”	
“I worry about students overstepping their bounds. I don’t want to fix their mistakes.”	
“I hope the student has the skills to start providing services right away.”	

Practicum students have varied and sometimes ambivalent reactions to the challenges of the practicum. They feel both excited about learning from a mentor and anxious about being observed and evaluated. If these ambivalent reactions describe your emotional state as you begin your practicum, recognize that this uncertainty is normal. It is not easy to receive feedback and sometimes correction, but it is an integral part of growth. These ambivalent reactions are also very similar to the experiences of a client entering a professional relationship with a social worker. Clients are likely to be ambivalent as well, so be aware of this possibility when you experience varying emotions and reactions. Honestly identifying your own positive and negative reactions to supervision will help you become more empathetic to your clients. Understanding your own responses to supervision can help you

understand what it is like for clients to be assessed, scrutinized, criticized, held accountable, and evaluated.

The practicum carries an expectation that students will shift from the university's focus on professional education to the agency's focus on professional training. Faculty members of social work programs provide **professional and academic education** that emphasizes the learning of general knowledge, theory, and broad principles that can be applied in many practice settings. Professional education encourages discussion, debate, and the consideration of alternative ways of assessing and responding to a problem or situation. It is related to the mission and purpose of the social work profession, and it focuses on learning outcomes rather than on providing actual services to clients.

By contrast, in actual social work practice, agency administrators and supervisors are concerned with training that emphasizes the learning of policies, procedures, and skills specific to their agency. They do not provide professional education, but rather offer **professional training** designed to teach what the agency has established as the standard or typical approaches to given practice situations. This training is agency-specific and related to the mission of the particular agency. Its effectiveness is measured through work outcomes, rather than through learning only. Because these approaches reflect agency purpose, policy, and procedures, students should generally follow them rather than challenge them. Respectful questions about agency practice and policy will be well received, however. Ideally, you will integrate the broad knowledge obtained from the academic world with the specific training provided within the agency.

All social services agencies have an **office culture**. This term refers to the general ways of operating that are based on the agency's history, values, theoretical underpinnings, mission, goals and objectives, policies

and procedures, position descriptions, and staff interactions. In the best case, the office culture will be positive and effective, so that you can see an organization at its best and learn how a healthy, learning, and functional organization operates. A related, but distinct term that is used to describe the more informal aspects of an organization is **office climate**. This refers to the quality of work life embodied in such areas as leadership, staff morale and satisfaction, positive communication, commitment to the agency's mission, desirability of the workplace, level of innovation and creativity, and acceptable salary and compensation. Watch for aspects of both the office culture and the office climate, and think about how positive culture and climate would positively impact both staff and the clients whom they serve.

All organizations, including human services agencies, have a political dimension that is referred to as **office politics**. This term refers to the undercurrent of power dynamics created by factors such as conflict between various factions within an organization, uneven distribution of power between those in various levels, personal ambition, individuals or groups jockeying for greater power, and efforts to lobby on behalf of a certain opinion. Larger organizations have more complex internal office politics than smaller organizations. Some disagreement, conflict, and power struggles are inevitable in organizational life, however, and these may become apparent to you. Be aware that aligning yourself with one side or another in these conflicts can undermine the success of your practicum.

Even though office politics is normal and difficult to avoid, if you become caught up in these power struggles and conflicts, learning opportunities may be closed to you, and some agency staff may withdraw their support. As a general rule, the larger and more political an organization, the more active is the office grapevine. Rumors, gossip, and speculations can occur within organizations with many bureaucratic layers and are especially

prevalent during times of uncertainty, conflict, and rapid change. Participating in agency gossip can be another major pitfall for you.

Agencies have both formal and informal aspects to their structurs and function. The official policies and procedures, the formal organizational chart, and the chain of command all serve to describe the work of your agency. They show who is responsible for what, and they provide written guidelines for employees. The informal workings of the agency, however, may differ greatly from what is shown in organizational charts or policy manuals. For example, you may discover that official titles and actual job descriptions do not match, that those persons with official power may not be the individuals to whom others look for guidance, and that exceptions may be made to official policies under certain circumstances.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

As you prepare your learning agreement in light of generalist competencies and professional behaviors of the social work profession, work hard to incorporate learning experiences that will help you develop these competencies. Your supervisors understand what you must learn to become a competent generalist social worker, which is why they are included in developing your learning plan. University social work programs include the competencies they want students to acquire in the learning agreements they develop. Learning agreements are **working documents** that are modified throughout the practicum as additional learning needs are identified and new learning opportunities arise. Your plan should be exciting and ambitious to stretch and expand your knowledge and skills. It must also be realistic given your practicum setting, your abilities, your prior experience, and the time available to you.

Your plan should include experiences and activities that will help you integrate theory with practice. The practicum is your opportunity to see how theory supports practice, and in what ways it does so. Classroom concepts and ideas should come alive during the practicum, and you will be expected to integrate what you learned in the classroom with your real-life experiences in your practicum setting. Reflect on what you learned in the courses you have taken, and work to bring that knowledge to bear in your practicum experience. Develop an awareness of the beliefs, values, and theories behind your decisions and your selection of an intervention. Seek exposure to social work practices and programs based on various beliefs about how, when, and why people and social systems change. All of these learning goals will help you bring theory and

practice together, and you will begin to see how classroom learning and actual skills are actually related.

Even though your practicum learning experience will be specific to your practicum agency, remember that you are developing knowledge and skills that can be generalized to other social work settings. Secure a breadth of experience by building a wide variety of experiences into your practicum, but also find ways to gain a detailed and in-depth experience in your particular area of interest. By doing so, you will prepare yourself for work in another setting while immersing yourself in practice issues about which you care deeply. Tell your agency field instructor that you want as full and broad an experience as possible to prepare yourself for practice.

When you put your goals for learning into words in your learning agreement, describe your desired outcomes for learning in ways that permit the monitoring and measurement of your progress. At the same times, recognize that many important learning outcomes are inherently difficult to quantify and measure, such as developing a commitment to social work values, growing in self-awareness, and acquiring self-confidence. Describe your desired outcomes as precisely as possible, but remember not everything will be fully measurable. It is better to describe outcomes in general and imperfect ways than to not mention them at all, even if you have a difficult time showing how you will measure them. Consider how your attempts to measure your learning could parallel your clients' attempts to demonstrate intangible growth to those with whom they are working. Your struggle to grow and to measure that growth should increase your sensitivity to your clients' hard work and their potential frustration with not being able to demonstrate their progress.

Once you have completed your plan and it has been approved by your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor, follow it. Review it often

and modify it as needed, but also resist the temptation to abandon a part of the plan simply because it calls for a learning opportunity that is difficult to arrange. Do everything possible to arrange and obtain the experiences you need to advance your learning. Become assertive in asking for meaningful learning experiences. If you need help to arrange these opportunities because of agency reluctance to offer them to you, ask your faculty supervisor to advocate on your behalf.

As you formulate your learning plan, give careful thought to your individual professional plans for the next five years. For example, if you are a BSW student who hopes to go on to graduate school, what can you do during the practicum to prepare yourself for graduate study or to increase your chances of being accepted into graduate school? If you expect to enter the job market immediately after graduation, what can you build into your plan that will prepare you for the job you seek? Which specific licensing or certification may be required for you to practice social work in your state or to become certified in a specialty area? If you are a MSW student, what learning goals can you set for yourself that will adequately prepare you for advanced practice?

In addition to the formal learning plans you develop, consider using a **professional journal**, which is a tool that you use on your own and do not share with anyone. This exercise can help you in many ways. A journal can document your progress in learning, show your professional growth over time, allow you to express your doubts and questions without necessarily sharing them with your supervisors, and offer you the chance to reflect on the very personal nature of your work. Many students report that journal keeping is very useful because it serves as a written record of growth that is both encouraging and reinforcing, particularly when viewed over time and in retrospect. A journal can include a listing of what you have accomplished, a description of what you have learned, your questions about your experiences, and your personal reactions to

what you have seen and done. Reviewing your journal over time will help you to see your own personal and professional growth. Such a journal is not part of the documentation required for practicum, but is intended only for your personal use and review.

In addition, be alert to learning experiences that become available to you unexpectedly during your practicum, and find ways to integrate these experiences into your learning plan. Do not be surprised if much of what you actually learn during your practicum was not anticipated and therefore could not have been written into your plan. Expect and learn to appreciate surprises. For example, if your agency's funding is drastically cut, you may end up working in a different unit or service area. Your agency field instructor may take another job, so you will have to adjust to a successor with a different supervisory style. Although such experiences can be stressful, they can also represent valuable learning opportunities. They will certainly teach you to be flexible and open to new experiences. You can also gain invaluable perspective on how agencies and the social workers in them cope with change and stress, capitalize on funding or policy shifts, and turn problems into opportunities.

During your practicum, you may potentially learn some things that are surprising or even discouraging. For example, you will probably discover that not all clients are motivated, that some are difficult to like and respect, and that some will not make use of needed and available services. You will probably learn that client, agency, or social changes occur only slowly, that social problems are more complex than you realized, that you must be skillful in the art of politics, and that not all professionals are competent and ethical. Your faculty supervisor can help you gain perspective on such matters that might be disappointing to you, so be sure to share these experiences and observations with him or her.

Your agency field instructor will be paying attention to how you begin the practicum. First impressions have a powerful impact on personal and professional relationships, so it is vital that you make a favorable first impression on your agency field instructor and the other staff members in your practicum agency. Make a deliberate effort to get the practicum off to a good start. No doubt you want to be assigned tasks early in the practicum so that you will maximize your learning from the outset. The agency field instructor, however, will need to feel confident about assigning challenging responsibilities to you. To make these assignments, the agency field instructor must trust you and believe that you are capable of doing the work and not likely to make significant mistakes. Very often, the agency field supervisor makes this decision on the basis of early patterns observed in the student's behavior. Thus, you should display the desirable learning and work behaviors outlined in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2 **Learning and Work Behaviors for Practicum Success**

Learning Behaviors	
Attitudes	• Demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. • Show initiative and willingness to take responsibility. • Take all assignments seriously. • Volunteer to take on tasks.
Communication with supervisor	• Inform your supervisor of your previous experience. • Keep your supervisor informed of your work and plans. • Ask questions when you are uncertain or uninformed. • Consult with your supervisor when problems arise.
Building of relationships	• Show ability to accept and use guidance and feedback. • Seek opportunities to work with mentors. • Maintain professionalism in all interactions. • Maintain personal and professional boundaries.
Work Behaviors	

Learning Behaviors	
Preparation	• Prepare yourself well for all meetings, client sessions, and supervisory sessions. • Read all agency manuals, procedures, websites, and other material to understand what your agency does.
Timeliness	• Complete all assignments on time, allowing for time to do them well and not at the last minute. • Alert your agency field instructor of any necessary absence or change in schedule.
Assuming responsibility	• Do your best to understand an assignment the first time and ask for any clarification you need. • Take responsibility for any mistakes you make.
Organizational skills	• Keep your workspace organized and neat. • Abide by all requirements for appearance and grooming.
Ethical behavior	• Abide by the NASW *Code of Ethics* in all interactions. • Be extremely careful to guard client confidentiality.

As you enter the office culture and observe the office politics of your agency, make thoughtful decisions about how you can respond in ways that will protect your practicum experience and avoid offending others. Here are some general guidelines for you to consider when dealing with office culture and office politics:

- Carefully observe how staff members interact, maneuver, and use their power.
- Be cognizant of the official lines of authority and the power relationships inherent within the chain of command as described by the agency's organizational chart.
- Do not assume that those individuals in certain positions are the most valued, powerful, and respected within the agency. Power relationships are often more subtle and complex than they appear at first. Consequently, your first impressions may be erroneous.
- Cultivate relationships with those persons in the agency who command the respect of most fellow professionals and the support staff and who are respected and valued by their administrative superiors.
- Do not align yourself with someone in the agency who has a reputation for being a complainer or a troublemaker, or who has little loyalty to the agency.

Every organization has unwritten rules, and it is likely that no one will think to tell you about them until after you ask about or break one. For example, you might be breaking a rule if you use your cell phone during a staff meeting, or if you submit a certain report late even though it is permissible to be a little late on other types of reports. The best way to learn about these informal rules and procedures is to observe the work of others in the agency and ask why things are done a certain way.

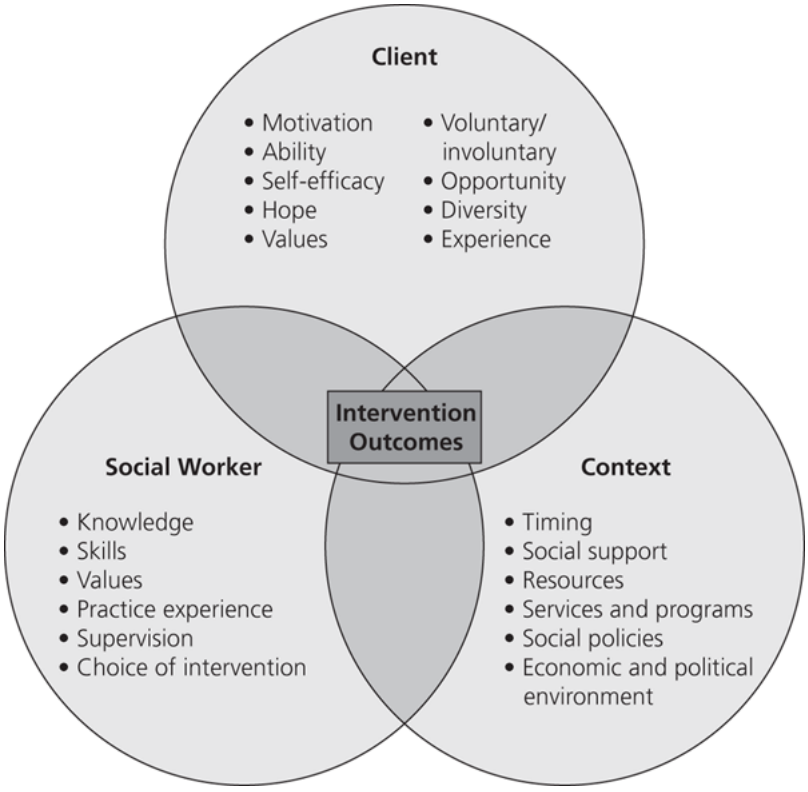
Video Application Exercise 2.2

This interactive exercise offers the opportunity to reflect on what you might seek to learn about helping clients living in challenging situations.

As a student, is important to know that the process of integrating academic content and actual practicum experiences works effectively at times and sometimes does not work as expected. You are likely to recall and use your academic learning, but you may also encounter situations that were never covered in classes. You may discover that what you learned in the classroom and what worked in theory and in rehearsal does not work as easily or effectively in real-life situations. Consider the numerous factors that influence whether a particular theory works in real people's lives. Real practice is more complicated than classroom examples, and it is important to learn how to respond to unexpected occurrences and to be open to learning things that sometimes seem contrary to what you have learned. These discrepancies may arise for many reasons, including your limited understanding from the classroom, great variation among social workers and clients alike, and the ineffective use of a technique that does not lead to successful outcomes.

Contributors to Intervention Outcomes

Prepare yourself to understand why interventions work sometimes, but not always. Using the information in this chapter and the accompanying figure showing the relationships among the client, the social worker, and the practice context, consult with your agency field instructor about a particular case in which he or she was involved. Ask your instructor to use this figure to describe the interaction between the three factors that contributed to a successful or unsuccessful outcome in that case.



Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for ongoing learning in professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Learning from Feedback

Learning is integrally related to the feedback you receive as you proceed through practicum. This feedback will come from your agency field instructor, your colleagues, your faculty supervisor, and your clients. Think about how you would respond to the following feedback comments made by agency field instructors and clients. What can you learn from these statements, even though they may be challenging to hear and accept initially? Your responses should be genuine and modest because you are a learner, but also open and nondefensive because you need to hear what you do well and what you need to work on.

Agency Field Instructor Feedback	Your Professional Response
“I don’t think you understand what we were asking you to do.”	
“You will need to be more assertive if you want to be effective here.”	
“What can I do to help you be more effective?”	
“I don’t think you realize how you impact clients when you interview them.”	
Client Feedback	**Your Professional Response**
“I’m not sure I want to work with a student.”	
“You haven’t experienced what I have. How could you possibly help me?”	
“You don’t understand anything about me.”	

Agency Field Instructor Feedback	Your Professional Response
“I thought you could help me more.”	

Self-Monitoring of Competency Development

This tool highlights the stages of competency building for social workers. Micro, mezzo, and macro social work skills can all be monitored using this tool. It also shows the professional areas in which students can monitor themselves, including knowledge, skills, and values. Use this tool and its reflective questions to critically analyze and discuss the ongoing process of your skill development, from your preparation to the refinement of your skills. Discuss the concepts presented in this tool with your agency field instructor, and ask him or her to help you through the stages of building your competency through observation, monitoring, and evaluation. Think of several major competencies you hope to achieve, and use the reflective questions below to help you move from preparation of an intervention to refinement of a skill. For example, you might commit to becoming competent in assessing clients for chemical dependency and make recommendations for an appropriate level of care or becoming competent in facilitating a support group for clients served by your agency.

Competency Building	Knowledge	Skills	Values
Preparing and designing an intervention ⇩	Which orienting theories apply in this situation? How do I know what skills to use? What if I don't know what to do?	Which social work roles are indicated? How can I learn to use a practice model? How will I know if I am being effective?	Which ethical issues need to be addressed? How do I tell my clients I am a student? Is it ethical to practice on clients?
Initial attempt at an intervention ⇩	Which practice theories apply? How can my client's goals be included in the intervention? What do my client's behaviors tell me?	Which helping skills are needed in this case? How can I use my assessment to guide my intervention? Do I have the skills needed for this practice model?	Is it ethical to be developing skills as I work with clients? How can I trust my judgment? Is it acceptable to adjust the model as the intervention proceeds?
Reflection on and adaptation of intervention ⇩	What knowledge do I need that I do not possess now? How can I learn about evidence-based models? How can I prepare for the next client?	What should I do differently next time? How can I perform less mechanically? How can I evaluate my professional growth?	Am I able to focus on my client's issues rather than my own? How would my client define success? How can I get better at ethical decision making?
Refinement of intervention skills ⇩	What is the best way to get feedback? What will I need to know to work in more challenging situations? What continuing education is required of social workers?	How can I individualize treatment plans? How can I enlist client involvement? How can I work with unmotivated and involuntary clients?	Will this work with diverse clients? What biases or stereotypes have I become aware of? What does the NASW *Code of Ethics* say about competency?

Video Application Exercise 2.3

This interactive exercise shows how to view situations when clients may not be able to make needed changes.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What personal values led you to choose social work as a profession, and what will you do if your values conflict with those of your clients?
2. As you learn to assess clients and client systems, what might be the challenges of designing interventions based on multiple sources such as your assessment, client preferences, and research knowledge?
3. Because it is important to learn how to work with diverse clients and coworkers, how can you structure your practicum so that you learn from clients very different from yourself?
4. In what ways can you demonstrate your professionalism through your learning and work behaviors?
5. How can you use your observations of intervention outcomes to conduct research about the effectiveness of your work?

Suggested Learning Activities

- If your agency cannot provide all the learning experiences you need, ask your agency field instructor to help you gain that experience by working several hours each week in another agency.
- Attend committee meetings, staff meetings, and any small group activities in your agency. Watch to see what interactional skills people have, and find a way to acquire them yourself.
- If you have a specific career goal such as chemical dependency certification, school social work certification, social work licensing, or a graduate degree, identify the requirements for this goal and seek practicum experiences related to that goal.
- Ask social workers in your agency what they wish they had known or were able to do when they started their social work position. Find ways to learn this information while in practicum.
- Attend meetings and trainings provided by agencies or the local branch of the National Association of Social Workers to see how social workers continue to acquire needed competency.

Chapter Review 2.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

References and Recommended Readings

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Chapter 3

Learning from Supervision

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the purpose of administrative, educational, and supportive social work supervision.
- Utilize forms of supervision available within the practicum setting.
- Engage in supervision for professional development in the use of the planned change process.
- Understand legal and professional standards for social work supervision.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Types of Supervision*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

- *Student Questions for Supervisory Sessions*
- *Supervisory Questions*

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *State Standards for Supervision*
- *Professional Standards for Supervision*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Reading

Chapter Preview

This chapter provides information on the nature, functions, benefits, and context of **professional supervision**, including a variety of styles, perspectives, and approaches to supervisory activities. It describes how students can **intentionally seek and use supervision** when integrating theory and practice for the first time, as well as to ensure ongoing professional growth. The stages of practicum from both the student and the supervisor point of view are presented, accompanied by recommendations for supervision at each respective stage. The **forms and types of supervision** commonly used by agency field instructors are described. Additionally, the chapter highlights the **requirements and guidelines for supervision** provided by social work licensing boards and professional organizations.

Professional social workers routinely use supervision to ensure the quality of their work and to provide a structure for ongoing professional growth. The practicum provides this same experience for students. Because the quality of your practicum is closely tied to the nature and quality of the teacher–student relationship you develop with your agency field instructor, it is advisable that you approach that relationship from a professional point of view. Learning from a skilled and caring supervisor can enrich a practicum experience and provide a positive model of staff interaction. Learning about the roles, responsibilities, and approaches to supervision will be of great help as you plan your practicum.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

A good understanding of the purpose and functions of supervision within an organization is necessary to make full use of professional supervision. Supervisors monitor the work of those students whom they supervise, but also go beyond that to educating, directing, and supporting their supervisees. All this supervisory effort is directed toward the ultimate goal of providing the highest quality of services possible, with the additional task of preparing students for professional practice. The role of an agency field instructor in supervising students is an integral part of the educational process for professional programs such as social work, and students can benefit significantly from it.

Serving as a supervisor in a social services agency can be a very challenging responsibility—one that requires a diverse set of skills such as sensitivity, skill, common sense, commitment, good humor, and intelligence. Supervisors are mediators and conduits between line-level social workers and higher-level agency administrators. They frequently represent the agency in its interactions with other agencies and the community. In addition, they often face the challenging task of responding to the concerns and complaints of clients who are dissatisfied with the agency's programs or with the performance of a social worker or other staff member.

Although being a supervisor can be demanding, it can also be a satisfying job, especially for those who understand and appreciate the teaching aspect of supervision. Watching a new social worker or social work student learn and develop on the job can be a rewarding and inspiring experience. That is one reason why many busy social workers choose to

serve as agency field instructors to social work students. Ideally, your agency field instructor will be highly motivated to teach you about social work practice because he or she wants to give back to the profession.

The responsibilities of supervisors to clients, staff, funding sources, and administrative officials create a broad and demanding set of expectations. During your practicum, you should remember that supervising students is only one aspect of this job, so you will not usually be able to spend a great deal of time with your supervisor. However, you can learn much by observing his or her work.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) identify three distinct but complimentary functions of supervisory practice that illustrate the broad scope of supervision: the administrative function, the supportive function, and the educational function. The **administrative function of supervision** focuses on the assigning, monitoring, and evaluating of services. This includes recruiting, selecting, and orienting new staff; assigning and coordinating work; monitoring and evaluating staff performance for efficiency and effectiveness; facilitating communication up and down within the organization; advocating for staff; serving as a buffer between staff and administration; representing the agency to the public; and encouraging needed agency change. As part of the administrative function, supervisors also work between levels of staff and administrators and interface with the funding sources and other agencies that have influence over the way the agency works to benefit both employees and clients.

Self-Check 3.1

The **educational function of supervision** focuses on providing formal and informal orientation and training. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that staff members receive all the initial training needed to perform well in their positions. Supervisors must keep abreast of the professional development of their employees, review their work and the documentation of their work, and oversee the work of employees with specific clients and interventions (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002).

Self-Check 3.2

The **supportive function of supervision** focuses on sustaining staff morale, cultivating a sense of teamwork, building commitment to agency goals and mission, encouraging workers by providing support, and dealing with work-related problems of conflict and frustration. It also includes modeling excellence, building trust between supervisors and supervisees so that professional growth can occur, facilitating the professional reflection process, and helping supervisees develop self-awareness necessary for practice. The supervisor must strive to create a work environment that is conducive to the provision of quality services to clients while also supporting staff who may at times feel stressed (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002).

Your agency field instructor will be concerned with these three functions as they relate to practicum students. He or she will pay attention to whether you are performing the work of the agency in an appropriate manner and in keeping with agency policies and procedures. In addition, your supervisor will be sensitive to your fears and insecurities and to the fact that you have personal responsibilities along with those related to the practicum. Your agency field instructor will want to do everything

possible to facilitate your learning, but, in the final analysis, his or her primary obligation must be to the agency's clients or consumers and to the agency that serves those clients rather than to your learning.

Types of Supervision

Many types of social work supervision exist, all of which serve an important purpose, and all of which are valuable in specific, unique ways. Each type of supervision addresses a certain need or situation, and it is recommended that you engage with as many forms of supervision as you can, as each one teaches differently, uses different approaches, and leads to skill building in distinct ways.

Determine which of the following types of supervision are available to you in your practicum and find out how to access them. Make a plan now to avail yourself of all types available to you so you can learn from a variety of people and in a variety of ways.

- **Individual supervision:** regular meetings between agency field instructor and student
- **Group supervision:** meetings between agency field instructor and a group of students or employees
- **Peer supervision:** meetings of a group of social workers who assume responsibility for providing guidance and suggestions to each other
- **Formal case presentations:** meetings at which social workers describe their work on a specific case and invite advice and guidance from peers and supervisors about how it should be handled
- **Ad hoc supervision:** brief, need-based, unscheduled meetings to discuss a specific question or issue
- **Virtual supervision:** computer, e-mail, or live web-based supervision

- **Observation:** watching social workers practice and discussing observations with supervisor
- **Role-playing:** rehearsal of skills in which student takes on client or social work role
- **Modeling:** demonstration of a technique during supervision or actual intervention
- **Clinical supervision:** discussion of and reflection on interventions, ethics, techniques, and professional use of self

Self-Check 3.3

Video Application Exercise 3.1

This interactive exercise focuses on how mentoring can benefit both social workers and their clients.

Social workers who assume the role of agency field instructor to students have specific **ethical obligations** because they assume responsibility for the quality of work and outcomes of those they supervise. Ethically, they must have knowledge and skill in the areas in which they provide supervision, and they are expected to evaluate the performance of those whom they supervise by using effective and fair methods of supervision. They must also take care to manage the supervisory relationship, while maintaining professional boundaries and avoiding dual relationships, both of which can complicate and undermine the supervisory relationship. Supervisors always take on the responsibility for the outcomes of those they supervise, and this role assumes increasing

importance when they supervise students who are performing tasks for the first time.

Social workers have specific **legal obligations** when taking on the responsibility of agency field instructor. These responsibilities relate to the **gatekeeping function of social work supervisors**, which is based on the principle of competence for practice. Both supervisors and schools of social work have legal and ethical obligations to ensure that those students who enter social work are competent, suitable for the profession, and meet the basic requirements for practice. At times, this requirement means that students and social workers who do not meet the standard may not be able to continue in the profession.

Supervisors are subject to **direct liability** for any failures or negligence to properly supervise their employees or students. Negative outcomes for clients can be the basis for complaints and lawsuits against both staff and supervisors. Examples of direct liability include the following:

- Failure to train employees in new or specialty areas of work
- Provision of poor or inadequate instructions to employees
- Inadequate supervision of employees resulting in negative outcomes for staff or clients
- Negligence or failure to provide sufficient supervision
- Assigning work to unqualified staff
- Failure to document supervision
- Failure to properly evaluate work of supervisees
- Failure to provide guidance in ethical decision making and deal with ethical violations
- Violation of professional and personal boundaries between supervisor and supervisee

The principle of indirect or **vicarious liability** also applies to social work supervisors, which means that a supervisor may be held liable for the potentially ineffective, incompetent, or unethical actions of those workers whom he or she supervises. In their role as trainers, mentors, and supervisors, agency field instructors must do whatever they can to ensure that students avoid making decisions and taking actions that could be considered unprofessional in some way. Supervisors are accountable not just to those whom they supervise, but ultimately to their clients, which makes supervision a highly important area of practice. Supervisees may perform in incompetent or unethical ways such as **malfeasance** (commission of an unlawful or wrongful act), **misfeasance** (commission of a proper act in a way that is injurious or wrongful), or **nonfeasance** (failure to act in accordance with one's responsibility).

As a social work student, because your ethical behavior and adherence to legal requirements of the profession will impact both you and your supervisor, make sure you understand and abide by all requirements so that you do not put yourself, your supervisor, or your agency in a position of defending your actions. Supervisors may also be held professionally and legally accountable for the work of their supervisees, which means that they will pay close attention to what you are learning and doing, sometimes for the first time.

Furthermore, agency field instructors and students are held accountable for complying with **standards of care** (the type, level, and specific type of treatment or intervention that is indicated and appropriate for a specific client with a particular condition) and **standards of practice** (professional expectations for individual social workers that are based on what has been termed a reasonableness standard, which is the manner in which an ordinary person who is reasonable and prudent would have acted under similar circumstances). Beyond this, supervisors seek to promote **evidence-based practice** (practice supported by research

demonstrating its effectiveness) and **best practices** (practices deemed to be the highest quality and most suitable for a particular client base). Standards of care are the lowest level of acceptable services, whereas best practices are the highest. Supervisors always aspire to provide the highest level, but that is not always possible due to financial constraints or other significant barriers. These concepts are discussed in more detail in Chapter 15, Evaluating Your Practice.

Supervisors have a variety of **supervisory styles** or preferred ways of doing their jobs, all of which will affect student experiences in the agency. No style or approach is necessarily better than the others. In fact, varying styles are needed depending on the nature of the work to be done and the level of training and experience of those being supervised. **Table 3.1** illustrates the various approaches to supervision to which the student will generally need to adapt to and use. It can be useful to understand your agency field instructor's individual style and approach to supervising your work. Although supervisors will do their best to help you learn and grow, their other obligations are also important, and they may not be able to supervise you exactly as you wish. Given this reality, it is important that you be able to adjust to various styles of supervision. Supervisors vary a great deal in terms of overseeing and controlling the work of their supervisees, as **Table 3.1** indicates.

Table 3.1 **Supervisory Tasks and Styles**

Supervisory Tasks	Supervisory Styles
Functions of supervision	Fulfills the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision Fulfills one or two functions of supervision more than other functions Fulfills the function of supervision required by the situation
Balance of process and outcome	Emphasizes the processes of interventions Emphasizes the outcomes of interventions Emphasizes both processes and outcomes
Attention to detail	Focuses on details of work Focuses on the broad mission and leaves the details to others Focuses on both details and the broad mission

Supervisory Tasks	Supervisory Styles
Delegation of work	Delegates work when necessary Delegates work easily and generously Delegates work depending on the situation
Monitoring and evaluation of work	Monitors work closely to avoid mistakes and problems Allows the supervisee autonomy and assumes success Monitors work depending on the situation
Use of power	Retains power over supervisees and their work Shares power with supervisees and empowers them Uses power depending on the situation

Self-Check 3.4

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Social work is challenging and sometimes stressful, and because your work directly affects clients' lives, you will need guidance, direction, support, and feedback from your agency field instructor. Both students and experienced social workers use supervision to help them deal with challenging situations, provide performance feedback, and give support. **Learning to seek and use supervision for professional development** is an important part of your practicum that can teach you the immense value of professional supervision to you, the agency, and your clients. Students experience tremendous professional growth while in practicum, and the use of supervision will facilitate this professional growth significantly.

Self-Check 3.5

Self-Check 3.6

Learn to use supervision in a purposeful, intentional, and responsible manner. Arranging a regularly scheduled supervisory meeting time each week will help you avoid the difficulties of struggling to arrange a different meeting time each week. Prepare for each meeting and do not expect your agency field instructor to do all of the talking. Bring questions, observations, and requests for input and feedback to the meeting. Use this time to examine your performance and explore new ideas. Do everything you can to develop a positive working relationship

with your supervisor, because this person will teach you, support you, guide you, correct you, evaluate your performance, and—you hope—will recommend you for a professional position when you complete your practicum.

The conscious building of professional social work skills and competencies is directly related to the conscious use of professional supervision. That is why social work programs and practicum agencies collaborate so closely in the design and implementation of practicum programs. Schools and agencies understand the developmental stages of professional growth, and consequently they choose to have other experienced social workers lead students through the process of integrating theory and practice. Both programs and agencies assist students to engage in self-reflective practice that enhances the acquisition of professional skills and practice behaviors. Seeking, thinking about, and making use of supervisory feedback are all parts of the reflective process, as is the necessity of responding to both positive feedback and changing one's practice based on suggestions for improvement.

You and your agency field instructor will discuss many things during your scheduled time together, and you should prepare for each of these meetings to maximize the time and benefits of your interactions. Look forward to these sessions, as you will be provided with much knowledge and guidance that you can use to enhance your knowledge and skills. Your meetings with your supervisor offer unique opportunities to learn how to integrate theory and practice, so take advantage of them. Following is a list of questions that you can bring to these discussions that demonstrate your willingness to learn and grow as a professional. Take these questions with you to supervisory sessions with your agency field instructor and engage in professional conversations about them over time. This will demonstrate your initiative and commitment to professional development.

Student Questions for Supervisory Sessions

- What professional social work roles will be expected of me?
- How can I determine the most appropriate level of intervention, including micro, mezzo, and macro interventions?
- Which theories and models of practice are commonly used in this agency?
- How do I individualize intervention plans to address client needs?
- What is the role of practice wisdom in interventions?
- What is the role of intuition in interventions?
- How can I keep abreast of social work research?
- How can I serve diverse clients in a culturally competent manner?
- How can I learn from my mistakes?
- How can I learn from my clients?
- How can academic information be applied and adapted in real-life situations?
- How can I determine if I am being effective?

Video Application Exercise 3.2

This interactive exercise will give you insights into how a supervisor can help you see the importance of basing your work on the client's values, rather than your own values.

During your practicum, you need to learn how to proactively utilize supervision both for consultation on interventions and for professional growth while you are a student. Continuing to use and give supervision to others is an element of sound social work practice. Expect your agency field instructor to ask some very pointed, thorough, and thoughtful questions to learn about and monitor your work in the agency. Supervisors ask these questions both to be of support to you and to ensure that clients are well served. They will help you analyze your performance, understand why an intervention was or was not successful, and develop your critical thinking skills. In regard to specific cases you have been assigned, the following questions may be addressed to help you reflect and purposefully grow professionally.

Supervisory Questions

To apply what you are learning about the importance and uses of professional supervision, choose a situation in which you have or will be involved in your practicum. It can be a short- or long-term intervention, and it can be at the micro, mezzo, or macro level of practice. For example, you may have finished your first home visit with a family considering becoming foster parents, you may have just facilitated an advisory council of an assisted living facility, or you may have completed an assessment of a community's capacity to welcome immigrants.

Preparing yourself for this intervention probably required you to engage in a number of activities. You likely observed a social worker do this task before you became involved; read reports, descriptions, agendas, or documentation of similar interventions; rehearsed the skills necessary for this intervention; and discussed any concerns with your agency field instructor. You may have had the chance to discuss each phase of the planned change process with your agency field instructor, who undoubtedly had a list of questions to help you process and learn from your intervention. Although you may not have completed the four phases of the planned change process (engagement, assessment, intervention, and termination/evaluation), think about how you would answer these questions posed by your agency field instructor. He or she will use questions such as these to help you reflect on your work, integrate theory and practice, and evaluate yourself.

Phases of the Planned Change Process	Supervisory Questions Related to the Phase
Engagement	How did you prepare for the first meeting with your client(s) or client system? Was your client voluntary or involuntary? How did you explain that you are a student? Did you fully understand what your task and goals were? Which interviewing skills did you use to engage your client? What was your client's level of motivation? Did you experience any challenges in engaging the client?

Phases of the Planned Change Process	Supervisory Questions Related to the Phase
Assessment	Which client problems and issues were identified? Which client strengths were identified that can be used in interventions? What were your client's goals and desires? Which knowledge and skills did you draw upon as you assessed your client?
Intervention	How did you decide upon the intervention plan? Which responsibilities did you and your client assume? Which theories and models guided your intervention? Which evidence or research guided you? Which ethical standards or issues were at play, and how did you handle them?

Phases of the Planned Change Process	Supervisory Questions Related to the Phase
Termination and Evaluation	To what degree was the intervention a success? What did you use to measure outcomes? Did your client view the intervention as successful? How was termination handled? What did you learn from this intervention? What would you do differently next time and why?

A supervisor is expected to give both instruction and feedback, and you will increase your chances of success if you seek out and are open to input about yourself and your work. You may be anxious because your agency field instructor will be evaluating your performance in an ongoing way and at the end of your practicum. This reaction is certainly understandable, and in many ways parallels what clients feel when they are being monitored by social workers. However, to help you develop your knowledge and skills over time, your agency field instructor should evaluate your performance in an ongoing and continuous manner, and

you should accept this monitoring and evaluation in an open and nondefensive manner.

You will receive feedback, suggestions, and constructive criticism during all phases of your practicum so that you can continue to grow professionally. If this is not happening, discuss the matter with your agency field instructor and ask for an ongoing critique of your performance in the use of the planned change process at any level of practice in which you are engaged. As you receive more feedback and ongoing training, you will be expected to demonstrate that you have taken this instruction to heart and have grown as a result.

As you begin your practicum and take on new responsibilities, you may be afraid of making a serious mistake or in some way hurting your clients. Such worries are to be expected. In fact, your agency field instructor will become concerned if you do not have these fears, because that could mean that you are overconfident or that you do not understand the seriousness of your situation. Do not hesitate to express your fears. Your agency field instructor can help you address these concerns and prepare you for any tasks assigned to you. You may be worried about making mistakes that negatively impact your clients, but you can take heart in the knowledge that most beginning student errors tend to be those related to being tentative and not doing enough, rather than actually harming clients. Over time, your growing competence will allow you to practice confidently and, at necessary points in time, with boldness.

Your agency field instructor will likely view any errors or omissions that you make not only as mistakes, but also as ways to learn and grow in your work with future clients and in more challenging future situations. He or she will help you gain the confidence needed to act when appropriate and overcome any hesitance you have based on lack of knowledge or confidence. Failing to act is not potentially as harmful as

doing the wrong thing, so discuss your hesitance with your agency field instructor to help you learn how to take action even if you are not fully certain of what should be done. Over time, you will learn to observe, critique, evaluate, instruct, and affirm your own practice based on the constructive feedback given by your agency field instructor. This will teach you the value of ongoing self-monitoring of the effectiveness of your work in addition to the value of supervision.

Supervision is an **interactional process** that in many ways parallels the social worker–client relationship and the helping process (Shulman, 1992). To help you improve your performance, your agency field instructor will employ many of the techniques with you that other social workers use when working with clients. This includes offering guidance and support, providing feedback, recognizing strengths, and confronting when necessary. If you have the opportunity, watch your supervisor model the supervisory techniques with you that are also effective with clients, focusing on how they help you grow by being open to teaching and feedback.

Students tend to move through several stages during their practicum experience, including (1) **orientation**, (2) **exploration and skill building**, and (3) **beginning competency**. Your agency field instructor will provide specific and varying types of help at each stage, helping you move forward as a professional. As you become more knowledgeable and competent, your agency field instructor will apply different strategies of supervision with you because your growth and the situations require them. As you move through the practicum, be conscious of the shifts in your experiences outlined in **Table 3.2**. These experiences of both students and supervisors, combined with the stage of practicum, dictate the ways in which supervision will change over the course of your practicum.

Table 3.2 **Stages of Practicum: Student and Supervisor Experiences**

Stage of Practicum	Student Experiences	Supervisor Experiences
Orientation Stage	**Approach to Supervision** Enthusiastic, excited, anxious, unsure, overwhelmed, confused, ready, motivated, confident, worried about making mistakes, hesitant to be observed	**Approach to Supervision** Motivated to teach, hopeful that student will be competent, challenged to find time to supervise student
	Responsibilities Develop learning plan, participate in orientation and training, become familiar with agency staff and programs, attend agency meetings, visit other agencies	**Responsibilities** Provide orientation and training, offer guidance and direction, provide encouragement, assist in selection of learning activities, support initial attempts at practice behaviors, identify student competencies and limitations

Stage of Practicum	Student Experiences	Supervisor Experiences
Exploration and Skill-Building Stage	**Approach to Supervision** Less anxious, more realistic, motivated, growing in confidence, willing to be observed, motivated by successes, learning from mistakes	**Approach to Supervision** Confident in student competence, allowing more student autonomy, aware of student strengths and limitations and need for supervision

	Student Experiences	Supervisor Experiences
	Responsibilities Implement learning plan, take on responsibilities, develop professional skills and knowledge, integrate theory and practice, gain exposure to all facets of agency practice, gain experience in all levels of practice, play variety of social work roles, identify strengths and address limitations	**Responsibilities** Monitor completion of learning activities, provide instructive and corrective feedback, help build on experiences, assist student in integrating theory and practice, help student assume more challenging tasks

Stage of Practicum	Student Experiences	Supervisor Experiences
Beginning Competency Stage	**Approach to Supervision** More confident in skills, increased insight, self-aware, motivated for professional position, appreciative of supervision, and experienced in most aspects of practicum experience **Responsibilities** Identify own professional growth needs, identify tasks independently, integrate theory and practice, refine skills	**Approach to Supervision** Confident in student as an entry-level practitioner, affirming of student competence **Responsibilities** Help student refine skills, assign broad range of tasks at all levels of practice, expect autonomous performance, help student generalize learning to other settings and populations

Although unlikely, it is possible that tensions and conflicts may arise in your supervisory relationship. For example, you may feel that your agency field instructor does not devote enough time to you and your learning needs. Perhaps you may believe that your agency field instructor

is either too controlling or not structured enough. The two of you may have very different personalities. Perhaps you and your agency field instructor differ in terms of gender, race, ethnic background, or age, and at times these differences affect your relationship and work in ways you are not sure about how to handle. You may wonder if your supervisor is ethical because of something you observe. If you have a conflict or difficulty with your agency field instructor, talk about it with this person, or ask your faculty supervisor for guidance. Do not avoid the problem or circumvent your agency field instructor. You will be expected to find ways to deal with these issues, both now and in any future work environment. If the problem cannot be worked out with your agency field instructor, consult with your faculty supervisor.

Exercise caution when developing a **dual relationship** with your agency field instructor. This person should act as a supervisor, not a friend or a counselor. Although an element of friendship can arise between students and supervisors, this can also be problematic when supervisors need to provide feedback and students need to be able to accept it. State laws and professional organizations may prohibit forms of dual relationships, including romantic relationships. Do not agree to requests by your supervisor or coworkers to engage in personal requests to provide child care, borrow personal items or money, or other similar behaviors. If you have personal problems that arise during your practicum, do not ask or expect your agency field instructor to provide counseling. If you need such services, arrange to receive them in another way. As supervision is not counseling or therapy, if you need counseling for personal issues or those related to your practicum, seek counseling from a professional other than your agency field instructor.

Video Application Exercise 3.3

This interactive exercise suggests that you determine early in your career how to seek and use professional supervision.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about supervision into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of supervision in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice utilizing supervision. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

State Standards for Supervision

Each state has its own distinct way of regulating social work supervision and may specify how such supervision must be done, how often, and by whom. These standards are applied because clients deserve the best services possible, which in turn requires that social workers seeking licensure develop competence under the supervision of trained and approved social workers. Read the laws and guidelines of your state regarding the social work profession and answer the following questions.

Who is considered an approved supervisor for social workers seeking licensing (i.e., degree, training in supervision, practice experience)?

How much supervision is required of a social worker seeking licensure, with what frequency, and on which topics?

How is supervision documented and included in applications for licensure?

Professional Standards for Supervision

Read the National Association of Social Workers *Best Practices in Supervision* (NASW, 2013) and *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017), which describe the profession's commitment to and best practices in providing and seeking supervision throughout a social work career. Answer the following questions based on what you learned.

What legal responsibilities does a social work supervisor assume?

What ethical responsibilities does a social work supervisor assume?

What aspects of supervision are covered by the NASW *Code of Ethics*?

Self-Check 3.7

Self-Check 3.8

Critical Thinking Questions

1. This chapter discusses the internal and external forces and issues supervisors must handle. How can you learn about how your supervisor deals with the internal and external issues that your practicum agency faces? Who else can be an example of such professionalism?
2. What are the parallels between how your supervisor engages with you and how you will engage with your clients? How can you use the experience of being supervised to be supportive of your clients?
3. What questions can you ask your agency field instructor about the use of evidence-based or best practices in your agency?
4. How does the effective and ethical provision and use of effective supervision advance human rights?
5. How can you use your agency field instructor's questions about the effectiveness of the planned change process used with your clients to gain practice knowledge and skills?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Present a case you are working on at a peer supervisory session, asking for input from other social workers.
- If appropriate and feasible, work with a variety of social workers, supervisors, and managers in your agency so that you can observe different supervisory styles.
- Ask your agency field instructor how your agency provides support to its employees, such as through an employee assistance program and continuing education.

Chapter Review 3.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 4

Organizational Context of Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the types, structure, and function of social services agencies.
- Understand the hypotheses upon which social work agency programs are based.
- Utilize methods of organizational communication.
- Describe the characteristics of a learning organization.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Agency Approach to Social Problems*
- *Organizational Policies and Procedures and the Values Demonstrated to Clients*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *Agency Analysis*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on the **organizational context of practice**, providing information on **formal and informal structure** of agencies, **practice hypotheses** upon which agencies build their programs, and the **culture and climate** of social services agencies. It also lists the **contextual factors** surrounding agency operation and the organizational tasks necessary for agency effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. Also featured are the potential positive or negative **impact of organizational characteristics** on clients and the ways in which **organizations communicate formally and informally with their client base**.

Throughout history, social work has been an agency-based profession. The daily activities and decisions of a social worker are heavily influenced by the nature and purpose of the organization that employs him or her. The majority of social workers are employed by agencies, and they provide their services within an organizational context. Social services agencies do not operate in a vacuum, but rather are part of a larger **social service delivery system**, as described in this chapter. Given this reality, you must examine and understand your practicum agency's mission, goals, structure, funding sources, and level of effectiveness so that you can use this organization as a foundation for your practice.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Knowing that the word **agency** refers to an organization authorized or sanctioned to act in the place of someone, on behalf of others, or in response to a particular social problem helps draw our attention to what agencies can and should do. Acting on behalf of others can mean supporting clients in their social functioning, advocating for individuals and groups who cannot act on their own behalf, providing services that clients are unable to provide adequately for themselves or their families, planning and developing programs, developing and implementing social policy, and conducting research that informs social work practice. It is important to understand much about your agency to ensure that you can work effectively within it.

Several types of agencies provide social services to clients, and each has particular characteristics that impact and direct the services it provides. You may be working in a **public agency** created by a legislative body at the federal, state, county, tribal, or community level. Public agencies are often mandated by law to provide certain services and are funded by tax revenue.

You may be placed in a **private nonprofit agency** established by private individuals or organizations to meet an identified social need or address a social problem. Private nonprofit agencies focus only on providing services. Perhaps you are doing your practicum in a subcategory of private nonprofit agency known as a **sectarian agency** or **faith-based agency**. Sectarian agencies are guided by religious beliefs and foundations for the provision of their services, and membership organizations serve their members.

The term **membership agency** is used to describe an agency that derives much of its budget from membership fees and in which members are involved in setting policy. In contrast to a public agency or a private nonprofit agency, a **for-profit agency** is a business corporation that sells a set of services and is designed and operated to yield a profit for investors and stockholders. Finally, your agency may be a **host setting** in which the organization's primary mission or purpose is something other than the delivery of social services, but the organization includes social workers in its interdisciplinary teams.

Self-Check 4.1

Agency Approach to Social Problems

Agencies are designed to address one or more social problem that threatens the welfare of clients and communities. Because most social problems are multifaceted and complicated, many approaches and levels of practice are used to reduce these problems and their negative impacts. The term **social service delivery system** is used to describe the continuum of organizations that address facets of any particular social problem, and your agency is part of such a system. No agency can address a social problem entirely independently, and you will be able to see that as you gain experience.

In your practicum, you should identify the social problem addressed by your agency, such as violence, poverty, homelessness, or mental illness. To help you see where your agency is positioned within the service delivery system addressing that problem in your community, consult with your agency field instructor about other organizations that address the same social problem but use a different approach. Record the name of the agencies doing work within the social service delivery system of which you are a part. This will help you see whether your community offers a comprehensive approach to the social problem, or if small or significant gaps in services exist.

Approach	Description	Agency Name
Prevention of a social problem	• Stop a social problem from occurring across all populations • Stop a social problem from occurring in a high-risk population	
Enhancement of social functioning	• Offer services that promote skills, attributes, and abilities needed for positive social functioning • Address ineffective client, family, and community coping skills that undermine positive social functioning	
Remediation of an existing problem	• Provide services to those impacted by a social problem • Provide services to those contributing to a social problem	

Approach	Description	Agency Name
Social change efforts	• Address and change societal conditions that produce or contribute to social problems • Promote social functioning by reducing the negative impact of social problems on society	

Social service agencies also fall into several categories based on their strategy to achieve their mission and purpose. They tend to use one or more broad strategies to achieve their purposes:

- **Socialization:** assisting and encouraging people to understand, learn, and abide by the norms of society for their own benefit and the benefit of the family or community
- **Social integration:** encouraging and helping people to interact more effectively with other individuals and with the social systems or resources they need to function effectively and cope with problems
- **Social control:** monitoring and restricting those who exhibit self-destructive or dangerous behavior
- **Social change:** expanding the number and types of life-enhancing opportunities available to people, taking actions that will improve the

environment in which people must function, and taking actions necessary to reduce or eliminate negative and destructive forces in their social environment

Video Application Exercise 4.1

This interactive exercise will help you consider the variety of ways organizations design their services and why.

Many social service agencies are quite **bureaucratic**, especially public agencies. The characteristics of a bureaucracy are listed here so that you can observe and determine how many of them exist in your agency. This can also help you determine how these characteristics affect clients.

- An organizational structure consisting of a vertical hierarchy with numerous units, each of which has a designated leader responsible for that unit's operation and who has authority over those working in the unit
- A set of written rules, policies, and guidelines that outline procedures to be followed in performing work
- Centralization of power and communication channels
- A clear chain of command in communication and assigned authority
- Division of labor giving employees a specific job and job description
- Clear eligibility guidelines that regulate the provision of services
- Standardized policies and programs geared toward equal treatment to clients
- Supervision of each employee's work
- An emphasis on formal communication, written documentation, and recordkeeping

Self-Check 4.2

Bureaucratic agencies have direct impacts on both their clients and the social workers who work in those agencies. Positive impacts on clients include standardized services, consistency in operations, and clear policies and procedures. Negative impacts of bureaucratic organizations can include rigidity in service delivery and few opportunities to innovate or individualize services. Positive impacts on social workers include clear guidance regarding eligibility, service delivery, chain of command, and policies. Negative impacts on social workers might include restrictions on incorporating new services and programs, the inability to effect needed organizational change, and a lack of access to power.

Some agencies have developed less bureaucratic structures in an effort to be more responsive to clients and to their ever-changing environments. They often use **partnership and empowerment principles** that lead them to involve their clients in the work of the agency; promote shared power and decision making at all levels; develop flexible guidelines and approaches; and strive to individualize and customize their interventions and services. As a general rule, these agencies are more flexible than bureaucratic organizations and provide a less stressful environment for the social workers working for them in terms of adhering to policies and procedures. Agencies that operate on these principles often are private, smaller organizations that do not need the structure of bureaucracy to be efficient or to provide equal services to all clients.

You might wonder how agencies select, design, and offer services to address the needs of their clients. To determine how an organization developed its particular approach, you must research the beliefs upon

which the agency is based, available data and statistics about the social problem addressed, theories and information about how social policies develop, evidence about which approaches are effective, commitment to best practices, and the agency's value base. It may be challenging to uncover all of these elements of organizational history and mission, but if you try to do so, you will learn how agencies form, change, develop, and grow over time.

Social service agencies base their services on actual **practice hypotheses** about how their programs will address the social problems they are committed to reducing or preventing. These hypotheses have expected **outcomes**, which can be short-term results, longer-term changes, and even large-scale changes at the community level. Hypotheses can be supported by positive practice outcomes and research that demonstrates program effectiveness. Hypotheses exist at all levels of practice, as illustrated by the examples given in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 **Practice Hypotheses at Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Levels**

Micro-Level Practice	Sample Hypotheses
• Practice with individuals	• Intimate-partner violence can be reduced by using a combination of legally mandated services and offering supportive counseling to victims of intimate-partner violence.
• Practice with families	• Child neglect can be prevented by providing services to single parents with mental health challenges.
Mezzo-Level Practice	**Sample Hypotheses**
• Practice with groups	• Mutual aid groups for families of persons with schizophrenia can help members cope with the challenges by offering the support of others who have the same experience and can be empathetic.
• Practice with organizations	• A diverse workforce trained to deal with a variety of people will lead to more culturally appropriate service delivery.
Macro-Level Practice	**Sample Hypotheses**

Micro-Level Practice	Sample Hypotheses
• Community practice	• Community organization that builds dementia-friendly communities is best accomplished by involving those families directly impacted by dementia.
• Policy practice	• Effecting social policy changes in mass incarceration will be achieved through collaboration between social and criminal justice systems and communities of color.

Self-Check 4.3

In addition to the stated formal approach of organizations, agencies have informal structures that must be understood. The **formal** or **official structure** of an agency is described by organizational charts, policy and procedure manuals, the official chain of command, and documents that explain the structure and function of various organizational units. The term **informal structure**, sometimes referred to as the **shadow structure**, refers to various networks of employees and unofficial channels of communication that operate through unwritten but universally understood rules. Staff sometimes describe this informal structure as the way the agency really works. This informal structure often becomes apparent only after working in the agency for an extended period of time.

Self-Check 4.4

An agency's informal structure includes a framework, set of practices, and relationships that allow for some flexibility and individualization of services for clients and that recognize the need to adapt services for diverse clients. This informal structure allows staff members to give input through informal channels when needed and to adapt decision-making procedures as necessary. It includes frank behind-the-scenes discussions among staff members that may not be shared with the public. The informal structure may also encompass the influence of key staff members who may not possess official power but are listened to and looked to for guidance and wisdom.

The term **organizational communication** refers to the somewhat impersonal exchange of messages and information between the various levels, departments, and divisions of an organization, and between the organization and various individuals and groups outside the organization. Communication within an organization tends to be more formal and more often takes written form. Moreover, the nature and flow of information within an organization is strongly influenced by lines of authority and the chain of command.

Effective organizational communication promotes the organization's overall mission, efficient functioning, clarity of roles, and provision of services to individual clients. Organizations that develop strong communication networks and policies understand that inherent within every agency function is an opportunity to develop and maintain positive communication. This includes situations and practices such as the following, which involve both oral and written communication:

- Supervisory sessions, which require supervisors to provide support and supervision
- Employee feedback and performance evaluations, which necessitate providing and receiving constructive feedback
- Staff and committee meetings, which are productive when policies are clear, input is solicited and valued, and agency problems and strengths are openly discussed
- Team-building, which develops trust, negotiation skills, and working toward common goals
- Training of employees, board members, and volunteers, which clarifies expectations, addresses policies and procedures, and teaches new skills in working with clients

Self-Check 4.5

In addition to intra-agency communication, agencies engage in both formal and informal forms of communication with their clients through their written materials, web presence, physical environment, quality of services, policies, staffing levels, and professional knowledge and skills of the social workers employed by the agency. Consider how the dimensions of organizations indirectly send messages to clients about the values of the organization. Ideally, the policies, processes, and structures of organizations will signal or clearly inform clients that they are valued, respected, and entitled to quality services.

Organizational Policies and Procedures and the Values Demonstrated to Clients

Social workers often make presentations about their agencies to service groups in the community or to philanthropic organizations such as United Way that accept applications for funding. In these situations, the presentation must be done in such a way that those listening will connect with and appreciate the work done and the clients served. Think ahead to a time when you might be asked to make such a presentation, knowing that your ability to bring your work to life will influence the financial support offered by the service group or the philanthropic organization. You have 15 minutes to make a presentation, which must be clear and succinct, yet comprehensive enough so that listeners can picture your work, the clients whom you serve, and why it is important to fund.

Using the table, consider how various organizational policies and practices reveal a certain value of practice. How can you talk about each dimension in a way that shows the value base underlying your work?

Organizational Policies and Practices	Organizational Value Demonstrated to Clients
Clear mission and goals	Commitment to clients and needed services
Well-trained, diverse, effective staff with low turnover rate and adequate staffing level	Commitment to quality services and competent staff
Effective, affordable, accessible programs and services	Program evaluation, access, and quality improvement
Fair and inclusive eligibility requirements	Inclusion and access
Welcoming physical setting	Dignity, respect, and access
Standardization of services to ensure equality	Equality and nondiscrimination
Individualization of services to match services to client need	Client-centered focus

Organizational Policies and Practices	Organizational Value Demonstrated to Clients
Safety policies	Security and protection
Good written and electronic materials	Access, readability, and commitment to outreach
Clear description of practice theories and models used	Evidence-based practice that is relevant and based on sound theoretical and research foundations
Adequate funding levels	Quality and availability of services
Clear and fair policies and procedures	Clarity, organization, and fairness
Seeking of client input	Respect, dignity, inclusion client-centered focus and relevance of programs.
Clear place in community continuum of care	Collegiality, cooperation, and commitment to seamless services

Organizational Policies and Practices	Organizational Value Demonstrated to Clients
Commitment to diversity	Culturally relevant services, diverse staff, and nondiscrimination policies and practices
Values and ethics	Clear ethical expectations and standards for staff and services

Organizational (agency) climate and **culture** are other terms used to describe the way organizations function. **Organizational climate** refers to the "tone" of the agency, and includes relationships, level of teamwork, morale, communication, and the level of mutual support among employees. **Organizational culture** refers to the values of the agency that affect its programs and represent the underpinnings of the services provided. Both climate and culture are important influences on the agency's effectiveness, its workplace environment, and the satisfaction of both employees and clients.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Your practicum agency will be a very valuable learning environment in which you will develop professional social work skills, observe other social workers providing services, and learn how agencies are organized and structured to address social needs and problems. You will begin to understand how organizations are organized, administered and managed; learn about the common problems of organizations; and see how to work effectively with others within an organizational context.

Work to learn about your agency history, why and when it began, and how it has evolved over time. Ask about the individuals involved in the establishment of the agency, including what led them to start providing services. Originally the organization could have been a grassroots effort or the result of mandated services resulting from social policy changes. Inquire about how and why your agency may have modified its original mission, changed its structure, and adapted to shifting community and political contexts. This will help you understand how agencies survive within an ever-evolving environment and continually adjust and adapt their efforts to address the changing social problems and needs on which they focus.

Both internal and external forces operating at any one time may impact your agency, both positively and negatively. Ask your agency field instructor about external forces that shape or limit your agency, such as funding priorities and sources, community attitudes, client feedback, regulatory bodies, political pressure, and research findings. Learn what contemporary, current external forces influence the focus, work, and effectiveness of your agency. Ask how much influence internal forces

such as staff suggestions, changes in personnel, and staff morale have on the agency and its programs. This is a vital task for a social worker because the provision of services occurs within a broad context that must be taken into account when serving clients.

Agencies are always changing. Notice how shifts, increases, or cuts in funding cause changes in the services that can be provided. Observe how public attitudes and political forces shape the ways in which your agency functions. Your agency may go through some significant changes during your practicum. For example, it may experience a crisis in funding, be negatively evaluated by an outside source, or be required to change significant portions of its program because of financial or political forces. You may even observe the birth of a new agency, or perhaps the dismantling of one that has lost its support or outlived its usefulness. You will see how changes in leadership or staff influence the direction and effectiveness of the organization. You will learn about the dynamic nature of human services organizations if you closely observe the functioning of your own agency and that of others in the community.

As mentioned earlier, your agency will use one or more specific perspectives, orienting theories, or practice theories in the design and provision of its services and programs. Determine what those conceptual frameworks are and why they were chosen. For example, does your agency use the strengths, ecological, or diversity perspective? Does it base its programs on a particular understanding of social systems theory? Does your agency use a family preservation or family reunification approach to intervention? Does it invest resources in prevention, early intervention, or rehabilitation? Is the approach therapeutic or correctional? Does your agency hire generalist social workers or those with specializations in certain fields of practice? Does it work toward social change and social justice? Does your agency provide holistic services or does it specialize? Review courses you have taken and books you have read to help you

better understand why your agency chose a particular approach to address the problem or concern identified. Consider what other theoretical approaches might also be used to enhance, replace, or improve existing services.

Self-Check 4.6

Become familiar with your agency's methods of evaluating its programs and services. Find out how your agency assesses its effectiveness, determines whether it is honoring its mission and reaching its goals, measures client or community satisfaction, and decides whether it is making a difference. Your agency may use either formal or informal methods of evaluation, process, or outcome measures, and it may collect either quantitative or qualitative data. Ask your agency field instructor whether he or she thinks these approaches or evaluation tools are valid and adequate. Learn how lessons learned and insights gained from agency evaluations are used to enhance or change services. Ask which methods your supervisor would ideally recommend to evaluate services if enough time and money were available to support them. Further detail on organizational evaluation methods is provided in Chapter 15, Evaluating Your Practice.

Video Application Exercise 4.2

This interactive exercise asks you to consider the importance and challenges of soliciting client input into agency design.

Agencies regularly reexamine their program effectiveness, review their mission and goals, adjust their objectives, and engage in strategic planning for the future. This type of evaluation is done to maintain focus on the mission and vision of the organization; shift priorities in light of changing political climates, community need, or financial resources; and continuously search for better ways to serve those to whom they are committed. If you have the opportunity to become involved in such efforts, count yourself fortunate to be allowed to participate in the agency's work to redefine itself or improve its services.

Agencies may do this sort of work during staff retreats involving a review of history and mission, and as a result identify new ways to meet their goals. They can then engage in strategic planning, identify strengths and needs, and clarify opportunities and barriers. Agencies that are most effective in the long run are those that stay current, adjust priorities as needed, build on past success, measure their effectiveness, and look to the future. Watch for these qualities in your organization. Think about what makes an organization strong and able to serve its clients well.

It is vital to understand how an agency is perceived by its clients, including those clients' view of the agency's openness, effectiveness, and ability to address their needs. Observe the ways in which your agency works to maintain links to clients, opens itself to client feedback, and works in partnership with client groups, especially diverse populations. In the end, clients are best served by learning organizations that value their input and continually work to improve services. Agencies that continually grow, thrive, sustain themselves, and provide measurably effective programs and services must work diligently to achieve these outcomes.

Effective organizations, their leaders, and their staff members must also work in coordination with entities outside the agency boundaries, accurately assess the multiple contexts of agency practice, and recognize

that they are part of a much larger social system made up of interacting parts. This type of assessment for integration is often referred to as **environmental scanning**. For social workers, it includes being knowledgeable about and able to incorporate an understanding of **contextual factors** into their work on behalf of their clients. Of course, all agencies face immense challenges in understanding all of the contextual factors and integrating them into their mission and operation of everyday activities. **Table 4.2** shows how the context or organizations, both positive and negative, lead to organizational responses.

Table 4.2 **Organizational Context and Responses**

Contextual Factor	Organizational Responses
Current and projected client need	Enhance or modify services
Current and projected social problems	Plan for emerging social problems
Political economy and funding challenges	Plan for future funding opportunities and challenges
Social and political forces supporting the status quo with negative impacts	Counter forces supporting the status quo and impeding progress in addressing social problems
External barriers to service delivery	Address barriers such as societal attitudes, funding challenges, and lack of resources
Current and emerging social policies	Abide by current social policies and advocate for emerging policies with positive impact
External research on social problems	Utilize research to inform the agency's approach
Emerging and empirically based services	Incorporate new services into the existing program

Contextual Factor	Organizational Responses
Cultural shifts in the social environment	Address diverse clients and communities appropriately
Professional standards for practice	Abide by current standards and promote changing standards to improve services and protect clients
External regulations, licensing, and accreditation	Comply with all external regulations and use results of the self-evaluation for program improvement
Existing and needed continuum of services addressing social problems	Coordinate with all agencies addressing similar social problems to provide seamless services

Self-Check 4.7

Because it is important that agencies grow, change, improve their services, and respond to emerging trends and social problems, they must become what have been described as **learning organizations**. Learning organizations seek to maintain relevance, work toward best practices, continuously evaluate their services, anticipate needed improvements, and base their growth on sound information and a commitment to their

mission. They are also committed to staying relevant, addressing emerging social problems, and providing their staff with the knowledge and skills needed to engage in continuous improvement. A learning organization is one that adapts as needed and desired, continuously works to improve its approach and outcomes, customizes its work to client needs, and regularly redesigns itself as necessary. Again, this is no easy task, but it is necessary for organizations to remain relevant, stable, and sustainable. To that end, learning organizations must engage themselves in the following organizational tasks:

Review and Revision of Mission, Programs, and Services

- Conduct a periodic review of mission, vision, goals, and objectives, with revision as needed.
- Develop of agency-specific best practices based on program evaluation and research.
- Conduct a periodic review and revision of agency policies and procedures.

Evaluate Programs and Services

- Identify and build upon agency strengths.
- Identify and address gaps in agency services.
- Engage in qualitative and quantitative evaluation of services, including client feedback.
- Commit to ongoing program development by using evaluation data and results.

Engage in Strategic Planning

- Scan similar programs and services.
- Commit to emerging, evidence-based, and best practices.
- Include client input into planning efforts.
- Engage in sustainability activities to support planned programs.

Build Capacity

- Commit to employee continuing education for knowledge building and skill development.
- Adjust staffing patterns as needed.
- Build financial resources to maintain and grow programs and services.
- Diversify staff and administration.
- Engage in team building and leadership development.

Finally, commit yourself to understanding your agency, work to integrate yourself into the organization in a productive way, observe and participate in as many agency activities as possible, learn about its inner workings, and imagine yourself as a supervisor or administrator. This process may help you to consider, understand, and participate in the vital role of a social services agency and all that is involved in keeping it effective and responsive to client needs at all levels of practice.

Self-Check 4.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you in recalling and integrating classroom knowledge about organizations into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of organizations in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice within organizations. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Agency Analysis

Answer the following questions about your practicum agency, using the information in this chapter. Doing so will help you analyze what your agency does, why, how effectively, and in what ways. This will be the beginning of your professional skills in agency analysis.

1. What type of organization is your practicum agency? What strategies does it employ?

2. What practice hypotheses are in place in your agency, either formally or informally?

3. What perspectives (i.e., strengths, diversity, ecosystems) does your agency use?

4. What features of bureaucratic organizations are at work in your agency?

5. Based on your analysis of **Table 4.2**, what organizational values are demonstrated to your clients?

Video Application Exercise 4.3

This interactive exercise presents the challenges inherent in the political forces impacting organizations.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What empirical evidence supports the theoretical approach of your agency?
2. Which legislation and social policies shape or dictate the work of your agency?
3. Which human rights does your agency commit to, and which social justice issues does it address?
4. Which diverse groups might feel positively or negatively about your agency, and why?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Attend meetings of the agency's board of directors or advisory board, and consider how the topics discussed relate to the agency's mission, goals, programs, and funding.
- Find out how ordinary citizens or the general public view your agency. Speak with friends and acquaintances who know little about social work, and ask what they know or have heard about your agency.
- Attend public meetings sponsored by United Way or other social welfare planning groups to better understand how your agency fits into the overall social welfare system.
- Accompany a client applying for services at another agency, and identify attitudes reflected in how agency staff members treat clients and handle client requests.
- Visit other agencies that provide services similar to those offered by your agency and compare approaches and programs.

Chapter Review 4.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 5

The Community Context of Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the community as both a context of practice and a target for intervention.
- Describe dynamics of community functioning.
- Understand community blocking and building goals.
- Understand similarities and differences between community development and community organization.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Agency Data Gathering About Community

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Community Dynamics and Examples

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Developing Community Practice Skills

Selecting Community Practice Theories and Models

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter examines the **community context of social work**, which can either enhance or undermine the level of social functioning of individuals, families, and groups. The community is one of the most important **contexts of social work practice** as well as one of the most **common targets of social work practice**. It is in communities that relationships are forged, **social functioning** is enhanced, **social capital** is built, **social assets** are developed, **attitudes** are shaped, and **socialization** takes place. Because of the immense impact of communities on both clients and social services agencies, it is vital to understand how communities work to strengthen themselves and help develop the assets needed to meet the needs of their residents through **community development** and **community organization**.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which community **resources and assets** are valuable to individuals and families. It also focuses on community **problems, attitudes, and gaps** that can negatively impact the social functioning of individuals and families. It describes **types of communities**, explores the **functions of a community**, and discusses the use of power and influence within communities. Further, it describes the range of **goals of community social work practice** and their accompanying **social work roles**. **Orienting/explanatory theories** that inform community-level practice are presented, as are the ways in which **practice theories/models** are used in such practice.

Communities are dynamic systems that interact with the individuals, families, groups, and organizations within them. Communities also interact with the larger **social systems** that impact them, such as social policies, societal attitudes, and social movements. When communities represent the context for social work practice, social workers must understand them very well so that they can best use the community's

resources and strengths to support their clients. Communities form the background for individuals, families, groups, and organizations as they go about their daily activities, and this background, which may be either positive or negative, often contributes to the success or the struggles of people and organizations. Knowing this, social workers focus on macro-level practice to support and improve community functioning, an effort that is called **community development**. When communities are the targets of intervention, social workers engage in another facet of social work, which is **community organization** geared toward addressing specific community needs and problems.

Because of the immense impact of communities on both clients and social services agencies, it is vital to understand how communities are structured and operate. In turn, you and others can apply this knowledge to strengthen these communities and help them develop the assets necessary to meet the needs of residents through community development and community organization.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Communities greatly impact the agencies within them, as well as the clients of those agencies, so it is important to study the community in which your practicum agency is located. Obviously, agencies do not exist in a vacuum. In fact, an agency's mission, programs, and operations often reflect the community's characteristics, such as its values, strengths, politics, history, and specific problems. Most of your clients live and work in this community, so it is not possible to understand your clients without understanding their wider social environment and both the positive and negative conditions and forces within that environment.

As you have already learned, the term **community** refers to a group of people brought together by physical proximity or by a common identity based on shared experiences, interests, or culture. Two major types of communities are distinguished: communities of place or location and communities of interest or identification. As a social worker, you will interact with both.

A **community of place or location** is defined mostly by geography and specified boundaries. Such communities include neighborhoods, suburbs, towns, and cities. The boundaries of a community of place might be a legal definition, a river, or a street. Such a community may have a formal or informal name such as the South Side, Orange County, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, the university area, the West Side, or the Warehouse District. People living in these areas or places may share some level of identification, but typically they are more diverse in terms of values, beliefs, and other characteristics than are the people of a community of interest and identification.

It is not uncommon for the people within this type of community to be in conflict over a variety of issues. Living in proximity to others, in and of itself, does not create a social bond and a sense of belonging. In fact, for many of your clients, the community in which they live does not provide them with a sense of belonging, and it may even negatively impact their quality of life. Within a given community of place, many different communities of interest and identification may coexist. Not everyone living within a geographically defined community views that community in the same way. Some might see it as safe, whereas others may perceive it as a threatening or unfriendly place to live. Some might experience their community as full of opportunity, whereas others may view it as blocking their ability to get ahead. Think about the possible reasons for this diversity of perspectives, including community attitudes, cultural conflicts, racial tensions, and income disparities. Consider how your clients will view their community in ways that may differ from how you view it.

A **community of interest and identification** can be described as a group of individuals who share a sense of identity and belonging because they share a characteristic, interest, or life experience such as ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, or occupation. The social work community, the business community, the Native American community, the faith community, and the university community are examples of communities of interest and identification. These communities are not defined by geographic area or boundaries, but are nonetheless very important in the lives of individuals and families. Sometimes communities of identification come together around a shared goal or aspiration, such that its members engage with each other in positive activities to enhance their community's functioning. At other times, communities coalesce over shared negative experiences such as discrimination or exclusion, and their bond is born of a negative experience. Social workers must learn to assess and work within

communities in which perceptions of the community vary depending on such things as social status or stereotyping. Through such efforts, social workers can promote progress, social change, and public awareness within communities

Video Application Exercise 5.1

This interactive exercise highlights the need for building social support for marginalized clients.

Learning about a community takes time and effort for social workers. However, you will find it to be an invaluable and interesting experience. You will become fascinated as you begin to observe and understand the interplay between the functioning of individuals and families and their neighborhood and community. If your practicum agency is concerned mostly with micro-level practice, you will soon see how your clients' lives are either enriched or harmed by community factors. If your organization is involved in macro-level practice, you will come to understand that every community has its own complex personality and profile, and that to deal effectively with social problems and bring about needed social change, you must understand and appreciate that uniqueness.

Your informal study and assessment of the community will allow you to begin to identify community strengths, unmet human needs, and the gaps in the service network that should be addressed to better serve the people of the community. By gathering information about the community's values, history, power structure, economic base, demographics, religious beliefs, and decision-making processes, you will be able to identify those groups or individuals who have the power and influence to facilitate

needed social change, block harmful social change within the community, and support existing strengths of a community. Micro-level practitioners who work with individuals and families will recognize the importance of knowing the community because of its powerful influence on their clients. Look for opportunities to engage in a study of your community so that you can best serve your clients.

Social workers and social services agencies must be knowledgeable about how power and influence are used in the community. **Power** is the ability to make change happen in some way, whereas **influence** is the capacity to increase the chances that a desired change may occur. Successful efforts to develop a new agency program, pass a new law, modify social policy, and bring about social change all depend on the skilled use of power and influence. To promote social change, social workers must have access to, and forge positive relationships with, those individuals and organizations that have power and influence and are willing to use it on behalf of the social services agency or its clients.

The movers and shakers of a community are those individuals with real power, although they are not always the visible leaders. Many key decision makers work behind the scenes and hold no formal positions, yet are capable of contributing greatly to social change and call attention to social issues because of their influence. Social workers involved in community practice must engage with elected officials; those who control credit and loans; those who control the media and information; executive directors of corporations and owners of businesses; respected religious and moral leaders; recognized experts in their field; long-time, respected residents; natural leaders without formal power; leaders or advocacy organizations; and clients or citizens who are skilled in self-advocacy. Sometimes these leaders and those with influence serve on the boards of directors of social services agencies, and in that capacity they can help

promote the agencies' functioning by increasing its visibility, securing funding, and adding to its credibility.

Communities attempt to grow, progress, and improve the quality of life for their members, engaging in a variety of activities designed to reach these goals. Many of these activities are undertaken by people who care about life within their community. They include informal and formal actions by citizens, governmental entities, private or membership organizations, economic development groups, special-interest groups, religious leaders, public employees, and many others. Social workers can build upon the motivation, energy, and resources of all these groups of people, and at times engage with them to promote their goals for quality of life. This can take the form of either community development or community organization.

Community-based social work must rest on a foundation that is accurate, factual, and values-based. **Community needs assessments** are often undertaken by networks of individuals and groups interested in knowing which problems need to be addressed, whether those problems are getting better or worse, what the consequences of these problems are, and what the community wants to have done about them. Needs assessments can be done in a variety of ways, including gathering data from both primary and secondary sources, from individuals affected by community life and from those trying to improve it, and in both quantitative and qualitative ways. A variety of sources of information, in combination, can provide a good understanding of the community and what its citizens want. **Surveys** of citizens, professionals, interest groups, and public officials can yield important information needed for community work, and **interviews** with such persons may yield more detailed information and perspectives. **Focus groups** consisting of interested or affected parties can give a voice to those who care about community issues and can allow for input that is unstructured compared

to the way quantitative surveys are designed. **Data sources** such as the U.S. Census Bureau, chambers of commerce, labor unions, neighborhood councils, social services agencies, and public health departments can provide needed data about community characteristics, strengths, and needs.

Participatory action research projects involve impacted groups as research partners and can provide the perspective of those most affected by the social issue being studied. They encourage leadership by those most affected by social problems, because they stand to lose or gain the most as research on their communities is conducted. In addition, participatory action research projects involve actual interventions related to the research being done.

Agency Data Gathering About Community

Determine how your agency gathers information about the community, using the information provided in this chapter about ways of data gathering. Consult your agency field instructor and review written materials your agency has used and written that describe the community. Record what you learn in the categories listed here. Also think about other ways of studying your community might help your agency and its clients.

Community Needs Assessments

Surveys

Interviews with Stakeholders

Focus Groups

Data Sources

Participatory Action Research

Studying **social indicators** can provide information to guide program improvement, service delivery systems, grant writing, and grassroots efforts to reduce social problems. Focused study of social indicators will help identify the **incidence** of a social problem (the number or percentage of people affected by a social problem in a given period of time), the **prevalence** of a social problem (the likelihood that individuals or families experience such problems), **trends** in problems and potential societal changes, **projections** for the future, **comparisons** with other locations or time periods, and the dynamic **interactions** between social problems. Public and private community organizations tend to identify the social indicators that are important to them or that they are required to address, measure them regularly over time, monitor efforts to improve conditions, and support resources that appear to be making conditions better. Taken together, and when understood as interactive and dynamic, such social indicators can paint a picture of social conditions and allow for social planning efforts to address them.

Self-Check 5.1

Asset mapping is another important tool for community social work practice, which involves identifying the resources available to a community that could either be enhanced because they promote positive communities or be used to address negative aspects of communities. Assets within a community fall into categories such as social, cultural, physical, environmental, financial, political, spiritual, and educational resources. Every community asset is influenced by others, and every

community asset can be improved when others are improved. For example, attracting financial capital for small business development within the community can lead to lower unemployment rates and higher income. In contrast, the lack of one community asset may prevent the development of another community asset. This could result in challenges to changing the status quo or in a decline in positive social conditions overall. For example, low-quality public education can lead to high dropout rates, which can lead to unemployment. Asset mapping shows the relationships and synergy between community assets, as these assets influence each other rather than existing in a vacuum. Community assets tend to cluster together and enhance each other in the same way that community problems tend to cluster together and reduce the quality of life in those communities.

Self-Check 5.2

Some community assets are measurable through quantitative means, whereas some are not easily measured but are powerful just the same. One example of an asset is a **sense of community**, which can lead to community involvement, civic engagement, and responsibility. Formal and informal **social networks** support individuals and families and provide resources needed for social functioning. A **shared identity** contributes to community solidarity that will be useful in times of economic stress. **Acceptance of diversity** helps reduce cultural conflicts and integrates diverse people into the functioning of communities. **Access to power and influence** by citizens can facilitate positive social changes. **Untapped potential and talent** within the community can be identified and used to facilitate positive social changes. A **commitment to social planning** by public officials and formal resources that includes citizens

can set a course toward community progress. Finally, **community resilience** is the ability of a community to recover from tragedy, natural disasters, and other challenging and sometimes overwhelmingly negative occurrences, “leading to the ability to face future challenges”.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

This section examines community from two important social work perspectives: (1) **communities as context for practice** and (2) **communities as clients and targets for change**. Social workers use communities to help support their clients, and they sometimes work to strengthen communities themselves. Understanding the **community context of practice** will help you see that people are all shaped in both positive and negative ways by their life experiences. In other words, individuals may be supported or undermined, protected or put at risk, guided or controlled, served or stressed, and encouraged or discouraged by their interactions with the individuals, groups, and organizations that make up the communities in which they live. These interactions have a profound effect on social functioning and quality of life.

Self-Check 5.3

It is possible that your clients may not perceive the community in which they live as supportive, accepting, and willing to include or support them. It is not uncommon for people experiencing significant stresses of life to view the community as uncaring, unresponsive, judgmental, or culturally insensitive to them, even though the residents and social service agencies in the community really desire to help. Client perceptions of community assets are as important as the reality of those assets, and they must be taken into consideration in any interactions with client groups. Qualitative impressions of the community may not be as easy to measure

as specific social indicators such as unemployment rates or housing costs, but they are just as important because people's experiences color their participation in community life. They may also influence individuals' willingness to engage with agencies such as yours.

If you have not been exposed to the negative aspects of community life as your clients may have been, it is vital that you acknowledge that your **privileged position** in a community may make it difficult to understand your clients' views of their community. They may not have the option to live in a neighborhood of their choice, or they may lack the social skills to engage productively with others to give and gain social support. Your clients may have had significant life experiences that have shaped their attitudes toward the community, as well as toward your practicum agency. Social workers employed in diverse community settings must learn to identify the ways in which their privilege might influence their views of others or keep them from seeing things from their clients' perspectives.

Social workers who come from nonprivileged backgrounds may be in a better position to understand those who have not had equal treatment or who have been harmed by social systems. These personal and potentially negative experiences, however, do not guarantee that social workers will understand their clients' experiences. Moreover, the effects of those experiences must also be acknowledged and managed so that they do not negatively impact professional relationships. Either way, social workers must learn to bridge the gaps between themselves and those with whom they work by challenging their own beliefs and assumptions and finding ways to learn from their clients.

When working directly with clients, strive to identify their **social roles** (e.g., spouse, parent, or employee) and then consider how specific community characteristics may make it easier or more difficult for them to

fulfill those roles. As you examine the influence of a community on the social functioning of individuals and families, consider whether your clients have the benefits and opportunities needed to support social functioning or whether they lack these benefits or perceive them as unavailable. Do your clients have adequate employment opportunities to support themselves and a family? Is housing adequate, safe, and affordable? Do your clients feel safe and secure under the protection of law enforcement and environmental policies, or do they perceive threats from these entities? Do they experience acceptance and equitable treatment by other community members? Do they have access to public transportation, education and training, and affordable health care? Do they feel powerful and able to influence community conditions and policies that impact them? Your clients' answers to these questions will reveal a great deal about how well the community supports them, as well as their perceptions of this level of support.

Community Dynamics and Examples

As social work students gain experience and participate in a community, they often become aware of dynamics that are common to many communities. **Community dynamics** refer to the ways in which communities function, operate, and change. Communities do not remain static, but instead change because of both internal and external factors. As implied in the term "dynamics," community characteristics change over time, so a community assessment must take this shifting nature into account. Be alert to the following community dynamics that need to be understood and factored into any community change efforts in which you may be engaged. They affect community life, and illustrate the power of communities to influence people. For each dynamic in the table, answer the questions about how the dynamic influences the work of your agency and the lives of its clients.

Historical Events and Experiences
Which past community events or experiences influence whether my clients are defined as valued members of the community? (Example: History of environmental damage from industry abuses leads to community empowerment efforts to protect the physical environment.)
Which past community events or experiences indicate whether the community is united in its approach to the social problems addressed by my agency? (Example: Recovery from natural disaster results in community bonds.)
Sense of Identity
Does the community see itself as responsible for solving the social problems my agency addresses? (Example: The community's view of itself as "family-oriented" influences the quality of education.)
Does the community view itself as welcoming to clients like mine who wish to participate in the community and socialize them as being included? (Example: Formal and informal social networks encourage involvement of newcomers.)
Values and Belief Systems
What community values coincide with the values of your

agency? (Example: Community sense of acceptance results in an adequate supply of volunteers for persons with disabilities.)

What values influence whether your clients and their needs are viewed as high priority? (Example: Neighborhood councils set priorities based on diverse values and beliefs.)

Networks

Are all the community networks that could support your agency's work involved? (Example: Groups with a shared interest in children collaborate to build playgrounds.)

What social capital could be utilized to enhance your agency's work? (Example: Neighborhoods work to increase safety and in so doing build social bonds.)

Conflict

Which existing conflicts could slow the social changes promoted by your agency? (Example: Differences of opinion slow a decision about the nature of downtown development.)

Which conflicts and divisions might need to be addressed to further your work? (Example: A vote on infrastructure development shows a lack of support by certain age-related groups.)

Forces Supporting Change

Are there forces for change that can be identified to help the work of your agency? (Example: Successes in attracting business to economically disadvantaged areas provide momentum for neighborhood renewal and employment opportunities.)

How can forces for the social change that your agency promotes become resources for the agency? (Example: Positive outcomes of grants for building a dementia-friendly community lead to additional private and public funding.)

Forces Supporting the Status Quo

What forces would not support the changes supported by your agency? (Example: The wish to maintain the historical authenticity of the downtown area discourages the removal of historical buildings.)

What forces would actively resist the change desired by your agency, seeing it as unnecessary? (Example: The community votes to improve low-income housing rather than build new structures.)

Diversity

What differing perspectives on your work and your clients need to be addressed? (Example: Cultural groups provide

input on interactions with law enforcement procedures.)
What aspects of cultural diversity need to be promoted to increase awareness of your work? (Example: Forums on racism increase awareness of differential treatment based on diversity.)
Power
Which powerful groups or individuals could help your work? (Example: Voter registration campaigns for teenagers increase the youth vote.)
In what ways does lack of power negatively impact your clients? (Example: Violation of landlord–tenant laws leads to resident protests.)

At times, the focus of social work interventions may be the community itself. This level of practice sees the **community as the client, the target, or the focus of intervention**. When social workers engage in this level of practice, which is called **community development** and **community organization**, they must use their knowledge of community, communication skills, commitment to creating healthy communities, and ability to partner with others to achieve this important work. Communities that work to eliminate social problems and to reduce the impact of such problems on their members may do so without the involvement of social service agencies, but often these agencies become involved and even devote their entire mission to bringing community

stakeholders together to address social problems. They approach this work by pooling resources, seeking to organize those impacted by social problems, and by finding ways to improve shared community life. Innovative combinations of these skills will help to enhance social functioning of clients and client systems, which is the overall purpose of social work.

Video Application Exercise 5.2

This interactive exercise highlights the responsibility of organizations to influence social policies that impact their clients.

Community-level practice has myriad goals, but all are based on a belief that communities are central contributors to positive and negative human development. Community assets can enhance social functioning, whereas community problems can negatively impact social functioning. **Building approaches** to community practice are those that identify and strengthen community assets. These approaches are based on the belief that building strong communities will result in the enhancement of social functioning. **Blocking approaches** to community practice are those that identify and address community problems and gaps. These approaches are based on the belief that reducing or preventing such community problems will also result in enhancement of social functioning. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are often used simultaneously by community practitioners.

Table 5.1 highlights some of the goals of community social work practice. Review this information and determine which agencies in your

community, including your practicum agency, work toward either or both these goals of community practice.

Table 5.1 **Goals of Community Practice**

Building Goals (Goals That Strengthen Community Assets)		Blocking Goals (Goals That Address Community Problems)
Support social functioning of individuals and families	vs	Address problems that undermine or reduce social functioning of individuals and families
Identify and enhance community assets	vs	Identify and address community problems and gaps
Build social capital	vs	Address barriers to building social capital
Empower individuals and groups to identify, own, and reach goals	vs	Address barriers to community participation by citizens and impacted groups
Create community conditions that facilitate both broad and specific community development	vs	Address community conditions that impede overall and specific community development

Building Goals (Goals That Strengthen Community Assets)		Blocking Goals (Goals That Address Community Problems)
Engage in community organization efforts directed toward specific community problems	vs	Address overall conditions responsible for community problems
Build coalitions, networks, and partnerships to effect community change	vs	Reduce conflict, strain, and power differentials between groups
Create social change desired by community	vs	Address barriers to social change efforts

Self-Check 5.4

Self-Check 5.5

A number of conceptual frameworks provide the underpinnings of community-based social work, including **orienting/explanatory theories** that attempt to explain and describe both the positive and negative development and functioning of individuals, families, groups,

organizations, communities, and societies. These theories serve to orient social workers to what can be expected in terms of community development, how clients and their social environments interact, how social problems emerge, and what can influence development at all levels. The Appendix describes common macro orienting theories about communities and provides a practice example of an aspect of a community that can be explained by a particular orienting theory. In addition, a practice example illustrates how macro orienting theories are used in a specific planned change process. Remember that a combination of orienting theories usually helps explain the nature of community functioning, both positive and negative. For example, strain theory, structural theory, and social systems theory all factor into an understanding of how social problems are created and trigger responses within a community. Refer to these examples in the Appendix now to make certain you understand the orienting theories and practice theories that apply to your work.

Self-Check 5.6

Practice theories/models at the community level of practice specify which actions can be taken in intervention plans, and include particular approaches and strategies based on sound community assessments. These theories build on community orienting/explanatory theories, are matched to client resources and needs, and fit with client values and perspectives. Such theories are built into community-level intervention plans, guide the implementation of those plans, and provide opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. The Appendix lists and describes a number of common practice theories accompanied by examples. In addition, it provides a planned change process example

that incorporates both orienting and practice theories. For example, a number of practice theories at the community level can be combined when a community action project combines the community development model, the prevention model, and the social planning model to design an opioid abuse prevention program involving education, a community-wide approach to education about drugs, and the setting of goals for reducing negative social indicators related to opioid abuse. Review this section of the Appendix now to make sure you understand how actual practice theories are chosen when working with communities.

Watch for opportunities to engage in community practice. You may have the chance to participate in such activities as grant writing, community development, budgeting, self-advocacy efforts by community groups, and interagency collaborations. Reread the portions of your textbooks that refer to the roots of the social work profession, and you will be reminded of the social work profession's historical focus on community development to enhance social functioning and the interplay between individual well-being and the health of communities.

Self-Check 5.7

Self-Check 5.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about communities into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of communities in your practicum setting. The next step is to use this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice in the community. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Developing Community Practice Skills

Refer to **Table 5.1**, "Goals of Community Practice," and respond to the following questions. The research needed to respond to these questions will help you develop skills in community practice.

Question	Response
What community problems are addressed by your agency?	
Has a needs assessment been completed on these problems?	
Has an asset map been completed on resources to address these problems?	
What are the various visions for the community in regard to the problems?	
What building goals are in place to strengthen community resources to address the problems?	
What blocking goals are in place to prevent or reduce the problems?	

Selecting Community Practice Theories and Models

Engaging in community development and community organization requires the use of a strong theoretical foundation. Orienting theories can help to describe and explain how communities develop, function, and change. Practice theories are used to guide community-based interventions. Using the Appendix section on community-based orienting theories and practice theories, respond to the following questions.

Which orienting theories about communities inform your understanding of the community?

Which practice theories about community-based social work guide your community-based interventions?

What evidence exists to suggest that the practice theories used by your agency are effective?

Which different or additional community-based practice theories do you recommend?

Video Application Exercise 5.3

This interactive exercise suggests that social service organizations need to help make communities more welcoming for their clients.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Which social, economic, or environmental justice issues are addressed by your agency?
2. In what ways does an agency's level of cultural competence impact its ability to provide services to diverse groups in the community?
3. What research can you engage in that will help to inform the service delivery system in your community?
4. How can you identify mentors within the community who will help you understand the role of community developers and organizers?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Participate in interagency committees or task groups made up of representatives of various community organizations.
- Read grant proposals and reports written by your agency to see how the agency claims to meet community needs.
- Locate and study community resource directories and historical materials to deepen your understanding of a particular social problem addressed by your agency.
- Examine census data related to the area served by your agency.
- Attend meetings of support groups whose goals are related to the problems addressed by your agency.

Chapter Review 5.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 6

The Social Problem Context of Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the relationship between social problems and client social functioning.
- Play social work roles that address social problems.
- Discuss the clustering dynamic of social problems and social assets.
- Utilize social problem analysis model to understand social problems.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Identifying and Using Social Asset Clusters

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Social Problem Reduction

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Prevention Resources

Beliefs About Social Problems

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

The focus of this chapter is social problems as one important context of practice and the ways in which those problems are described and understood. This chapter defines the terms **social condition, social stressor, social problem, social policy, social problem clusters**, and **social asset clusters**. Information is provided on various perspectives on, theories about, and approaches to social problems. A variety of **social work roles** are described as ways of dealing with social problems. Guidelines for **analyzing social problems** and their impact on client-level social functioning are offered, along with content on the **science of prevention** of social problems. Most of the agencies and organizations that employ social workers were created in response to specific social problems or needs. To understand your agency's purpose, policies, and operation, you must carefully examine the social problems or conditions on which it focuses its attention and resources.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

The conceptualization and definition of a **social problem** is a complex process shaped by historical, political, and cultural forces as well as by existing empirical knowledge. Either agreement or intense disagreement can occur over whether a particular social condition should even be defined as a social problem. Even when people agree that a problem exists, there can be much debate over what causes it, how severe it is, what can and should be done about it, and who is responsible for addressing it. Great debates can also arise over whether those individuals or groups experiencing a social problem should be blamed or held accountable for their situation or instead be supported by others as they attempt to cope with or change their situation. The profession of social work examines **social problems from an ecosystems perspective**, understanding the interplay between micro and macro factors that influence the development of a social problem.

The definitions and the predominant beliefs about the **causation** of a social problem have a profound effect on the formulation of social policies and the design of social programs intended to address the problem. Moreover, as understanding of the problem changes or deepens, agencies must modify their guiding principles and adapt their services and interventions to include this emerging knowledge. Because of these challenges to defining and describing social problems, it is vital that the certain related terms be understood and differentiated from each other. Chapter 7, "The Social Policy Context of Practice," describes how social policies are formed in response to identified social problems, building on the information in this chapter.

A **social condition** is a factual reality that can be observed and measured. It can be positive or negative, and it may or may not rise to the level of a social problem. A social condition such as the fact that a large share of the homeless population is made up of families may or not be seen as a problem depending on individual points of view. It is vital that facts describing social conditions be made public, measured, and monitored to determine if they are getting worse, because they may need to be addressed through intervention or legislation of some sort at times.

A **social stressor** is an event, series of events, or crisis experienced by a vulnerable individual, family, group, or community that moves the social condition to the status of a social problem. Examples of social stressors for families include loss of employment, medical emergencies, breakdown of social support systems, and increased costs of living. Examples of community social stressors are the rising cost of housing and stagnant salaries. Given enough interacting social stressors without the resources, assets, or resiliency factors needed to mitigate these social stressors, the individual, family, group, or community finds itself dealing with all the impacts of a true social problem and may be in need of informal and formal services.

A **social problem** can be defined as a social condition that negatively impacts the social functioning of individuals or communities, and as a situation in which the welfare, values, and well-being of at least a portion of society may be compromised. A social problem is considered as such because many people believe that its existence is harmful, wrong, or immoral. Other people or groups may define a social problem as a violation of human rights or a social injustice because it prevents people or groups of people from obtaining the basic resources, guarantees, and protections deemed to be universal. Others presume that it is simply an inevitable, ongoing, predictable, and acceptable part of life that requires no special response. A social problem threatens the values, sense of

morality, security, or safety of the members of a community or a society and ideally will be addressed by those who have the power and influence to bring forth collective action to develop new policies, programs, and agencies to address this problem. This point raises questions that you should consider: Who gets to decide if a social problem exists, and who has power to address it? What values and beliefs are used to justify social action aimed at reducing the social problem or acceptance of the status quo? Should the problem be addressed through social policy, or is it even the role of the government to become involved?

Self-Check 6.1

Social problems do not exist in isolation. Indeed, they are often related to each other in terms of causation or increased vulnerability to associated problems. We know that the root causes of social problems may encompass a complex variety of interacting social conditions, and as a result, **social problem clusters** may develop. One social problem can lead to another, or one social problem can make another more likely to occur because it increases vulnerability. We also know that the existence of one social problem may undermine a positive aspect of a community or society, or that one social problem makes another worse. You will notice this in the lives of individuals and families, and you will also observe it at the community level if you watch for it. Examples include the fact that low-quality education can lead to poor health outcomes, and high unemployment and low wages contribute to recidivism among persons leaving correctional settings.

When social conditions improve, or when one social problem decreases, other social problems may sometimes decrease in severity as well. In

addition, positive social conditions tend to support and enhance each other, meaning that **clusters of positive social conditions** may appear. For example, increased high school graduation rates tend to positively impact income, prosocial behavior, civic engagement, and eventual parenting practices.

When thinking how best to address social problems, consider two paths that social workers can take, armed with the knowledge that positive clusters will develop as we address social problems. First, social workers and communities can work to reduce or eliminate social problems, knowing that the eradication of one social problem is likely to help eliminate other social problems. Second, social workers and communities can work to enhance, support, and create positive social conditions within a community or society, thereby relying on the positive clustering effect to create societal conditions that will enhance social functioning.

Self-Check 6.2

Understanding how vulnerability and certain risk factors impact human behavior is vital because we know that vulnerable clients are more likely to experience clusters of social problems than those with more social assets. The level of resilience, ability to adapt, presence of assets, and effective coping skills exhibited by individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities all influence a client's or client system's well-being and lessen their vulnerability to experiencing social problems. Working in such client situations requires that social workers enhance and help build strengths so that clients, families, and communities are capable of better dealing with the crises facing them. Clients or client systems without sufficient **strengths in social functioning** will be more

severely impacted by a cluster of social problems than will clients who possess an adequate number of strengths in social functioning. These assets might include client self-efficacy, hope, a realistic perspective on problems and their future, motivation and perseverance, problem-solving abilities, optimism, cognitive ability, emotional regulation skills, spiritual foundation, and physical strength and stamina.

Video Application Exercise 6.1

This interactive exercise reinforces the importance of understanding clients' perspectives on social problems.

Of course, not all social problems can or should be solved by individual effort and initiative on the part of those experiencing the impact of these problems. Nevertheless, those who have sufficient strengths in social functioning may be in a better position to insulate themselves from the negative impacts of the social problems they face and even to extricate themselves from challenging situations. This group of strengths can be termed **social assets**, and it is important to understand that these strengths tend to build upon each other and form **social asset clusters**. The presence of mutually beneficial assets gives those persons who possess them an advantage in dealing with social problems. Moreover, those individuals with supportive and adequate social environments will have additional advantages when dealing with social problems. Understanding this as a social worker will help you design interventions that enhance and utilize whatever parts of your clients' social environments are positive, nurturing, and supportive. Knowing how, why, and when social assets tend to cluster together gives social workers insight into ways to structure interventions. This is an **application of the**

strengths perspective you have learned so much about, because effective interventions **use and build upon client assets and strengths** to address the social problems that clients face.

Identifying and Using Social Asset Clusters

Consider the social problems addressed by your agency. Instead of thinking only about these negative impacts on clients and families, think about which social assets and resiliency factors could make people less vulnerable to the social problems you identified. Think about how one social asset (e.g., social support, coping skills, optimism, community resources) could lead to and build upon the positive impact of other social assets by clustering these assets together. Think of various social problems that your clients face. In the table, describe the impact of this problem on your clients. Then identify a variety of social assets that could address this problem, promote resilience, and combine with other assets to form a cluster of strengths. Articulate specifically how one asset combines with others. This could help you think with more clarity about how to engage with clients.

Social Problems	Impact of Social Problems on Clients
Example: Addiction	Loss of family, employment, health
Social Asset	**How It Addresses Social Problem and Promotes Resilience**
Example: Social support	Provides sober environment promotes sobriety through accountability, encouragement, and rebuilding of relationships
Social Asset Clusters	**How They Combine to Enhance Social Functioning**

Social Problems	Impact of Social Problems on Clients
Example: Social support, coping skills, accountability, spiritual development, health promotion	Social support and accountability, in combination with coping skills, allows people with addictions to deal more positively with their life challenges. Successes in remaining sober in spite of problems leads to a stronger sense of purpose in life, and healthy life choices result in energy that can be used to maintain sobriety.

You will be able to identify several competing theories of causation of the social problems addressed by your agency, each of which purports to explain why problems exist and what can and should be done about them. Different solutions or actions may also be proposed, with each resting on a particular set of assumptions, values, and beliefs about the cause of the problem and the interventions that are necessary, feasible, and effective. Various views exist regarding what is a viable and desirable solution, as well as how to measure outcomes and success. A comprehensive understanding of the contributors to social problems requires an examination of **theories of etiology** and causation, also called **explanatory theories**. This understanding is also derived from a number of other factors, including empirical evidence, personal values, individual experiences or lack of experiences, and even misconceptions and biases. A partial, incomplete, or flawed explanation for the etiology of social

problems will result in partial, incomplete, and flawed responses at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Likewise, the decisions about the nature and cause of the problem are often heavily political and will reflect the views and preferences of those who have power and influence. That is why social workers must become competent in the political and social policy arena if they are to effect change in the social policies that impact their clients.

Self-Check 6.3

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Within communities and society, there is a great variety of perspectives on social problems, including their causes and their solutions. These different viewpoints are based on personal experiences, attitudes, values, information, misinformation, and even stereotypes. You might think that some of these perspectives are uninformed or biased, but it is important to realize that the beliefs make sense and seem valid to those who hold them. Not everyone agrees that a social condition is a social problem, and not everyone agrees on the causes of social problems. Not everyone you encounter will see social problems in precisely the same way you do. Further, much disagreement arises regarding which social policies should be put in place to address social problems—an important reminder of the challenges of macro-level social work.

Although this can be confusing and may make it difficult to know how to begin addressing social problems, answering the questions in **Table 6.1** can help you gain a comprehensive perspective on a social problem that concerns you and that your agency addresses. Discuss these questions with your agency field instructor and try to understand how the ability to complete a **social problem analysis** using the structure and questions provided in **Table 6.1** will be essential in designing interventions, programs, and organizations to effectively address the social problems your clients face.

Table 6.1 **Social Problem Analysis Model**

Social Problems Addressed by the Agency

- What social problems are addressed by your agency?
- How are these problems defined and understood?
- How do your agency mission and programs address the social problems?

Status of the Social Problems

- What is the scope and scale of the problems?
- In recent years, have these problems worsened, stayed the same, or improved?
- How does their level of severity compare with the same problems at the state or national level?

Theories of Causation and Etiology

- What are the various theories that attempt to explain these social problems?
- What is the basis of these theories (e.g., values, experiences, research, politics)?
- How does taking an ecosystems perspective on these social problems enhance an understanding of why they exist and persist?

Values Surrounding the Social Problems

- What societal value would be upheld if these social problems did not exist?
- What human rights are compromised by these social problems?

- What social justice issues are raised by the presence of these social problems?

Perspectives on the Social Problems

- What groups in your community see these problems as real and significant?
- What groups in your community do not view these problems as real or significant?
- What other social problems are connected to the social problems addressed by your agency, and how do they interact and influence each other?

Impact of the Social Problems

- In what ways do these social problems affect the social functioning of your clients?
- How do these social problems affect the community?
- How would the absence of these social problems change societal well-being?

Evidence-Based Practice

- What research can be relied upon to provide an accurate measurement of the social problems?
- What research is available on evidence-based approaches and best practices to address the social problems that your agency addresses?
- What program evaluation is done by your agency to measure its impact on the social problems it addresses?

Prevention of the Social Problems

- How can prevention be measured to see if the steps taken actually prevented these social problems?
- What social conditions, if enhanced, would help to prevent the social problems from occurring or worsening?
- What social conditions, if reduced or eliminated, would help to prevent the social problems from occurring or worsening?

Research and Knowledge Building About the Social Problems

- What practice models addressing the social problems at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels need to be studied for effectiveness?
- What demonstration and pilot programs would you recommend to test emerging and promising approaches to dealing with the social problems?
- How can clients' understanding of the social problems be included in knowledge building?

Self-Check 6.4

Self-Check 6.5

The contrasting viewpoints and the political debates that arise from these diverse perspectives will, at times, result in social policy that you support and, at other times, lead to social policy that you see as ineffective or harmful. Remember that the democratic political process is influenced by public attitudes, values, information, and power. To influence the process of social policy formation, you will need to engage in the process of politics and use your skills to advocate for social policies that benefit those whom you serve. The political landscape will rarely be easy to navigate because of the strongly held beliefs of everyone involved in the issue and because those negatively affected by existing social problems or policies may not have access to power. It is imperative that you learn how to bridge the gap between those who sharply disagree with each other and who often attack and demonize each other because of their differing perspectives. Recognize that entrenched beliefs and positions often preclude progress in the community or the societal unity required to move forward. You must be able to find ways to elevate the conversation beyond personal attacks. Learn how to listen to and truly understand beliefs other than yours, try to learn from others, and focus on compromise as a way to move forward in addressing social problems.

In addition, if you wish to address social problems at the community or societal level, you will need to contribute reason, collaboration, reliable data, and political influence to this debate. Any single perspective on why social problems exist and what should be done about them is never fully adequate, totally accurate, or complete. Resolve to find any common ground that can be built upon between those holding competing perspectives when addressing social problems. Working well with others who are also trying to address social problem will require that you develop the political skills of listening to those with whom you disagree, compromising, at times settling for modest gains in addressing the social problems you care about while at other times fighting hard for social justice.

Video Application Exercise 6.2

This interactive exercise promotes the idea that societal attitudes can be changed through education.

Once you have considered each of the issues involved, and have committed to addressing social problems, use **Table 6.2** to help you identify the approaches you can take to reducing social problems. You may find yourself, over time, involved in all of these strategies.

Table 6.2 **Social Work Strategies to Address Social Problems**

Identify social problems and raise public awareness	Social workers identify, name, and highlight social problems so that they and others can see them. They shine a light on the existence, scope, and depth of the problem; show the negative impacts on all levels of society; explain the complex causation of social problems; standardize definitions of social problems; give voice to impacted populations; and illustrate the relevance of diversity on social problems.
Intervene to address social problems	Social workers, in collaboration with stakeholders, set goals and objectives and design programs to address social problems. They de-stigmatize the problem, work to shape attitudes, appeal to commonalities, clarify societal values, incorporate diverse stakeholders into the intervention, and anticipate forces for change and opposition. They incorporate best practices and innovations into plans. They include social systems in change efforts and also in evaluation of outcomes of interventions and programs.
Conduct and utilize research on social problems	Social workers identify evidence-based practices to apply to social problems and engage in program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of interventions and programs. They utilize a variety of evaluation approaches, including process, outcome, quantitative, qualitative, and action research. They include client groups in the evaluation. They use research results to understand causes and

	contributors to social problems, and disseminate this information to practitioners, social planners, policy makers, and educators.
Engage in social policy practice to address social problems	Social workers utilize program evaluation data to inform clients, stakeholders, and policy makers about the need for social policy formation or change. They make recommendations for new policy initiatives and for policy amendments based on findings. They formulate social policies that will address social problems and offer amendments to existing social policies.

Perhaps the most important perspective on social problems is that of the **clients who are experiencing them**. Their personal beliefs about causation come from their own personal experiences, and their input must be included to obtain complete understanding of social problems and what to do about them. Remember that clients who are experiencing problems firsthand may view them very differently from the way you view those issues. A situation that you or other professionals define as a problem might not seem like a problem to your client, or vice versa. Listen sensitively to accounts of your clients' life experiences so that you can better understand their importance and the impact on your clients' personal lives. It is always desirable when clients become empowered to become involved in efforts to alleviate social problems that affect them. Community organization and community development initiatives that include and at times are **led by clients** may sometimes be the most effective. Work to involve yourself in any such efforts available to you.

Self-Check 6.6

As you deepen your exposure to and experience with social problems, you will undoubtedly conclude that more time, funding, and effort should be put into preventing social problems rather than addressing them after they occur, worsen, and negatively impact people. Think critically and creatively about the **science of prevention** and the ways in which you could become involved in preventing the social problems that you are attempting to address. Educate yourself about the science of prevention so that any preventive programs in which you participate will be based on best practices in prevention. In doing so, you will find answers to questions about levels of prevention, finding resources for prevention, ways to measure prevention efforts, and which prevention program can serve as models for dissemination statewide or nationwide.

Self-Check 6.7

Answering these questions before designing effective prevention efforts will require a grasp of the science of prevention. Effective efforts to prevent social problems are based on an understanding and use of concepts such as **risk factors** and **vulnerability factors**, both of which contribute to the development of social problems. Prevention models are also based on increasing **protective factors** and **resiliency**, as well as to reducing risk factors and vulnerability. To many social workers, prevention programs seem to make more sense than reacting after problems have developed, so work to understand how to design such

problems. You will need knowledge about the **precursors to problems**, including how they set the stage for the development of social problems. The **causation of problems** must be understood before a prevention program is designed, so that the program can target the appropriate area. The **epidemiology** of problems (i.e., incidence, prevalence, impact) must also be described to design effective prevention efforts. You will need to know which factors are considered protective and how they buffer, inoculate, and mitigate the social problems. Both risk factors and protective factors cluster together, thereby making them more powerful in either a positive or negative fashion. As a result, programs that are successful in preventing one social problem might find that other associated problems are reduced as well.

Social Problem Reduction

Combining prevention and intervention efforts is common practice among social workers and social services agencies, because neither approach alone addresses the full spectrum of what is needed to reduce or eliminate social problems. Use this table to help organize your thinking about how social problems can be addressed through various levels of prevention and through a variety of intervention methods.

Assume you are being asked to participate in a community-wide coalition of groups committed to reducing and eventually preventing homelessness. Your community's goals are to reduce homelessness by a certain amount by a defined time by addressing contributors such as housing costs, availability of suitable housing, low wages, education and job training, mental health, and addiction treatment. The plan is to engage in micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level approaches. In the right-hand column, indicate which prevention and intervention approaches you could take.

Approaches to Solving Social Problems

Prevention		
Approach	**Examples**	**Homelessness Campaign**
Apply the prevention strategy to the general population	Educate all school children about healthy relationships to prevent partner violence.	
Apply the prevention strategy to a high-risk population for the social problem	Assist teen parents to complete their education to address their risk for poverty.	
Apply the prevention strategy to those impacted by the social problem	Provide case management to those with traumatic brain injuries to prevent secondary disability.	

Prevention		
Approach	**Examples**	**Homelessness Campaign**
Making a general population aware of a social problem and its impact, hoping to stimulate action	Conduct a public education campaign about the relationship between mental illness and shortened life expectancy.	
Build resiliency and protective factors that prevent social problems	Teach girls self-efficacy and empowerment to reduce their risk for abuse.	
Counter vulnerability and risk factors leading to social problems	Enact laws that penalize parties engaged in human trafficking.	

Prevention		
Approach	**Examples**	**Homelessness Campaign**
Measure and monitor effectiveness of approaches in reducing problems	Measure the impact of in-home services to older adults and families in reducing nursing home placements.	
Design and implement laws that address social problems	Require education and training for university students, faculty, and staff about the role of consent in sexual assault.	

Finally, during your practicum, you will most likely meet clients who are truly remarkable, positive human beings even though they grew up in very challenging or destructive social environments and experienced the impact of social problems. For reasons that we are just beginning to understand, some individuals are resilient and able to resist the negative influences of a corrosive environment. Perhaps social supports were available at a variety of levels to these individuals that enhanced their

individual strengths and coping skills, allowing them to function well in spite of their experiences. Seek to understand why individuals respond differently to the positive and negative aspects of their social environment. Learn from your clients about the strengths and **resiliency factors** that have made it possible for them to overcome adversity. Even though they had many risk factors and were considered vulnerable to social problems, they must have had enough resiliency and protective factors to reduce their likelihood of developing social problems and to reduce the impact on them if social problems actually did develop. Social workers base much of their work on the belief that this can happen for their clients.

Self-Check 6.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about social problems into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of social problems in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice that addresses one or more social problems. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Prevention Resources

Understanding the social problems addressed by your agency will help you analyze them and begin the work necessary to reduce or eliminate them. This understanding includes contributors to these problems, your agency's responses to these problems, the context in which your agency works, and the research surrounding the problems. Identify a social problem that you would like to eliminate through prevention efforts. Conduct research by accessing resources such as state and national databases of program outcomes and model programs as well as clearinghouses that describe state- and government-funded prevention programs. Look for prevention programs that have been effective in addressing the social problem that interests you. Determine what these programs have in common, which beliefs they are founded on, and how the results of their effectiveness are shared and disseminated.

Utilizing **Table 6.2**, identify the major social problem(s) addressed by your agency, and respond to questions in the table. This exercise will help you to gain skills in analyzing the problem you see addressed in your agency, and will also provide a framework for social problem analysis in the future from the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Beliefs About Social Problems

Social workers encounter numerous beliefs about social problems held by a variety of people. Those beliefs are rooted in values, experiences, observations, and information about those problems. Engaging in conversations with people who have divergent beliefs about the social problems you care deeply about will help you clarify your own beliefs, acquire reliable information, and understand how the views of those impacted by social problems shape their beliefs.

Respond to the following commonly heard beliefs about social problems, reflecting on how your response could further discourse that might lead to deepened understanding of social problems so that they may be addressed adequately. Discussing these perspectives with fellow students and supervisors will also help you to anticipate such statements.

Common Beliefs About Social Problems

“Social problems are inevitable, and we can’t ever really solve them.”

“People bring social problems on themselves.”

“It doesn’t impact me.”

“It’s not my problem and not my responsibility.”

“Someone should do something.”

Professional Beliefs About Social Problems

"One person can't do much about such overwhelming problems, so I would rather work one-to-one with clients."

"In this agency, we work only on the micro level, and do not get involved in social policy."

"If I can help one person, I will be satisfied."

"It's all political."

Video Application Exercise 6.3

This interactive exercise highlights the importance of advocating for clients experiencing serious social problems by educating and influencing legislators.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways might the social problems addressed by your agency be examples of social, economic, or environmental injustice?
2. In what ways are minority populations impacted more negatively by serious social problems compared to nonminority populations?
3. What empirical research evidence supports the ways in which your agency approaches social problems?
4. What might get in the way of truly listening to and learning from others whose opinions about social problems may differ from yours?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Attend public meetings (e.g., city council meetings) and read the letters to the editor of the local newspaper to better understand the various ways in which people explain the existence of social problems and the variety of solutions they propose.
- Attend the meetings of a group or organization that defines the problem addressed by your agency differently than does your agency. Try to understand the basis for its views.
- Identify and attend a self-help group that addresses the social problem your agency addresses. Attend a meeting to see how it explains the existence of the social problem.
- Examine the **Social Work Almanac** or a similar reference book that presents national statistics on the social problem addressed by your agency and compares them with those of your area.
- Read print and electronic media descriptions of social problems. Pay attention to whether the media takes a strengths or deficit perspective on these social problems.

Chapter Review 6.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 7

The Social Policy Context of Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the categories and types of social policies common to social work.
- Describe the variables and processes of social policy formation.
- Engage in social policy analysis.
- Explain social policy analysis as a function of social work.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Domains of Social Welfare Policy

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Critical Social Policy Analysis

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Perspectives on Policy Practice

Preparing Legislative Testimony

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter provides an overview of **social policy practice**, including **definitions of social policy** and related terms. It presents a **typology of social policies** and describes the ideal and actual trajectories often seen in social policy formation and implementation. Also offered is a **social policy analysis model** to help you understand the effectiveness and efficiency of policies in addressing social problems. This chapter also presents a **rationale for social policy practice**, social work values related to social policy, and direction in comprehending the ways in which social policies can be implemented or adapted. All of this information can be used in combination with all that you have learned already about the role of social policy in social work practice.

Previous chapters have focused on the agency context, the community context, and the social problem context of social work practice. This chapter examines a fourth context and arena for practice, the **social policy context**. This information is vital because the clients served by your practicum agency, the other social workers and staff within this agency, and even your practicum experiences are affected by social policy. To clarify the nature of social policy, this chapter distinguishes between various terms and explains the impact of social policy on a social services agency and the clients whom it serves.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

The study of social policy is exciting because it involves an examination of what we as a society believe about people and the problems they experience—something that social workers care about deeply. Studying social policy also highlights what can and should be done about these problems. It pushes us to carefully examine our own assumptions, beliefs, and values. In the process, we are sometimes surprised by what we discover about our views and ourselves. In addition to being stimulating, however, the study of social policy is a complex undertaking.

Social policy is defined as a decision made by public or governmental authorities regarding the assignment and allocation of resources, rights, and responsibilities and expressed in laws and governmental regulations. For the most part, social welfare policies address matters or issues related to the **social well-being** of people and to **social and economic justice**. Thus, social policies focus on such concerns as health, mental health, economic assistance for the poor, marriage, divorce, adoption, abuse, needs of older adults, juvenile delinquency, mental health, discrimination, training and employment opportunities for the disadvantaged, availability of affordable housing, immigration, and other similar concerns. The term **social welfare policy** is often applied to those social policies that focus primarily on the distribution of economic resources and educational and health benefits to those in need. These approaches account for the ways in which many federal and state laws and social policies have been enacted, some of which result in effective social policy, and some of which do not.

Social policies are directly related to social problems and are intended to prevent or reduce the extent and consequences of these problems. Thus, once a social problem is identified, various groups, all with different values, belief systems, and political affiliations, begin the process of addressing these social problems. Some groups may support government involvement through the passing of state or federal laws, whereas other groups may oppose governmental involvement as a solution to social problems. Those working to establish social policies through the legislative process propose laws that they believe could change the social structures that contribute to or add to the social problems. Social policies often direct agencies to do what is required, perform to a certain standard, and accomplish goals within a given budget. Further, they provide tools to be used to measure effectiveness and show accountability in the use of public money. Those who do not believe government should be heavily involved in addressing social problems may resist such laws and suggest that social problems should be handled in other ways.

Social policies are a **reflection of values**—that is, what is believed to be right and wrong, desirable and undesirable. They are shaped mostly by those who have power and influence. The formulation of social policy is basically a political process, and the political process is primarily about power. The art of gaining, exercising, and retaining power so as to influence and enact social policies is the goal of **policy practice**. The effectiveness of social policy implementation should be monitored, measured, and evaluated, and the results shared with policy makers, so that social policies can be continually improved and adjusted to address social problems more effectively.

Self-Check 7.1

Video Application Exercise 7.1

This interactive exercise points out the necessity of understanding how laws affect individual people's lives before engaging in policy practice.

Stakeholders with personal, financial, civic, or policy-making perspectives all have individual perspectives on the need for, design of, and goals for state and federal social welfare policies. They bring their values, political beliefs, religious background, and knowledge to bear through the process of social policy involvement. Numerous forces, groups, and individuals with power and influence may have a disproportionate amount of control over which policies are enacted. The social work profession as a whole is committed to social policies that support the vulnerable populations they serve, because these groups often do not possess or exercise political power.

Listed here are the stakeholders impacted by and involved in the development and implementation of social policy. Use this categorization to help you understand the variety of perspectives brought to all social policy discussions and actions.

Individuals and families directly impacted by the social welfare policy

- Those who are negatively impacted by the current policy or lack of policy
- Those who are positively impacted by the current policy or lack of policy

General public

- Those who support the social policy and are actively involved
- Those who do not support the social policy and are resistant to its formation
- Those who are passive and uninvolved

Policy makers

- Legislators who support particular social policies, work to amend them, and propose new legislation
- Legislators who oppose particular social policies and work to amend or abolish them

Special-interest groups

- Those who promote social policies that benefit themselves
- Those who resist social policies that disadvantage them

Advocacy groups

- Those who promote the welfare of others without power and influence
- Those who work to empower those impacted by social policy

Self-Check 7.2

Domains of Social Welfare Policy

Social welfare policies fall into several policy categories and domains based on their focus, intent, values, assumptions, eligibility, and funding. Use this table to help you identify and categorize those social policies that impact your clients so that you can truly understand what they are intended to achieve and whether they do so effectively or at all. Refer to courses you have taken on social policy that define the terms in this table, making sure you understand what they mean so you can apply them to social policies you deal with in your agency.

Domain	Description	Policy Impacting My Clients
Type	Social insurance Health insurance Cash assistance and family support In-kind assistance Public programs and services (e.g., education, corrections, public health)	
Goals	Societal well-being Prevention of social problems Reduction in and remediation of social problems Basic needs and safety net Protection Demonstration project	

Domain	Description	Policy Impacting My Clients
Values Base	Self-sufficiency Altruism Dignity Minimum standard of living Rights Personal responsibility Governmental responsibility	
Human Rights Base	Equity Access Freedom from restriction and exploitation Right to life and liberty Social justice and economic justice	

Domain	Description	Policy Impacting My Clients
Assumptions	Social support for vulnerable populations results in self-sufficiency. Social support for vulnerable populations results in dependency. Social support is necessary. Social support is unnecessary.	
Funding	Taxpayer-funded (federal and state budget) Employee and employer contributions through payroll Pilot program Pass-through funding from federal to state government	

Domain	Description	Policy Impacting My Clients
Eligibility	Means testing Entitlement Documented need	
Social Benefits	Social well-being Growth Prosperity Upward mobility Public health Solidarity	

Social policies are in a constant state of evaluation and revision, ideally based on (1) research evidence regarding their effectiveness, (2) the impact on social problems addressed by the social policy, and (3) an overall rational approach. However, numerous additional variables influence how actual social policies are developed and whether they are revised based on sound information. **Table 7.1** highlights the ideal and actual trajectories that often characterize social policy formation, implementation, and revision. Social policy development rarely follows

an ideal trajectory, which means that social policies are not always comprehensive, inclusive, evidence-based, and effective. Often social policies offer only partial solutions, which may be exclusive, politically motivated, and reactive. Note that stakeholders will have varied opinions on what the ideal trajectory of social policy development might be. **Table 7.1** presents a way of thinking about how social policy formation should follow a trajectory based on a variety of social policy dimensions, and about how the actual trajectory of social policy formation may differ quite dramatically from the ideal trajectory.

Table 7.1 **Ideal and Actual Trajectories in Social Policy Development**

Dimension of Social Policy	Ideal Trajectory	Actual Trajectory
Value base	Societal values regarding social well-being	Political compromise or based on values of those in power
Knowledge base	Full understanding of the social problem and its etiology	Partial understanding or biased beliefs about the social problem and its etiology
Scope	Comprehensive and universal	Limited, partial, and piecemeal
Time orientation	Timely and future-oriented	Slow development or reaction to crisis
Stakeholder base	All stakeholders involved, including the client base and those personally impacted by the social problem	Stakeholders with political power and influence involved, while excluding those impacted by the social problem
Empirical base	Based on facts and empirical research	Based on interpretation of facts and emotion

Dimension of Social Policy	Ideal Trajectory	Actual Trajectory
Relationship to existing and future policy	Built upon effective policy and allowing for future growth	Detached from future orientation
Rationality	Purposeful and planned	Reactive and unplanned

Self-Check 7.3

You have already learned about how large-scale societal dynamics influence social policy. This includes societal attitudes, global factors, political differences, and changes in administration at the state and federal levels. Laws are envisioned, implemented, amended, blocked, and abolished depending on what is needed, what is politically feasible, and what those possessing power can achieve in passing or blocking social policy. **Recent trends in social policy formation** have included the following dynamics that you should understand and be prepared to deal with as a social worker:

- **Privatization** involves the transfer of public responsibilities and power from public control to private entities, which has the potential

to greatly change the ways in which services are provided as well as what is offered.

- **Devolution** is the granting of power and responsibility from one level of government to a lower level, granting the lower level of government choice regarding what is provided and how it is provided.
- **Decentralization** shifts responsibility for programs from one central location to various regional, state, or local locations.
- **Reduction in governmental influence** over social welfare may occur as a result of political and societal beliefs that government is not responsible for responding to social needs and problems, and that other entities or individuals should address them instead.
- **Rollback or reversal of social policies** happens when dissatisfaction arises with the results or philosophy of existing social policies, and a change is seen as necessary.

Self-Check 7.4

It is important to understand the difference between social policy and agency policy. Agency policies are specific requirements and guidelines used by agencies to structure their work. Although an **agency policy** is not a social policy according to the definitions in this chapter, social policies do filter down to the level of a local or community agency and find their way into the agency's policy manual. At the local level, social policies have a significant impact on an agency's services and programs and on what a social worker actually does, must do, or cannot do in his or her work with clients. The impact of social policy on agency policy is most evident in the operation of a public agency whose policy manual

contains direct responses to specific legal codes and various governmental rules and regulations.

If social policies are ill-conceived because the decision makers either do not understand the problem or have erroneous beliefs about its causes, the resulting social programs will also be flawed. Those who understand the concerns being addressed and the inadequacies of existing policies and programs have both an obligation and an opportunity to provide accurate information to the policy makers so that they can develop appropriate and effective social policies. In the absence of such information, policy makers will assume that social policies are successfully addressing the needs they were intended to address. Social workers are trained specifically in this area, so they can be extremely influential in not only providing needed information but also lobbying for just, equitable, and effective social policy changes.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Depending on your practicum setting, you will need to become familiar with a range of social policy issues and concerns. You must acquire a basic or **working understanding** of the social policies that most directly influence the operation of your agency, the agency's own policies, your role, and the agency's clients or consumers. Social policies constantly evolve as a result of changing societal needs, shifting social values, increases or decreases in financial resources available to implement policy, and, of course, political forces. You will need to keep abreast of proposed state and federal legislative changes and find ways to have input into this political process. During your practicum, make a special effort to involve yourself in activities that prepare you for policy practice. Look for opportunities to participate in task forces, serve on committees working to pass a law, or assist grassroots or advocacy groups seeking to change social policy. You may be able to observe and give testimony at public meetings or legislative hearings that solicit public input before social policy decisions are made.

When social workers fail to engage in the politics of forming social welfare policy and allocating funding for social welfare programs, decision makers can overlook many clients' needs and concerns. Moreover, the development of the social policy will not benefit from the insights and values of the social work profession. Your knowledge and skills are needed in the ongoing work of social policy development, so it is vital to develop competence in policy practice. Social workers also serve in public office, including state and federal legislatures, and it would be helpful for you to research the careers of social workers in public office and the social policies they pursue.

Sources of information regarding a social policy include the original code or statute, administrative rules and regulations, and other governmental documents that describe and explain the policy. Various professional and advocacy organizations distribute reports of their analysis of social policies relevant to their specific issue. In addition, the observations of social workers and of clients will provide insights into how a given policy affects the lives of individuals and families. The social workers in your agency will have opinions about how social policy could be improved, how it benefits or harms clients, and how it complements or conflicts with other social policies. Clients may also have insights based on their experiences with effective or ineffective social policies, so seek opportunities to learn from them and their experiences.

Policy practice necessitates an understanding of several areas discussed already, including social problems, their impact, and policy approaches that will actually reduce these social problems and enhance social functioning of individuals, families, and communities. The science of policy analysis is challenging, yet social workers must familiarize themselves with the dimensions of social policy analysis to understand whether certain policies and programs are actually effective and efficient. To do this work well, you will need to develop and utilize a **social policy analysis model** or conceptual framework to guide your examination and analysis of the social policies that affect the operation of your agency and either support or undermine the social functioning of your clients. The questions listed in this section are often addressed in the various models and conceptual frameworks used in policy analysis. Learn to view such models as tools to help you understand and assess the effectiveness of social policies that impact your work. Recognize that these frameworks will not only guide your evaluation of social policy, but they can also provide you with the insights needed to improve social policy.

Self-Check 7.5

Video Application Exercise 7.2

This interactive exercise demonstrates how social workers use individual client stories to influence policy makers' decisions about funding cuts.

If you take steps to involve yourself in policy practice while in practicum, you will soon be able to understand, describe, and engage in social policy analysis. Analyzing social policies in terms of the dimensions listed in **Table 7.2** will help you prepare for involvement in the social policies you care most about or that intimately impact your clients. These dimensions, when assessed in depth, form a **model of social policy analysis**.

Table 7.2 **Model of Social Policy Analysis**

Description

- Authority and auspices of the social policy (federal, state, or local law)
- Official name and legal citation

History

- Reasons for the social policy's development, including various societal conditions
- History of amendments and changes

Approach to Social Problem

- Definition of the social problem within the law
- Assumptions, beliefs, and values upon which the law is based
- Stated purpose, goals, and objectives of the law

Implementation Process

- Key provisions, programs, and services
- Funding processes
- Rules and regulations put in place to implement the overall policy
- Mandated or voluntary nature of the policy
- Relationship to existing policies

Evaluation of Policy Effectiveness

Description

- Ability to promote the well-being of affected groups
- Reduction in or elimination of the social problem(s)
- Impact of incentives and disincentives of the policy
- Benefit to social services agencies
- Strategies or requirements for dissemination of the evaluation results

Improvements and Ongoing Amendments

- Needed changes in the social policy related to unintended consequences
- Identified gaps and inequities in services
- Recommendations by stakeholders in regard to maintaining, improving, or abolishing the policy

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Self-Check 7.6

Critical Social Policy Analysis

In addition to the previously described dimensions of policy analysis, several other areas need to be examined to engage in a **critical analysis of social policy**. This additional level of analysis identifies and shines a light on such influences as power, discrimination, diversity, and who actually benefits from the policy and its implementation. Engaging in an in-depth critical examination of social policy can reveal how money is used to influence policy, how lobbying efforts influence legislation, and the level of power exerted by special-interest groups. Such an analysis would include questions such as the following. Using your agency field instructor as a consultant, record the answers to these critical questions about a social policy that directly impacts your clients.

- Who is involved in the actual decision making of policy formation?

  _____

  _____

- Who is left out of or excluded from the actual decision making of policy formation?

  _____

  _____

- Who has power to influence policy formation?

  _____

  _____

- Who is paying to promote or oppose social policies?

  _____

  _____

- What trade-offs and compromises were made as the policy was formed and enacted?

- How were issues of diversity addressed, including gender, culture, ability, and socioeconomic status?
- What special interests were involved, including lobbyists and funders?
- Which entities actually implement policies?
- How are requirements enforced?
- Who benefits from certain policies and how?
- Who is put at a disadvantage by certain policies and how?
- In what ways would the social policy be better able to achieve its goals if revised?

After you have become familiar with a specific social policy and its effects, consider how it could be improved and what steps or actions would be necessary to achieve those improvements, such as changes in existing

legislation, changes in administrative rules, or the creation of incentives to adhere to the policy. Commit yourself to gaining skills and competency in policy practice. To become competent, you will need to recognize windows of opportunity for policy change, build coalitions with those who support the policies on which you are working, recognize the values inherent in policy approaches, communicate your vision of how social policies will improve societal conditions, persuade others to support your work, anticipate and deal with opposition, and garner the support necessary to be successful. Find social workers who are active in policy practice and learn from them about how they deal with these issues.

Self-Check 7.7

Policy practice uses the social work **planned change process** common to micro-level practice with individuals and families and mezzo-level practice with groups and organizations. Those engaged in policy practice must work through the various phases of the planned change process: (1) **engaging** with all stakeholders and policy makers, (2) **assessing** social conditions and likelihood of passing legislation, (3) **developing and implementing** an intervention plan to successfully change or formulate social policy, and (4) **evaluating** the process or intervention plan and the effectiveness of social policy outcomes over time.

Policy practice requires an understanding of the ways in which political parties and perspectives differ in terms of what they perceive as a good approach to social policy. Because legislative efforts generally require the support of members of more than one political party, it is important to understand the underlying values of each approach to social policy. The strongly held belief systems of policy makers and stakeholders alike will

play into their level of support for specific policies. **Table 7.3** highlights the contributions and pitfalls of three common political perspectives, which may help you as a policy practitioner respect the values of each. Political perspectives include many more than the three included in the table. In fact, a long and detailed continuum of perspectives exists. Those adhering to a particular political perspective tend to focus on the contributions they believe their perspective can bring to social policy, see the pitfalls of the approaches advocated by those holding other opinions, and are not particularly open to the critiques of their perspective. Think about how trying to honor the values and beliefs of a political perspective different from yours would help further social policy, and how understanding the critiques of your political beliefs might be necessary to forge a collaboration that results in social change. It is also vital to understand the pressures on legislators from their own political parties and constituents to vote a certain way. Moreover, you should recognize that each political perspective inevitably encompasses a range of views held by its advocates.

Table 7.3 **Contributions and Pitfalls of Political Perspectives**

Political Perspective	Contributions	Pitfalls
Conservative	• Keeps the best of the various historical efforts and successes • Promotes individual liberty through minimal legislation	• Resists needed and desirable change • Lack of regulation has potential for harm
Moderate	• Promotes stability in social policy • Is nonreactionary to crisis situations	• Supports minimal but insufficient change • Does not respond quickly to social problems
Liberal	• Views progressive change as desirable • Promotes the rights of vulnerable populations	• May dismiss historical policy achievements • Does not see negative results of over-regulation

Finally, think about how social policies can be used to achieve social and economic justice for your clients, their communities, and society in general. Follow the principles of achieving social justice through social policy practice outlined in **Table 7.4**. Over time, even as social conditions change and social policies evolve, these principles will serve you well as a social worker who promotes social justice.

Table 7.4 **Principles of Achieving Social Justice Through Policy Practice**

Importance of Policy Practice

- Social policy practice is a vital arena for social workers because social policy strongly impacts the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and society.
- Social policies are social contracts based on societal values and commonalities.

Value Base of Policy Practice

- Human rights are universal and should be protected through social policy.
- Social policy should be based on values of social justice such as equity, access, dignity, worth of the individual, opportunity, and fairness.
- Policy practice requires a vision that can be translated into legislation.

Goals of Policy Practice

- Social policy should proactively promote social functioning.
- Social policy should work to address, reduce, prevent, and eliminate social problems.
- Social policies should address social problems at all levels of practice.

Process of Policy Practice

Importance of Policy Practice

- Social policies should be based on historical, current, and future orientations.
- Social policies should be based on an understanding of social problems, including their causes.
- Policy practice uses valid and accurate information provided in legislative testimony, policy briefs, tracking of trends, and public information campaigns.
- Policy practice requires a commitment to methodical and sustained work over time, because change is often partial and incremental.
- Clients, constituents, and stakeholders must be involved in social policy development.

Politics of Policy Practice

- Political shifts provide windows of opportunity for social change that can be utilized in policy practice.
- Building of coalitions and garnering support is necessary.
- Opposition must be anticipated and intentionally addressed.
- Cooperation, seeking common ground, and compromise are necessary to effect change.

Evaluation of Policy Practice

Importance of Policy Practice

- Social policies should be measured and evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.
- Individuals and communities impacted by social policies should be consulted and included in the evaluation.
- Evaluation results should be incorporated into social policy improvements.

Self-Check 7.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about social policy into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of social policy in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional policy practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Perspectives on Policy Practice

To clarify your own personal and professional perspective on policy practice, it is important to think about the following questions. Consider them in the context of the social problems you care most about.

What social issues and problems do I care most about?

What are my most strongly held values about social policy and the role of social work in its formation?

What does it mean that there are competing theories, explanations, and even evidence about social problems and policies?

Is finding common ground possible among those with competing ideologies and political beliefs regarding social policy?

How will I deal with partial success or defeats in the promotion of social policy?

In an ideal world of my description, what social policies would be in place?

Preparing Legislative Testimony

Based on a social policy that affects your agency, prepare testimony that you would give at either the state or federal level about revisions, improvements, and advances in this policy to ensure that it would better address social problems, benefit those impacted, and demonstrate effectiveness. Refer to the tables and information in this chapter that describe how social workers impact social policy, and incorporate them into your testimony. Review your testimony with social workers and others experienced in policy practice and seek their input on your work. Include your main points, your justification for your thoughts, and the ways in which your recommendations support a new or revised social policy. Consider using examples that could illustrate to legislators the ways in which people are affected, both positively and negatively, by social policies.

Video Application Exercise 7.3

This interactive exercise asks you to consider how you will work with involuntary clients who are experiencing serious social problems related to social policy to ensure their success.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How is policy practice similar to and different from micro-level practice?
2. Which social policies protect your clients from oppression and discrimination?
3. How can research inform and improve social policies that directly impact the functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities?
4. How can you gain access to and learn from policy practice documents such as legislative testimony, proposed legislation, policy briefs, and fact sheets?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Interview a social worker in your agency about a social policy that most directly affects his or her clients, and obtain his or her recommendations for improving the social policy.
- Review the NASW **Code of Ethics** (**2017**) guidelines regarding the social worker's responsibility in the area of social policy.
- Read **Social Work Speaks** (**National Association of Social Workers, 2018**), which describes NASW's position on a variety of social issues. Consider how your own personal and professional positions on similar social issues are similar to or different from NASW's position.
- Attend legislative or public hearings that gather public input before a social policy is enacted or modified.
- Invite a state legislator to discuss his or her experiences with proposing, formulating, and passing legislation.
- Use the Internet to monitor the progress of a bill before the U.S. Congress or your state legislature. For information on federal legislation relevant to social work, explore the legislative section of the website of NASW.
- Explore the websites of organizations that monitor social policy, such as the Electronic Policy Network, Center for Law and Social Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers, Professional Organization Public Affairs Division, the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, and the U.S. Congressional Record Services.

Chapter Review 7.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 8

Professional Social Work

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the enhancement of social functioning as the domain of the social work profession.
- Understand the knowledge and skills required of professional social work roles.
- Move from the role of practicum student to that of a professional social worker.
- Research the licensing and professional development requirements for social workers at all levels of practice.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Professional Attitudes and Behaviors*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

- *Constructing a Community of Practice*

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *Social Work Licensing*
- *Moving from Student to Professional*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on the **profession of social work**, including social functioning, which is the unique domain of social work practice. It offers information on **professional social work behavior**, helping you move from the role of practicum student to the role of professional social worker. It identifies the skills expected of the **generalist social worker** at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. In addition, it discusses the variety of **social work roles** required and offers insights into the balance of the **art and science of social work practice**. You have learned in a classroom setting what is considered professional social work and behavior and now you are asked to integrate that with your practicum experience and apply it in a real-life setting.

You will also be asked to consider professional growth and development beyond your practicum experience, including issues related to **ongoing supervision** as you gain more experience and work with challenging situations; **professional licensing and certifications** you may wish to seek or that might be required in your state or in your position; and the **scope of practice**, which defines what social workers do because of their unique education. Other topics covered here include the need for **continuing education**, **maintaining good standing in the profession**, and both **title and practice protection** as ways to protect clients.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Professions are unique and distinct from each other because they have special and unique missions, knowledge, and skills. Professionals understand certain phenomena better than those persons who lack this special training. Because they adhere to a code of ethical conduct, their clients and the public at large can expect ethical conduct and behavior from professionals. Thus, members of a profession are accountable for their decisions and actions. Professionals also lay claim to a certain domain of activities, which is the basis for professional licensing and certification. From a legal perspective, professionals are responsible for providing their clients with a certain standard of care, and if they fail to do so, they may be sued for malpractice or professional negligence.

Broadly speaking, a **profession** is an occupation that possesses the following specific characteristics, all of which apply to the social work profession:

- A sense of "calling" to the profession by virtue of values, interests, or natural abilities
- A unique body of knowledge and theories from which special skills and techniques are derived
- A unique set of skills and abilities to perform professional tasks that other professionals or persons cannot perform
- A set of professional values and a written code of ethics that guide practice activities
- Professional, accredited education for those entering the profession
- A distinct culture, including specialized language or terminology, sense of purpose, identity, history, and set of values

- Capacity and authority, usually by law, to regulate practice, admitting new members and ensuring quality of services to clients
- Sanction and regulation by the community or state to perform certain activities

Understanding these characteristics as they apply to the social work profession is a good start when trying to learn exactly what social workers do, especially now that you are expected to function as a social worker.

Self-Check 8.1

The unique domain of the social work profession is to enhance the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, and communities. The term **social functioning** refers to the social well-being of people, and especially their capacity and opportunity to meet their basic needs such as those for food, shelter, safety, and self-worth, and to satisfactorily perform their social roles such as spouse, parent, student, employee, and citizen. It is the promotion of social functioning that is the unique focus and domain of the social work profession at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. According to the National Association of Social Workers (**1973**, 4–5), "Social workers help individuals, families, and groups restore or enhance their capacity for social functioning, and work to create societal conditions that support communities in need." Thus, social workers not only provide services to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, but just as importantly work to implement social policies and promote societal conditions that will support social functioning. The NASW definition epitomizes the concept of generalist practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels as described in Chapter 2, "Implementing a Learning Plan."

Self-Check 8.2

Self-Check 8.3

Video Application Exercise 8.1

This interactive exercise reminds social workers to reflect on the history of the profession as it relates to contemporary practice.

Recall that the social work profession also operates in the context of large ideas and beliefs about social justice and how people should be treated. As a student, you are primarily focused on your work in your agency; nevertheless, it is good to know about organizations such as the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW), which serves as a deliberative and visionary body of social workers, scholars, researchers, and educators who strive to place social work into large societal and global challenges. Based on its monitoring of social conditions, problems, and trends, the ASSWSW has set forth the following 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work (**ASSWSW, 2018**):

1. Ensure healthy development for all youth.
2. Close the health gap.
3. Stop family violence.
4. Advance long and productive lives.
5. Eradicate social isolation.
6. End homelessness.
7. Create social responses to a changing environment.
8. Harness technology for social good.
9. Promote smart decarceration.

10. Reduce extreme economic inequality.
11. Build financial capability for all.
12. Achieve equal opportunity and justice.

These identified challenges, which are based on the values, research, and mission espoused by the social work profession, are both significant and very challenging to address. Each of the 12 Grand Challenges represents an enormous undertaking, but social workers are clear in their commitment to not only reducing social problems but also ending them. Consider how your work will help to address one or more of these challenges, and think deeply about the relationships between these challenges, including how deterioration in one area negatively influences another, and how progress in one area can lead to progress in another area.

Social workers see themselves as professionals, and they describe their occupation as a profession. As a social work student, you are expected to behave in a professional manner during your practicum, so it is important to understand exactly what a profession is and what professional behavior looks like. Developing yourself as a professional social worker is one of the main priorities of the practicum experience. For this reason, as you proceed through your practicum, consider the following questions. You will not have the answers to all these questions now, but you should work to acquire them.

- What is considered professional and unprofessional behavior?
- What observable and positive effects does the presence of professionally trained social workers in an agency have on the nature and quality of the services received by clients?
- What will be required of me as a growing professional as I proceed through my career?
- What are the ethical standards for social work professionals?

- What other professions can I observe, learn from, and collaborate with?

A profession can be viewed as an organized effort to actualize and implement a set of core values; indeed, all professions have their own core values. Social work is often described as a **values-driven profession** because so much of what a social worker does is guided by this profession's particular set of core values. Its foundational values include service, equality, promotion of human rights, and working toward social justice. These social work values are at play in all of the interactions social workers have with clients and form the basis for their work. You will find it interesting to think about, observe, and participate in interventions that are intentionally based on social work values.

The social work profession maintains high standards for its members, including the demonstration of professional behavior. This point is vital for you as a new social worker to understand, because adhering to these standards helps ensure that clients receive the highest-quality services. Engaging in nonprofessional behavior puts clients at risk, reduces the quality of services, undermines the public image of the profession, and may violate the profession's ethical principles.

Self-Check 8.4

Professional Attitudes and Behaviors

Because it is vital that you now put your understanding of professionalism into practice, the following table clearly describes the attitudes and behaviors associated with professional conduct. Make sure you review it often and begin developing the attitudes and behaviors listed here. Having positive attitudes toward your clients, your colleagues, and your overall work will greatly influence your actual professional behavior. Find colleagues whom you admire for their professionalism, and ask them how they maintain their positive attitudes and behaviors in a very challenging profession. Read the following list of professional attitudes and behaviors, and then make notes of your observations of such professionalism among your colleagues and agency field instructor. In addition, record what you see as the positive impacts of both professional attitudes and behaviors. This could include such impacts as improved morale within the agency, enhanced teamwork, productive working relationship with clients, improved client outcomes, or other positive outcomes.

Attitude	Observations of Professional Attitudes	Impact of Professional Attitudes
Committed to mission, colleagues, and clients		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Respectful of others and diverse perspectives		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Collegial and cooperative		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Shows decorum of the profession		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients

Attitude	Observations of Professional Attitudes	Impact of Professional Attitudes
Possesses integrity and honesty		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Reliable and dependable		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Positive and supportive		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Focused		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients

Attitude	Observations of Professional Attitudes	Impact of Professional Attitudes
Work ethic		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients

Behavior	Observations of Professional Behavior	Impact of Professional Behavior
Communicates well orally and in writing		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Assumes responsibility		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Anticipates needs and responds to requests		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Seeks input in an inclusive manner		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Engages in professional development		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Abides by ethical standards		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Deals well with conflict		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Separates personal and professional lives		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients
Seeks and uses supervision and feedback		Impact on colleagues Impact on clients

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

A significant challenge that you will face in your practicum, but one that you should take on enthusiastically, is making the transition from the status of student to the role and expectations of a professional social worker. As a student in the classroom, you might have been allowed to listen without responding, or to learn about theory without having to apply it. In the practicum, all that changes. Consider how the roles of student and social worker differ, as shown in **Table 8.1**. Push yourself to leave the passive and partial student role behind, choosing to do whatever you can to assume the roles and responsibilities of a professional. Your future clients deserve the highest level of professionalism you can offer when you are a student, just as much as they will when you have finished your education and training.

Table 8.1 **Student Role Versus Social Worker Role**

Student Role	Social Worker Role
Learns passively	Learns actively and applies learning
Engages in theoretical discussions and hypothetical decisions	Applies theory to real clients
Has occasional absences from class or practicum without consequence to self or client	Needs to be fully present to ensure quality services to clients
Defers to others in decision making and intervention	Takes the initiative in developing and implementing interventions
Assumes partial responsibility	Assumes full responsibility
Bases work on theory and academic preparation	Bases work on academic preparation as well as accumulated experience and practice wisdom
May take client feedback personally and react emotionally	Sees client feedback as crucial to professional growth

A primary purpose of the practicum is to help you develop a **professional identity** as a social worker. To achieve this identity means that you have a clear understanding of the purpose of the profession, your roles and responsibilities as a social worker, the profession's core values and ethical guidelines, and the skills and knowledge needed to perform social work tasks and activities. You can begin developing a professional identity by observing other social workers and reflecting on their behaviors, decisions, and attitudes. If you pay close attention, you will notice all of the professional social work roles that you learned about in the classroom being played out in real-life situations. Remember that different social work roles can be enacted at varying levels of practice. Observing and then learning to play them will be your responsibility. Each role requires specific knowledge and skills.

Read the job or position description for social workers in your agency and determine if it is consistent with the profession's stated purposes, values, and practice roles. Watch for variation between how social workers define their own roles and responsibilities and how their roles may be defined by administrators or funding sources. Ask your agency field instructor or other social workers how they attempt to meet the expectations of high-level administrators and fiscal managers while still adhering to the mission and purpose of the profession and fulfilling their obligations to their clients.

The uniqueness of the social work profession will become apparent if you truly understand the profession's core values and ethical principles, as well as the concept of social functioning. Thinking back to your liberal arts education (which is a requirement of all undergraduate social work programs), you may recall the broad array of courses you took in fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, biology, and ethics. You will now see how that preparation was intentional, because social workers must take a broad view of the social environment of their

clients to truly understand and help them. In addition, think of that liberal arts focus as preparation for you to work across disciplines now as a professional social worker. You will need to rely on professionals who understand things differently from you as a social worker, and who have knowledge and expertise in fields important to the support of your clients. For example, those professionals understand medical and physical issues, financial challenges, psychological functioning, societal trends, culture, and other important facets of social functioning.

Constructing a Community of Practice

Effective social workers find and use professionals from other fields as colleagues and consultants. In so doing, they can purposefully construct a **community of practice** made up of other social workers whom they trust and respect and other professionals with whom they can share information. Those other professionals will also consult with social workers at times, so you can expect to be part of other people's communities of practice. Because answers to social problems involve professionals besides social workers, you will likely need to develop your own community of practice, which could include attorneys, physicians, financial planners, psychologists, police officers, and educators, among others.

To make this concept a reality, interview social workers in your agency about who they consult outside the profession of social work, why, and under which circumstances. Ask about the ways in which this community of practice helps social workers be more effective. Begin now to identify categories and names of professionals whom you will include in your own community of practice. Use the table to record what you find from interviewing and observing other social workers about their professional communities of practice.

Contributions of Community of Practice	Disciplines That Make These Contributions
Help broaden the view of social problems or clients	
Bring needed or missing information to shared work	
Engage in collaborative projects	
Provide consultation in challenging cases	
Assist with legal aspects of practice	
Assist with ethical aspects of practice	

Remind yourself of the social work roles you learned about at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. You will now be expected to actually play those social work roles. **Table 8.2**, **Table 8.3**, and **Table 8.4** illustrate in condensed form how this can happen. They list the common social work roles at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, respectively, and succinctly describe the skills required to fulfill these roles. Use these

tables to help you understand which roles you will be playing in your practicum and think about which knowledge and skills you will need to fulfill these roles effectively. Make plans to observe each of these roles played in your agency, and ask your agency field instructor to help you do so.

Table 8.2 **Micro-Level Roles: Social Work Skills with Individuals and Families**

Social Work Role	Social Work Skills
Advocate	Identify resources and gaps
Broker	Match services to clients through appropriate referrals and linkages
Case manager	Monitor, manage, and coordinate services
Counselor	Utilize practice models to address clients' psychosocial needs
Educator	Provide education to address identified needs
Mediator	Utilize techniques to resolve conflicts that promote social functioning
Networker	Promote linkages between individuals and/or social systems

Table 8.3 **Mezzo-Level Roles: Social Work Skills with Groups and Organizations**

Social Work Role	Social Work Skills
Administrator	Utilize techniques of supervision and administration
Facilitator	Promote communication within social systems and progress toward mutual goals
Mediator	Utilize conflict resolution techniques that promote the interests of the involved parties
Program developer	Utilize organizational skills to develop programs that address identified needs

Table 8.4 **Macro-Level Roles: Social Work Skills with Communities, Society, and Social Policy**

Social Work Role	Social Work Skills
Community developer	Support community goals to strengthen the community's ability to support its residents
Community organizer	Promote social change that focuses on an identified social need or problem
Policy analyst/developer	Build coalitions, mobilize, and effect social change through policy formation
Researcher	Conduct research to build a knowledge base and evaluate programs and policies
Social planner	Systematically influence societal attitudes, policies, programs, and institutions

Self-Check 8.5

Self-Check 8.6

Professional licensing and certifications are important facets of the social work profession, and it is vital to research and understand what you will be required to do to become licensed in your state. Each state has its own statutes regulating the licensing of social workers, although

they also share some commonalities. Most states require that those seeking licensing become approved as candidates for licensing as they work to fulfill each requirement. It is important to understand the basics of licensing prior to starting the process of becoming licensed. The following facets of the licensing process must be understood to plan for licensure if you choose to do so, or if you are required to do so by the laws in your state:

- ***Educational requirements:*** Some states have only one level of licensure based on the level of education in social work achieved, whereas other states have multilevel licensure for various levels of education in social work. This includes the BSW, MSW, DSW, and PhD levels of academic preparation.
- ***Scope of practice:*** Depending on the scope, focus, and responsibilities of practice, a certain level of licensure will be required in some states. For example, states will give specific descriptive terms to these licenses, such as **social worker**, **clinical social worker**, or **independent social worker**.
- ***Supervised experience:*** States require a specified number of hours of professional social work experience, usually post-degree, and these hours must be supervised by professionals with specific credentials and possibly also by those with training in supervision. These hours, generally between 1000 to 3000, must be acquired over a certain period of time, be documented, cover certain areas of professional tasks, and be supervised. Some agencies provide supervision by other licensed social workers employed in the agency, whereas others may not. In the latter case, the agency may help you pay for the supervision you need, but require you to obtain this supervision yourself. At other times, you may have to pay the entire cost of supervision and arrange for it on your own.
- ***Licensing examination:*** A written examination is required to become licensed, though its content varies based on the level of licensure the

candidate seeks. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) provides the examinations used by states and offers four levels of examinations. Each state selects the examinations most closely aligned with its licensing requirements. ASWB offers information about the examinations, a tutorial on how to take examinations, and online practice tests. In addition, a number of private organizations sell licensing examination preparation courses that guide candidates for licensing through the preparation process, including offering sample questions and feedback.

Speak to your agency field instructor and your faculty supervisor about licensing in your state or the states in which you may practice. Learn about the requirements so that if and when you pursue licensure, you will be ready to begin the process quickly. Make connections with other licensed social workers, and ask about their experiences with licensure, including their recommendations and possible pitfalls you can avoid if you have adequate information and preparation. Research the licensure requirements of other states in which you may practice, because you will need to fulfill the requirements of each state in which you practice. Another reason to understand other states' laws is that you might serve clients residing in other states through technology, and you may have to be licensed in the states in which they live.

Self-Check 8.7

Although you may not have thought about licensure as a way to protect the public, especially those persons seeking social services, that is one of the most important functions of licensure. That function is also supported by NASW through its **Code of Ethics**, which describes professional

behavior, and by the publication of social work standards for specific facets of social work such as cultural competence, supervision, clinical social work, and the use of technology (**NASW, 2017**). Professional organizations dedicated to specific fields of practice such as child welfare, poverty programs, geriatrics, and mental health often establish their own standards for practice, and they also typically have a research arm, a code of ethics, and a clearinghouse of best practices. Making yourself familiar with these principles and practices will help keep you focused not only on your work with your own clients and assignments, but also on the larger context of practice and partnerships that are needed to address social problems of concern to you and the profession.

Self-Check 8.8

To protect clients, licensure laws often refer to **title protection**, which prohibits those without a social work degree or license from calling themselves social workers. Other states have established **practice protection**, which allows only social workers to engage in the practice activities of social work, which is a more stringent requirement. Similar concepts are found in other professions such as medicine or law, which prohibit those without the training in these areas from practicing medicine or law, respectively. Determine if your state includes this terminology in its laws.

The licensing requirements for social work vary from state to state, and a license obtained in one state may or may not be accepted in another state. Multiple-state acceptance of a license, called **reciprocity**, is not necessarily available between all states. In addition, the various types and titles of licenses in specific states may vary. It is important to inform

yourself about the licensing requirements of any state in which you intend to practice and to work toward meeting those requirements.

Following licensure, social workers are required to engage in and document their **continuing education**. A certain number of hours of ongoing professional training is required each year to maintain an active license, and documentation of these hours is required either annually or when requested by a random audit of licensees. Start now to identify sources of potential continuing education, which can include conferences, in-service education programs within agencies, academic courses, webinars, and other online training. Some states have required annual hours of continuing education in specific areas of practice, such as social work ethics. They may accept only continuing education that is preapproved by the state agency that licenses social workers, although many states allow social workers to choose training that is not pre-approved but which must meet high standards for quality.

Maintaining one's licensure in good standing is very important for social workers and their clients. To maintain good standing, social workers must provide quality services. States have provisions for clients, employers, or members of the public who wish to file complaints about licensed social workers. Such complaints may deal with ethical violations, breach of contract, practicing outside one's level of training or competence, or inappropriate dual relationships. State licensing boards will investigate any such complaints and issue their findings, which sometimes result in professional sanctions or loss of licensure. It is vital that you understand what constitutes such unprofessional behavior, particularly to the degree that might result in the loss of a license.

You will probably find it helpful to remember that for all the emphasis on social work knowledge, theory, and research, you will be more effective if you also pay close attention to the **art of social work**, which is the

combination of empirical knowledge and creativity that makes social work effective in many situations. Often called a personal or professional style of practice, the art of social work encompasses much more than the use of and dependence on intuition or a lack of commitment to social work knowledge and professional skills. It may be somewhat difficult to define, but it is nonetheless vital to working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers who are genuine, compassionate, and caring are likely to possess the ability to communicate this compassion in honest and open ways. The manner in which knowledge and skills are applied is one form of the art of social work, because this approach is tailored not only to each individual client situation based on the ability to understand clients, but also to identify the unique ways in which a relationship can be built to help clients.

A final way in which social work practice requires artistic and creative activity is in building upon one's unique personal and professional characteristics as they relate to being a social worker. Social workers often say that they "use themselves as a tool for helping others," which means they must know their own strengths and gifts for helping others, building on them throughout a career. Characteristics of a social worker that can be enhanced to better serve clients include the ability to stay positive in the face of client adversity, a belief in the good in people, a sense of optimism about addressing social problems, and a high level of emotional strength that results in a positive perspective. All of these characteristics can be used to maintain high performance as a social worker over the length of a career, to communicate positivity to clients, and to be able to remain in this challenging profession.

Finally, even though you are just beginning your social work practice, start thinking like a leader and visionary. Do not limit your learning to what is currently being done, which practices are common, which laws exist, and which limitations get in the way of providing the best-quality

services. While learning your job and integrating classroom theory with actual practice, you will identify ways in which practice approaches could be improved. Try to determine what it would take to reduce or eliminate the social problems you care about, and prepare yourself to engage at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels to make that happen. Professionals do more than is required, and social work leaders are among those professionals who work toward actual social change.

Video Application Exercise 8.2

This interactive exercise shows one professional's way of balancing hope and realism, learning when and when not to take responsibility for client outcomes.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about professional social work into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of professional social work in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Social Work Licensing

To learn the requirements of social work licensing in your state, research the licensing statutes governing the profession in your state. Respond to the following questions.

1. What levels of licensing are available in your state, and what are the names of each?

2. What are the educational requirements of each license?

3. Which licensing examinations are required for each license? How often are the examinations given?

4. Which licensing preparation materials are available and recommended by other social workers?

5. What are the requirements for supervisors? How much supervision is required, and how is it to be documented?

6. What are the continuing education requirements for each license?

7. What guidelines are followed when clients or others make a formal complaint against a licensed social worker?

Moving from Student to Professional

Refer to **Table 8.1**, and reflect on the process of moving from a student to a professional. Answering the following questions and discussing them with professional social workers will help you to understand what is expected of you as you make this transition. Ask your agency field instructor to discuss the following ideas and questions with you.

1. What would you expect of me when considering hiring me for a professional position at your agency?

2. What problems have you observed in practicum students that limit their professional readiness for a position?

3. What is your definition of professionalism?

4. Where do you see me in terms of my transition to a professional social worker?

5. What can I do to maximize this experience so that I am ready for practice?

Video Application Exercise 8.3

This interactive exercise reinforces the generalist approach to social work at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what circumstances might a social worker be expected to simultaneously intervene at the micro and macro levels?
2. What learning experiences can you design for yourself that will help you make the transition from student to professional?
3. What responsibility does a social worker have to monitor, evaluate, and improve services to clients?
4. Upon what values and ethics of the profession is the concept of generalist practice based?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Attend local chapter meetings of NASW or the meetings of other social work–related professional organizations, and decide what issues are of greatest concern to the social workers in your community.
- Join NASW as a student member and work to understand how local, state, and membership opportunities contribute to the development of social work at these levels.
- Review announcements of social work conferences and workshops to determine what topics are of interest to social workers.
- Watch for media portrayals of social workers in newspapers and magazines, on television, or on the Internet to determine how social work is described and whether it is usually presented in a positive or negative light.

Chapter Review 8.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 9

Communication

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the impact of effective and ineffective communication skills on working relationships with clients and colleagues.
- Utilize following and furthering communication techniques in the planned change process.
- Understand the guidelines for professional use of all forms of written and technological communication.
- Apply communication skills with resistant and involuntary clients.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Attending and Expressive Techniques*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

- *Communication with Involuntary Clients*

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *Developing Communication Skills*
- *Analyzing Electronic Communication in Social Work Practice*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

Professional communication lies at the heart of social work practice. As detailed in this chapter, it includes **interpersonal communication** with clients, both voluntary and resistant. **Organizational communication** with colleagues and supervisors entails both oral and written communication. Principles of and guidelines for **electronic communication and technology** are also detailed here in terms of their uses, cautions about potential pitfalls, connections with social work ethics, and recommendations for agency policies.

The effective use of **following and furthering communication techniques** in social work practice with clients is central to success, and they are to be used intentionally at specific phases of the planned change process. Following techniques are primarily used in the first two phases of the planned change process—(1) engaging with clients and (2) assessing clients. Furthering techniques are generally used in the last two phases of the planned change process—(3) intervening and (4) evaluating and terminating.

Resistant and involuntary clients present unique challenges in communication that can be addressed with the use of specific effective communication techniques aimed at reducing barriers and resistance to engaging with social workers. **Written and electronic forms of communication** play an important role in social work as well. To ensure that communication at all levels and between all parties is effective, communication skills must be developed, and the ethical and legal aspects of communication must be understood. The acquisition of effective and ethical communication skills is a career-long endeavor that can begin in practicum, and this chapter provides guidelines and suggestions for gaining those skills as you enter your practicum.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Professional social work practice is built upon communication of all types with a wide variety of individuals, families, and groups. Communication serves many purposes in professional social work practice, depending on the task at hand. As a result, professional communication must be **intentional**, which means it is purposeful and based on careful thought because of its potential to positively or negatively impact clients and others. It must also be **judicious**, which means it is based on good judgment and is prudent and discreet.

Understanding the importance of effective communication is an important prerequisite for truly becoming a skilled communicator, which is the goal of both social work students and lifelong practitioners. A number of specific effective interpersonal communication skills, when used with clients, colleagues, or others, have a positive impact on the professional relationship and can enhance outcomes. A similar number of specific ineffective interpersonal communication skills can have a negative impact on the professional relationship, undermine and weaken the working relationship, and reduce the chances that outcomes will be positive. **Therapeutic communication techniques** with clients, including both following and furthering techniques, will help to ensure effective relationships and outcomes. All of these skills and techniques are covered in this chapter, and you are asked to apply what you have learned in real communication with real colleagues and clients.

Resistant, unmotivated, or involuntary clients present unique challenges to effective communication, and social workers must develop skills with clients who have not necessarily chosen to work with a social worker.

Effective communication with reluctant clients requires a clear understanding of the possible underlying reasons that clients could be reluctant or unwilling to engage with social workers. Social workers who view such clients in a respectful, empathetic manner and who use specific approaches with them are more likely to be successful, as are their clients. Specific guidelines for working with involuntary clients are provided later in this chapter.

Written communication is an important form of organizational communication, and it takes as many forms as it has purposes. Clear, timely, and accurate documentation of one's work with written intake instruments, assessments, treatment plans, case notes, discharge summaries, and court documents is absolutely necessary and important in practice with individuals and families. Organizational written documentation not necessarily related to actual clients includes memos, reports, minutes of meetings, letters, contracts, grant proposals, employee manuals, online materials, policies, and procedures. At the community, research, and social policy levels of practice, writing takes the form of needs assessments, interagency agreements, surveys, questionnaires, program evaluation, client feedback, policy briefs, and written testimony for legislative proposals. Although developing skills in all forms of professional communication is a major undertaking, competence in professional writing begins in the practicum, where you will have numerous opportunities to learn writing skills. In this role, you can observe, read, and emulate a wide variety of written materials, thereby acquiring skills in writing under close supervision.

The use of **technological and electronic communication** in social work is a central feature of contemporary practice for many reasons. Computers, the Internet, websites, cell phones and smartphones, social media, faxes, online interventions, virtual counseling, blogs, and social work apps provide opportunities for enhanced effectiveness and creative service

delivery. The use of technology for communication is efficient, providing quick and sometimes immediate access to information, other professionals, and clients themselves. Electronic communication allows social workers to reach numerous people simultaneously with needed information and reduces the need to travel to central locations for meetings and training sessions. However, the use of technology also has many pitfalls, including those with implications for relationships with clients, client outcomes, legal aspects of practice, and ethical dimensions of practice. These are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Because you have been trained in interactions with clients and client systems, consider the ways in which you can hone your interpersonal communication skills with them. Social workers use both attending and expressive skills with both clients and colleagues. **Table 9.1** summarizes the major **attending skills** that involve listening, paying attention, building respect, and seeking understanding of others. As this table indicates, there are both effective and ineffective types of attending communication skills, which can have either positive or negative impacts. **Table 9.2** summarizes the major **expressive skills**, which social workers use to help clients gain insight, reflect, and make progress in their thinking or emotional lives. Review both tables, and make specific plans to develop the effective skills by intentional practice and to avoid developing ineffective skills. Pay particular attention to the positive impact that these skills can have on the working relationship. Try to understand exactly how the effective use of these techniques results in enhanced communication and perhaps enhanced outcomes. These positive skills can also be applied to your work with colleagues, supervisors, and other professionals, as good communication with them resembles positive communication with clients in many ways. Conversely, ineffective interpersonal communication skills are potential pitfalls in communication with colleagues as well as clients.

Table 9.1 **Attending Communication Skills**

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Active listening	• Enhances accurate understanding • Communicates an intent to understand
Building rapport	• Establishes an effective working relationship • Provides the foundation for intervention
Genuineness	• Demonstrates a real intent to communicate • Promotes trust and openness
Use of open-ended questions	• Promotes the power of the listener to select the response • Deepens the level of sharing
Listening to underlying messages	• Shows a desire to understand what is not communicated • Deepens the level of understanding
Nondefensive attitude	• Allows for increased honesty • Reduces misunderstanding

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Respect	• Promotes a reciprocal respectful response • Fosters the ability to understand diverse viewpoints
Self-awareness	• Promotes conscious use of the self • Reduces the chance of misinterpretation
Allowing adequate time	• Demonstrates motivation to hear and understand • Reduces the chances of misunderstanding
Structuring physical environment	• Reduces environmental barriers to communication • Increases opportunities for effective communication
Managing emotions	• Lowers potential interference of emotions • Promotes mutual exchange
Ineffective Attending Skill	**Negative Impact on Professional Relationship**

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Dominating conversation	• Discourages mutual communication • Demonstrates a lack of interest in understanding
Rushing rapport	• Assumes trust without establishing a relationship • Suggests a hidden agenda
Missing cues	• Suggests a lack of interest in the message • Reduces the level of understanding
Missing underlying messages	• Results in surface-level understanding • Demonstrates a lack of interest in what is not said
Using closed-ended questions	• Results in factual and limited responses • Reduces opportunities for deepened responses

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Not allowing adequate time	• Communicates disinterest in client communication • Reduces the chances of mutual understanding
Defensive attitude	• Discourages the sender from communicating • Reduces the receiver's ability to hear the message
Failing to show respect	• Shuts down open communication • Reduces the ability to hear the message
Asking excessive why questions	• Builds respondent's defensiveness • Increases the respondent's need to justify response
Failing to observe nonverbal communication	• Misses opportunities for enhanced understanding • Misses what is left unsaid
Stacking questions	• Confuses the listener • Results in inadequate responses

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Asking leading questions	• Intimidates the listener • Pushes the respondent toward a certain response

Table 9.2 **Expressive Communication Skills**

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Clarity of expression	• Increases mutual understanding • Reduces time spent trying to understand
Nonjudgmental response	• Promotes trust and openness • Communicates good faith
Paraphrasing	• Communicates motivation to understand • Demonstrates understanding of respondent’s account
Seeking common ground	• Encourages deepened communication • Reduces defensiveness and divisiveness
Fostering dialogue	• Communicates a desire to understand • Promotes exchange of ideas
Seeking mutual understanding	• Provides a foundation for action • Demonstrates willingness to hear and be heard

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Checking for accuracy	• Demonstrates a desire to understand • Promotes precision for both sender and receiver
Matching language	• Reduces language barrier misunderstandings • Enhances understanding by tailoring terminology
Compromising	• Signals a willingness to see both sides • Allows give-and-take
Negotiating	• Enhances partnership • Signals openness to diverse opinions
Summarizing	• Consolidates content and meaning • Allows for an effective end of communication
Ineffective Expressive Skills	**Negative Impact on Professional Relationship**

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Interrupting	• Demonstrates a lack of respect for the speaker • Discourages further communication
Sending confusing or unclear messages	• Reduces the clarity of content • Reduces the chances of accuracy in receiving
Responding judgmentally	• Reduces the speaker's desire to share • Reduces trust and openness
Sending mixed or confusing messages	• Reduces accurate understanding • Confuses the listener
Assuming	• Closes off genuine inquiry • Results in limited and distorted understanding
Trying to prove a point or win an argument	• Suggests that the communication is a contest • Sets up an adversarial relationship

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Environmental barriers	• Reduces the chances for connection • Demonstrates lack of a wish to communicate
Failing to match language	• Increases the chance for misunderstanding • Demonstrates an inability to connect with the speaker
Lacking genuineness	• Reduces the chance of an honest response in return • Shows a lack of real interest
Misinterpreting	• Distorts understanding • Results in flawed intervention

Self-Check 9.1

Video Application Exercise 9.1

This interactive exercise highlights the Importance of professional communication, including the ethical dimensions of communication.

Self-Check 9.2

Attending and Expressive Techniques

Recall what you learned in social work courses and combine that with what you just read about attending (listening) and expressive (responding) techniques. Write a short response to the following questions.

1. What are the major uses for attending techniques?

2. How does the effective use of attending techniques enhance the helping relationship?

3. What are the major uses for expressive techniques?

4. How does the effective use of expressive techniques enhance the helping relationship?

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Following techniques are those therapeutic techniques used to engage clients in the initial phases of the helping relationship, and which can be used to involve clients enough that they will begin to trust the social worker and participate somewhat openly in the planned change process. These approaches to communication are used specifically to understand the client, family, or group with whom the social worker is engaging. They are termed following techniques because social workers must follow the lead of their clients by listening, building rapport, soliciting information, establishing trust, and gaining an idea of what the client situation really is and will require. Only then can meaningful goals or objectives be set and any intervention begin. These techniques are used primarily in the engagement and assessment phases of the planned change process. They let clients know that you are genuine in your desire to understand their situation as they see it and that you want to hear their story. They are designed to create the possibility of an ongoing helping relationship that will move through the stages of the helping process.

Furthering techniques are the therapeutic techniques used to move the professional relationship and clients forward toward meeting their goals in the actual intervention and evaluation phases of the planned change process. They build on following techniques used to create effective working relationships with clients. Furthering techniques help clients make progress, reach goals, enhance their functioning, develop insights, make sustainable changes, and view interventions as successful. These techniques are employed to help clients feel supported, be challenged when that might be needed, develop insight into their own situation, recognize their progress, and move through the intervention. Using

furthering techniques before a foundational relationship is established can be counterproductive, however, because clients may not have fully engaged in the actions required in the treatment plan or intervention. Following techniques can be carried into the intervention and evaluation phases as well, as clients need to believe they are understood and heard throughout the planned change process.

Self-Check 9.3

Self-Check 9.4

When communicating with and counseling clients, it is not uncommon for students to wonder how they will know which therapeutic techniques to use. Wanting to help people doesn't necessarily mean that you automatically know how to help them, and you may be worried about how to help and what to say in specific situations. When integrating what you have learned in the classroom setting into your experience with real people, it is helpful to place helping techniques into the two broad categories of following and furthering techniques, and to connect them to their use in specific phases of the planned change process. Think of how the helping relationship with client is established (engagement phase), facilitates an understanding of clients' situation (assessment phase), allows for work and progress (intervention phase), and terminates when the intervention is complete (termination and evaluation phase). Work diligently to tie your understanding of this dynamic relationship with clients to specific communication techniques. This will help you know what technique is indicated at certain stages of your relationship with clients.

There is no magical or universally effective response that works in all situations, and there is no way of phrasing questions and speaking with clients that works for all clients. Having a firm grasp of what phase of the planned change process you and the client are in will help, because different following and furthering techniques are used at different phases. Train yourself to think about what phase of change you are in and utilize the techniques specific to that phase.

Video Application Exercise 9.2

This interactive exercise demonstrates the use of following and furthering techniques to communicate empathy and to reinforce client strengths.

Social workers use mostly following techniques early in the helping relationship and mostly furthering techniques as the intervention proceeds. **Table 9.3** describes the major following and furthering therapeutic techniques used by social workers, and it highlights the ways they can be used within the respective phases of the helping process. Use this table to help you think about which techniques will help your clients based on where they are in the stages of the planned change process. Remember that use of following techniques is not restricted to the first two phases of the planned change process, and that furthering skills might also be applied in the assessment phase.

Table 9.3 Following and Furthering Techniques in the Planned Change Process

Engagement Phase	
Following Techniques	**Purpose of Techniques**
• Active listening • Empathy • Open-ended questions • Building rapport • Use of genuineness	• Show interest in understanding the client • Help the client feel heard and understood • Empower the client to tell his or her story • Develop a helping relationship and trust • Convey real concern
Assessment Phase	
Following Techniques	**Purpose of Techniques**
• Active listening • Empathy • Open-ended questions • Building rapport • Clarification • Seeking concreteness	• Assess the client's needs and resources • Support the client's emotions and beliefs • Encourage the client to assess the situation • Encourage the client to share information • Obtain a clear understanding of the situation • Help the client move from generalization to specific ideas and experiences
Intervention Phase	
Furthering Techniques	**Purpose of Techniques**
• Paraphrasing • Prompts • Focusing • Contracting • Interpretation • Reflection of content and meaning • Reflection of feeling • Confrontation • Cognitive restructuring • Reframing	• Convey understanding • Encourage sharing • Help the client focus until progress is made • Set expectations for both client and social worker • Help gain insight into thoughts and behavior • Help the client recognize issues • Help the client recognize emotions • Point out the client's need to change • Assist the client to change thoughts and beliefs • Assist the client to view the situation differently
Termination and Evaluation Phase	
Furthering Techniques	**Purpose of Techniques**
• Encouraging • Summarizing • Consolidating gains • Evaluating • Closing	• Assist the client to maintain progress • Highlight progress made • Showing how the client's work has impacted functioning • Help the client measure outcomes and effort • Terminate the relationship

Not all clients become involved with social services agencies voluntarily. Some may be resistant, hostile, or perhaps involuntary. Communication with such clients presents specific challenges to the new social worker or practicum student. Understanding possible reasons for the reluctance of clients to engage in assessments and interventions will provide insight into how to adapt your communication skills to effectively engage these clients to the greatest degree possible. Even for voluntary clients, working with social workers can be uncomfortable, intrusive, and even humiliating. Resistant clients will likely experience these reactions, and

more. Being required to share very personal struggles, concerns, and sometimes even failures with a professional whom they do not know can make clients very resistant to engaging in the helping process.

Self-Check 9.5

Working effectively with resistant clients partly depends on a social worker's ability to use **anticipatory empathy** and address clients' aversion to social work interventions. That is, you as a social worker must try to imagine what clients might be feeling when they are required to accept and participate in services. It is also important to understand how those emotions and reactions will express themselves in client behavior, so that you become able to interpret behaviors accurately without becoming upset or defensive with clients. It is vital to understand in advance that clients who do not want to work with you may appear or be angry, passive, sarcastic, hostile, quiet, and even threatening. Resistant and involuntary clients actually need more understanding and more support than voluntary clients do in some important ways. Because they may find themselves without choice in the matter, they are likely to fear judgment and to wonder if they will lose control over their lives and be forced into participation. They might be anxious about the consequences of being seen as uncooperative, angry, and resentful at being required to accept services, and apathetic toward the prospect of change. They could show ambivalence about fully engaging in services, be confused about expectations for them, be unmotivated, and show resistance to intervention plans that do not make sense to them. They might not have the level of self-efficacy to believe that they are capable of meeting expectations, be overwhelmed and paralyzed, and likely be embarrassed

and ashamed about the perceptions of others. Feelings of powerlessness, hostility, and passivity will be common.

Self-Check 9.6

It is understandable that people who have little or no choice about engaging in interventions might have these feelings and reactions, and the first key to communicating well with resistant clients is to acknowledge and appreciate this dynamic. Some clients may never cooperate, see the need for change, or honestly engage in treatment plans, but their resistance or ambivalence may be lessened when social workers are genuinely empathetic about their emotions. Acknowledging that such reactions may be valid and expected for clients, and being able to express empathy about having to engage in services will at least help clients know that their reasons for resistance have validity and that they are being heard.

Clients may have had previous negative or coercive experiences with social workers or other professionals and programs, and these experiences are likely to impact the effectiveness of treatment plans. Clients may also have had deeply harmful personal experiences that have resulted in negative coping skills, and those experiences may contribute to their antagonistic feelings toward social workers. Such experiences may result in barriers and obstacles to establishing positive working relationships, including client defensiveness, distorted thinking, false bravado, denial, minimization, projection, inability to recognize one's own problems, ineffective coping skills, sarcasm, and manipulative interactional patterns. When seen as strengths by the social worker, these

results of negative life experiences can be reframed by the social worker as what clients needed to do to cope with or escape such experiences.

Communication with Involuntary Clients

Interventions with resistant clients have a higher likelihood of success if the following guidelines are followed. These guidelines are based on the same social work values surrounding interactions with voluntary and motivated clients, but they require additional communication skills that demonstrate you respect clients even if they are required to accept services. To ensure that you understand each technique and the positive impact it can have on involuntary clients, write an example statement that could promote a working relationship with an involuntary client.

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients	Example Statement
Sharing power	Empowers clients who are feeling powerless to resist participation	Example: “I know you would rather not be here, but I will do everything I can to give you choices about how our time together will be spent.”
Offering choice	Promotes self-determination to the greatest degree possible	
Remembering details of clients’ lives	Communicates interest in knowing the client	
Showing respect	Reduces the stigma of being required to participate	

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients	Example Statement
Using clear and concise communication	Avoids misunderstandings in stressful situations	
Suspending disbelief	Suggests that clients are not seen as untrustworthy	
Recognizing one client emotion as masking another emotion	Avoids misinterpretation of negative emotions and behaviors	
Being truthful and honest about possibilities and potential outcomes	Clarifies expectations and consequences	

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients	Example Statement
Treating clients fairly and equally	Minimizes the fear of receiving unfair or unequal treatment	
Avoiding assumptions and judgments	Communicates an open and nonjudgmental view of the client	
Customizing interventions	Helps the client feel his or her needs and goals are being considered	
Recognizing all client efforts	Shows appreciation for the client's work, even if it is involuntary	
Ensuring transparency	Reduces fear of a hidden agenda or misuse of records	

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients	Example Statement
Listening to understand	Promotes client willingness to share information	
Accepting resistance as normal	Shows understanding of what it feels like to be forced to accept services and engage in the treatment plan	
Avoiding defensiveness in response to client behavior	Demonstrates the ability to hear the client's emotions without reacting emotionally	

In addition to oral communication, written communication is a vital part of social work practice. All forms of written communication in the social work setting, including client case records or documents about an organization, have a specific purpose and must meet a professional standard. For example, written records are used to document services

offered, make decisions based on social workers' recommendations, record progress or lack of it, provide a rationale for a proposal, confirm verbal agreements, record decisions, demonstrate the use of best practices, address legal requirements, and meet the requirements of licensing or accreditation organizations. Because you will be engaged in professional writing and documentation as a student, apply the following guidelines in your written communication:

- Understand who your audience is, what they need to know, and how they want the information presented so that it is readable for the purposes of the document.
- Use the documentation format required by your agency.
- Recognize that you may need to make several revisions in your writing and seek to incorporate feedback into your revisions.
- Use professional language, but do not overuse jargon.
- Avoid slang and language that could be judgmental, derogatory, biased, disorganized, speculative, or ambiguous, and that could be interpreted in more than one way.
- Use direct, clear language rather than vague and tentative words.
- Check for accuracy of all statements made, using factual and objective wording.
- Make sure that records are comprehensive and include all required elements.
- Complete all required documentation in a timely manner.
- Understand agency policies about making corrections to client records, and avoid any action that could be viewed in retrospect as falsification of records.
- Assume that all records might be subpoenaed and write accordingly.
- Be aware that someone may read your records in your absence or after your practicum is completed, and you will have no opportunity to explain or clarify what you wrote.

- Retain copies of all written communication that is sent out of the agency.

You may wonder how much detail about clients is required. A good guideline to follow is to include enough detail to bring the issue to life for anyone reading it, but not to overwhelm the reader with unnecessary and extraneous information. Every written word should help to convey meaning, and each one counts toward that purpose. Unnecessary information detracts from the concise nature of social work documentation and may lead to faulty conclusions by readers of your writing. Written communication includes many subtle components, so do not leave written statements open to misinterpretation. There is much at stake for clients whose lives and experiences are being written about, and social workers' assessments and recommendations can have major positive or negative impacts on those clients' lives. There is also much at stake for agencies in regard to their recordkeeping, report writing, accreditation documents, grant proposals, and annual reports, so make certain that you understand this when you begin to write on behalf of your agency.

There are a number of legal guidelines for written communication, and you need to learn and abide by them, especially in regard to electronic communication. Because electronic recordkeeping systems are used to store a wide variety of very personal information about clients, be very aware of confidentiality of client records and learn to anticipate potential breaches in confidentiality that could occur when sharing information between agencies. Client records need to be protected, and electronic breaches in confidentiality can result in **cyber liability**. Learn what can be shared and what cannot. Learn when and how to use **releases of information**, which record clients' permission and approval to share information with other professionals or agencies that may need this information. Be cautious when using electronic forms of communication

such as computerized client databases, text messages, faxes, voice mail, and e-mail so that client confidentiality is always closely guarded and electronically protected. Only those who are involved should have access to the information. Even though clients may waive some of their rights to confidentiality to be eligible for third-party payments for services or may be involuntary clients, this status does not mean that they understand the degree to which their confidentiality may be compromised.

Clients have the right to see and obtain copies of any documentation about them. They are partners with the agency in the services they are offered, including when they are involuntarily involved. For this reason, you must carefully consider what to enter into the formal record and use factual, nonjudgmental language when doing so. The sharing of client information is closely regulated by both social services agencies and state and federal laws. Abide by all agency policies as well as state and federal regulations related to the sharing and protection of client information. Remember that each form of communication can be very helpful to social workers and other entities that serve clients, but also potentially very harmful to clients if their confidentiality is compromised.

Self-Check 9.7

The use of technology in social work practice is an emerging consideration in communication management. Communicating with clients, other organizations, and entities that need access to client information must be done with the utmost care because of the strict laws and guidelines about protecting client privacy, but also because of the need to protect yourself and your agency from inadvertent mistakes that could put everyone at risk. As is true for many facets of practice, use of

technology has both benefits and risks. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), and the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA) have worked hard in recent years to develop guidelines for the use of technology, and NASW has published **Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice** (**NASW, 2018**). Consult this valuable resource and discuss with your agency field instructor the implications of technology within your agency.

In general, there are legal, ethical, and practice elements of technology utilization, and you must first understand all laws regulating the use of technology. Violations of laws dealing with privacy and confidentiality can carry stiff penalties, even if no intent to divulge information was present. In addition to the legal aspects of technology use, social workers must appreciate the ethical dimensions of technology:

- The competency of social workers in the use of technology
- The capacity and opportunity for clients to use and understand the ramifications of technology
- The protection of client information
- Comparisons of quality between face-to-face and virtual services and communication
- The pitfalls of technology
- The possibilities for misunderstanding
- The boundaries between professional and personal use of technology such as social media and Internet searches
- Sharing information about clients
- Saving and storing information securely
- Preparing for and managing breaches of information

Competency in the use of technology requires not only that social workers use technology competently, but also that social work programs

teach the use of technology, that face-to-face and virtual communication have the same level of quality, and that social workers develop technological skills to serve underserved populations and remote areas. Moreover, social work supervision can be conducted via technology, and doing so requires the same standard of excellence as in-person supervision.

Table 9.4 presents guidelines regarding the use of technology in social work practice, and can supplement any guidelines, policies, or requirements of your agency and your university. Use this table to understand both the benefits and the potential pitfalls of using technology, and then commit to engaging in competent and ethical use of technology in your practice. This information can also be used by your university and agency to supplement their guidelines.

Table 9.4 **Guidelines for the Use of Technology in Social Work Practice**

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don't**
Use separate professional and personal telephones for professional and person purposes, as the use of a personal device for professional reasons can result in a subpoena of all personal devices.	Avoid checking cell phone messages when meeting with clients out of respect for your clients' time and to communicate that you are fully engaged with them.
Send text and e-mail messages to clients only for professional purposes.	Do not use automatic location settings on cell phones to protect yourself from clients who may monitor your whereabouts.
Select wording for text and e-mail messages to clients and colleagues in a professional manner to avoid misunderstandings.	Do not share your personal phone number or e-mail address with clients to maintain professional boundaries and to avoid having your personal phone subpoenaed.

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Remember that text messages and e-mails can be forwarded to others who may not have ethical or legitimate reasons to view them, and that they can never be completely deleted.	Avoid using professional telephones and computers for personal purposes so as to maintain professional boundaries and to avoid having personal communication opened for scrutiny.

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Restrict fax access to those persons who need it, and design policies regarding safeguarding of faxed documents, both sent and received.	Avoid judgmental or personal descriptions of clients in telephone, text, e-mail, or fax communications.

Web Presence and Use of Internet	
Do's	**Don'ts**

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Use the agency's website to describe its mission and services and to provide links to additional information. Verify the accuracy of information on links that are recommended to clients.	Refrain from including excessive political content on the website to maintain a focus on the agency's services and mission and to avoid unnecessary controversy.
Use blogs and relevant apps to provide education and resources for clients on topics of interest.	Minimize the amount of personal information about the staff and administration placed on the agency's website.
Use the Internet judiciously and only if necessary to obtain information on clients who may pose a threat to you or your agency so as to guard their privacy.	Do not violate client or colleague privacy by conducting Internet searches on them or their family and friends without a compelling need to do so for safety or legal reasons.
Social Media	
Do's	**Don'ts**

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Remember that social media postings can become public, and post only content and images that will not threaten or undermine your professional status.	Do not engage in social media contacts with clients, but focus on maintaining professional boundaries and avoiding potential misinterpretations of your relationship.
Use privacy settings to protect your privacy and recognize that they are not always universally secure.	Refrain from posting comments or identifying information about your clients on social media, even in professional online groups.
Consider the impact of personal postings on your professional relationships.	Do not view client profiles on social media without a compelling reason so as to protect their privacy.

Provision of Services via Technology	
Do's	**Don'ts**

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Conduct electronic meetings and training sessions professionally.	Follow up electronic meetings and sessions with face-to-face or written communication if possible.
Provide online services to clients with the same attention to quality and privacy as you provide face-to-face services.	Do not rely solely on online services if face-to-face services can also be provided.
Supplement electronic services with personal contacts to ensure quality of services.	Do not assume clients have access to and the capacity to utilize technology to obtain services.
Utilize technology to provide social work supervision and consultation, including written and face-to-face methodology.	Do not use remote supervision without making personal contact and creating documentation as needed.
Educate yourself about licensing laws and state reciprocity when providing services to clients in other states or countries.	Avoid providing services across state or national lines without knowing if licensing and specific forms of documentation are required.

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Use the same standards of service provision for online clients and face-to-face clients.	Do not compromise standards of services to online clients because of the convenience of online services.

Agency Policies and Procedures	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Develop and follow agency policies in line with best practices regarding use of all forms of technology in practice, including safe gathering, sharing, and storing of client information.	Do not develop policies that are impractical or impossible to implement or follow.
Consult legal counsel regarding legal aspects of technology when developing agency or private practice policies.	Do not violate the agency's commitment to ethical and competent use of technology.
Maintain privacy of client information through encryption, firewalls, privacy settings, and use of technology staff.	Refrain from using technology that clients cannot access or understand.

Telephone, Text, E-mail, and Fax Communication	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Train and support staff in the use of technology, including the content and importance of abiding by agency policies.	Do not assume that clients understand the risks and ethical dimensions involved in the use of technology.
Develop policies about protocols to be used in the event of disruption of services or breach of privacy.	Do not cover up any breaches or failures in technology.

Self-Check 9.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about communication into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge about communication in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for communication in professional practice. Following is an exercise designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Developing Communication Skills

Using **Table 9.1** and **Table 9.2**, consult with your agency field instructor about the use of both positive and negative communication skills with your clients. Ask your agency field instructor to answer the following questions about you and about himself or herself.

1. What effective communication skills do I possess? Can you provide examples that I can build upon?

2. What ineffective communication skills do I possess? Can you provide examples so that I can see what I need to change?

3. Which following techniques have you found to be most helpful with clients during the engagement and assessment phases of the planned change process?

4. Which furthering techniques have you found to be most helpful with clients during the intervention and evaluation phases of the planned change process?

Analyzing Electronic Communication in Social Work Practice

Refer to **Table 9.4**. Discuss the following questions with your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor.

1. What are the most important benefits of electronic communication?

2. What are the most serious risks of using electronic communication?

3. How can the risks be addressed? What policies does this agency have that address risks?

4. How can I learn what I need to know to use electronic communication effectively and to the benefit of clients and organizations?

Video Application Exercise 9.3

This interactive exercise describes the rights of clients to see their records and what this means for social workers.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How does diversity affect communication between social workers and clients? What can you do to enhance your ability to communicate with people who are very different from you?
2. How can effective following techniques be used in the engagement and assessment phases of the planned change process to improve assessments? How will this result in good intervention plans?
3. In what ways can this chapter's guidelines for the use of electronic and technological communication be considered ethical guidelines?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Read the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in its entirety to make sure you understand federal laws about confidentiality and privacy, and discuss it with your field instructor.
- Read NASW **Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice** (**NASW, 2018**).
- Ask your agency field instructor to show you examples of both well-written and poorly written letters, memos, reports, and case records. Observe how writing style, organization, and choice of words affect their quality.
- Seek opportunities to make an oral presentation to your agency or a community group.

Chapter Review 9.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

References and Recommended Readings

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Chapter 10

Social Work Ethics

Learning Outcomes

- Begin to develop ethical competence.
- Adopt a model for ethical decision making and resolving ethical dilemmas.
- Complete an ethics audit.
- Describe the relationship between social work values and agency policies.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Client Concerns and Agency Policies That Address Them

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Ethics Audit

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Values and Ethics in Your Agency

Using the NASW Code of Ethics

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter describes **professional values and ethics** and highlights the ways in which professional codes of ethics can guide practice. It describes **ethical competencies**, **ethical decision making**, and a **process for resolving ethical dilemmas**. Tools are provided that demonstrate how primary social work values can be promoted through specific agency practices and policies. The use of an agency **ethics audit** is discussed as a quality improvement technique to monitor and maintain ethical service provision. Guidance and recommendations for the **ethical use of technology** in social work practice are provided.

Every day, social workers make decisions and take actions based on ethical principles. These principles have a profound and far-reaching impact on practice. They also have a significant impact on a student's practicum. You have studied the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) **Code of Ethics** and spent devoted classroom time to discussion of ethical questions and issues. Up to this point, the topic of professional ethics may have seemed rather abstract, but in your practicum experience you will meet these questions and dilemmas face to face. These encounters will require that you recognize, understand, and deal with ethical situations and ethical dilemmas. This chapter briefly reviews the nature of professional values and ethics, discusses a number of ethical issues and examples common to social work, and offers guidance on identifying ethical issues and resolving ethical dilemmas.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Each profession has a code of ethics that provides an ethical and values base for practice. These codes usually focus on professional responsibilities to those whom the professionals serve, to the organizations for which they work, and to society at large. Social work ethics are built upon a set of values that are central to the profession and that give general guidance to social workers facing decisions with strong values and ethical components. **Ethical decision making** is the process of critically and thoughtfully incorporating ethics into the decisions made at all phases of the planned change process, into organizational development, and into larger-scale efforts such as research and social justice efforts. Every situation involving ethics may not be an actual ethical dilemma, but the ethical dimensions must still be addressed.

The term **ethical dilemma** describes a situation in which the social worker has two or more ethical obligations (e.g., to take action to protect the client from imminent harm and to protect the client's right to privacy), but cannot adhere to one principle without violating another because of those obligations' conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive nature. Rather than providing clear-cut guidance for resolving each dilemma, the **NASW Code of Ethics** offers general principles based on the values of the profession that the social worker uses to make ethical decisions. Having a protocol or set of principles to use in this process is both necessary and invaluable. This is no easy task, however, and social workers must learn to identify and sort through all ethical problems involved.

Self-Check 10.1

The standards for ethical conduct by social workers may be descried as **ethical competencies**. They require knowledge that goes beyond a rigid and universal interpretation of the ethics of practice situations. They also require skills and actions based on the analysis of ethical situations and the consideration of the values of all stakeholders. Ethical competencies for social workers can be summarized as follows:

- The ethical social worker becomes familiar with the NASW **Code of Ethics**, including its purposes, uses, and limitations.
- The ethical social worker identifies ethical issues and ethical dilemmas.
- The ethical social worker understands connections between ethical and legal issues.
- The ethical social worker understands potential ethical violations and their consequences.
- The ethical social worker develops and uses a model of ethical decision making.
- The ethical social worker examines, explores, and resolves ethical dilemmas.
- The ethical social worker uses supervision, consultation and continuing education.

Your agency will have a written or informal process for resolving ethical issues and dilemmas. It may use ethics committees, staff discussions, and outside legal and ethics consultations to help make difficult decisions. During your practicum, you should try to participate in such meetings as often as possible, because this will help you develop awareness of and

skill in identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas. Ask for opportunities to observe and contribute to these sessions. Each situation is unique to some degree, and there is seldom only one right way to deal with the issue, which is the nature of an ethical dilemma. Over time, you will become more comfortable with this uncertainty and be better able to sort out the competing values and potential consequences of each decision.

Self-Check 10.2

When you encounter an ethical dilemma, consider the following ethical decision-making framework as a guide for thinking such dilemmas through and for selecting an intervention that is based on social work values and ethics combined with client values and desires. This framework offers a set of questions that will help you clarify the dilemma, identify options, and make a decision.

- Describe the **practice situation in detail**, including the range of ethical positions.
- Identify the **primary client** so as to focus on the impact on him or her, including the capacity to make a decision on his or her own behalf.
- Identify all the **players and stakeholders** involved or impacted by a decision.
- Identify any **legal issues** that must be resolved and any laws that must be obeyed.
- Clarify **potential options** and courses of action, including values inherent in each option that are in conflict with each other.
- Anticipate potential results and **consequences** of taking action or not.
- Rank the **conflicting values** of all stakeholders in terms of importance and impact, including those of the primary client.

- Clarify who is charged with or **responsible** for making the final decision.
- Take **diversity** and cultural differences into account.
- Decide on a **course of action** and implement the plan.
- **Monitor** ongoing effects of the plan.
- **Evaluate the impact** of the decision and adapt the ongoing intervention as needed.

Social work ethics are involved in many practice situations. Having studied them in the classroom, you know what you are required or forbidden to do in theory. Now, in real-life practice situations, you will probably find these guidelines challenging to use in actual situations. A number of areas of practice frequently present challenges to social workers. For example, one ethical area that may be confusing for you is the question of limits to client confidentiality. Clients have a right to privacy, but there are limits and exceptions to a client's right to confidentiality, including situations in which social workers are mandated reporters. You may need to release client information without your client's permission when your client is abusing another person, is planning or has committed a serious and dangerous illegal act that places others in danger, or is threatening harm to himself or herself or to another person. Confidentiality also may not apply when you receive a court order requiring you to release client information, when a contract requires you to share information with a third party, or perhaps when your client is a minor.

Self-Check 10.3

Video Application Exercise 10.1

This interactive exercise provides ethical guidelines for identifying oneself as a student and for providing services while a student.

Another concern that often arises is when and how private information can and should be shared with others. Do your best to understand your agency's policies about the concept of **privileged communication**. This means that clients can expect that their social worker will not or cannot share information without their consent because information shared with a profession social worker is protected by law. In certain circumstances, however, social workers may be required to share client information, especially in situations involving threats to the safety of clients, people they are in contact with, or social workers. Consult with your agency field instructor to make certain that you know how and when privileged communication requirements apply to you and your clients.

Client Concerns and Agency Policies That Address Them

Clients will often have clear preferences about how ethical situations should be handled, and this is important to consider. To demonstrate to clients that their concerns will be addressed and their rights will be protected, specific agency procedures and practices should be developed and implemented. Good ethical practice means that social workers anticipate, identify, and address such concerns proactively rather than waiting for client resistance, harm, or complaints. The following table provides examples of client concerns and situations that can be addressed by agency policies, thereby acknowledging and dealing with the ethical components of providing services. Being able to identify the ethical dimensions of ordinary practice situations is vital because, although they may not be full ethical dilemmas, client perceptions and concerns can be alleviated and addressed by agency policies sensitive to client concerns. After reading the information presented here, in the right hand column write your understanding of exactly how client concerns can be addressed through agency policies in the right-hand column.

Client Concerns	Agency Policies That Address Client Concerns	How Policies Address Client Concerns
Ambivalence about engaging in an intervention	Choice and right to refuse treatment	Example: Allowing clients to choose or refuse treatment empowers them and may help to resolve ambivalence.
Embarrassment and guilt at being an involuntary client	Confidentiality policy Release of information policy Privileged communication policy	
Difficulty understanding what will be required in a treatment or intervention	Informed consent policy	
Right to be offered evidence-based practices	Best practices policy Staff credentialing policy Staff development policy Supervision	
Desire to review one's records	Documentation policy	
Belief that inferior services have been provided	Grievance policy and feedback on complaint	

Self-Check 10.4

Self-Check 10.5

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Social service agencies are guided by professional values and ethics, all of which can be addressed in multiple ways through agency policies, procedures, and guidelines. **Table 10.1** lists eight of the primary social work values and shows how agencies can uphold these values through comprehensive and creative agency policies for ethical professional behavior. Review it and ask your agency field instructor if these agency practices are used in your agency. If some of these agency practices are not used in your agency, consider whether they would be helpful in promoting ethical professional care.

Table 10.1 **Social Work Values and Agency Policies and Procedures to Support Them**

Policies and Practices	Social Wo				
	Dignity and Respect	Safety and Protection	Equality	Autonomy and Self-Determination	C
Advisory board	✓		✓	✓	
Best practices policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bill of rights	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Choice and right to refuse	✓			✓	
Code of ethics	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Confidentiality statement	✓	✓		✓	
Conflict of interest policy		✓			
Consultation		✓		✓	
Credential verification		✓			

Documentation	✓	✓	✓		
Ethical decision-making process	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ethics committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grievance policy		✓		✓	
Informed consent policy	✓	✓		✓	
Length of service policy		✓	✓		
Payment policy	✓	✓	✓		
Privileged communication policy		✓		✓	
Release of information	✓	✓			

Staff development	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Supervision		✓	✓	✓	

A recommended practice for agencies that wish to monitor their performance in terms of adherence to and use of ethical practices is an **ethics audit**. Such a review of an agency's compliance with its own policies and ethical principles can be done at various time intervals, with information gathered from several sources. It can then be used to assess the ethical operation of an agency. Following is a glossary of terms that includes all the items included in the ethics audit. Read them in conjunction with the Ethics Audit table.

- **Advisory board:** a board that advises the agency on policy, programs, and services, and whose members may include clients
- **Best practices policy:** an agency's commitment to the use of best practices that are evidence-based, superior to other approaches, and in keeping with client need and preference
- **Bill of rights:** written document describing client rights, either designed by the agency or required by a funding, licensing, or accrediting body
- **Choice and right to refuse:** a policy that guarantees clients the right to choose and decline services
- **Code of ethics:** professional description of ethics related to the professions employed within the agency, which are posted within the agency or implemented informally
- **Confidentiality statement:** a signed statement required of agency employees and volunteers that commits them to maintaining client confidentiality

- **Consultation:** advice, feedback, and recommendations from professionals outside the agency who provide varied perspectives and guidance on agency programs and services
- **Credential verification:** the process of requiring and verifying the professional credentials, degrees, and experience of employees
- **Documentation:** written description of services provided for the purposes of continuity of care, verification of services, monitoring of client progress, and meeting evaluation requirements
- **Ethical decision-making process:** a process by which ethical decisions can be approached and made, including decisions about ethical dilemmas
- **Ethics committee**: an interdisciplinary committee whose members have expertise in their respective fields, are schooled in the ethics of care, and make ethical decisions or make recommendations on ethical issues
- **Grievance policy:** a policy that outlines clients' rights to make complaints, file grievances, and receive satisfactory responses from the agency
- **Informed consent policy:** a policy that requires staff members to inform clients of all aspects of the agency's services, including effectiveness, length, cost, and potential positive and negative outcomes
- **Length of service policy:** a policy clarifying the expected length of service, including the client's and agency's rights to change the length of service
- **Payment policy:** a clear policy on payment for services, including costs, insurance coverage, sliding fee scales, payment plans, and termination of services for nonpayment
- **Privileged communication policy:** a policy describing the laws governing the protection of and limits to shared information between the client and the professional

- **Release of information**: the process by which the agency releases client information based on written approval
- **Staff development:** provision of or support of professional development of staff members through in-service training and continuing education of licensed professionals
- **Supervision**: structured supervision of employees to monitor their effectiveness, increase knowledge and skills, and provide consultation as needed

Self-Check 10.6

Ethics Audit

Learning to evaluate the ethical behavior of your agency can be done by completing an ethics audit. The ethics audit tool provided here helps an agency determine whether it is truly implementing policies that will ensure values are guarded on behalf of clients.

This instrument will assist an agency to assess its own level of compliance with self-designed agency policies and procedures that ensure ethical professional behavior. Low levels of agency compliance are related to high levels of risk to clients in regard to ethical violations. High levels of agency compliance are related to low levels of risk to clients. Check the agency's level of compliance with each of its own internal policies and procedures governing ethical practice. Use this tool to identify agency strengths and weaknesses in ethical agency operations, both of which can be incorporated into organizational improvement efforts.

Agency Policies and Procedures	**In Compliance** ***(Minimal risk to client, social worker, and agency)***	**Minor Noncompliance** ***(Low risk to client, social worker, and agency)***	**Major Noncompliance** ***(High risk to client, social worker, and agency)***
Advisory board			
Best practices policy			
Bill of rights			
Choice and right to refuse			
Confidentiality statement			
Conflict of interest policy			
Consultation			
Credential verification			

Documentation of services			
Ethical decision-making process			
Ethics committee			
Ethical violation policy			
Grievance policy			
Informed consent policy			
Length of service policy			
Payment policy			
Privileged communication policy			

Release of information			
Staff development and training			
Supervision			

The ethics audit can be a very effective learning tool for you. It will help you see how values can be turned into actual practices and procedures that truly promote the welfare of real clients. It will also help you determine your agency's actual implementation of ethical guidelines in addition to its spoken commitment to ethical practice. Imagine yourself being a client in your agency, and ask yourself how important it would be to have policies and procedures in place for specific problems and experiences you may have.

Unfortunately, sometimes social work values and ethics are not protected or ethical violations occur through social workers' action or inaction or through agency problems. It is important to know how violations of ethical codes sometimes result in client complaints and lawsuits so that you can avoid such unprofessional behavior while in practicum. Not only do these behaviors on the part of a social worker or agency raise the risk of malpractice claims, but they can also undermine services and potentially bring harm to clients, some of whom may be in vulnerable situations. Examples of alleged violations of ethics may include the following:

- Breach of confidentiality and failure to protect privacy
- Failure to address informed consent prior to providing services
- Dual relationships with clients that compromise the professional relationship
- Incompetence of the social worker
- Defamation of the client's character orally, in writing, or through electronic communication
- Premature termination of services or without cause
- Lack of cultural competence
- Inequitable access or service
- Violation of client self-determination

These violations may be legal issues as well as ethical violations, and violating the profession's ethics may result in legal jeopardy for social workers and agencies. Do what you can to understand why these violations would be considered harmful.

Self-Check 10.7

Self-Check 10.8

To function effectively as a social worker, you must be able to identify and distinguish between your personal values and morals and those of the client. As a general principle, you should not impose your values and beliefs on the client. Maintaining this kind of neutrality is challenging in practice because the social work profession and social services agencies are built on and represent a set of values and beliefs about what is good for people and desirable in human relationships. Your personal values may be at odds in some way with those of your agency. Moreover, some clients engage in behaviors that are clearly wrong and a danger to

themselves and others (e.g., assault, rape, robbery, child neglect). In such situations, attempting to be values-free or values-neutral can be extremely dangerous, irresponsible, and possibly unethical.

If you find that your personal moral code conflicts with the values of your clients, your agency field instructor, your agency, or even the NASW **Code of Ethics**, do not ignore them. They raise important questions and dilemmas that must be faced honestly and squarely. You will need to decide when you can and cannot suspend your personal moral code. Remember that it is your clients' values that are primary in your interactions with them, not yours. Ask other social workers how they have dealt with such values conflicts with their clients. You can learn from their experiences.

Finally, think about the NASW **Code of Ethics** as a minimum requirement for ethical conduct and professional behavior. Find ways to do more than the minimum required in the code, as that will help prevent complaints or allegations of negligence or misconduct. If the welfare of clients is always the primary focus of your work, it will be easy to provide ethical and competent services, document their provision, and give clients and client systems the services they deserve.

Video Application Exercise 10.2

This interactive exercise shows how a social worker and a supervisor deal with the need to separate their own values from those of their clients.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about ethics into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of ethics in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for future ethical professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a social work professional.

Values and Ethics in Your Agency

1. What ethical concerns or dilemmas are most frequently encountered in your practicum setting, according to your agency field instructor?

2. How do the social workers in your agency deal with ethical questions and resolve ethical dilemmas (e.g., discussions at a staff meeting, presentations to an ethics committee, consultation with experts)?

3. To what degree and in what way does the NASW **Code of Ethics** influence the decisions and behavior of the social workers employed by your agency (e.g., referred to during case conferences and staff meetings and made available to social workers)?

4. Does your agency have its own code of ethics or a code of conduct for its employees? If yes, how is it similar to and different from the NASW **Code of Ethics**?

5. How does your agency handle reports of ethics violations on the part of its staff (e.g., written incident reports, temporary suspensions of staff, formal investigations, grievance policies, reports to state licensing bodies)?

6. Are there statements or sections in the NASW **Code of Ethics** that are in conflict with your personal moral and ethical standards? If yes, how will you attempt to resolve these conflicts?

7. What are the possible sanctions in your state for social workers who commit ethics violations (e.g., loss of license, civil action for monetary damages, criminal prosecution, sanctions by NASW)?

Using the NASW *Code of Ethics*

Using the table below, identify the actual references in the NASW **Code of Ethics** that apply to each practice situation in which there is an ethical dilemma. Next, identify the two (or more) values that are in conflict, and indicate which of those values you believe is primary.

Ethical Dilemma	Code of Ethics Reference	Values in Conflict	Primary Value
Client wishing to be a friend			
Involuntary treatment of a client			
Use of social media to learn about a client			
Registration of sex offenders in treatment			
Parental notification regarding drug use			
Choosing an agency program to eliminate due to funding cuts			

Video Application Exercise 10.3

This interactive exercise identifies the importance of social workers tolerating ambiguity in practice and being able to practice in uncertain situations.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways does a sound knowledge of a variety of theoretical frameworks demonstrate a commitment to social work values?
2. Who can you ask to help you sort through ethical decisions and dilemmas?
3. How will you balance the values of client self-determination and the protection of vulnerable populations?
4. What does it mean if your personal values and ethics differ from the NASW **Code of Ethics** in specific practice situations?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Read and study the NASW **Code of Ethics** in relation to situations in your agency.
- If members of other professions (e.g., psychologists, nurses, or teachers) work in your practicum setting or in the service delivery system of which your agency is a part, secure a copy of their profession's code of ethics and compare it to the NASW **Code of Ethics**.
- Interview experienced social workers and ask them to describe the ethical issues they most often encounter and the issues that are especially difficult for them to resolve.
- Review your agency's policy manual and identify policy principles that are similar to the NASW **Code of Ethics**. Identify policies that appear to be in opposition to the NASW **Code of Ethics**.

Chapter Review 10.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

References and Recommended Readings

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Chapter 11

Legal Issues

Learning Outcomes

- Apply laws that regulate and guide social work practice.
- Understand legal terminology related to social work practice.
- Articulate laws that embody social work values.
- Describe legal liability and risk management strategies.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Social Work Values and Laws That Support Them*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

- *Agency Policies to Prevent Lawsuits*

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *Legal Issues and Concerns*
- *Legal Ramifications of Practice Situations*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter provides an overview of the **legal context of the practicum and social work practice**. It presents basic **legal terminology** that impacts social work practice, examples of laws that directly affect clients and social workers, guidelines for **functioning within the laws impacting social work practice**, and suggestions for **avoiding malpractice situations**.

The legal context of social work practice is important to understand and negotiate because social work, like all professions, is guided and influenced greatly by the law. Every social service agency is shaped and guided by specific codes or legal considerations. Some agencies were formed in response to laws requiring states or the federal government to provide specific services and programs. In some cases, law defines a client's eligibility for services. In many instances, a social worker's actions are dictated by law, as in the case of mandated reporting of child abuse. Many social workers are licensed by state law and must practice in keeping with the provisions of that law.

As a practicum student, you must understand the legal context of your professional practice. You must be alert to potential actions by both you and your agency that may violate the law and recognize the types of situations that might give rise to a lawsuit against an agency, a social worker, and even a social work student. You also need to understand which laws require you to take a specific action or which laws preclude you from certain actions. Because the legal context directly impacts both social workers and clients, social workers must acquire a basic understanding of the laws, legal terminology, and legal procedures that most directly relate to their practice setting and clients served. They must become familiar with specific laws related to their practice roles, duties, and job description. You may have learned about these issues in your

courses, but in your practicum you will actually be held to legal standards.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Social workers are often involved in helping their clients, groups, or organizations negotiate or utilize the legal system. Knowing, using, and adhering to laws at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice is essential for social workers. At the **micro level of practice**, which entails working with individuals and families, this may involve the following professional skills related to laws and regulations:

- Advocating for and supporting individual clients and families in legal situations
- Securing protection for clients
- Obtaining reparations for clients
- Securing legal services for clients in need

At the **mezzo level of practice** with groups, numerous laws regulate social work practice. In mezzo-level practice with organizations, laws dictate service provision. Professional social work skills that require knowledge of laws at the mezzo level may include the following:

- Adhering to laws protecting employees and workers
- Advocating for disability accommodations for clients
- Understanding local laws and ordinances regulating or empowering informal and formal groups
- Assisting groups involved in class-action suits
- Engaging in efforts to empower groups to advocate for themselves

At the **macro level of practice**, social workers may also become involved in macro-level legal proceedings and legislative efforts. This level of

practice requires that social workers possess professional skills such as the following:

- Drafting and promoting new laws or amendments to current social policies
- Providing legislative testimony on the impact of social policies on clients
- Encouraging clients' involvement in social policies that impact their lives
- Promoting civic engagement and voter registration efforts

Self-Check 11.1

Social Work Values and Laws That Support Them

Inherent in laws impacting both clients and social work practice are the values and beliefs of those parties who have proposed, supported, and enacted those laws. Once embodied in law, such values and beliefs are put into practice in ways that strongly impact the lives of your potential clients. These laws may have been enacted to promote social justice or to protect and ensure human rights. Such laws include those outlined in the table in this feature.

Think about the relationship between social work values and the laws in place that embody those values. Consider whether the laws with which you are familiar really do support social workers and their clients, and to what degree—and if not, why not. Social workers engaged in policy practice will need to clarify the values underlying laws that they propose and support as well as those they oppose. As you learn about the laws specific to your agency and your clients, consider which of these social work values underlie the laws you will be following or working to change.

Although it is important to understand in general terms what these laws prescribe or prohibit, it is also vital that you learn how to find, read, and abide by them by locating them in state statutes or federal laws. Research and record in the table the actual names of state or federal laws associated with the social work values listed there so that you can learn how to access and abide by laws regulating your practice.

Social Work Values	Laws Supporting Social Work Values	Title of State or Federal Law
Access to services	• Disability accommodation laws • Nondiscrimination laws	
Empowerment of vulnerable populations	• Child and adult protection laws • Consumer protection laws	
Equality in provision of services	• Equal opportunity laws • Nondiscrimination laws	
Full disclosure	• Informed consent • Privacy laws	
Least harm to clients	• Client consent to treatment • Consumer protection laws	

Social Work Values	Laws Supporting Social Work Values	Title of State or Federal Law
Privacy and confidentiality	• Privileged communication laws • Release of information laws	
Protection and safety	• Orders of protection • Duty to warn	
Quality of life	• Environmental protections • Landlord/tenant laws	
Right to quality and competent services	• Social work licensing and regulation • Consumer protection laws	

Social Work Values	Laws Supporting Social Work Values	Title of State or Federal Law
Self-determination	• Advance directives for end-of-life care • Right to refuse treatment	

Self-Check 11.2

Self-Check 11.3

Issues related to the written documentation of social work practice are important for practicum students to understand. From a legal perspective, social workers and practicum students must operate on the assumption that any of their professional records, case notes, reports, and correspondence may eventually become the target of a **subpoena**, which means these records must be given to authorities and will be reviewed by attorneys and read in court. You need to be thoughtful and cautious about what you put into a written record and how you write it, because at some point you may be asked to explain and defend your statements. Chapter 9 focuses on communication in social work practice

and provides a wealth of suggestions and guidelines on how to develop documentation skills that will protect clients, social workers, and agencies alike. Review those guidelines and consider how following them will protect you should your records be reviewed in legal contexts.

Video Application Exercise 11.1

This interactive exercise illustrates the importance of understanding and working within the court system when needed.

Because practicum students are acting in the capacity of social workers, they are held to the same **standards of practice**, laws, and ethical behavior that social workers are. For this reason, it is vital that you understand as much of the legal context of your agency as possible. It is also important to act in accordance with agency policy, professional standards, university policy, and the NASW **Code of Ethics** to provide the highest-quality services to clients while also avoiding the possibility of malpractice allegations or lawsuits. It is recommended that you obtain student **professional liability and malpractice insurance** through your university, the agency, NASW, or independently. Such insurance will cover you in lawsuits, but not if you are negligent in some way.

Because a growing number of social workers are being sued for malpractice, this possibility must be considered daily, even as a practicum student. Although it is not common for social work students to be sued for **negligence** or **malpractice**, it is possible. Social workers have been known to engage in illegal, improper, incompetent, or negligent practice. Even in cases where this is not true, clients or others may believe that

social workers have committed malpractice. Because of this potential for mistakes or intentional misbehavior, you must understand the seriousness of this arena of professional practice. Malpractice and professional negligence fall under a category of law known as tort law. A **tort** is a private or civil wrong or injury that results from actions other than the breach of a formal legal contract and the commission of a crime. For the plaintiff (e.g., a social worker's client or former client) to be successful in this type of lawsuit alleging malpractice against a defendant (e.g., the social worker or practicum student), the plaintiff's attorney must prove four points:

1. The social worker had a professional obligation or **duty to provide the plaintiff with services or care**, often outlined in an agreement or contract regarding scope of services and obligations of the social worker.
2. The social worker has a professional obligation or duty to provide the plaintiff with a **reasonable standard of care**.
3. The social worker was **negligent or derelict** in his or her professional role because he or she did not live up to this recognized obligation or duty, standard of care, or expected professional conduct.
4. The plaintiff suffered **injury, loss, or harm** (e.g., physical, mental, emotional, or financial) as a result of what the social worker did (act) or did not do (omission), and this act or omission had a foreseeable harmful consequence for the plaintiff.
5. The social worker's act or omission was a **direct or proximate cause** of the harm experienced by the plaintiff.

Self-Check 11.4

A wide variety of acts or omissions can place social workers or the agencies for which they work at risk of being sued and held liable for causing harm to their clients or to individuals harmed by their clients. **Acts** are behaviors and actions taken by social workers. **Omissions** are failures to act or abdication of professional obligations in specific situations. Both acts and omissions on the part of the social worker that could place social workers at risk include the following.

Acts That May Place Social Workers at Risk

- Dual relationships between the social worker and the client that cross professional boundaries
- Sexual or romantic involvement with a current or former client
- Misrepresentation of professional training, experience, and credentials
- Violation of client civil rights
- Violation of privacy or confidentiality, intentional or unintentional
- Misdiagnosis or use of harmful, inappropriate, or ineffective interventions
- Engaging in illegal activity related to client services
- Fraudulent billing or misrepresentation of self and services

Omissions and Dereliction of Duty That May Place Social Workers at Risk

- Failure to clearly outline duties and responsibilities of the social worker and the client
- Failure to warn others when clients threaten and disclose clear intent to inflict serious physical harm on someone
- Failure to alert others when a client discloses intent to harm self
- Failure to attempt to prevent a client's suicide
- Failure to provide needed treatment to a client or premature release, termination, or abandonment of the client
- Failure to maintain and protect confidentiality
- Failure to maintain accurate professional records and proper accounting of client fees, payments, and reimbursements by third-party payers
- Failure to refer clients to other services or professionals when indicated
- Failure to protect a client from harm caused by other clients, the program, or the facility
- Failure to report suspected or confirmed abuse, neglect, or exploitation

Self-Check 11.5

Although all practice situations have the potential for lawsuits, a number of high-risk situations must be recognized to better manage the chance for lawsuits. Certain clients may place social workers and agencies at a higher risk of being sued. These clients and situations may include the following:

- Clients with complex and intense needs requiring social workers to provide highly technical and competent services
- Clients who are a real physical danger to others
- Clients who have been separated from their children because of actions taken by the social worker or agency (e.g., foster care placement and custody evaluations)
- Clients at risk for self-harm or suicide
- Clients who are very suspicious of others and quick to blame and accuse others of some wrongdoing
- Clients with a history of alleging malpractice and negligence and bringing suits against various professionals
- Clients who are very manipulative and deceptive

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

As you begin to research the ways in which laws impact social workers and their clients, it will be helpful to familiarize yourself with common legal terminology that relates to social work practice. These terms are important to know, but their meaning and application to your work and your clients is what is most important so that you can abide by the laws that the terminology describes. The definitions of legal terms that you will need to know are listed in **Table 11.1**.

Table 11.1 **Legal Terminology for Social Work**

Term	Definition and Application to Social Work Practice
Least harm	Some practice situations require that a social worker make a decision that involves several less than perfect choices. Sometimes there are two “bad” choices. The principle of least harm means that the social worker considers the impact or consequences of each choice, and then tries to choose the path that causes the least harm to the client or others involved.
Malfeasance	Behavior or treatment by a social worker that is harmful, negative, and perhaps negligent or derelict. Such unprofessional behavior is below the standards of the profession and is hurtful to the client.
Malpractice	Negative, harmful, or negligent behavior that is subject to lawsuits from clients because it involved malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance.
Misfeasance	Situations in which social workers do not practice well, but do not intend to do harm. This could include social workers practicing beyond their skill level or not recognizing the need for services.

Term	Definition and Application to Social Work Practice
Negligence	Failure to use thoughtful, carefully considered and proper interventions with clients. In lawsuits against social workers, clients must prove that the social worker's negligence actually resulted in harm to them.
Nonfeasance	Ethical or legal failure on the part of a social worker to act when clients need action, support, or services. This could result in negative outcomes for the client, including such serious acts as suicide.
Proximate cause	The causal relationship between harm to a client and a social worker's action or inaction. In malpractice situations, clients must prove that a social workers' action or inaction resulted in harm to them.
Prudent practice	The concept that professionals should provide services that are reasonable, considered to be logical and effective by the profession, and would be seen as good choices by the general public. Engaging in prudent practice may provide some protection in lawsuits.

Term	Definition and Application to Social Work Practice
Standard of care/practice	The expectation within a profession about what services should be provided, and to what minimum standards. Adhering to a standard of care reduces legal risk.

Self-Check 11.6

Make a special effort to become familiar with the laws relevant to your practicum setting, including the laws that regulate the services your agency provides and the laws that regulate professional social work practice. Depending on the nature and purpose of your agency, you may need to become familiar with federal and state codes, and sometimes local ordinances, that apply to your clients and the services your agency provides. Such laws affect your clients' lives both directly and indirectly. For example, you may need to understand laws pertaining to the following areas when you engage in micro-level practice with individuals and families:

- Marriage, parenthood, divorce, and child custody
- Abuse of children, intimate partners, or elders including termination of parental rights
- Guardianship, conservatorship, power of attorney, and durable power of attorney for health care
- Involuntary detaining of persons with mental illness or who are a threat to self or others

- Parental notification regarding services provided to minors
- Adult and juvenile adjudication, probation, and parole
- Crime victim assistance
- Immigration and refugee status
- Family planning, reproductive rights, and abortion
- Disability accommodation
- Discrimination in employment and housing
- Confidentiality in health and mental health settings
- Reporting of contagious diseases and public health hazards
- Personal debt and bankruptcy
- Restorative justice

Social work supervisors and administrators working at the mezzo or macro level of practice with organizations and communities will need a basic understanding of laws related to such issues as employee matters and financial management. As a practicum student, it is likely that you will only be able to observe the administration of your agency; nevertheless, laws that impact your agency are an important part of the context of providing quality services and of maintaining good employees and employee relations. Watch for opportunities to learn about laws pertaining to the following areas:

- Hiring and dismissal of employees
- Employee compensation and benefits
- Contracts, leases, and rental agreements
- Property and liability insurance
- Worker's compensation and unemployment insurance
- Employee unions
- Financial recordkeeping
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Restrictions on political action and lobbying by public employees
- Sexual harassment

- Drug-free workplaces
- Affirmative action
- Whistleblowing in cases of alleged ethics violations or mistreatment of clients
- Mediation processes for individuals, groups, and organizations

Agency Policies to Prevent Lawsuits

Agency policy and procedure manuals generally describe standards of care and services owed to, and expected by, the client. An agency places itself at higher legal risk when it has an official policy that is not or cannot be regularly followed by its employees. Agencies and malpractice insurance will not protect social workers who do not abide by the policies of their agency, especially if this results in harm to clients. The best way to avoid becoming involved in a malpractice lawsuit, including a frivolous complaint, is to be proactive in learning and acting on the following guidelines. Discuss each of these with your agency field instructor and ask if any lawsuits have been brought against the agency or social workers that you should be aware of. Inquire if there are additional recommendations and guidelines you should follow.

- Read the NASW **Code of Ethics** regularly and abide by its guidelines.
- Adhere to agency policy, procedure, and protocol.
- Make every effort to practice competently and avoid situations beyond your level of competence.
- Utilize supervision regularly to ensure that your techniques are legal, ethical, and therapeutically sound.
- Recognize situations involving high legal risk.
- Consult with your agency's legal counsel whenever confronted with troublesome or confusing legal issues or questions.
- Obtain malpractice insurance if your agency does not provide it for you.
- Avoid dual relationships with clients.

- Protect client confidentiality and inform clients about the limits of confidentiality.
- Maintain up-to-date, accurate, and complete client records that are free of hearsay and judgmental language.
- Obtain written permission from clients to release information about them to others.
- Document any client complaints or grievances, and the steps you took to resolve them.
- Understand and abide by laws pertaining to privileged communication for social workers in your state.
- Abide by all mandatory reporting laws requiring you to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- Abide by duty to warn principles when third parties are threatened.
- Refer clients to other professionals and programs when you are unable to provide the services they require and document your efforts to make a referral.

You are not likely to become entangled in a malpractice lawsuit if you follow the guidelines described here, so do not let concerns over legal risk and malpractice keep you from learning or acting in the best interests of your clients. At the same time, you must be careful to avoid legal consequences. Adhere to what would be considered **reasonable, customary, and prudent practice** by an average citizen, a jury, or a judge. The actions you take on behalf of clients must be fair, in good faith, and in keeping with how other professionals would tend to act. This will provide you with some level of protection in lawsuits even if negative outcomes occur. If you need clarification in any specific area, seek guidance and consultation from your social work supervisor and/or agency legal counsel.

Some settings recognize that social workers commonly appear in court. If social workers in your agency often appear in court, request the opportunity to observe their court testimony. Determine their role and function in court, how they prepare for a court appearance, what types of questions they are asked by attorneys and how they respond, what written documents they provide the court, and if their recommendations tend to be followed by judges. Give special thought to legal and ethical issues that may arise when social workers advocate for their clients, when they are asked to participate in involuntary treatment of clients, and when they must testify on behalf of one client and against another. Learn about social workers who testify as expert witnesses and what is required of them. If social workers in your agency are not routinely involved in court proceedings, seek the opportunity to observe this activity within another agency setting. Although you are a student and will probably not testify in court, observing and learning from the experiences of those who do will prove invaluable to you.

Self-Check 11.7

Self-Check 11.8

Video Application Exercise 11.2

This interactive exercise shows how a social worker engaged in prudent practice that helped him when faced with a malpractice suit.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about legal issues into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of legal guidelines in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for the legal aspects of professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Legal Issues and Concerns

The following questions are designed to heighten your awareness of the legal context of social work practice and the legal considerations that are relevant to your practicum agency. Discuss these questions and issues with your agency field instructor and with experienced social workers in your agency. Your agency may also have a legal department and staff attorneys who can respond to your questions and explain legal principles.

1. Is eligibility for your agency's services defined by law? If so, which statutes, legal rules, and regulations are used to determine who is eligible and who is not?

2. Are certain individuals legally required or mandated to obtain services from your agency (e.g., those on probation and subject to court-ordered treatment or those whose children are in foster care)? If so, which specific statutes apply to these individuals and situations?

3. Do those individuals who are pressured to make use of your agency have a right to refuse to participate? If so, do they face any potential consequences for that action?

4. Is your agency licensed by the state (e.g., a child placing agency, a residential center for youth)? If yes, identify the specific license(s) and the laws and regulations that apply to these licensures.

5. Which outside agencies or organizations (e.g., governmental agencies, accrediting bodies, and citizen review boards) are authorized to interview staff about their practices and review the records kept by your agency (e.g., client records, client services, and financial records)?

6. Does your agency have malpractice insurance that provides employees with legal defense against allegations of wrongdoing and/or pay the assessed damages if found guilty? If so, which limitations and restrictions apply (e.g., must the employee be following agency policy and behave in an ethical manner before he or she be covered by the insurance policy)?

7. What are the possible legal consequences for a social worker who takes action that conflicts with or violates the

agency's written policy?

8. Has the agency or any staff member been sued for negligence or malpractice? If yes, what was the nature of the allegation(s) and the outcome of the lawsuit(s)?

Legal Ramifications of Practice Situations

Read the following practice situations that have potential legal ramifications depending on how they are handled. Although not all of them may apply to your practicum setting, many could arise in your agency. Identify in writing what the legal ramifications could be for you and your agency if handled inappropriately. In addition, record what your agency's policy is in regard to each practice situation listed.

Practice Situations	Legal Ramifications and Agency Policy
A client who may not be mentally competent to make legal, medical, or financial decisions	
A minor client in need of services and whose parents may or may not be informed	
A client who puts himself or herself at risk by refusing or withdrawing from treatment	
A client known to have or suspected of having committed a serious crime	
A client who has been ordered to receive services from your agency	
A client who has lied, withheld information, or falsified an application to become eligible for benefits or services	

Practice Situations	Legal Ramifications and Agency Policy
A client who states the intention to bring a lawsuit against a social worker or agency	
How to proceed when a client asks to read or copy the records in his or her case file	
How to obtain a client's permission to release records to your agency or another one	
When and how to report suspected child or elder abuse or neglect	
How to obtain a client's informed consent to participate in programs and receive services	
How to handle and record the offer of gifts from a client	

Practice Situations	Legal Ramifications and Agency Policy
How to respond to a subpoena for client records or to be a witness in a trial or court action	

Video Application Exercise 11.3

This interactive exercise describes recommended procedures when dealing with subpoenas for information or for court appearances.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways can the likelihood of malpractice allegations be reduced if the selection of interventions meet NASW standards for appropriate interventions?
2. How do the concepts of social work effectiveness and negligence relate to the concepts of human rights and social justice?
3. How might the experiences of diverse clients lead them to view the legal aspects of intervention differently from you?
4. How will you use supervision and consultation with other professionals to help you maintain legal standards of practice?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Examine your agency's policy manual and identify policies that refer to the need for staff to conform to specific legal codes or requirements.
- Identify situations in which there might be a conflict between what is required by the NASW **Code of Ethics** and the requirements of a specific state or federal law.
- Observe court proceedings, especially ones in which your agency is involved.
- Determine whether your agency has a staff attorney. If so, familiarize yourself with the legal services provided by the attorney to staff social workers.

Chapter Review 11.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 12

Planned Change Process

Learning Outcomes

- Utilize the stages of the planned change process.
- Understand the principles of each phase of the planned change process.
- Apply orienting/explanatory theories to the planned change process.
- Apply practice theories and models to the planned change process.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

- *Characteristics and Contexts Impacting Planned Change*

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

- *Questions About Change*

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

- *Evidence-Based Practice*
- *Planned Change Process*

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter presents the **planned change process**, which is the central approach of social work at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. **Guidelines and considerations** for engaging in planned change are offered. The **phases of the planned change process** are described. Conceptual frameworks guiding social work practice are defined and described, including **professional perspectives, explanatory/orienting theories, and practice theories/models. Principles of each phase of the planned change process** are presented as guides for engaging in the full process.

Fundamentally, the practice of social work is about the **process of planned change**. Social workers take deliberate and specific steps to encourage and facilitate movement toward a certain goal. Your practicum offers an excellent opportunity to observe and critically examine the values, beliefs, ethical principles, theories, and knowledge base that guide social workers' efforts to bring about a desired change at any level of practice. Of course, interventions do not always go as planned, for a number of reasons. In such cases, a plan that allows for adaptations based on additional information gained as the plan proceeds, on changes in client situations, and on shifts in motivation has a reasonable chance for success.

Not all agencies, including your practicum agency, will use the term "planned change process." They may instead use the terms "treatment plan" and "intervention plan." Regardless of whether they use the planned change process terminology, they all engage in the phases of planned change, including (1) **engagement**, (2) **assessment**, (3) **intervention**, and (4) **evaluation/termination**. All social service agencies are committed to and structured around deep-seated beliefs about how clients, families, organizations, communities, or broad social

conditions change. During your practicum, you will identify the assumptions about change that are embedded in your agency's programs and policies as well as in its various approaches to practice. You will identify your own beliefs about how, why, and under what circumstances desirable change by individuals, families, small groups, organizations, and communities is possible and probable. In addition, work to integrate the theories and models you learned in the classroom into your practicum experiences, guided by the content of this chapter.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Planned change at all levels, including the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, is the central focus of social work. Social workers assist clients, families, and communities to make changes that will improve their lives and to change the conditions and social policies that impact their lives. Planned change is intentional, structured through the four phases of the planned change process (i.e., engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation), and based on orienting theories and practice models. With this process, potential issues and changes are anticipated, and specific approaches and techniques are used at each stage. The change being considered varies a great deal, and sometimes it is desired by clients and sometimes not. Perhaps the change means an individual, family, organization, or community should do something new. At other times, the change requires a client to stop engaging in behavior or at the mezzo level for a program a program to be discontinued for some reason. Change might be imposed on and required of clients who might be resistant, and failure to change could result in negative consequences. Change may be significant and striking in its scope, but it might also be small and incremental as a precursor to larger-scale change.

As a student, you may wonder if you will know how to assess clients and situations, and you may wonder how you will determine which interventions to implement. You probably wonder how social workers determine what should be done and how to actually design an intervention that results in meaningful change. It should be helpful to you to know that social workers use a process comprised of four phases that guides them and their clients toward the desired change. That process is discussed throughout this chapter.

The use of the term "planned" is not meant to suggest that planned interventions always result in desired outcomes. Many positive and negative factors and variables influence the process itself and the outcomes. Because clients and communities are in constant interaction with their wider social environments, and because these clients and social environments are in a state of constant flux, social work interventions are more dynamic than the term "planned" might suggest.

Social work at all of levels of practice, whether the client is an individual or a community, typically moves through the phases of planned change, which are listed and described in **Table 12.1**. This table also provides the guiding principles of each phase.

Table 12.1 **Phases and Principles of the Planned Change Process**

Engagement

Description: Social workers at all levels of practice engage with clients and client systems to establish effective working relationships that form the basis for effective assessment, intervention, and evaluation of planned change.

- A positive working relationship is necessary to engage in the planned change process.
- The better the engagement, the more accurate and comprehensive the assessment.
- Effective engagement can help make the intervention a partnership.
- Professional perspectives are used in the engagement phase (e.g., strengths, diversity).

Assessment

Engagement

Description: Social workers gather, sort, and interpret information related to client or client system functioning (including strengths and needs); identify goals and objectives; and develop intervention plans based on client input and an understanding of orienting/explanatory theories.

- Assessment begins early in the planned change process, but continues throughout the intervention as additional information emerges.
- Good assessments require a variety of tools and sources of information.
- Clients are the experts on their lives, so their perspective is integral to assessment.
- Clients' values, perceptions, and preferences are paramount in goal setting.
- Orienting theories that explain and describe the behavior and development of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities are used in this phase.

Intervention

Engagement

Description: Social workers implement intervention plans, monitor progress of planned change efforts, and adapt intervention plans as necessary to achieve desired change.

- Intervention plans are directly derived from assessment data.
- Intervention plans have broad goals and specific objectives.
- Intervention plans are reasonable, feasible, ethical, and client-centered.
- Client strengths identified in the assessment are used to address problems in the intervention.
- Intervention plans are adapted as needed and when circumstances change.

Termination and Evaluation

Description: Social workers evaluate effectiveness of intervention plans toward desired change using a variety of measures, terminate the planned change process when appropriate, and incorporate the results into future planned change processes.

- Termination may be at the discretion of the client or the agency.
- Both client and social work definitions of success and effectiveness are included.
- Evaluation of intervention is based on success in reaching goals and objectives.
- Partial success or failure of interventions can be instructive and provide insight.

Self-Check 12.1

Self-Check 12.2

Video Application Exercise 12.1

This interactive exercise demonstrates how to explain confidentiality and its limitations early in the planned change process.

The list of phases in **Table 12.1** might give you the impression that the change process is quite orderly and linear but in reality, that is seldom the case. Typically, the client and the social worker move back and forth between these phases several times during the intervention process. In addition, other parties involved in the intervention, such as extended family members, may not move through the intervention process at the same pace or with the same goals in mind. This can make the change process more complex and unpredictable. As a consequence, the knowledge that change can be uneven or unexpected needs to be taken into account because change is not always made at the pace or to the degree anticipated.

Characteristics and Contexts Impacting Planned Change

Planned change efforts do not take place in a social vacuum. In fact, social work interventions are greatly impacted by a wide variety of external factors and characteristics. These external factors may either help support interventions or undermine efforts. These factors may be resources that can be incorporated into the plan. For interventions to be effective, the contextual considerations listed here must be considered, integrated into the plans, and factored into the overall success of the intervention. After reading the numerous characteristics of clients, social workers, agencies, communities, and social policies that make up the context of any intervention, identify what you believe could be the positive and/or negative impact of each characteristic on outcomes. Articulating these possible impacts will help you think through how to take each of these characteristics into account when you design interventions.

Client Characteristics	Potential Impact on Outcomes
Definition of and meaning assigned to situation	
Goals and desires	
Personal values	
Self-awareness and insight	
Level of motivation and engagement	
Voluntary or involuntary status	
Social support available	
Issues of diversity	
Social Worker Characteristics	**Potential Impact on Outcomes**
Knowledge base	
Training and preparation	
Personal values	

Client Characteristics	Potential Impact on Outcomes
Professional values	
Level of rapport and engagement	
Ability to complete high-quality assessment	
Skill in a variety of practice models	
Agency Characteristics	**Potential Impact on Outcomes**
Agency mission	
Available programs and services	
Agency priorities	
Agency resources	
Level of cultural competence in agency	
Timeliness of services	
Use of evidence-based practices	

Client Characteristics	Potential Impact on Outcomes
Community Characteristics	**Potential Impact on Outcomes**
Community assets	
Community needs and problems	
Sense of community	
Attitudes toward and support of clients	
Community attitudes toward and support of agency	
Informal resources available to supplement agency services	
Social Policy Characteristics	**Potential Impact on Outcomes**
Laws regulating practice	
Laws mandating services	
Laws limiting or prohibiting services	

Client Characteristics	Potential Impact on Outcomes
Political context of social policy formation	
Value base of social policies	
Effectiveness of social policies in meeting client needs	

Social workers use what are called conceptual frameworks to guide practice. A **conceptual framework** is a way of organizing ideas about social work practice. Examples of conceptual frameworks are (1) professional perspectives, (2) orienting theories, and (3) practice theories or models. Conceptual framework is an umbrella term for all the concepts that provide a foundation for practice. You have learned about many conceptual frameworks in a variety of courses, but perhaps you have never truly seen how they are used purposefully and in combination in the planned change process. Your knowledge of orienting theories and practice theories may have come from separate courses that you have not yet linked together. You may not have seen how orienting theories that explain social functioning are used in the engagement and assessment phases of change. Such theories are applied to measure clients' functioning. You may not have seen how practice theories and models are chosen based on comprehensive assessments. They are used in the intervention phase of change. In the practicum, you will see how all of these theories are combined in practice with real people.

A **professional perspective** is an intentional viewing of a practice situation using a certain professional lens, which helps to clarify and magnify a specific facet of the client or client system. Using these professional lenses helps us to examine, draw attention to, and shine a light on what needs attention in any given situation. All practice situations require a **strengths perspective** to highlight strengths and resources upon which to build an intervention. An **ecosystems perspective** prompts us to consider the impact of the social environment on our clients, as well as the interactions between our clients and their social environments. A **diversity perspective** ensures that we consider the ways in which diversity of all kinds impacts a client's experience and view of that experience. A **feminist perspective** prompts social workers to pay attention to the gender aspects of life and social functioning, including experiences of discrimination. Note that a perspective is not a theory, and that it does not tell a social worker what to do. It is very important, however, to train yourself to look for strengths, impact of diversity, and the interactions between clients and their social environment because missing something related to any of these aspects of clients' lives can undermine each phase of the planned change process.

Orienting/explanatory theories contribute to a social worker's body of knowledge about how individuals, families, groups, communities, and societies develop and change over time. They often build on and synthesize the social and behavioral sciences such as psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. Such theories attempt to explain human behavior, human development, social forces that shape human experiences, and political contexts and economic systems that impact individuals, families, and communities. Although necessary to good practice because they help us understand what might be happening and why, these theories do not provide guidance on how to facilitate planned change. The Appendix summarizes the major orienting theories used at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice, providing a short

description and example of each theory. Make sure that you understand each of these theories, at least in general terms, because they will enhance your ability to conduct comprehensive, holistic, and accurate assessments that focus on important facets of your clients.

Self-Check 12.3

Practice theories and models are those that offer specific guidelines about how to intervene at various levels of practice. They build on orienting/explanatory theories and suggest that certain situations call for specific practice theories. As the actual approaches and techniques chosen for use in real interventions, practice theories and models build on the information obtained in the assessment stage, addressing the problems and issues identified in that stage. Ideally, they should be chosen based on client preference, and should also be based on evidence and research that have identified their relevance in specific practice situations. The Appendix lists commonly used practice theories/models, along with practice examples at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. Understanding the basics of each of these models will give you a broad understanding of your choices of practice models with clients.

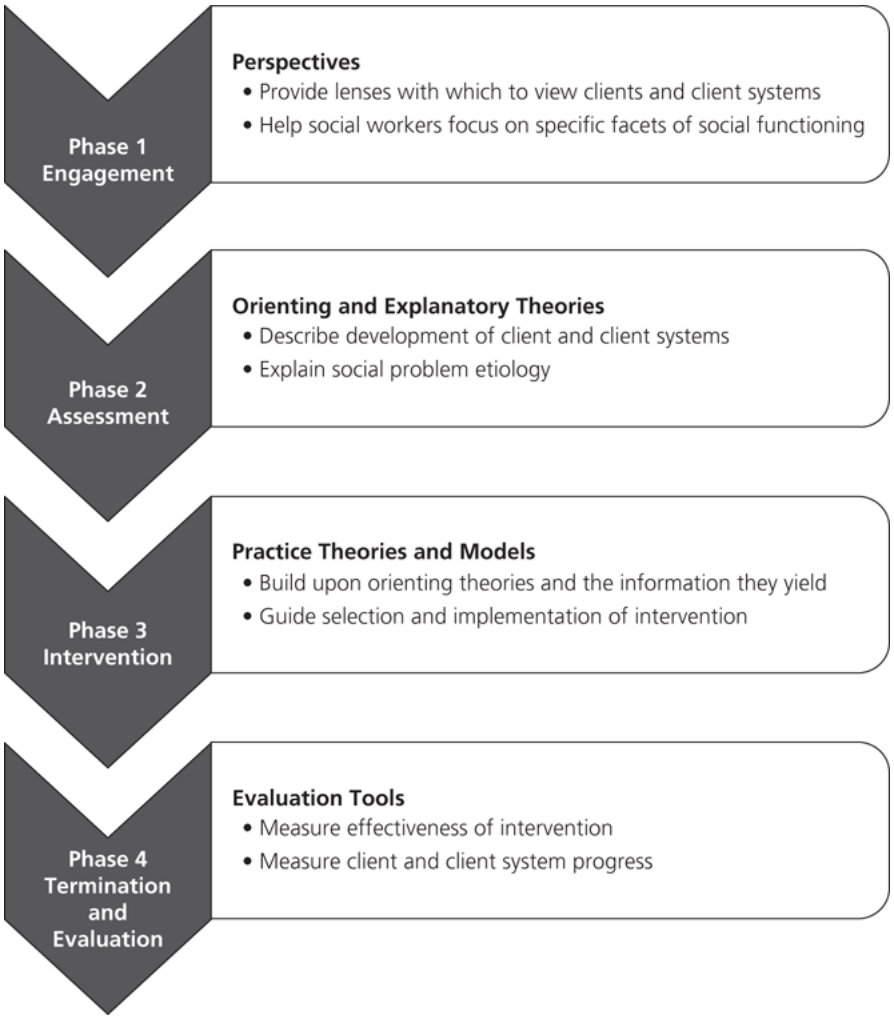
Self-Check 12.4

Self-Check 12.5

Self-Check 12.6

Figure 12.1 shows the relationship between the conceptual frameworks just described, including professional perspectives, orienting/explanatory theories, practice theories/models, and actual interventions. The blending of these conceptual frameworks and others is done in any effective planned change process that is based on social work knowledge, theory, evidence-based practice, best practices, and social work values. Make sure you understand when and how various conceptual frameworks are applied in the planned change process, because social workers must use a sound theoretical foundation for their practice. Failure to use well-tested theories and evidence-based practice theories does not meet the standard for high-quality services to clients.

Figure 12.1 Planned Change Process



Based on this diagrammatic representation of how conceptual frameworks are used to design effective, theory-based, and individualized intervention plans, several practice examples are included in the Appendix. Review these examples of (1) micro-level situations with individuals and families, (2) mezzo-level examples with groups and organizations, and (3) macro-level examples with communities and social policy.

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

It is important to identify the practice frameworks (i.e., perspectives, orienting theories, and practice theories/models) used in your agency. These frameworks influence how your agency designs its programs and services and how it works with clients. Determine why these particular practice frameworks are appropriate and most effective for the clients served by your agency. Consider what your agency's choice of practice frameworks reveals about the agency's beliefs and assumptions concerning the causes of personal and social problems, how and why clients and client systems change, and which actions are most likely to facilitate change. Learn how the agency measures success, and ask about the importance it places on identifying and using client strengths.

Your practicum agency will expect you to use the regularly utilized forms of intervention engaged in by other social workers and will train you in these approaches. Do your best to learn the skills required to implement these interventions, remembering that many of these skills can be generalized and transferred to another setting even if that organization takes a different approach to intervention. Over time, you will see how interventions, even though they may seem similar for several clients, are customized based on individual needs and goals. As you grow in experience and confidence, your ability to craft appropriate interventions will increase.

Refer again to the four phases of the planned change process, and carefully consider in more depth your role in each phase. As you become involved in the **engagement** phase of planned change, it is incumbent upon you to use a variety of proposed perspectives. During this phase,

social workers use **following techniques** to engage clients in the initial phases of the helping relationship, and to involve clients enough that they will begin to trust the social worker and participate somewhat openly in the planned change process. This includes the skills of rapport-building, active listening, open-ended questions, and partnering to build a strong initial professional relationship. This first phase of planned change will require you to learn how to use yourself as the tool for change, as the next three stages of planned change hinge on your ability to connect in a meaningful way with your client. These are discussed in Chapter 9, Communication, in additional detail.

Video Application Exercise 12.2

This interactive exercise shows how the use of empathy to connect with clients can lead to accurate assessments.

In the **assessment** phase of planned change, whether you are assessing a client's functioning, a community's capacity to serve its citizens, an organization's ability to provide services, or a social policy's ability to address the needs of a group of people, following are some general guidelines which can help you perform a thorough and effective assessment. As in the engagement phase, you will continue to use following skills (e.g., active listening, building rapport, open-ended questions, prompts, and use of empathy) in the assessment phase, as you are still working to form a positive relationship as you conduct an assessment. Make sure to assess for strengths as well as problems and to use assessment tools that are effective and appropriate. Include the client in the assessment process. Prioritize the identified needs to maximize your effectiveness. Consider the impact of diversity on your interventions.

Pay attention to any ethical and legal issues related to assessment. Ask yourself what value judgments you might be making. Consider the sociohistorical context of your client or client system. Continually ask yourself what else you might need to know to develop a comprehensive assessment upon which an effective intervention can be built.

As you design **interventions** from the micro level to the macro level, certain guidelines for effective interventions will be of help to you and your clients. First, use **furthering techniques** to promote change, increase insight and motivation, challenge clients, and help them make progress. Such techniques include reflection, confrontation, interpretation, paraphrasing, reframing, and summarizing. These furthering techniques are discussed in additional detail in Chapter 9, Communication. In addition, ensure that the intervention plan addresses both strengths and needs, is built upon as comprehensive an assessment as possible, and is feasible and reasonable for both the client and the social worker. The plan should be mutually developed by the client and the social worker, based on a theory of change that matches the client's needs, and within the social worker's knowledge base and skill level. Remember that your intervention may need to be modified at some point. Make sure that the plan has incremental steps and reasonable goals. Plan for how you will terminate the helping relationship and evaluate the outcomes. Do what you can to minimize negative effects on clients, avoid being overly intrusive into your clients' lives, address important issues of diversity, and include a timeline and termination plan.

As you enter the **termination and evaluation** phase of the planned change process, you may be ending the process for several reasons. For example, there may have been a predetermined length of service, or perhaps the client may have wished to terminate early or needed to do so for various reasons. Ideally, termination will have been anticipated and structured in a positive way. No matter how an intervention ends, it

needs to be evaluated for effectiveness. Consider how to design evaluations for your interventions. This is the time to measure the outcomes of the intervention in relation to the goals and objectives that were identified in the assessment and intervention phases. The profession of social work is rightfully asked to hold itself accountable and to demonstrate its ability to address social issues in effective and efficient ways. Chapter 15 describes the numerous ways to evaluate practice, so refer to it as you engage in interventions.

Social workers are expected to use **evidence-based practice**, which means that they need to base their interventions on empirical evidence whenever possible and engage in proactive program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of services provided. Such research on practice often leads to the identification of **best practices**, which refers to practices that the profession considers to be ideal approaches for specific clients based on its values and research on what is effective, what is in the best interests of clients, and what clients wish for themselves. Learn to research evidence-based and best practices in your field so that you can pattern your work after them. Although using evidence-based practice allows social workers to have confidence that their interventions will work, they must still measure the effectiveness of evidence-based practice with their specific clients, because these approaches may or may not work with your clients for one reason or another.

Self-Check 12.7

Self-Check 12.8

Become sophisticated in your analysis of claims that specific models of practice are evidence-based or considered best practices. Look beyond

those claims to the actual research supporting them. Sometimes the research shows that a model is a best practice for one type of client, but not for another. The ability to perform this kind of analysis will help you be more discriminating and to refrain from using inappropriate approaches. A model or approach is only a best practice if it is a best practice for your particular client, family, group, organization, or community.

In addition to seeking out research-guided practice, recognize that there is no substitute for knowing your client well enough to know if a model would work for that particular client. Also, clients have the right to know how well supported a particular model is supported by empirical research so they can choose whether to become involved. Chapter 15 provides a more detailed description of the varied levels of quality practice, and it will help you determine where your agency's services fall on the continuum of quality.

Questions About Change

Ideally, your practicum experience will provide you with opportunities to function as a generalist at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Your agency may work primarily at one level, so it will be up to you to seek out learning experiences that will prepare you as broadly as possible. Even if you work at the micro level, you will no doubt see that it is imperative to understand how larger social systems and environments impact your work with individuals and families. For example, your work with immigrants will be deeply impacted by community attitudes toward diversity and laws about access to services depending on legal status. Not understanding the impact of these factors will reduce the effectiveness of your work. In addition, your macro-level work to change social policies must be informed by the daily lives of clients as well as the capacity of local communities and states to comply with or fund social policies. For example, a federal law mandating that all public schools measure student learning through standardized testing and then receive funding based on student scores may not recognize the community factors that contribute to student scores. Such characteristics could include a lower tax base, the socioeconomic level of students and families, and the challenges involved in attracting and supporting qualified teachers.

Ask yourself the following questions as a social worker at all levels of practice. Select a case or intervention at one level of practice that you are involved with. Using that intervention, answer the questions about how that intervention is impacted at all levels of practice and context. But don’t stop there,

however. Think about how the social problem you are addressing could also be addressed at another level.

Questions to Ask Yourself About Micro-Level Planned Change

- What are the reasons that clients change?
- What is the role of internal motivation, and how can it be acquired and enhanced?
- What is the role of external motivation, and how can external forces be used to facilitate change?
- What is the importance of readiness and capacity to change?
- What is the impact of the larger social environment on clients' opportunity to change?
- How much impact does voluntary versus involuntary involvement have on change?
- How does the acquisition of personal assets for social functioning help clients change?
- How can we know if the change made during an intervention will be maintained over time?

Questions to Ask Yourself About Mezzo-Level Planned Change

- In what ways can group interventions be effective that individual interventions cannot?
- Which types of groups are suitable for particular client needs and problems?
- How does an understanding of group dynamics help guide planned change?
- What is the role of capacity building in organizational change?
- What types of organizational structures lend themselves to ongoing change?
- How can a learning organization help itself grow and change proactively?

Questions to Ask Yourself About Macro-Level Planned Change

- What role do community problems and assets play in planned change?
- Which social conditions tend to provide the impetus for community change?
- What is the role of social capital in achieving positive community change?
- How does an understanding of social problems lead to sound social policy?
- In what ways does policy practice impact individuals and families?
- How does macro-level change help to support micro- and mezzo-level change?

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about the planned change process into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of the planned change process in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for professional practice using the planned change process. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Evidence-Based Practice

Select an intervention in which you are or have been involved in, and research the evidence on a variety of approaches to intervening in situations such as this. Use the following sources of information to determine which approaches are commonly used in similar situations, and which could be considered evidence-based or best practices.

Your agency field instructor

Your faculty supervisor

Journal articles you have found to support particular approaches to practice

National databases or clearinghouses that collect and disseminate research evidence

Governmental sources that fund research on models and disseminate their findings

Lists of best practices proposed by social service organizations at the state or federal level

Planned Change Process

This activity will help demonstrate that you understand the phases of the planned change process and know which tools to use at each phase. Select a client or client system in your agency with which you are familiar. This example can be at the micro, mezzo, or macro level of intervention. Complete a flowchart resembling those in the Appendix and describe which perspectives, orienting theories, practice models, and evaluation tools should be used for this planned change process. Using the lists of theories presented in this chapter, refer to the examples in the Appendix. Share and discuss this product with your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor.

Video Application Exercise 12.3

This interactive exercise Illustrates how to provide clients with the information on treatment options they need to make informed choices.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What practice models are most commonly used with the clients of your agency, and how are they rooted in research?
2. How can a complete understanding of the context of social work practice help promote social and economic justice?
3. Which ethical principles do you believe to be most central to the choice of an intervention? Would your clients agree?
4. Which NASW cultural competence standards should be met when developing intervention plans with diverse clients?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Examine the data-gathering and assessment tools and instruments used in your agency.
- Ask social workers or other professionals in your agency to identify the perspectives and theories that guide their practice. Ask why those frameworks are preferred over other possibilities.
- Identify the beliefs, values, and assumptions implicit in the perspectives, theories, and models used in your agency.
- Ask social workers or other professionals in your agency to describe how they and the agency determine whether they are being effective in their work with clients.
- In the **Encyclopedia of Social Work** (Mizrahi and Davis, 2010), read chapters on the various practice frameworks used in your agency and by social work professionals.
- Refer to the **Social Workes' Desk Reference** (Corcoran and Roberts, 2015) to see which interventions are recommended in certain situations.

Chapter Review 12.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 13

Diversity in Social Work Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Understand what a diversity perspective is and how it is developed and used in practice.
- Understand the centrality of diverse experiences and identities to clients and communities.
- Recognize the responsibility of social workers to address injustice based on diversity.
- Apply a diversity perspective and culturally appropriate interventions in work with clients and organizations.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

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Belief Barriers to Cultural Competence

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Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on a **diversity perspective in social work practice**, including its definition, the centrality of diverse identities and experiences in the lives of clients and communities, and cultural competence and its importance in social work practice. Emphasis is placed on the diverse experiences, identities, and belief systems of both clients and social workers, including the impact of these factors on interventions. The domains of social worker–client relationships that are impacted by diversity are discussed, as well as the **common misinterpretations** of difference. The challenge of engaging in **lifelong efforts to achieve cultural competence** is presented. **Guidelines for effective practice** with diverse clients and within diverse communities are provided. Much of this content will have been included in courses you have taken prior to beginning your practicum, but in practicum you will be asked to apply these ideas with actual clients who may be very different from you.

Social workers and social services agencies are challenged to find ways to balance the value of diversity with the concept of universal human development. They must be capable of recognizing, respecting, and accommodating differences, while at the same time treating all clients with fairness and equality under the law. Agencies must be thoughtful and fair in making decisions about who is eligible for the services they offer and how best to allocate limited resources. They must avoid discrimination based on all forms of diversity. Meeting these important goals and responsibilities is an enormous undertaking requiring dedication, education, practice, and a commitment to ensuring human rights and fighting discrimination.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Although you have learned the foundational concepts of working with diverse people and communities at all levels of practice, you are certainly aware that not all people are alike and will not necessarily be helped if you use the same approaches for everyone. Professional relationships with people very different from you in terms of culture, age, gender, religion, political affiliation, or ability may be challenging to establish. Instead of thinking of diversity as an exception to the rule in practice, it is more helpful and meaningful to **think of diversity as the norm**. Indeed, every encounter with a client or community is actually a cross-cultural interaction because of the diversity of background, experience, belief systems, identity, and culture experienced by both the client and the social worker. Thinking about social work in that way is recommended, because a **diversity perspective** will always be needed in this field. A perspective, as you have learned, is a professional way of viewing clients and communities that pays attention to and shines a light on specific facets of those clients and communities. Unless you train yourself to apply certain vital professional lenses to understand and work with diverse clients, you will undoubtedly miss important pieces of information and misinterpret interactions and behaviors, leading you to design interventions that are not appropriate and perhaps even harmful. Taking a diversity perspective ensures that social workers pay close attention to the ways in which difference has influenced and continues to influence the lives, choices, options, and worldviews of those whom they serve.

Taking a diversity perspective requires focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of diverse experiences. Thus, it is built into all four phases of the planned change process: (1) engagement, (2) assessment,

(3) intervention, and (4) termination and evaluation. Every time clients and social workers engage with each other, differences related to those diverse experiences will come into play and have the potential to influence all phases of the planned change process. It is vital to understand that cultural differences may at times emerge as the most important factors to the success of the professional relationship. These differences may be more impactful than other components of that relationship such as client motivation, social worker genuineness, client ability, and social worker skills. Knowing this, all social workers must develop the professional ability to acknowledge, appreciate, and bridge all forms of differences.

Video Application Exercise 13.1

This interactive exercise outlines the ways that social workers can provide culturally sensitive services while continuously learning about cultural differences.

Making social work practice with diverse people and communities even more challenging and interesting is the reality that there is **diversity within diversity**. For example, not all older adults are limited in their functioning, not all Native Americans are traditional in their customs, not all members of a sexual minority feel safe revealing their identity or manner of expression, religious beliefs vary widely among those of a particular faith, and persons with physical or mental limitations may or may not want accommodations. As a consequence, you must not stereotype individuals because they belong to a specific group, but rather seek to understand how membership in that group influences them individually.

It is no easy task to view people simultaneously as individuals with diverse experiences or identity and as unique individuals who do not wish to be defined by such characteristics or identity. For example, you may believe that people are more alike than they are different, and that treating all clients alike is fair and reasonable. Although people certainly share many human characteristics, needs, and desires, adopting these beliefs fails to recognize the importance and centrality of diversity to the human experience. This may cause you to overlook unique aspects of a client's background and the powerful impact of minority status.

Moreover, although all people have much in common and everyone should be treated equitably in social work practice, it is also true that people have significant differences, which can greatly affect social work practice. In that vein, social workers must also acknowledge the importance and centrality of universality in the human experience. A balance between treating diverse people equally and yet individually based on their differences is not easy to achieve, but remains an important goal. All people are entitled to be treated equally, but ignoring the differences between people can be dismissive of the centrality of culture to your clients. Viewed broadly, social workers face the challenge of ensuring both **universality** (all individuals share characteristics and are entitled to the same rights and opportunities) and **individuality** (every individual should be seen as unique). Seek to find ways to achieve this duality with clients, asking your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor to help you envision it and to put it into practice.

Schools of social work are committed to promoting diversity, working toward inclusion, upholding human rights, and supporting the lives of vulnerable people. The Council on Social Work Education (2015), the accrediting body of the social work profession, outlines the responsibilities of social workers in terms of social work competencies and behaviors, including working with diversity and difference. Social

workers identify social problems that disproportionately impact diverse groups, describe policies and attitudes that negatively impact diverse groups, and stand up against injustice, stereotyping, and injustice. In fact, the social work profession has a unique responsibility to uphold human rights, challenge injustice, and value all people.

These standards for practice clearly expect that social workers will understand the impact of diversity and how various forms of life experience intersect and influence functioning. They also require that social workers understand that, depending on one's identity and experience, clients and social workers may have lived experiences of oppression, discrimination, marginalization, privilege, or power. Those experiences will undoubtedly impact professional helping relationships. They must not only be taken into account, but also enhanced through the commitment to developing sensitivity and competence with diverse clients.

In your classes, you may have studied theoretical foundations for the practice of social work with diverse populations. Review what you have learned about the role of critical theory in race and diversity, because it challenges social workers to go beyond understanding cultural customs, history, and worldviews. Such theory pushes us into uncomfortable professional territory at times because it insists on examining the assumptions, preconceptions, and biases that we, as individuals, acquire. **Critical race theory** challenges us to delve deeply into how power and class play out in society and, therefore, influence social work practice. It encourages us to identify our own biases and assumptions, as well as those woven into service provision and social policy. Various theories of racial identity development, both for minority individuals and individuals who do not have minority status and who have experienced privilege, examine the ways in which life experiences shape our racial and cultural

identity over time. These theories demonstrate the diversity of human development, even among similar groups.

The need to engage in personal and **professional self-reflection** and **reflexive practice** was no doubt covered in your social work program in theoretical and hypothetical ways. The practicum now brings you face to face with the need to engage in these practices without defensiveness and with a level of enthusiasm for knowing that self-reflection can result in the self-awareness needed to engage with people different from you. The various theories employed in social work suggest that a diversity perspective, in combination with cross-cultural competence, constitutes a **professional stance** instead of an actual collection of knowledge or skills. Such a stance includes (1) an attitude toward learning, (2) a commitment to openness, (3) a willingness to change, (4) a true appreciation for diversity, and (5) a dedication to challenging injustice, power over others, and the violation of human rights. Taking such a stance will bear fruit in practice because it leads to learning and understanding.

Self-Check 13.1

Connecting My Experience to Yours

Sometimes it is easier to understand and empathize with the experience of others very different from us if we can connect their experience and point of view with something similar in our own lives. Using the following situations and prompts, try to think about a time when you did not feel understood, and that gap in communication and connection resulted in a negative outcome for you. Utilize this exercise to help guide your efforts to grow professionally.

- Recall a time when you shared a concern, problem, experience, or confidence in a trusted person such as a parent, teacher, friend, or counselor, but that person did not understand or respond in a positive manner.
- What did the person do or say that showed you he or she didn't understand you, put you in a category that didn't fit you, or dismissed your experience?
- What was your reaction? What did you say or do? What were your emotions?
- How did this impact the relationship between you and the other person?
- What did you learn, either positively or negatively, from this experience?
- How can that experience help you understand the reactions and responses of clients to social workers who do not understand them or do not recognize the importance of the experiences they have had?
- What can you do to avoid being that person who does not understand or try to understand?

This commitment to diversity is also in keeping with the NASW **Code of Ethics** (2018), which states that social workers are ethically expected to understand the role of culture and all forms of difference in clients' lives, educate themselves about diverse people, and develop competence in the provision of services to diverse populations. This expectation always requires the commitment of social workers, but in reality, the development of competence with diverse clients is a tremendous challenge. Some sources suggest that such competence is never truly developed, but that it is possible to work toward that goal, positing that **cultural sensitivity**, **cultural adaptation**, **cultural responsiveness**, or **cultural humility** might be more reasonable goals and reminders that social workers must continue to learn, monitor their own biases, and understand that they can never be totally competent with people very different from themselves. Reminding oneself that such professional skills are enhanced over time but may never be totally mastered is a good way to motivate continued education and self-awareness regarding difference and diversity. It is just as important to know what we do not know as it is to increase our knowledge, and it is just as important to know that we can probably never achieve **cultural neutrality** as it is to work toward nonbiased practice. We may be limited in how competent we can become, but we must keep improving.

In our pursuit of competence, we are inevitably limited by **ethnocentrism**, which is the tendency, often unconscious, to assume that one's own culture is normal and perhaps superior, and that this culture is an appropriate standard for judging the beliefs and behaviors of others. That concept is also applicable to differences between social workers and clients in terms of age, socioeconomic status, gender identity, political beliefs, religion, or mental and physical ability. We cannot avoid being ethnocentric to some degree, because our own

beliefs, values, and patterns feel natural and normal and seem rooted in common sense and our daily lives. In addition, we may not even be aware of the assumptions we make and the interactions we engage in based on these beliefs, values, and patterns.

Self-Check 13.2

Our own culture is so integral to each of us that it can be difficult to realize that there are other ways of thinking and living, and to understand fully the potential negative impact of discrimination or marginalization based on diversity. We must become aware of how our culture and our personal experience influence our thoughts, decisions, and actions in an effort to avoid misunderstanding our clients. We must recognize our tendency not to recognize and respect others' unique culture, and we may even blame clients for the failure of interventions when a lack of cultural understanding and competence on our part might instead explain the outcome.

It is also possible for social workers to engage in **unintentional discrimination**, which is usually understood as behavior rooted in denial of one's own racism or stereotypical thinking. Such a denial of our own biases precludes an honest self-assessment and may keep us from seeing our own limitations. Remember that even unintentional acts by social workers can cause harm to the client–social worker relationship.

Self-Check 13.3

If clients perceive themselves as different from others or as less powerful and more vulnerable, these perceptions have an impact on their **help-seeking behavior**, including how they expect to be treated, their level of trust in a social worker or agency, and what they consider to be a useful and relevant service or program. Nevertheless, clients' membership in a minority group does not automatically mean that they are experts on their culture, able to engage with social workers from different backgrounds, or have cultural competence themselves because of their minority status. The following client descriptors may all impact interventions, and should be taken into consideration as you learn how to work with people different from you in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics:

- Cultural history, including cultural conflict and its impact on client social functioning
- Personal experiences with stereotyping, discrimination, and oppression
- Strength of cultural identity
- Ability and desire to move between cultures and associate with diverse people
- Disparities in income, health, and opportunity
- Cumulative disadvantage over the life span due to fewer resources
- Cumulative trauma related to discrimination or oppression
- Cultural resources, assets, and resiliency factors
- Previous experience with social workers and social service programs
- Beliefs about help-seeking
- Intersectionality and impact of multiple forms of diversity in one individual or group

Taking these characteristics into account in any interaction with clients whose experiences differ from yours is likely to result in increased competence in engaging effectively, performing more accurate

assessments, designing appropriate interventions, and evaluating progress based on client input and standards.

A critical aspect of competence when working with diverse populations is the ability to identify your own thinking errors, defensiveness, emotional reactions, and resistance to learning. **Table 13.1** highlights common pitfalls for those engaged in work with diverse individuals, families, and groups. Anticipating such pitfalls and preparing yourself to deal with them will help you work toward cultural competence.

Table 13.1 **Pitfalls in Acquiring a Diversity Perspective**

Pitfall	Negative Impact	Avoiding the Pitfall
Avoid the discomfort of cross- cultural interactions	Engagement with the client is not possible	Understand and embrace discomfort as a vehicle for growth
Assume that training is sufficient	Closes off additional avenues of learning and assumes knowledge is sufficient	Think of training as the beginning of growth rather than the end
Attack, discredit, or demonize those who challenge or criticize you	Cuts off communication and raises the level of conflict	Think of challenges or criticism as necessary for growth
Dismiss others' feelings and experiences	Leads to anger and curtailed communication	Listen without dismissing or judging
Expect diverse individuals to dismiss the past	Communicates that you do not understand	Come to terms with the impact of history on the present, including your relationship

Pitfall	Negative Impact	Avoiding the Pitfall
Misinterpret emotion	Shows you do not understand that anger or hostility may be rooted in pain or fear	Work to understand and accept emotion without responding in kind or taking its expression personally
Associate primarily with those who share your beliefs and experiences	Confirms your beliefs and biases and does not challenge you to think differently	Bravely associate with people different from yourself and challenge yourself to truly listen and learn
Adopt ideas and language of diversity training without internalizing them	Limits your learning to a surface level and helps you avoid conflict or critical reflection	Commit not to become "politically correct" without personal reflection

Many of the issues related to diversity that the social work profession addresses are at their core **human rights issues** with national and international contexts. The work you will be doing in the practicum may be very personal and individual for one client or family, yet it may also be tied to the human rights issues addressed by large human rights organizations and their declarations. Recall what you have learned about commonalities between general human rights and social work values and

ethics. The profession of social work is committed to protecting the human rights of all people, and a commitment to these rights may also underlie the work of your agency. Clients who are stereotyped or discriminated against may, in effect, be denied their basic human rights. In courses about institutional discrimination, you have learned about beliefs and practices that are embedded in laws, social structures, economic systems, and governmental or organizational policy. Because institutional discrimination is often pervasive and unacknowledged, it can cause great harm to members of certain groups. Examples often given of institutional racism include policies requiring English as a primary language, those restricting access to basic services by refugees or undocumented workers, and those that disallow benefits to same-sex partners. You may recognize institutional racism and discrimination in your agency or in social policies related to some form of diversity, and your job will be to decide how to address such insights.

Self-Check 13.4

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

No doubt you will work hard to be sensitive to and respectful of differences among people. However, you may not always recognize your own biases, prejudices, or lack of knowledge regarding diverse groups. The practicum offers you an important opportunity for **self-examination, self-regulation**, and **self-correction** in terms of such personal limitations. Seek opportunities for professional growth in this area while you are a student, taking advantage of any training, experience, or exposure to clients and communities with whom you have little experience. When you encounter differences that might surprise you, puzzle you, or make you uncomfortable, remember that this is a normal reaction and that such discomfort is an indicator of your need to learn more and find ways to engage with diversity. It is common in such situations to feel defensive and perhaps judgmental without knowing or recognizing these reactions. Monitor yourself in this regard, and commit yourself to learning from these reactions rather than dismissing them, judging clients, or avoiding experiences that make you uncomfortable. Much of this can be accomplished with good supervision that allows for the free expression of ideas, asking of questions, airing of differences, and seeking understanding. Such supervision may make you more vigilant for any instances of **micro-aggressions** toward clients by yourself or your agency. Although micro-aggressions such as small slights or jokes or dismissals of others' points of view in regard to diversity might seem inconsequential, they accumulate and greatly impact the people toward whom they are targeted, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Video Application Exercise 13.2

This interactive exercise provides an example of how clients can be harmed even by people whose intentions may be good.

Recognize the positive experiences resulting from diversity or minority group status, such as ethnic pride, bilingual abilities, community solidarity, extended family cohesion, ability to endure hardship, and a strong sense of history. These experiences are strengths upon which a professional relationship and a possible intervention can be built. Do not assume that membership in a minority group has only negative implications. However, you should work to understand any negative experiences your clients may have had because of their minority status, such as discrimination in school, housing, or employment; inappropriate placement in foster homes; or threats and violence in the form of hate crimes. You should also recognize that many personal problems such as depression, poverty, dropping out of school, substance abuse, suicide, and even physical illness may have roots in the stress and inner turmoil a person feels when subjected to discrimination or oppression. In contrast, the positive experiences related to diversity and minority status may be strengths and resources that can be built upon and used in effective interventions for these problems.

If you consider yourself a member of a minority group, you may be better able to understand the effects of prejudice and discrimination than those social workers who are not members of a minority group. Such negative experiences of personal discrimination or marginalization can also work to your advantage by providing motivation and passion for the work you may do with others who are experiencing oppression. All social workers,

not just those who have had negative experiences related to diversity, must work to ensure that their own personal issues do not negatively impact their clients. To be objective and recognize the uniqueness of each client situation, it is also important that you satisfactorily resolve any personal issues, anger, and resentment related to your experiences to the degree that they will not impact your work with clients.

Of course, if you have experienced discrimination because of your minority status, you should not automatically assume that your minority clients will have the same experiences or conclusions about them as you have. Everyone's experiences and their reactions to those experiences are individual and unique, and you should not believe that everyone will come to believe or act the way you might if you had the same experiences. If you have not experienced discrimination or marginalization, have been fortunate to have had privileged experiences, have not felt unsafe or threatened because of your identity, and believe that you have power or access to power in life, it may be challenging for you to understand the experiences of others. Moreover, clients who have not experienced such privilege may tend to discount you as a helper, believing that you could not understand them and even that you have been part of a system that has worked against them. Try not to become defensive if interactions with clients produce such dynamics. Instead, commit to learning from them and to recognizing how your privilege needs to be acknowledged.

Thinking about developing competency with diverse clients and communities may lead you to undertake a professional development approach to such learning and growth. Embracing a proactive approach to your growth will definitely promote greater and deeper development. Consider the recommendations in **Table 13.2**, which outlines the characteristics of a professional development plan in regard to competence with diversity.

Table 13.2 **Professional Development for Competency with Diversity**

Characteristic of Learner	Outcomes
Authentic desire to grow	Leads to deeper understanding of self and others
Intentionality	Organizes growth potential in planned manner
Expectation for unexpected learning	Recognizes unplanned opportunities to learn
Willingness to unlearn	Identifies and deals with biases and assumptions
Self-reflection	Reveals personal growth and need for growth
Consideration of context	Recognizes impact of individual and systemic issues
Examination of power	Understands impact of having or not having power
Examination of privilege	Understands impact of having or not having privilege
Community of practice involvement	Grow together through support and challenge

Characteristic of Learner	Outcomes
Cultural identity development	Clarifies cultural impact on self and others
Openness to learning	Willingness to reflect more deeply
Openness to emotional reactions	Accepts anger and frustration of oppressed
Humility	Recognizes limits of understanding and competency

It is hard to describe how complex and challenging it will be for you to develop the ability to work effectively with diverse clients and in diverse communities. Stereotypical adaptations of the usual social work approaches or slight changes in the agency's standard operating procedures are not likely to be effective. Rather, you will need to develop distinct, culturally appropriate methods that are acceptable to, relevant to, and appropriate for the specific group with which you are working, and this necessitates involving your clients in any such steps. It is not easy to even know what those methods may be, so seek information from your supervisors, input from your clients, and guidelines from professional associations such as the National Association of Social Workers in regard to standards and suggestions for culturally appropriate practice.

Misunderstandings and misinterpretations in cross-cultural interactions with individuals and families can occur in many areas and situations, including the following:

- Spoken and written language, including words, accents, meanings, and nuances
- Nonverbal communication such as misunderstanding gestures, facial expressions, touch, and eye contact
- Verbal communication, including tone of voice, word choice, and turn-taking
- Interpersonal differences such as appropriate level of directness, assertiveness, and self-disclosure
- Beliefs about gender relations and appropriate touching
- Judgments concerning appearance, appropriate dress, body ornamentation, and level of modesty
- Views of time, including emphasis on punctuality, use of time, and future planning
- Beliefs about physical and personal space and appropriate distance between people
- Ways of learning and teaching, including giving and taking direction
- Ways of negotiating and handling conflict, including direct and indirect communication
- Ways of expressing emotion such as externalizing or internalizing feelings
- Help-seeking beliefs and use of professional or culturally valued helpers
- Differences in definition of family and the involvement of family in social work interventions

Recognize that different groups may hold very different beliefs about the nature and cause of personal problems. For example, some ethnic groups may view depression or physical illness as primarily a problem of spirituality (e.g., a consequence of eating a taboo food, having broken one's relationship with God, or of a lack of balance between one's spirit and body). These deeply held beliefs will significantly impact the ways in

which clients may approach, seek, or accept the services of social workers and other professionals.

Self-Check 13.5

Seek to understand your clients' beliefs about the appropriateness of asking for and receiving help from professionals and agencies. Members of some cultural groups may believe that personal and family problems should not be discussed with anyone outside the family. Some may feel great shame if they must seek help from a stranger. Others may prefer to seek help from religious leaders, and some may view social workers with mistrust for historical reasons such as discriminatory agency or social policies.

Different groups have different ideas about what constitutes an appropriate method of helping and who has the capacity and authority to help with or treat certain types of problems. Some people may choose to use informal helpers and spiritual leaders, prayer, purification ceremonies, and religious or cultural rituals rather than the services of a professional helper. For this reason, you will need to learn how to work cooperatively with cultural spiritual leaders, healers, and clergy. Expect to learn from them about approaches to helping that are valued by your clients.

Remember that clients from a minority group may have had or may anticipate having negative experiences with social workers or social service agencies based on their group's history with those outside their group. Clients may also be fearful of interacting with social workers because they fear legal recrimination for themselves (e.g., undocumented

workers or clients of a sexual minority living in states with discriminatory practices). Their fears may impose a barrier to their development of trust and their willingness to invest themselves in a professional helping relationship. Be careful not to interpret such mistrust, fear, or anger as client resistance.

Also be careful when interpreting and assigning meaning to differences in behavior, communication, language, and ways of engaging in the helping process. For example, do not automatically interpret client quietness, reticence, or anxiety as pathology or dysfunction. Silence may mean respect, or it may signal that the client does not feel understood or valued. When appropriate, acknowledge to your clients that you recognize the differences that separate you, and show your appreciation for their struggles by validating their experiences and perspectives. Sometimes your level of cultural competence may be more important in your work with diverse clients than your overall knowledge and skill in social work.

Social problems may be more likely to impact minority groups than other groups and individuals. The disproportionate consequences of social problems and any disparities in opportunity and service provision for minority groups need to be identified and addressed by social workers. These populations may be underserved, under-represented, characterized by lower socioeconomic status, or subject to discrimination in multiple ways, repeated over time, all that result in disadvantages that other groups do not experience and that compound each other.

Belief Barriers to Cultural Competence

Given that we as social workers use ourselves as the tool to help others, if we are not culturally competent, the use of self is greatly compromised. A number of beliefs that might be held by social workers engaged in cross-cultural practice are listed in the table. Statements made to clients that are based on such beliefs can create significant barriers to effective professional relationships and the desired outcomes of interventions. Each of these beliefs, when held by social workers, has the potential to undermine and limit the effectiveness of the professional relationship with diverse clients, as it shows a lack of understanding and even misinterpretation of what is said and done by clients. This lack of understanding can easily lead to inappropriate interventions and false cooperation by clients, who believe they must go along with a treatment plan even if it does not fit their needs. There can be a big difference between what is said and what is heard, due to communication differences on both sides. Some questions should not be asked because they violate cultural values and beliefs, whereas others need to be asked to more fully understand clients' situations. Consider how these beliefs might be considered inappropriate, limited in cultural sensitivity, or offensive in working with diverse clients. Think about the various negative impacts that these beliefs might have and reflect on any of your own beliefs that might lead to similar negative outcomes. Try writing an alternative idea or belief that could reduce the likelihood of barriers being created between you and your clients.

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence	Alternative Belief
“All people are alike.”	Devalues difference	
“People are more like than they are different.”	Devalues difference	
“It is best to be color blind.”	Ignores/dismisses difference	
“As long as I care about my client, I don’t need to adapt.”	Shows naivete about need for cultural competence	
“Clients should learn to adapt.”	Shows lack of understanding of the need for diversity adaptations in intervention	
“All—act the same.”	Reveals stereotypes and overgeneralizations	

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence	Alternative Belief
“How can people move forward if they continue to focus on the past?”	Dismisses individual and cultural history/oppression	
“Agency policy requires us to treat everyone the same.”	Devalues difference	
“I have no biases.”	Demonstrates lack of self-awareness	
“How can I be expected to understand all cultures?”	Reveals defensiveness and resistance to growth	
“There is too much emphasis on being politically correct.”	Misunderstands meaning and importance of language	

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence	Alternative Belief
“If a client doesn’t tell me something, how should I know?”	Dismisses communication differences	
“These people are so amazing.”	Romanticizing of diverse groups	
“—are so resistant and unmotivated.”	Misinterprets meaning of client behavior	
“The reason this person is doing this is because of his or her culture.”	Attributes too much to cultural difference	
“This is how we deal with —”	Reveals stereotypes and use of inappropriate intervention	

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence	Alternative Belief
“Don’t be disappointed if they don’t do well.”	Holds low expectations for diverse groups, blaming client for ineffective intervention, and not recognizing client definition of success	
“Every time I ask an honest question about culture or diversity, I am attacked.”	Shows inability to understand that strong language comes from those who are tired of questions they think have been answered or are offensive	

As a social worker, you should develop a **dual perspective**, which is the ability to focus simultaneously on the attitudes, values, and customs of the larger society and the attitudes, values, and customs of the individual client or family. Doing this while being aware of the impact of your own values, attitudes, and customs will help you more effectively relate to diverse clients, understand how they are impacted by the larger society, and at least partially perceive your clients’ experiences from their point of view and not just your own.

Self-Check 13.6

Self-Check 13.7

Work to develop the ability to move between your culture and that of your clients, recognizing that this can be done only partially in spite of your best efforts because of ethnocentrism. Expand your knowledge of diverse people, increasing your awareness of the impact of your own cultural identity on your work. Recognize that communication with your clients and their communication with you are both seen through personal and cultural filters. Doing so will reduce the chances of misinterpretation and inappropriate interventions, while increasing the chances that an effective professional relationship will set the stage for a culturally appropriate and effective intervention. If your own position in relation to your clients is one of privilege, try to understand how clients might view you, look for commonalities while respecting difference, challenge oppression, learn from your clients, work to identify any biases, and equalize power when you can.

In an effort to see your agency from the perspective of diverse clients, examine its physical environment, written materials, internal policies, and staffing patterns. Assess whether your agency is accessible to persons with disabilities. Determine whether reading materials, posters, and artwork would appeal to diverse groups of people, and identify needs for language adaptations and visual representations of people from a variety of backgrounds. Read the agency's written materials to determine whether they are free of bias and whether they use inclusive language. Finally, learn if the agency staff is diverse and represents people of various ages, cultures, sexual orientations, and other backgrounds. Take

advantage of any training in working with diverse populations that might be available to you as a student.

Agencies sometimes intentionally or unintentionally adopt attitudes, engage in behavior, and enact agency policies that reinforce stereotypes, widen the gap between social workers and clients, and eventually result in clients choosing to separate themselves from these agencies. Watch for agency-related attitudes, behaviors, and policies that might be uninformed, stereotypical, or culturally inappropriate. Seek out opportunities to work with diverse clients so that you can avoid adopting such stereotypes or attitudes yourself. In addition, research various cultural competence self-assessment tools available to agencies wishing to enhance their cultural sensitivity and effectiveness and discuss them with your supervisors. Such tools can help organizations determine their need for training, workforce diversification, policy changes, or input from diverse groups.

Self-Check 13.8

Honestly study yourself, other social workers, and your agency to assess their level of cultural competence. Is your agency working to serve its diverse clients well and appropriately? Does it engage in the practices listed in **Table 13.3** to enhance its ability to work with diverse clients? What else might the agency do to increase its organizational competence, given that true cultural competence is probably never fully achieved by either individual social workers or social services agencies? **Table 13.3** highlights major practice guidelines for culturally competent practice that should be followed by organizations.

Table 13.3 **Guidelines for Cultural Competence in Organizations**

Organizational Development	Interactions with Client Groups
Learn the history of the diverse groups served by the agency.	Conduct outreach activities.
Develop inclusive written materials.	Design an inviting physical environment.
Train staff in cultural competence.	Develop culturally appropriate agency policies.
Diversify staff.	Develop culturally appropriate practice models.
Develop culturally sensitive agency policies.	Include feedback from diverse groups in the program evaluation.
Recognize the limitations of a charity orientation to providing services.	Commit to have the client base reflect the makeup of the community.
Remember the impossibility of being culturally neutral.	Learn about and develop best practices in cross-cultural social work.

Organizational Development	Interactions with Client Groups
Include commitment to diverse groups and cultural competence in the agency's mission.	Develop a comprehensive and varied referral network.
Maintain compliance with federal laws on antidiscriminatory practices.	Provide accommodations for persons with disabilities.
Maintain compliance with state and local laws on antidiscriminatory practices.	Provide accommodations for persons whose first language is not English or who use sign language.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about diversity into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge about cultural competence in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for culturally competent professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Students' Honest Questions

Using the list of questions in the table, and adding any others of your own, discuss with your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor how you should address each question to work toward developing a diversity perspective that truly results in effective social work practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. If you are someone who has had negative experiences because of your identity, status, or identification as a minority, use this list of questions to help you understand and reflect upon those who have not had your experiences but who are honestly trying to become more sensitive and competent. Some of the questions can be used if you have experienced discrimination or stereotyping as you consider the best responses to such experiences.

Questions for Students Seeking to Grow	Reflection and Response
What if I make mistakes with people different from me?	
How can I discover what I don't know so that I don't offend or harm someone?	
How can I keep from being defensive when challenged or corrected?	
Is it ethical to practice without training in diversity?	
How can I ask clients to share their experience without asking them to speak for all people in their particular group?	
How can I become aware of my biases if biases are by nature unconscious?	
Questions for Students Who Have Experienced Oppression or Discrimination	**Reflection and Responses**
How can I use my experiences to make me a good social worker?	

Questions for Students Seeking to Grow	Reflection and Response
How can I make sure my negative experiences do not negatively impact my clients?	
How can I best get others to recognize their privilege and understand how it has put them in a position of power I have never been in?	
What should I do when someone asks what I consider to be an uninformed or offensive question?	
What should I say when someone tells me he or she didn't mean to insult me, and that the intention was to help?	

Organizational Statements to Consider

Respond to the following statements that might be made by leaders and employees of social services agencies in regard to their work with diverse groups. Write a response that you could give that could help the person making that statement reflect and that might result in that statement being reconsidered. Refer to the National Association of Social Workers' **Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice** (2007), which describes how social workers and agencies are to conduct themselves in regard to cultural competence. Remember, as a student, you must be cautious about criticizing your supervisor and agency.

Statement	Your Response
“We do not serve many diverse clients.”	
“Clients of color tend to go to agencies that focus on their specific needs rather than coming to us.”	
“It shouldn’t matter if our employees are mostly white.”	
“We don’t discriminate. We offer the same services to people from all groups.”	
“We provide annual training in cultural competence to all our employees.”	
“Some groups expect accommodations that are not reasonable and that we cannot provide.”	

Video Application Exercise 13.3

This interactive exercise challenges social workers to help clients build upon positive experiences and resources to deal with the negative aspects of diversity.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In light of the presence of ethnocentrism, is it possibly for an agency to assess its own level of cultural competence?
2. How can a diversity perspective and a strengths perspective be used together?
3. How might your clients' cultural beliefs about seeking help, especially from those different from themselves, affect your ability to engage with them?
4. Upon which NASW ethical principles is cultural competence based?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Attend cultural and religious celebrations and activities that are meaningful to many of the clients or consumers served by your agency (e.g., powwows, religious ceremonies, and gay pride events).
- Invite respected members of various ethnic and religious groups to explain how cultural and religious factors might influence clients' perceptions of the agency's programs and services and whether they would be inclined to use those services.
- Listen to music and read books and poetry by members of cultural or minority groups served by your agency.
- Visit agencies that specifically serve members of minority groups (e.g., refugee programs, women's centers, community centers for elders, and advocacy groups for persons with disabilities). Ask how their programs differ from yours.
- Seek special training designed to help social services personnel respond more effectively to diverse clients.
- Examine assessment tools used in your agency to determine if they are culture-bound or culturally inappropriate.
- Seek opportunities for cultural immersion experiences.

Chapter Review 13.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 14

Personal Safety

Learning Outcomes

- Identify potential threats to personal safety in the practicum setting.
- Describe principles of de-escalation of potential violence.
- Utilize guidelines for the prevention and management of violence.
- Understand the balance of risk and protective factors in potentially violent situations.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Risk and Protective Factors in Potentially Violent Situations

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Dealing with Potentially Violent Situations

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

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Chapter Preview

This chapter describes the potential threats and dangers inherent in social work practice and offers ways in which social work students can practice safely by identifying the **sources and types of danger** most often encountered in social work practice, becoming familiar with potential dangers and risks in practicum, and informing themselves of agency policies and procedures that can **reduce risk and protect staff and clients**. It also familiarizes students with **precautions and preventive actions** that can reduce the risk of being harmed and provides guidance on steps and actions that can be taken to **de-escalate threatening situations and deal with violence when it happens**.

When dealing with clients in stressful personal situations, social workers sometimes find themselves involved in emotional encounters laden with the potential to undermine the safety of both clients and social workers. Although social workers see themselves as helpers and expect most clients to be cooperative, at times they find themselves in situations in which they must deal with clients who are angry, emotionally volatile, and threatening. Violence toward social workers is often due to client frustration with social services systems; cutbacks in services; increased levels of crime, drug use and violence in society; untreated mental illness and addiction; previous history of violent behavior; and antiauthority or antigovernment attitudes on the part of clients. It is of the utmost importance that students learn how to avoid such danger and deal with it if it occurs.

In addition to the actual physical dangers associated with certain circumstances and types of social work practice, **exposure to job-related danger** can lead to negative outcomes such as anxiety, low morale, burnout, family stress, cynicism, and high job turnover rates. As a social work practicum student, you must become cognizant of the dangers you

face so that you do not experience physical or emotional assaults. You need to exercise certain precautions to reduce risks to your safety. Moreover, you must know what steps to take if you encounter a dangerous situation rather than assume that you are not in danger or that you can handle situations without training and the use of specific guidelines and recommendations.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Although social workers practice in areas of human life and client struggles that lead to heightened emotions and potential conflict, much can be done to avoid actual threats and violence. It is possible to prevent violent incidents from occurring, as well as to reduce the threat and potential of harm. Knowing the sources of possible harm will help greatly, as will understanding how to react when threats occur or are imminent. This section summarizes the various sources of harm, including high-risk settings, certain social work practices and interventions that can present danger, and potentially dangerous clients. Armed with knowledge and skills related to reducing or preventing harm, you can keep from becoming overly alarmed or assuming that all situations and clients will be dangerous. Thus, it is important to be aware, vigilant, and safe, yet not allow yourself to become too worried.

Self-Check 14.1

Certain high-risk settings present more risk to social workers than others. Examples of such settings include child protection agencies, corrections programs, forensic units of psychiatric hospitals, shelters for the homeless population, and residential facilities for youth who may be aggressive and impulsive. These settings are potentially dangerous because some of the clients served in them may have tendencies toward the use of violence. Of course, not all clients in such settings pose a danger, but it is still helpful to know which settings are associated with an enhanced level of

risk. In reality, any practice setting can be threatening because client–social worker interactions often involve emotionally charged situations and concerns.

Certain social work practices and interventions also have a greater likelihood of placing the social worker at risk than others. Examples of such activities include the initial investigation of child abuse allegations, the involuntary removal of a child from a parent's home, protection of a victim of domestic violence, outreach to youth involved in gang activity, home visits with clients on probation or parole, intervention with drug- and alcohol-involved clients, transporting clients who do not wish to be moved, behavioral management of persons with certain forms of brain injury, and monitoring of clients in correctional settings. In these situations, social workers' actions can be perceived by clients as threatening, intrusive, and coercive. This may result in heightened emotion or defensiveness on the part of clients and an inclination to use violence as a way of resisting intervention and protecting themselves in light of a perceived threat by a social worker.

Social workers who work with potentially dangerous clients face the difficult challenge of remaining humane, open, and accepting of clients, while also remaining alert to the possibility of danger or attack. It is important not to view every client as a potential threat, but it is also crucial to recognize a client who might be a threat. Although any client may have the potential to pose a danger to social workers and practicum students, anticipating the possibility of heightened emotion, unregulated behavior, extreme stress, and history of violence can be helpful self-protective steps for social workers. Even clients with no previous history of violence or high-risk behaviors can, under certain circumstances, pose a threat to social workers.

Self-Check 14.2

Video Application Exercise 14.1

This interactive exercise shows how anticipating and understanding client fears and resistance can serve to de-escalate emotionally charged situations.

Specific clients may also present a threat. To anticipate possible danger in your practicum, consider the following examples of specific clients who may be threatening or violent:

- A client with a previous history of violence or threats
- A parent reacting to an involuntary intervention by a social worker
- A client engaging in an illegal act that is discovered by a social worker
- An involuntary client being transported to a secure facility
- A client being seen in a follow-up visit who is angry about a previous encounter
- A client with a mental illness involving paranoia, delusions, or hallucinations
- A client under the influence of substances, which can lower inhibitions
- A client in withdrawal from substances, which can lead to violent behavior
- A client who does not respect or resents the authority of professionals
- A client with a lack of impulse control
- A client with post-traumatic stress disorder experiencing hyperarousal due to perceived threat by a social worker
- A perpetrator of partner violence who wants to know the whereabouts of the partner

- A client who possesses and is not afraid to use weapons such as firearms

In addition to the threat of physical violence, social workers in some settings experience frequent verbal abuse due to the nature of their work and the clients whom they serve. Because most of these threats do not result in actual violence, social workers may become complacent about actual risk. They may come to view verbal threats as part of their job, mistakenly assume that their clients are usually bluffing, and consequently fail to take reasonable precautions. Some social workers erroneously believe that because they have been trained in basic helping skills, they will always be able to talk their way out of a dangerous situation. These overly confident workers may underestimate the risk to themselves and not seek special training in how to respond in truly dangerous situations, thereby putting themselves at higher risk. It is important that practicum students learn to take their personal safety very seriously. You must become aware of potentially dangerous situations, able to identify such situations yourself, familiar with all agency policies regarding violence prevention, knowledgeable about how to report negative experiences, how to find support when unsure of yourself, and know how to access supportive services in the event of a threat or actual form of violence.

Risk and Protective Factors in Potentially Violent Situations

Although circumstances putting social workers at risk vary, certain guiding principles can be applied in all situations. Certain interpersonal dynamics, insights, and policies can be generalized in most cases. Think about the following **guiding principles of promoting safety**, which cover both risk factors and protective factors for potential violence. What can you do to recognize and reduce the risk factors? What can you do to recognize and enhance the protective factors?

Risk Factors in Potentially Violent Situations

- There is potential for harm in any setting or client encounter.
- Certain practice situations present higher risk than others.
- Certain clients present higher risk than others.
- Clients use threats and violence when other forms of communication fail them.
- Past behavior is the single best predictor of future behavior.
- Clients' threats can escalate to actual violence if appropriate interventions are not taken.
- Defensive or aggressive responses to clients' emotions and threats can escalate dangerous situations.
- Arguing with or showing disrespect for clients will exacerbate the situation.
- A lack of agency policies and staff training can put social workers at risk.

Protective Factors in Potentially Violent Situations

- Safety training is necessary for all social workers and practicum students.
- Agency safety policies are necessary and must be reviewed, updated, and followed.
- The potential for harm can be anticipated in some cases.
- The potential for harm can be reduced with effective approaches.
- Different approaches need to be used at different levels of escalating threats.
- Ineffective responses to threats can actually increase the risk of harm.
- Reducing the potential for harm requires a dual focus on interactions with clients and the design and management of the environment and context of these interactions.
- The attitude and approach of the social worker play roles in either controlling or provoking threatening behavior.
- Demonstrating a desire to understand the client through empathy, active listening, reflection, and silence can serve to reduce anger.
- Offering alternatives can provide choices and autonomy for clients, which can reduce negative emotions.

Self-Check 14.3

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

When social workers understand client reactions and effective ways of responding to risks of violence, much violence toward social workers can be prevented. It is very important to understand the **stages of potentially violent incidents** and how to intervene at each phase of escalation. Many dangerous interpersonal psychosocial situations result from tensions that have grown and intensified over a period of time. It is vital to understand the phases of escalation, clients' needs and feelings during each phase, and actions or interventions by the social worker that might reduce the tension and level of risk.

It is vital to **intervene as early as possible** in high-risk situations to prevent escalation and eventual loss of control by the client. Clients who may threaten violence are likely experiencing a myriad of emotions. Depending on the situation, they may feel afraid, judged, threatened, lonely, without hope, wronged, misunderstood, overwhelmed, frustrated, without power or recourse, or vengeful. A genuine attempt by the social worker to understand the emotions of people who are extremely upset may be helpful in defusing or de-escalating potentially dangerous situations. Think about how strong emotions can negatively impact communication and lead to unacceptable behavior. When clients do not feel threatened or in crisis, their thinking is likely to be logical, rational, and reasonable. They can engage in abstract thought about the consequences of their actions. Conversely, when they feel threatened or are in crisis, their cognitive processes become less logical, distorted, and unreasonable. They are less likely to be able to think through the possible negative consequences of their threats and violence. In response, social workers should be aware that what they say, how they say it, their tone of

voice, and their body language will all communicate something to angry clients. For that reason, intervening before violence occurs is the best approach, because you might be able to help people calm themselves, find solutions, and avoid actions that could harm you or others and result in negative consequences for them.

Self-Check 14.4

Dealing with Potentially Violent Situations

Think of all potentially violent situations as having five general stages: (1) high-risk situation, (2) escalation, (3) threats, (4) violence, and (5) post incident. In each of these stages, distinct goals and approaches should be used to manage the situation. Ideally, such situations will be prevented, defused, or resolved without actual violence, but that is not always the case. The goal of de-escalation in such situations is to resolve the threat before it moves from one stage to another. Social workers may be harmed physically or emotionally, and there are real cases of social workers losing their lives in extreme circumstances.

In the following table, read the descriptions of each stage, including the client emotions and client behaviors observed in that stage. Work to understand the goals for each stage and what social workers should do to deal with the challenges of each stage. Discuss this information with your agency field instructor and determine if this approach is consistent with agency policy.

Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or Intervention Approaches
High-Risk Situation			
Stress, anxiety, fear, anger	In control of own behavior but exhibits unusual response	Prevent violence	Recognize potential for high-risk situation to escalate Use active listening and empathy to allow the client to be heard and work toward resolution of concerns
Escalation of Potential for Violence			

Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or Intervention Approaches
Escalation of emotions and irrational thoughts	Verbal venting or unusual quietness Client starting to lose control over own behavior	De-escalate violence	Assess potential for violence Utilize nonthreatening, respectful, and calm responses to client statements and behavior Avoid arguing and challenging client Seek solutions satisfactory to client Use nonthreatening body language
Threats			

Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or Intervention Approaches
Feeling attacked, angry, disrespected, vulnerable, mistreated, unheard	Verbal attacks, intimidation, and threats of physical violence Client close to losing control over own behavior and statements	Deal with threats	Set limits on client speech and behavior Develop a potential escape plan Avoid giving orders or returning threats Call for assistance
Violence			

Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or Intervention Approaches
Extremely angry, sees no alternative to violence	Threatening actions, actual violence Client has lost control over own behavior	Deal with violence	Use self-defensive measures If safety cannot be ensured, leave or escape Cooperate with responding law enforcement or others who arrive to assist
Post Incident			
Remorseful, embarrassed, released from tension	Client has regained control over behavior	Review incident to provide support and learn from incident	Consult with supervisor and administrators Provide critical incident debriefing and support as needed

Self-Check 14.5

Building on this information, review **Table 14.1** and consider how an understanding of any specific client threat can lead to specific social work approaches geared toward reducing client threats. Depending on the intense emotions felt by clients and their specific situations, distinct and individualized approaches will be effective. This information is an example of learning how to use your interactional skills with clients in very challenging situations.

Table 14.1 **Approaches Tailored to Specific Client Threat**

Clients who Pose a Risk	Approaches
Involuntary client	Provide as much respect, choice and autonomy as possible. Use anticipatory empathy to understand that involuntary clients feel a lack of power.
Client with a history of threats or violence	Remain calm and matter-of-fact. Consult agency records prior to meeting with a potentially violent client to inform yourself of any previous threats or violent behavior. Notify colleagues when planning to meet a client with a history of violence.
Angry client	Provide the client with as much privacy as possible without compromising your own safety. Allow the client to vent angry feelings and maintain a calm and confident attitude. Do not touch or stand above the client and give him or her personal space.

Clients who Pose a Risk	Approaches
Fearful client	Recognize that fear can turn to aggression when clients feel targeted. Acknowledge the client's emotions and provide reassurance if possible. Speak and act in ways that lessen the client's need to fear you.
Client with escalating emotion and behavior	Recognize physical signs of emotional escalation, such as rapid breathing, teeth grinding, dilated pupils, loud speech, clenched fists, and threatening movements. Reduce threatening stimuli to de-escalate emotion and threat. Increase structure and boundaries to de-escalate emotion and threat.

Clients who Pose a Risk	Approaches
Client under the influence of substances or in withdrawal	Identify the level of client impairment. Identify the extent of inhibition due to substance use. Remember that reasoning with the client may be ineffective due to impaired judgment.
Clients with access to weapons	Assure the client you intend no harm. Remember that weapons may be kept in kitchens or bedrooms. Remember that any object can be used as a weapon.
Client threatening you with a weapon	Do not attempt to disarm a client with a weapon. Do not endanger yourself by remaining in the situation; use any escape route available.
Client involved in illegal activities	Recognize that you pose a threat to the client and what you have seen. Find a reason to exit the situation.

Clients who Pose a Risk	Approaches
Client who makes you uncomfortable	Trust your instincts and assume that you have a built-in unconscious mechanism that can recognize danger more quickly than your rational thought processes.
Active shooter	Utilize a predetermined excuse to leave or seek help. Train all staff in the response to an active shooter inside or outside the building. Rehearse all training to reinforce learning and improve crisis response.

Self-Check 14.6

Video Application Exercise 14.2

This interactive exercise highlights the techniques used by social workers to offer choices to clients who feel they have no power.

Table 14.2 provides guidelines for anticipating and managing potential agency-based dangers, identifying situations that might put you at risk,

preventing or dealing with risky situations, resolving violent situations should they arise, and managing the aftermath of threats and actual violence. Discuss these dangers and the approaches to dealing with them with your agency field instructor, making certain that you understand your practicum agency's policies. Observe whether these approaches are actually utilized in your agency, and whether any improvements could be made in the agency's structure and function that might reduce potential risk for harm. Inquire about training available to you and ask about which situations in your agency may have the potential for violence.

Table 14.2 **Anticipating and Managing Potential Agency-Based Risks**

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Quality of services	Provide services in a timely and professional manner to reduce client frustration.
Exterior of office	Avoid waiting lists when possible and reduce waiting periods for eligibility determination. Ensure that the exterior of the agency and the parking area are well lighted. Make entrances and signs friendly, clear, and inviting.
Environmental stimuli	Keep waiting rooms and offices clean, and create a pleasant and inviting physical environment. Avoid an unkempt or impersonal appearance that may convey disrespect to clients and generate frustration and hostility.
Agency policy regarding unacceptable behavior	Post a statement in waiting rooms and in other prominent places explaining that alcohol, drugs, and weapons are not allowed in the building. Post a statement that security officers or police will be called and legal action may be taken when clients become threatening.

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Meeting space	Designate a specific office or room for meeting with potentially threatening or violent clients. Select a room that is easily and frequently observable by others.
Policies and protocol	Develop policies on how staff members should assess danger and respond, including bomb threats, hostage taking, and hazardous materials management. Develop policies on when and how to seek police assistance, including a written agreement with the local law enforcement agency. Review and revise policies as needed.
Staff training	Provide training for all staff on personal safety, including repetition of training over time. Rehearse and provide drills to reinforce staff understanding and ensure effective response.

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Identification of high-risk clients	Devise recordkeeping systems that use color codes or other markings to identify clients with a history of threats or violence. Share information with all staff, especially when staff members are new to the agency.
Safety measures and devices	Install a call button in each office. Utilize code words and phrases for letting others know that help is needed.
Reporting and documentation	Encourage all staff to report threats or attempts of violence. Maintain a log of all threats so staff can identify those clients who present a risk. Review actual incidents to determine the effectiveness of the agency's response, and make revisions as necessary to protect staff.

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Legal actions	Develop agreements with law enforcement and court system to enlist their support for agency policy. File criminal charges against those clients who harm or threaten physical injury to either staff members or their families.
Staff support	Provide counseling, emotional support, time off, and other services to lessen the effects on staff members and their families. Offer critical incident debriefing support to all staff, even those not involved in an incident.

Self-Check 14.7

Self-Check 14.8

Because social workers may visit the homes of clients in order to conduct assessments or provide services, it is vital to be informed about and prepared for the potential risks associated with being in clients' homes. The unknown nature of first-time home visits makes it particularly important to exercise caution. Nevertheless, even if social workers have

visited a client's home before, successive visits can also pose hazards. Home visits may feel invasive, embarrassing, or threatening to clients, and social workers must be prepared to deal with these client emotions as well as to anticipate the possibility of unsafe neighbors, people, and settings. **Table 14.3** describes the potential dangers of home visits as well as approaches to dealing with those dangers. These approaches apply when planning a visit, entering a home, conducting a home visit, and utilizing escape strategies.

Table 14.3 **Anticipating and Managing Home Visit Risks**

Facets of a Home Visit	Approaches
Preparing for a home visit	Learn as much as possible about a potentially dangerous home, its occupants, and its neighborhood. Seek the assistance of another social worker or law enforcement if necessary. Assign two staff members for potentially dangerous home visits. Inform your agency of the time and place of all home visits. Unless there is a good reason to visit a home unannounced, call ahead to schedule a visit. Consider meeting a client in a neutral location unless the home needs to be visited. Educate yourself about drugs and illegal drug labs so that you can recognize the dangers inherent in entering such a place.

Facets of a Home Visit	Approaches
Entering a home	Enter a home only after identifying any signs of risk, including sounds of violence. Identify yourself, show identification, and clearly state your reason for the home visit. Check in with your agency when you arrive, during your home visit, and when you leave.
Managing a home visit	Be aware that weapons may be kept in bedrooms and that kitchens contain knives and other potential weapons. Do not sit in a chair or couch from which you cannot quickly get to your feet. A hard and movable chair could also be used as a shield against a threat. Watch for hazardous materials such as those in a methamphetamine lab and for objects such as syringes and chemicals. Observe any changes in emotion or behavior that could indicate clients are upset.

Facets of a Home Visit	Approaches
Escape plan	Have an escape plan ready in case you need to flee, including an escape excuse. Identify possible escape routes. Park your vehicle in a way that allows for quick escape if necessary. Keep your vehicle in good running order and full of fuel so you do not become stranded. If you are being followed, go immediately to a police or fire station or to a public place. Do not go to your home if you believe someone is following or watching you. Wear shoes and clothing that permit running. Carry a means of calling for help (e.g., cellular phone, emergency signal).

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about personal safety into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of personal safety in your practicum setting. The next step is to combine all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for safe professional practice. The following exercise is designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Reducing the Risk of Harm

Responding to the following questions will help you identify, understand, and utilize agency policies and procedures regarding potential threat.

1. What training is provided in your agency to help social workers prevent and deal with threatening or violent clients or situations?

2. Which kinds of high-risk clients or situations are you likely to encounter in your practicum? How will you prepare yourself to deal with them?

3. Which agency policies and procedures are in place to ensure your personal safety and reduce the risks to the agency's employees and clients?

4. Have any employees in your agency been threatened or harmed by clients? If yes, describe the circumstances that gave rise to the incident and how it was handled.

5. Are there any agency policies or environmental factors that could contribute to client frustration? If so, what changes do you recommend?

6. Does your agency have a formal, written agreement with law enforcement authorities detailing when they are to be called for assistance?

7. Are there any clients or situations that frighten you? If so, how can you deal with your concerns and fears?

8. Does your agency have an incident reporting system for documenting threats and violence toward workers?

9. Which services does your agency provide to workers who are threatened, injured, or traumatized by threats or

violence (e.g., counseling, critical incident stress debriefing, or support groups)?

Video Application Exercise 14.3

This interactive exercise reinforces the need to develop and follow safety procedures with potentially violent clients.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does the professional literature say about the factors that put social workers at risk for violence by clients?
2. Which aspects of social work practice and the ways in which social services agencies provide services could contribute to strong emotional reactions by clients?
3. Which clinical skills can you develop that could reduce the likelihood of violence by clients?
4. Which online training is available to you about gaining insights and skills that would be useful in dealing with threatening situations?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Research the literature on incidents and causes of violence toward helping professionals.
- Invite a local police officer to your practicum setting to offer guidance on how to reduce risk in and around your agency.
- Interview experienced social workers and ask for their advice about reducing personal risk based on their experiences.
- Role-play situations that illustrate each of the stages of potentially violent situations described in this chapter.
- Educate yourself on the specific safety issues faced by your agency (e.g., methamphetamine abuse, use of restraining orders).
- Attend training offered by your agency on safety.
- Determine which services (i.e., counseling or legal services) would be offered to you or others in your agency should you experience a threat or actual incident of violence.
- Discuss any fears you have about your safety with your agency field instructor and faculty supervisor.

Chapter Review 14.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 15

Evaluating Your Practice

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the types of social work evaluations.
- Use evaluation of social work practice for professional development.
- Use program quality continuum as a foundation for social work evaluation.
- Use a framework for analysis of ineffective outcomes.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Categories of Social Work Evaluation: What We Are Measuring and Why

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Critical Reflective Practice

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths Post-Test

Perspectives on Partial Success

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

Because social workers want to provide effective services, the evaluation of social work practice is a vital component of both ethical and professional standards. Because our clients deserve the best possible services we can offer them, we must determine how effective we are because only then can we improve our services. This determination of effectiveness includes the **evaluation of practicum and professional practice, evaluation of client outcomes, and program evaluation**. This chapter provides basic information on the process of student evaluation used by programs of social work education. It encourages you to examine and evaluate your own performance so you can make the best possible use of the practicum as a learning opportunity. It also describes the **purposes and types of evaluations commonly used in social work** practice and the concepts of best practices and culture of evaluation. Also contained in this chapter is a **framework for analyzing ineffective interventions** and learning from them.

The evaluation phase of the planned change process, both in the practicum setting and in subsequent practice, is a vital phase of intervention, both for the client and for the practitioner. Clients expect and deserve competent social workers, and ethical social work practice requires that the best interests of vulnerable clients take center stage. Your competence as a practicum student is developed over time as you integrate your classroom knowledge and practicum experiences through real social work experiences. Ongoing monitoring and frequent evaluations of your performance as a social worker are necessary to determine whether you are making progress, to help you identify your strengths, and to identify areas of performance that may need special attention and remediation. It is important to understand the role of evaluation as a tool for professional growth, and to think ahead about

how evaluation, including self-evaluation, can be incorporated into your professional practice.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Schools of social work use some type of rating scale or evaluation tool to monitor and evaluate student progress. The ultimate question being asked is whether a student's performance meets the standards expected of the entry-level social work practitioner. The evaluation process compares student performance to standards and criteria established by schools of social work, the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education, the practice standards of the National Association of Social Workers, and the evaluation standards applied to professional social workers in the agency. In addition, once you are licensed as a social worker, you must continue to meet high standards of performance to maintain your credentials and remain in good standing.

Evaluations of student performance are of two types: formal and informal. A **formal evaluation** is a detailed review, rating, and comparison of a student's performance with agreed-upon evaluation criteria, standards, and learning objectives for the practicum. It occurs at the end of each academic term and sometimes more often, depending on school policy or special circumstances. Formal evaluations are based on a school's specific evaluation criteria, and their results are documented in a written report. This report typically consists of the ratings assigned to the various items on the school's evaluation tool and a few paragraphs of narrative that describe special strengths and abilities and/or special problems and deficiencies in performance. The report may also indicate how needed learning experiences will be secured or deficiencies corrected prior to the next formal evaluation. An **informal evaluation** consists of the ongoing verbal feedback and suggestions offered by the agency field instructor.

This type of evaluation takes place on a weekly or even a daily basis, and it is provided both in scheduled meetings and as needed in practice situations.

A practicum evaluation tool should be both clear and specific in its descriptions of standards and criteria, yet also flexible enough to accurately and fairly evaluate the practice of social work, which is complex and difficult to observe directly. Although an evaluation should be objective to the degree possible, even a well-designed procedure will require judgments by the agency field instructor. For example, ratings of a student's level of cooperation, motivation, adaptability, and use of supervision are difficult to assess except when in an extreme form (i.e., very high or very low motivation). Consequently, the agency field instructor and the practicum student may sometimes disagree on the actual ratings given on a formal evaluation.

The following **guidelines for student evaluation** should be followed by agency field instructors and faculty supervisors so as to be fair, instructive, and supportive of student professional development:

- The evaluation criteria, the pertinent standards, and the agency's preferred practices and outcomes are made known to the student at the beginning of the practicum or at the beginning of the time period to be evaluated.
- The criteria used to evaluate the student are clear and objective.
- The criteria used to evaluate the student are realistic given the student's level (e.g., first semester versus second semester, BSW versus MSW).
- The evaluation tools recognize student growth and good performance as well as student problems or need for continued learning.
- Performance is compared to written standards rather than to implied standards.

- Adequate orientation and training have been provided.
- Ongoing feedback on professional growth, including warnings of unsatisfactory performance, have been given prior to the formal evaluation.
- The evaluation can cite examples of performance that form the basis of the ratings.
- The evaluation takes into consideration the nature and complexity of the assignments given to the student.
- The evaluation tools give consideration to extenuating circumstances that may influence the evaluation.

Self-Check 15.1

In some instances, the agency field instructor or the practicum coordinator may conclude that the practicum arrangement is unworkable and unsatisfactory for the student, the agency field instructor, or both. This may happen when it becomes apparent that the agency cannot meet the student's learning needs or because the student's performance is irresponsible, unethical, or far short of expectations. Examples of performance problems that may prompt the agency field instructor or the school to consider terminating the practicum include the following:

- Harmful or negligent behavior toward clients, agency staff, or the agency's reputation
- Irresponsible and unprofessional behavior (e.g., late for work, missing scheduled appointments, unable to spend the required hours in the practicum setting)
- Inadequate communication skills, either verbal or written

- Defensive or hostile attitude toward supervision and resistance to learning
- Inappropriate behavior toward clients or colleagues
- Inability to manage emotions that interfere with work (e.g., bizarre behavior, inability to concentrate, aggressiveness, withdrawal, inappropriate emotional expression)
- Inappropriate sharing of personal views, experiences, and problems with clients

Some behaviors by the student are considered so serious that they may result in the student's immediate dismissal from the practicum. These include the following issues:

- Clear and serious violations of the NASW Code of Ethics
- Clear and repeated insubordination
- Theft or the clear misuse of agency money, equipment, or property
- Concealing, consuming, or selling drugs on agency premises
- Reckless or threatening actions that place clients and staff at risk of serious harm
- Withholding information deliberately from a supervisor that the supervisor needs to know to properly serve clients and maintain the integrity and reputation of the agency and its programs
- Falsifying agency records and reports
- Soliciting or accepting gifts or favors from clients in exchange for preferential treatment
- Dual, sexual, or romantic relationships with clients
- Clear violations of strict agency policy
- Failure to correct or improve inadequate performance
- Inability to deal with the emotional and stressful aspects of practice

It is important to understand the purposes, types, processes, and uses of evaluation in social work practice. Evaluation is undertaken to protect

clients, to ensure that quality services are provided, to measure the impact of services and programs on client functioning, to demonstrate effectiveness to funding sources, and to contribute to the professional body of knowledge of the social work profession.

Self-Check 15.2

Video Application Exercise 15.1

This interactive exercise suggest ways to promote clients' success in maintaining the changes and progress they make.

Categories of Social Work Evaluation: What We Are Measuring and Why

The social work profession has committed to evidence-based practice, which is assessed using a variety of evaluation tools and approaches that measure both client progress and social work effectiveness. Each of these approaches is intended to meet a certain evaluative goal, and each results in information that can be used to continually inform the profession and improve practices. **Table 15.1** identifies categories of evaluation approaches commonly used in social services agencies, including both definitions of terms and examples of these approaches. Decide now how these categories could help you organize your thinking about what needs to be evaluated, why it should be measured, and how such measurements are made. Ask your agency field instructor which forms of evaluation your agency uses and why. Use the following table as a basis for this discussion.

Quantitative Evaluation	Qualitative Evaluation
Purpose: To measure intervention outcomes in a numeric manner that allows for quantification of results, analysis of success, and demonstrated level of change	**Purpose:** To measure intervention outcomes using a non-numeric approach that allows for the description of outcomes in subjective, individual, narrative, and non-quantifiable ways
Examples: Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, surveys, questionnaires, external review	**Examples:** Interviews, client satisfaction instruments, narrative evaluation tools, self-evaluation, and report by client/client system
Process Evaluation	**Outcome Evaluation**
Purpose: To measure the intervention process in terms of fidelity, the stages of planned change, monitoring and adapting of objectives, and completion of intervention effort	**Purpose:** To measure the results of the intervention process in terms of level of success, achievement of goals and objectives, and changes over time

Quantitative Evaluation	Qualitative Evaluation
Examples: Completion rates, assessment of fidelity to intervention model, process recordings	**Examples:** Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, surveys, questionnaires, goal attainment scaling, logic model, and longitudinal studies
Evaluation of Social Work Performance	**Evaluation of Client/Client System Progress**
Purpose: To measure the quality and level of performance of a social worker, organization, or social program in achieving the intervention goals and objectives	**Purpose:** To measure the quality and level of progress of a client/client system, which is the target of change in terms of the achievement of the intervention goals and objectives

Quantitative Evaluation	Qualitative Evaluation
Examples: Supervisory feedback, self-assessment, quality assurance, peer review, external review, agency compliance with standards, program evaluation, client satisfaction instruments, advisory board input	**Examples:** Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, achievement of goals and objectives, goal attainment scaling, self-evaluation and report of client/client system, observation, exit interviews, level of functioning scales

Self-Check 15.3

Self-Check 15.4

In some ways, practice evaluations are actually a way of testing practice hypotheses, as described in Chapter 4, "Organizational Context of Practice." Even if they are based on empirical evidence of previous effectiveness, interventions can be seen in every client case as a hypothesis that a specific intervention will be effective with a specific client or client system. **Table 4.1** provides examples of practice hypotheses at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels that you can apply to your agency. Your agency no doubt makes hypotheses about its services

and programs and must find ways to test these hypotheses in meaningful and effective ways. Consider which hypotheses you have proposed in your interventions, reflecting on how your evaluation either does or does not support these hypotheses.

Evaluation in social work is subject to some limitations, including those related to the challenges of measuring intangible processes and progress, which makes it difficult to demonstrate effectiveness at times. Some of what social workers do is hard to measure because it is qualitative in nature, and some of what clients do is also hard to measure for the same reason. For example, measuring a positive helping relationship can be difficult, but such a relationship is central to success with clients. Also, measuring clients' motivation is not always easy, but again this aspect is central to their success. Just because some of what social workers do is hard to measure, that does not mean that evaluation is not essential or should not be emphasized. Rather, it shows what we as social workers need to do better in our efforts to measure our effectiveness.

Agencies wishing to provide services that are demonstrated as effective must develop a **culture of evaluation**, which means that the agency considers evaluation of its services to be as important as the provision of those services. Such a culture leads to the development of **learning organizations**, as described in Chapter 4, "Organizational Context of Practice," which means that the results of evaluation are used for program enhancement. Watch for and ask about whether and to what degree your agency has developed such a culture of evaluation, as defined by the following characteristics:

- Commitment to achieving the agency's mission
- Commitment to measuring effectiveness
- Allocation of time and resources necessary to engage in meaningful evaluation

- Training of staff in the evaluation philosophy, processes, and uses of evaluation to improve practice
- Commitment to developing empirical knowledge on which to base services
- Commitment to innovation in addressing current and emerging social issues
- Creative combination of evaluation techniques to measure in multiple ways
- Using culturally relevant measures of outcomes
- Protocol for sharing the results of evaluation, dissemination of knowledge gained, and utilizing the evaluation results for program improvement and growth

Effective social work organizations are also committed to measuring their work against a set of evaluation concepts. **Table 15.1** lists and defines several evaluation concepts commonly used in social work agencies, showing how the quality of practice spans a continuum from acceptable to highest quality. Discuss these concepts with your agency field instructor and try to determine at which level on the practice quality continuum your agency currently operates.

Table 15.1 Practice Quality Continuum

Evaluation Concept	Definition	Uses
Standard of care ⇩	Generally agreed-upon minimum standard for provision and quality of services	Provides a basic level of expectations for services as understood by practitioners, agencies, and professional organizations
Accepted practice ⇩	Generally agreed-upon approach to the provision of services to clients with specific needs and resources	Provides a common, standardized approach for services to clients with similar needs and resources
Emerging practice ⇩	Innovative and promising approaches that are based on advances in orienting/explanatory theories and the practice models associated with them, but that are not yet fully evaluated empirically	Promotes the development of improved services and outcomes for specific populations, allows for adaptations of accepted practice, and incorporates emerging knowledge into existing practice
Evidence-based practice ⇩	Empirically tested and affirmed approaches that are based on accepted orienting/explanatory theories and that have demonstrated effectiveness over time	Provides standardized and effective services based on empirical testing and allows for ongoing testing of innovative approaches
Best practice	Recommended practice approaches found to be the most effective and of the highest quality, combined with guidelines for incorporation of those approaches into practice at the individual, agency, social policy, or research level, and selected because they are best practices for a given situation based on client preference and suitability	Promotes the highest standards for service provision, provides criteria on which to build interventions, and ensures quality of practice at all levels

Self-Check 15.5

Self-Check 15.6

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

As a student and as a professional social worker, you will be observed, guided, encouraged, assigned tasks, given feedback, and evaluated. In your practicum, your agency field instructor should provide an informal and ongoing critique so that you know how you are doing from week to week. You will be evaluated in a more formal and systematic manner at the end of each academic term, using the evaluation tool required by your agency. This tool will rate you on the specific values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that your school defines as important to your professional development. Obtain a copy of this evaluation tool early in your practicum so that you will have opportunities to learn and grow in each of the areas of performance to be evaluated. You may also be evaluated on the completion of the tasks, projects, and activities that you planned at the beginning of your practicum. Review your learning goals for the practicum regularly to determine whether you are making satisfactory progress.

Your agency field instructor and your faculty supervisor will ask for your opinion on how the practicum is proceeding and how you evaluate your own performance and growth. They may also ask for any suggestions or questions you might have. You may be asked the following questions as they evaluate you and continue to structure your learning:

Your learning and growth at the time of the evaluation

- Are the tasks and activities that you are performing different from what you expected?
- Are the demands on your time reasonable?
- Do you get enough supervision, and has it been helpful?
- Is this the right type of social work practice and practicum setting for you?
- Which aspects of practice in this agency are most and least appealing?
- How well do you get along with agency staff?
- Which practicum tasks have you completed most and least successfully?
- Have you been able to strike a workable balance between the demands of the practicum, your other academic work, and your personal life and responsibilities?

Your plans and expectations for the next phase of your practicum

- What do you hope to learn and accomplish in the next month? By the time you complete your practicum?
- Which new or additional learning experiences do you want or need?
- Have any experiences you hoped to have not been available to you?
- Has this experience advanced your career goals?
- What can be done to improve the learning experience for the next practicum student?
- Do you have other comments, complaints, observations, or questions?

When your agency field instructor evaluates you as a student, he or she is concurrently evaluating your potential as a professional social worker. Although he or she is officially evaluating you as a student, the agency field instructor's major responsibility is to supervise social workers, so undoubtedly he or she is already thinking about you as a social worker

when you complete your practicum. In light of that, your agency field instructor may also ask himself or herself the following questions:

- Has this student demonstrated dependability and professionally responsible behavior?
- Can this individual be counted on in a stressful and demanding situation?
- Would this student be able to handle a social work position in this agency?
- Would I want this person to be a social worker for my mother? For my child? For a good friend of mine?
- Would I be willing to write a strong letter of recommendation for this student?
- Would I hire this person for a social work job?

Think of the evaluation as a learning experience that can help you become more self-aware, insightful, and skilled. Become aware of any feelings of inadequacy or any emotional triggers that might be activated during the process of evaluation. If you know what they are, you will be more likely to benefit from supervision and suggestions for improvement than if you lack this level of self-awareness. Also prepare yourself intellectually and emotionally for the formal evaluation session so that you will be open to hearing feedback about your performance. Refer to the parallel processes of student and client in regard to intervention and evaluation described in Chapter 3, "Learning from Supervision," which highlight the similarities between students and clients in terms of ambivalent feelings toward being observed and evaluated. Understanding these parallels will help you become more empathetic with your clients. Although it may be difficult to hear a frank appraisal of your work, avoid becoming defensive. Consider this feedback carefully and work to improve in the areas noted as deficient, recognizing that feedback is actually a gift intended to make you a better practitioner.

In addition to constructive criticism, you will receive positive feedback related to areas in which you are doing well. Take note of what your agency field instructor sees as your skills and gifts. If you want more specific feedback about what you have done well so that you know what your skills or abilities are, ask for it. Review the Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths in Chapter 1, "Purpose and Expectations for Practicum," and complete the assessment again as a post-test. Compare your self-assessment of your practice strengths at the end of your practicum with the one you completed at the outset of your practicum to determine if the strengths you initially identified have been demonstrated in your performance, and if the ones you did not identify earlier have been developed over time. It will be helpful to review your professional growth to this point in practicum. Your progress over this time underscores the fact that throughout your career you will continue to develop the strengths needed for professional practice.

Strive to understand what your agency field instructor observed in your performance that led to a particular conclusion concerning your work. Seek descriptions and examples of any poor performance, and ask for specific suggestions on how you can improve. Request descriptions of your performance in specific areas that were rated higher than your performance in most other areas. Reflect on these descriptions and determine why you perform some tasks and activities better than others. If you and your agency field instructor disagree on the adequacy of your performance, prepare factual documentation supporting your point of view. However, if you agree that your performance is deficient, it is best to acknowledge the problem and set goals to improve.

Although you are just beginning your practice as a social worker, you have much to offer. Ask for opportunities to engage in more challenging and complex tasks as well as chances to repeat tasks so that you can develop some level of mastery and expertise. Build on those gifts,

attributes, values, and skills over time, knowing that professional growth is your responsibility. Continue to evaluate your own growth, expecting yourself to continuously acquire new learning, exhibit new skills, and advance your practice.

Finally, reflect on the ways in which your performance in practicum needs improvement so that your future interventions will be successful. Consider the connection between your competence, the effectiveness of your interventions, and the level of successful outcomes. There are many explanations for the level of success in interventions, and learning from interventions that would not be considered effective can teach us a great deal. Lack of desired success or disappointment in the outcomes of an intervention can be traced to a variety of factors, including those described in **Table 15.2**. Use the information in this table to help you reflect upon and discuss with your agency field instructor or faculty supervisor the ways in which your success or the success of your clients could be explained in relation to these factors. Consider in retrospect how your work could have been better with this knowledge, as well as how future interventions could be enhanced as you learn about what contributes to and detracts from successful interventions.

Table 15.2 **Client and Client Systems Contributors to Ineffective Interventions**

Micro-Level Practice	
Individual client	• Lack of ability, self-efficacy, capacity, and motivation • Little social support • Multi-problem situation • Involuntary involvement
Family	• Lack of ability, unity, capacity, and motivation • Dysfunctional patterns and skills • Complex family situation • Involuntary involvement
Mezzo-Level Practice	
Group	• Lack of group cohesion and goals • Lack of participation by all members • Lack of motivation • Involuntary and disruptive members
Organization	• Lack of clear mission and goals • Insufficient resources and funding • Political factors impeding interventions • Culturally insensitive practices and services
Macro-Level Practice	

Micro-Level Practice	
Community	• Factions working against each other • Negative social conditions within the community • Political factors impeding community development • Lack of resources and funding
Social policy	• Political climate and debates • Lack of cohesion, partners, and coalitions • Inappropriate timing • Low prioritization by policy makers

Video Application Exercise 15.2

This interactive exercise explains how relapse can be viewed as an expected event, and how to help clients learn from relapses.

Critical Reflective Practice

Even though you are a student who will be evaluated by your agency and your university, when you enter professional practice, you will be expected to engage in **critical self-reflective practice**. It will be your own responsibility to examine yourself, your knowledge, your abilities, and your need for improvement. Such self-reflection is actually more about adopting an open, honest, and humble attitude about yourself as a professional than it is about applying a specific technique. Openness to learning about yourself will result in new insights because others will see that you are open, you want to grow, you try not to become defensive, and you care about the quality of your work. Start now to think about how you will do this, because no doubt you want to become better over time. This critical analysis of yourself will require that you look within, seek the input of others, and be willing to use what you learn about yourself to devise a plan for growth and potentially for self-correction.

The following table highlights how self-awareness can lead to professional growth, in terms of both insight into yourself and insight into your interpersonal actions. In the right-hand column, identity specific avenues for your own professional growth that you can act on now. Open yourself to self-reflection on what you know and need to know about yourself, and think hard about how you can gain insights into your interpersonal skills as they impact your work.

Personal Insights	Avenues for Growth
Biases identified	Identify and reduce biases over time
Values clarified	Act on personal and professional values
Need for openness and nondefensiveness	View insights as helpful and not self-critical
Recognize negative impact of work on well-being	Deal with stresses and challenges productively
Personal issues not addressed adequately	Engage in counseling to avoid impact on clients

Interpersonal Insights	Avenues for Growth
Recognition of position and privilege	Address impact of your privilege on others
Become aware of assumptions	Refrain from making assumptions about others
Recognition of counter-transference	Maintain professional boundaries
See impact of self-disclosure on clients	Use self-disclosure for client benefit only
Become aware of your impact on others	Use self as a mechanism for positive impact

Self-Check 15.7

Self-Check 15.8

While you as a social worker should engage in individual self-reflective practice, agencies that are committed to providing quality services also must engage in **organizational self-reflective practice**. As mentioned in Chapter 4, "Organizational Context of Practice," agencies that evaluate themselves and that use the results of their evaluation to improve themselves are considered to be learning organizations. Such agencies learn from what they do well and what they could do better, and they enhance, improve, and sometimes overhaul their programs. Even though you as a student may not be involved in the overall evaluation of your agency, pay attention to the program evaluation being done and look for opportunities to become involved if possible.

Many agencies experience challenges when measuring their outcomes, and for many reasons. Meaningful evaluation takes time and money, but it also takes commitment to engage in assessment of outcomes over time. Moreover, it requires that the results of program evaluation be applied for the purposes of program enhancement. Because of these challenges, a number of potential pitfalls are associated with evaluation, related to the level of commitment to self-evaluation, poor-quality evaluation design and implementation, and failure to use the results of evaluation for program improvement. **Table 15.3** lists several of these pitfalls and their potential outcomes that may reduce the quality and use of evaluation for program enhancement.

Table 15.3 **Evaluation Pitfalls and Their Outcomes**

Evaluation Pitfalls	Potential Outcomes
Low Level of Commitment to Evaluation	
Evaluation done because of external requirements only	Design, implementation, and dissemination not used for program improvement
Adequate time and resources not committed	Design and implementation likely to be substandard
Agency goals unclear and hard to measure	Measures and results not accurate or meaningful
Low Quality of Evaluation Design and Implementation	
Confusing the process with the outcome	Process measures do not evaluate outcomes
Failing to use multiple measures	Achieve limited results
Using only qualitative or quantitative measures	Achieve partial view of program
Failing to include client input and feedback	Client-centered services compromised

Evaluation Pitfalls	Potential Outcomes
Lack of rigorous evaluation design	Poor design does not show real outcomes
Staff not trained in evaluation	Poor design and implementation
Failing to address diversity in design	Diverse client views left out of results

Results Not Used for Program Improvement

Results not shared with all staff	Staff unable to use results for program improvement
Results not related to mission and goals	Results not meaningful in relation to mission
Results not integrated into program planning	Reduced chance that program will improve

Finally, think about the importance of **celebrating successful outcomes**, especially those related to clients and client systems. Remember that even though you worked hard to help clients, ultimately it is their success to be celebrated. Although you can take gratification from such good outcomes, refrain from taking all the credit for success. In addition, your definition of and expectations for success may not be the same as those of your clients. In most situations, except perhaps at times in involuntary

situations, clients are the ones who define what success is and to what degree it has been achieved.

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about evaluating practice into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge about evaluation in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself to evaluate professional practice. Following are two exercises designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths Post-Test

Refer to the Self-Assessment of Practice Strengths in Chapter 1 that you completed at the outset of your practicum as a pretest measure of your strengths for practicum. Complete it again now that your practicum is completed, and analyze the areas in which you have shown significant professional growth as well as the areas in which you still need development.

Perspectives on Partial Success

Not all interventions are totally successful. Some achieve all the goals set by the social worker and the client, some achieve none of these goals, and most achieve some of the goals to some degree. Some of what social workers do is difficult to measure because it is qualitative in nature, and some of what clients do is also difficult to measure for the same reason. Examine the following examples of partial success. Record possible reasons for these outcomes, as well as what can be learned from them.

1. Slower pace of change than anticipated

   _____

2. A smaller degree of change than hoped for

   _____

3. Incremental change over time that eventually reached goals

   _____

4. Insight gained by client but not significant change

   _____

5. Increased level of motivation

   _____

   _

6. Strengths identified by client

   _____

   _

Video Application Exercise 15.3

This interactive exercise describes ways to help clients understand and build upon their successes to address future challenges.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Based on your practicum experiences, what research project would answer the questions you have about practice?
2. On what research is your agency's approach based?
3. What is the relationship between the evaluation of social work practice and social justice?
4. How can you use the experience of being evaluated as a student to improve your effectiveness as a social worker?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Compare the practicum evaluation instrument used by your school with the evaluation tool used to evaluate the performance of social workers in your agency. This will help you identify what is expected of social workers that is not expected of practicum students.
- Evaluate yourself using both your school's evaluation instrument and the sample tool in the learning agreement/evaluation tool for generalist social work in Chapter 2, "Implementing a Learning Plan."
- Identify fears you may have about being evaluated, and discuss them with your supervisor.
- Talk with other practicum students about their experiences with the evaluation process.

Chapter Review 15.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Chapter 16

Professional and Personal Identity

Learning Outcomes

- Integrate personal and professional perspectives on social work practice.
- Develop a self-care plan.
- Understand the dynamics of a satisfying professional career.
- Identify the need for ongoing professional development.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Factors Contributing to Professional Satisfaction

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Matching Self-Care Strategies with Sources of Stress

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Professional Development Plan

Values Reflection

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

This chapter offers you the opportunity to learn how to **integrate the personal and professional aspects of social work as a profession**. Your commitment to helping others, facilitating social change, and contributing to social justice has very likely led you to choose social work as a profession. Ideally, your practicum experience has reaffirmed your commitment to the profession and enhanced your knowledge and skills. Your commitment to ensuring the welfare of others, making a significant difference in the world, and promoting social justice has likely been reinforced up to this point in time, and reflecting on the integration of you as a person with you as a professional will help you consider the relationship between these two aspects of your life.

Managing the demands of your professional and personal lives also involves learning effective ways to engage in a personally meaningful profession while simultaneously promoting balance through **effective self-care strategies**. This chapter provides information on burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma, as well as reflective questions designed to stimulate critical thinking about the **personal challenges of social work as a profession**. You have learned in theory in the classroom how important it is to maintain balance in your social work practice to avoid burnout or compassion fatigue, and now you will have the opportunity to put that knowledge into practice.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Each of us brings our unique personality and set of abilities and interests to our profession. In addition, each profession has a discrete set of demands and required skills for those who select it. For you to be satisfied and effective as a social worker, there must be a good match between you and the profession as well as a good balance between your personal and professional selves. Understanding how to use yourself as a professional tool, which requires self-awareness, commitment to professional values, and ongoing professional growth, will help you serve your clients well.

Many social workers describe themselves as called to the profession of social work because they are committed to and passionate about helping others, and because they find the profession's values compatible with their own. They want to make a positive contribution to their community and to the world, and they see that the practice of social work is a way of doing that. Some also feel drawn to this profession because events and experiences in their lives have opened their eyes to certain problems and to the needs of other people. Others are attracted to social work because they have the natural skills and abilities necessary to the profession and see social work education as a formal way of acquiring the ability to make even more impact in terms of social justice. Most are drawn to social work by virtue of the way they think the world should be, the responsibility they feel to act on behalf of others, and the belief that they are compelled to become involved in social justice efforts. It is likely that you feel this calling in some way yourself.

Self-Check 16.1

When preparing for such a rewarding and challenging career, it is important to become skilled in merging the personal and professional aspects of practice. Social workers must have a high level of self-awareness so they can make good choices in relation to the type of job they seek, practice self-care and stress management, and balance their personal and professional responsibilities. They must be aware of their unique gifts and values, which will enhance their practice. Just as important is an awareness of their biases and the need for ongoing self-reflection. Such self-awareness is critical to becoming a professional whose effectiveness is enhanced by effective engagements with clients. Social workers must understand how their particular style and manner of interacting are perceived by others, especially by their clients.

Those planning to enter social work must be emotionally healthy, skilled in communication, able to build and maintain relationships, able to manage stress, and willing to continually learn and grow, both personally and professionally. Supervision can help social workers become aware of any issues they need to work on that might limit their effectiveness, and some social workers engage in counseling themselves when needed. A continual commitment to introspection is required to remain healthy in a demanding career like social work. Social workers face a career-long challenge to maintain a balanced perspective on both their personal and professional lives and commitments, and to maintain them in such a manner that they both flourish and mutually reinforce each other.

Finding this balance is critical because it is all too easy to allow your concerns for clients to overwhelm you and spill over into your personal

life. You may worry about your clients or take more responsibility for them than is healthy for you. It is important to set clear **professional boundaries** between your personal life and your work early in your career. Doing so will help you retain your energy, enthusiasm, and optimism while also preventing discouragement and burnout. Ask your agency field instructor for suggestions on how to recognize threats to healthy boundaries and what to do when action is needed. Learn how to set limits by defining and maintaining personal and professional boundaries. Establishing these lines will enable you to maintain your level of well-being, make time for your family and yourself, and maintain a positive outlook on clients and the work you do.

It is not too early to think about your career satisfaction and how to achieve this goal by determining what contributes to that kind of satisfaction. There is a strong relationship between career satisfaction and the quality of one's life overall. Those professionals who maintain a healthy perspective on themselves and their work, continue to learn and grow, remain optimistic, and continuously grow in their skills are likely to experience satisfaction in their careers. Contextual and organizational factors also contribute to career satisfaction and longevity among social workers committed to the profession. Finally, societal factors make very important contributions to the context that either supports or undermines professional satisfaction and success. These three categories of contributing factors are highlighted next, providing an example of the ways in which the social work profession and the social systems surrounding it interact over time, ultimately impacting both clients and the professionals serving them.

Self-Check 16.2

Self-Check 16.3

Video Application Exercise 16.1

This interactive exercise reinforces the need to maintain professional boundaries to maintain balance and avoid burnout.

Factors Contributing to Professional Satisfaction

Individual contributors to professional satisfaction with your career are definitely within your control. Organizational contributors, although not directly under your control, will affect you on a daily basis, and can be influenced somewhat by your way of selecting and interacting within an agency. Societal contributors are mostly outside your control, but if you take a macro perspective on your work and look for positive societal attitudes and resources, this effort will help you balance other negative societal influences. You will need to find a way to negotiate the societal context of your practice, as doing so can empower you to find satisfaction as a social worker. Use the following table to record specific goals for achieving and maintaining professional satisfaction as a social worker.

Individual Contributors to Professional Satisfaction	Goals to Maintain Professional Satisfaction
• Knowledge and skills necessary for effective practice • Personal values consistent with professional goals • Balance of collaborative and autonomous approach to work • Optimism, enthusiasm, self-efficacy, ability to manage stress, and belief in possibilities • Flexibility, openness, and commitment to professional growth	• Example: Engage in ongoing professional training to enhance knowledge and skills • • •
Organizational Contributors to Professional Satisfaction	**Goals to Achieve Professional Satisfaction**

Individual Contributors to Professional Satisfaction	Goals to Maintain Professional Satisfaction
• Agency support, training, and supervision • Reasonable workload and adequate organizational funding • Opportunities for professional growth and creativity • Inclusion in agency vision, mission, and program development • Collegiality, sharing of responsibility, and empowerment	• Example: Take advantage of supervision that teaches you and supports your growth • • •
Societal Contributors to Professional Satisfaction	**Goals to Achieve Professional Satisfaction**

Individual Contributors to Professional Satisfaction	Goals to Maintain Professional Satisfaction
• Political economy supportive of social justice efforts • Positive societal attitudes toward clients and profession • Effective social policies that support social work efforts • Societal commitment to prevention of social problems • Societal commitment to promotion of social justice • Societal support of social work mission	• Example: Engage in policy practice to advocate for socially just policies • • •

Keep these factors in mind as you begin your search for a professional position in the field of social work. The work itself will be both challenging and rewarding, so the work environment and surrounding society should also contribute to your overall well-being as a professional.

Self-Check 16.4

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Actual social work practice requires an **integration of professional knowledge, skills, ethics, and self-awareness**. It is not enough to know about people, to have skills, to know theories, or to understand models and techniques. Indeed, having all the skills and knowledge in the world is not enough to make you an effective social worker. You also need to bring your personal gifts, strengths, creativity, passion, and commitment to the social work profession. It is through the unique blending of your personal qualities and your professional education that you will become a truly skilled and qualified social worker.

Watch for opportunities to continuously enhance your professional growth. For example, read professional books and journals, attend workshops and in-service training, try out new skills and techniques, think critically about intervention strategies, carefully observe the behavior and practice of social workers in your agency, and spend time talking with knowledgeable and skilled practitioners. Engage in critical self-reflection, asking yourself and trusted colleagues what you can do to continue growing. Open yourself to feedback so that you see yourself as others do. You will certainly recognize your own growth over time, and this will not only reinforce your choice of social work as a profession but also remind you of the importance of self-awareness as a tool for helping others.

Reflexive social work practice becomes easier to engage in over time. Students learning from practice mistakes and successes tend to focus on what they do wrong. They do not necessarily know how to learn and grow from mistakes. They can, however, learn to analyze their work and

determine how it could be improved or how they could grow as professionals. New social workers often think retrospectively about interactions after they take place, committing to continuous improvement. Although this post-engagement reflection is certainly helpful, the eventual goal is to analyze your effectiveness **while you are engaged in interventions**, instead of after they take place. As social workers mature as professionals, they become able to engage in meaningful reflection during their engagements with clients and other professionals, adapting their approaches at the time they are actually practicing. This is an immense step toward professional growth, because it allows for self-critique while actually interacting with clients.

Because feedback from your trusted colleagues and supervisors will help you on this professional and personal journey, ask for feedback on your work, your skills, and your need for growth from coworkers, your agency field instructor, and clients. Use this information to better understand who you are as a social worker, what you have to offer, and what you may need to change to become a skilled and effective social worker. You are certain to see that you have grown over time, your questions have become more probing and sophisticated, and your reflections are more informed. This evolution will reinforce the fact that you are growing as a professional. Your practicum is relevant preparation for both practice and the job market. Do your best and remember that the skills you develop now, combined with favorable evaluations and recommendations from your agency field instructor, can help you obtain employment in the profession. Your colleagues and supervisors will give you feedback more readily than clients will, but if you ask for specific feedback and suggestions from your clients, you will likely learn some things your supervisors don't know and which could help you greatly.

Observe how social workers in your agency deal with challenges such as high caseloads, potentially modest salaries, unmotivated and difficult

clients, seemingly intractable social problems, funding cuts, and the stress of dealing with deeply emotional and painful situations daily. Begin now to develop stress management skills and habits that can help you avoid excessive job-related stress or burnout. Think about how you will deal with the stresses and challenges of professional social work. Learn how to avoid the negative consequences of stress for yourself and maintain your optimism and belief in possibility.

Video Application Exercise 16.2

This interactive exercise provides an example of the need to develop and abide by policies that help to maintain professional boundaries.

You will need to find ways to avoid **burnout**, which is the result of overworking, lack of support, and the inability to balance the demands of work with your personal life. You also need to be aware of and avoid **compassion fatigue**, which is a result of caring about the welfare of others but not managing the harmful impact of extending themselves to benefit clients over time. Finally, make certain you understand the phenomenon of **secondary/vicarious traumatic stress**, which is the negative impact on social workers from bearing witness to the pain and suffering of others and taking on the pain and trauma themselves. All of these problems are risks in social work, and you must find a way to prevent them from happening, deal with them productively should they occur, and help others in the social work profession stay healthy as well.

Your original practicum learning plan, described in Chapter 2 and implemented throughout your practicum experience, included a goal of

developing a self-care plan. Since you developed that plan, you have seen the personal challenges involved in maintaining balance and health personally and professionally. Now that you have seen and experienced the stresses inherent in social work practice, you need to seriously make and implement a plan that will help you to anticipate, recognize, and prevent the negative impacts of this work on your life in many areas.

Self-Check 16.5

Matching Self-Care Strategies with Sources of Stress

To manage the challenges inherent in social work practice and maintain the quality of both your personal and professional lives, it is important to identify both the **sources of stress** and potential **strategies for dealing effectively with them**. As part of this quest, it helps to understand the holistic nature of the challenges of social work, including stressors in the physical, intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual realms of life and practice. When you experience stress in any of these areas of your professional life, you can design a holistic self-care strategy that employs approaches in a variety of areas. Doing so will encourage you to thoughtfully identify the realms of your life in which you might potentially experience stress as a social worker. It also provides a way to identify individualized strategies to manage the stresses in these areas by engaging in self-care activities in these same realms of your life. Apply the self-care model presented here to yourself by identifying the areas of stress you have experienced during your practicum and designing and committing to self-care strategies that will help you manage this stress and keep you fresh, optimistic, and healthy.

	Physical Strategies	Intellectual Strategies	Psychological Strategies
	Exercise, nutrition, healthy practices	**Continuing education, professional reading**	**Counseling, stress management, peer support**
Physical Stressors Fatigue, overwork, neglected health and fitness			
Intellectual Stressors Continual need to learn new techniques and expand knowledge			

Psychological Stressors Worry, anxiety, stress, guilt, countertransference, inadequate coping skills			
Social Stressors Impact of work on relationships, dealing with colleagues and supervisors			
Cultural Stressors Cross-cultural differences, discomfort with diversity			
Spiritual Stressors Impact of work on values and belief system			

Self-Check 16.6

Begin now to develop the habit of monitoring your own professional growth. Because professional growth involves a vision of the profession, professional development, and the ability to envision future issues and challenges, ask yourself these questions regularly, knowing that your responses will help you to design a professional development plan and adjust it over time.

Vision of Social Work Practice

- In what way do I feel a calling to the profession of social work?
- What is my vision for myself as a social worker?
- What impact do I hope to make as a social worker?
- What can I contribute to my clients and my profession?

Professional Development

- What social work values are most important to me as I embark on this career, and how can I maintain my commitment to them?
- Am I growing as a person and a professional? How can I keep growing?
- How has self-reflection improved my personal and professional lives?
- Am I satisfied with who I am and what I am doing?

Envisioning the Future and Its Challenges

- How can I maintain my commitment in the face of the challenges and stresses of the profession?
- How can I remain optimistic and see the potential, possibility, and strengths of clients in light of serious social problems and what sometimes seems hopeless?
- What self-care activities can I engage in to maintain energy and optimism?
- After 5, 10, or 15 years in the profession, in what type of social work do I expect to be engaged?

Self-Check 16.7

Self-Check 16.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about balancing self and profession within your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for a balanced personal life and professional practice. The following exercises are designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Professional Development Plan

Using the following format, begin the process of developing a written professional development plan. You may add additional areas of development on which to focus your time and energy. These categories of professional development can help you identify the areas in which you will need additional training, education, and supervision to reach your goals. Putting your professional development plan into writing and reviewing it often will make it more likely that you will find ways to implement and adapt it as needed.

Areas for Professional Development	Goals and Plan	Timeline
Knowledge Attainment		
Continuing education		
Research		
Skills Acquisition		
Advanced training		
Specialty development		
Social Work Role Mastery		
Seeking supervision		
Using mentoring		
Credentials		
Degrees and certificates		
Licensure		
Professional Collaboration		

Areas for Professional Development	Goals and Plan	Timeline
Social work community of practice		
Interdisciplinary community of practice		

Values Reflection

Because social work is a values-driven profession, and because your personal values have led you to the field of social work, it is a good exercise to continually reflect on your values and the ways in which they are strengthened, changed, or questioned. Use this tool to help yourself, now and in the future, to examine the values that underly your professional life. Consider the reasons for the dynamic nature of personal and professional values, and devise a preliminary plan for engaging in continuous examination of your values. This could include such values as commitment to the welfare of others, integrity, self-awareness, spirituality, and professional growth. Doing so will help you identify professional goals, recognize stress, clarify areas of commitment, and identify desired professional changes.

Personal/Professional Values	Changes Experienced in Values	Plan for a Values-Driven Profession
Example: Commitment to the welfare of others	Keeping my commitment impacts my personal life negatively	Examine and adjust professional work life

Video Application Exercise 16.3

This interactive exercise shows how social workers can learn to tolerate ambiguous situations and support clients' wishes that may differ from their own.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. In what ways can reflection and self-regulation be used to maintain a healthy balance between your personal and professional lives?
2. In what important way is the ability to maintain a balance between personal and professional lives a practice that advances social justice?
3. How can the questions you have during practicum translate into actual research that increases your knowledge?
4. In what ways is the use of empathy with clients a potential risk factor for the personal and professional well-being of social workers?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Interview experienced social workers in your agency and in other agencies. Ask about their level of job satisfaction as well as their strategies for self-care.
- Speak with social workers who have obtained advanced degrees (MSW, PhD, or DSW) and ask them to help you consider the possibility of further education.
- Observe the self-care practices of those around you and adopt those that match your needs.
- Determine the ways in which your agency supports its workers in terms of self-care, stress management, and critical incident debriefing in the face of very challenging situations.
- Examine the social work job openings advertised in local and regional newspapers, public agency postings, and in NASW publications.

Chapter Review 16.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

References and Recommended Readings

Birkenmaier, Julie, and Marla Berg-Weger. *The Practicum Companion for Social Work: Integrating Class and Field Work*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2011.

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Schon, Donald A., and Aleksandr Romanovich Luria. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

Seden, Janet, Sarah Matthews, Mick McCormick, and Alun Morgan. *Professional Development in Social Work: Complex Issues in Practice*. Clifton, NJ: Routledge, 2010.

Skovholt, Thomas, and Michelle Trotter-Mathison. *The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout Prevention and Self-Care Strategies for Counselors, Therapist, Teachers, and Health Professionals*. 2nd ed. Clifton, NJ: Routledge, 2010.

Chapter 17

Leadership and Social Justice

Learning Outcomes

- Summarize the role and characteristics of leaders.
- Understand blocking and building leadership approaches to promote social justice.
- Summarize emerging issues requiring effective social work leadership.
- Commit to a leadership development plan.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Preview

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

Sources of Knowledge

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

Leadership Issues for the Future

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

Metaphors for Social Work Practice

Critical Thinking Questions

Suggested Learning Activities

References and Recommended Readings

Chapter Preview

Now that your practicum is nearing its completion, you have nearly fulfilled all the requirements necessary to obtain your degree. You are in a time of transition. No doubt you are excited about job possibilities and thinking seriously about the personal satisfaction of—and ramifications of—entering the world of social work. You may have also given some thought to the role of social work leaders in the profession, having observed and been inspired by the effective and thoughtful leaders you have worked with or observed. Although you are just finishing your academic program, now is a good time to plan for your potential leadership role in social work. This chapter invites you to **reflect on your transition from professional to leader**. It provides information about the **roles and characteristics of leaders** in social work, and it emphasizes the need for professional development to **assume leadership in promoting social justice**.

Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum

The mission of social work is rooted in social change and **social justice**, and ideally your practicum will have reinforced the importance and centrality of that emphasis to your work. Whether your professional work finds you working at the micro, mezzo, or macro level, social justice is always at the forefront of social work. Because of the ongoing and challenging nature of the fight for social justice, social workers must **embrace the role of leader** to achieve the goals of social justice. In the best-case scenario, your journey as a social worker will involve a professional life filled with meaning and purpose, and in addition, you will emerge as a leader within your community and the profession you have chosen based on a commitment to social justice.

Perhaps you do not think that being a leader is a realistic goal now because you are just entering the field, but leadership opportunities often present themselves before professionals believe they are ready to assume this responsibility. It is both exciting and perhaps daunting to think about being a social worker considering the numerous social problems facing people and society in general. Obviously, there are many problems to be addressed and numerous clients to be served. No doubt you believe that injustices must be challenged and many programs need to be envisioned, designed, or improved. There is much to be done and not enough resources devoted to the challenge. You also have much more to learn as you move from the academic world of a practicum student to the real world of the professional social worker. A great deal is expected of social workers, and much responsibility is given to them.

Because you have completed the requirements for a social work degree in a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, your professors and agency field instructor have concluded that you are ready to begin the practice of social work. Although you may still feel anxious and not quite prepared to assume the full responsibilities of a social worker, let alone become a leader, your professors and supervisors believe that you possess the knowledge and basic skills necessary to move into a social service agency and apply what you have learned. Do not underestimate what you have learned and what you are capable of doing. You are now becoming a professional social worker by virtue of all you have learned and all the ways that you have demonstrated your competence and commitment to ethical practice.

Social work is a profession deeply committed, by both its history and its current mission, to creating communities and a society that will nurture the well-being of individuals and families and to making sure that all people have access to the basic resources and opportunities necessary to live with dignity. You have entered a profession that is committed to challenging systems and institutional structures that do not treat people in a fair and humane manner. To respond to that mission will require significant leadership skills, and now is the time to commit to acquiring them.

Good social work practitioners and leaders view the practice of social work as much more than simply the tasks and activities listed in their job description or referred to in their agency's mission statement. They work hard at whatever they are hired to do, but also embrace additional responsibilities that they identify and care about because of their commitment to the welfare of others. Social work, at its unique best, involves going beyond one's job description and acting on a commitment to social justice. It means weaving together networks of people and resources to create synergy that can bring about needed changes at the

community, state, and national levels. A social work leader sees what is possible and is not constrained by a job description or by limited resources. A leader develops a vision, knows what needs to be done, and makes things happen. Whatever your job description might say, the entire spectrum of social functioning is germane to your work. If you do micro-level social work, many larger social systems will be the context for your work. If you engage in macro-level social work, your efforts will be undertaken on behalf of many individuals and families. Commit now to always looking for the connections between social systems to enhance social functioning at all levels.

Video Application Exercise 17.1

This interactive exercise offers the opportunity to reflect on how organizational leaders impact both social workers and the clients whom they serve.

Entering the profession and working toward a **leadership way of thinking**, you will see how the realities and time pressures associated with employment in an agency tend to set in motion a number of forces that might narrow the range of your concerns, interests, and vision. You will feel very busy with all the demands of your job, yet you must also find ways to be involved in social issues beyond the official scope of your work responsibilities. Doing so will help remind you that others care about their work as much as you do, and can serve as a source of inspiration for you. Strive to maintain a wide range of interests, involvements, and professional activities. Seek out new ideas, even when they are not immediately applicable in your everyday work. If you become competent in a variety of approaches, you will prepare yourself

for leadership by virtue of your knowledge and ability to bring various strategies to your work. In addition, you will need to observe, understand, and work within the organizational culture of your agency, committing to supporting what it does well while challenging it to become even better.

To know whether you are being effective over time, and to develop the expertise needed for practice, you will need to document your work and study the outcomes of your practice, both individually and in concert with other professionals and agencies. Be ready to change your approach if you are not being as effective as you had hoped or think is possible. Needless to say, much of what social workers do and much of what clients experience is difficult to measure, but you should resist the temptation to use the sometimes intangible nature of social work as an excuse for not making a genuine effort to evaluate your practice. You can improve your practice when you are willing to look at it critically and allow others to offer constructive criticism. The clients and communities you will serve deserve this level of program improvement as a matter of social justice, and as a leader in the work of social justice efforts, you will need to commit to the belief that evaluation is necessary. Ethical social workers are committed to ongoing, continual improvement in their practice, knowing that clients deserve the best services they can provide.

To build your knowledge base, recognize that you have many sources of knowledge to explore and tap. Each offers a distinct perspective on knowledge, and multiple sources can be combined as you proceed through your career. It is important to use evidence-based knowledge rooted in empirical and scientific studies, but it is also important to remember that many other sources of useful knowledge exist. Thus, you should avoid using only the **positivist view of knowledge building**, which rests primarily on the scientific method of understanding. You have learned how theories of orientation explain the human experience,

and how practice theories and models construct practice responses to human needs. However, you also need **practice wisdom**, which is the collective professional experiences and observations of seasoned practitioners. Social workers who learn from other sources such as alternative or emerging theories, qualitative research, and the deconstruction of assumptions we might make without even knowing that we do so are operating with a **postmodern view of knowledge**, which says that knowledge is derived from many sources, not all empirical, and that we sometimes must unlearn what we think we know. Finally, learn from your clients as you listen to their stories and experience, and add their expertise to yours.

Self-Check 17.1

Sources of Knowledge

Widely varying sources of knowledge will be exactly what you need for practice. Read and reflect on the information provided in the following table, which describes the contributions and limitations of understanding a variety of sources of knowledge. Each source of knowledge has a specific focus and contribution to make to your knowledge, yet each source of knowledge is not sufficient by itself. Commit yourself to learning from these sources over time, looking for ways to increase your understanding.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Theory	Orienting theories provide guidance for describing and understanding. Practice theories provide models and techniques for intervention.	Orienting theories are guides only, and do not always consider individuality and diversity. Practice theories must be tested and used with intention.	Example: Theories explaining human development are too general at times, not accounting for differences related to gender.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Empirical evidence	Research tests for effectiveness of interventions. Research leads to evidence-based and best practices.	Research can lead to a tendency toward reductionism and adopting a deterministic view of clients. Interventions are only considered best practices when they are best for and matched to individual clients and systems.	Example: Studies do not always suggest ways that agencies can implement their findings.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Postmodern thought	Postmodern thought suggests that not all knowledge needed for practice is empirical. Postmodern thought avoids conclusions based on empiricism alone.	Empirical knowledge must be accompanied by postmodern thought to be complete. Postmodern thought is broad and can be difficult to test or apply.	Example: It may not be ethical to try techniques that have not yet been tested on vulnerable clients.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Practice wisdom	Practice wisdom promotes self-reflection and professional growth. Practice wisdom provides opportunities for refinement of knowledge.	Practice wisdom alone is incomplete. Knowledge gained in practice may be biased and untested.	Example: Social workers who rely only on their practice wisdom may be too limited in their understanding.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Client accounts	Client accounts are reminders that clients are the experts on their lives. Client accounts are reminders of whose values are central.	Client accounts may be incomplete, biased, and lacking in insight. Client accounts may not take into account other perspectives.	Example: Clients can provide insight, but that knowledge does not apply to everyone.

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Interdisciplinary knowledge	Knowledge outside social work provides a broad scope of information. Knowledge outside social work provides the basis for intervention.	Knowledge outside social work is not based on the same values as social work. Knowledge outside social work must be synthesized into a coherent whole.	Example: The ethics of other professions may focus less on social justice than the ethics of social work.

Becoming involved in local, statewide, national, or international **professional organizations** outside of your agency can support your work, challenge you intellectually, and remind you to engage with others who are involved in the struggle to create a just society. Professional organizations promote a profession or an issue, often providing

continuing education, specialty credentials, and advocacy for social workers, including legal defense funds should they be needed. Some professional organizations focus on social work issues only, whereas others address a particular social problem or area of practice. Both are extremely useful, so watch for opportunities to become involved in them.

Remember that you are expected to contribute to the ongoing development and shaping of the profession, including mentoring students. Social work educators who will have trained the students you supervise need to hear your observations and suggestions just as much as clients need your skills. You will be expected to voice your opinions about directions you believe the profession should take based on your observations and your projections of future needs. Deciding to live and work in the world of ideas and questions and committing to lifelong learning are important activities for social workers to remain effective over time. You can take numerous approaches to continue learning and growing, which will not only make you more effective but also make you a better, more informed, and more capable practitioner. This will require an ongoing commitment to self-awareness and the use of self.

Recognizing your ability to be a catalyst for change will be important. As a social worker, you can bring individuals and groups together, contribute your skills and knowledge, and stimulate positive movement or changes that would not have occurred without your intervention. Remember that you are not alone in your efforts to help others because many other social workers will support and encourage you in your efforts. Seek them out, offer your support in return, and find avenues of renewal for yourself, both personally and professionally. You already know how important it will be to take care of yourself, recognize the good in the world as well as the problems, celebrate large and small successes, learn to laugh, and cultivate the sources of your passion and strength. It will be vital to use

your family, friends, spiritual beliefs, and core values to guide you and to take pride in your chosen profession.

Self-Check 17.2

Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence

As a way for you to summarize the contents of this entire book, integrate all topics into a meaningful whole, and relate them to the concept of social work leadership, think about how each preceding chapter and all the lessons in this text are related in some important ways to the manner by which leadership is needed and developed. When you initially read these chapters at the outset of your practicum, considered the critical thinking questions provided, and engaged in the workbook sections, you were probably not thinking about assuming leadership in any one particular facet of social work. You read those chapters as a student. However, if you think about the focus of each chapter now with an emphasis on the leadership needed in each area, you will see how you and other social work leaders can make a difference in various interrelated arenas. **Table 17.1** offers a brief reminder of each of those arenas and provides recommendations for leadership throughout development. It provides a structure for you to use as you implement a leadership development plan for yourself. Use this table as a guide to organize your professional development plans to become a leader. Throughout your career, you will find more and more opportunities to assume leadership. Preparing for these opportunities by using this list of leadership areas can be of immense help.

Table 17.1 **Comprehensive Leadership in Social Work: Competency Development**

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Student Learning (Chapters 1–2)
To facilitate the learning of other students, seek out a relationship with a nearby university where you contract with practicum students for your agency. Take advantage of school of social work training on the supervision of practicum students and learn from other agency field instructors how they make use of students. Develop standardized yet flexible learning plans and opportunities for practicum students to help them become generalist practitioners and engage in professional growth, as you needed to do as a student.
Supervision (Chapter 3)
Do your best to acquire formal training and certification in social work supervision. Research, understand, and commit to NASW ***Best Practices in Social Work Supervision*** (NASW, 2013). Promote a variety of forms of supervision, including clinical, peer, virtual, ad hoc, observation, modeling, and group.
Organizational Context of Practice (Chapter 4)

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Prepare for potential changes in your position within your agency that involve opportunities to assume leadership. Identify organizations that have effective leadership and determine what accounts for their success. Research the best practices related to the work of your organization, determine how a respected leader could incorporate those practices into his or her work, and commit to program enhancement.
Community Context of Practice (Chapter 5)
Seek out community leaders in social work from whom you want to learn and include them in your community of practice. Seek out leaders outside social work and interview them about skills and approaches they believe have been effective in their leadership roles. Join community organizations that promote issues you care about, and volunteer to work on committees or task groups leading social change efforts.
Social Problem Context of Practice (Chapter 6)
Engage in cutting-edge research and seek current knowledge about the etiology of social problems. Commit to the prevention and elimination of social problems through the use of best practices in your field. Research the social indicators related to a social problem you care about. Determine how community leaders could support positive indicators and reduce negative indicators of that problem.

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Social Policy Context of Practice (Chapter 7)
Engage in social policy practice that supports vulnerable and underserved populations even if such work is not in your formal job description. Utilize resources such as policy advocates, clearinghouses, and research organizations to inform and promote effective policies. Study the social policies impacting your organization and clients, and join a coalition working to change policies to make them more effective.
Professional Social Work (Chapter 8)
Assist colleagues and students in achieving licensure, certifications, and credentials that enhance practice effectiveness. Promote and provide continuing education for social workers. Provide input on current and emerging social issues to schools of social work to help them provide relevant training to their students.
Communication (Chapter 9)
Enhance your oral and written communication skills to prepare yourself for assuming leadership roles. Provide training to colleagues and students in effective use of communication skills with clients, professionals, the media, and policy makers. Identify and emulate the communication skills of leaders you admire and respect.

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Social Work Ethics (Chapter 10)
Abide by NASW ***Code of Ethics***. Engage in an ethics audit of your organization and respond to its results. Devise a process for ethical decision making in your agency in collaboration with others, and train colleagues and students in the use of this process.
Legal Issues (Chapter 11)
Develop a relationship with an attorney who can advise you on legal matters related to your work. Obtain professional liability and malpractice insurance, and make certain to understand the provisions of your insurance policy both to guide your work and to avoid lawsuits. Learn about the laws regulating social services organizations in regard to employees.
Planned Change Process (Chapter 12)
Train colleagues and students in the use of specific practice theories and models relevant to your client base. Provide in-service training for colleagues and students in ways to make the planned change process relevant to diverse clients. Review and revise the assessment tools used in your agency to assess clients and families or the needs assessments used to plan future programs.
Diversity (Chapter 13)

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Commit to NASW ***Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice*** (NASW, 2015). Promote diverse workplaces through education, client input, diverse employees, and cultural sensitivity training. Find and associate with leaders of minority, indigenous, and multicultural groups to learn about diverse leadership styles.
Personal Safety (Chapter 14)
Design, support, and implement policies that protect social workers in your agency. Adhere to NASW ***Guidelines for Social Worker Safety in the Workplace*** (NASW, 2013). Provide support and intervention for colleagues and students affected by violence or threats of violence.
Evaluating Practice (Chapter 15)
Review the program evaluation of your organization and determine whether and how the results of such evaluations are used to improve services and plan for future needs. Design and use tools soliciting meaningful client feedback and incorporate data into agency training, recruitment, and programs. Work with or organize a client/stakeholder advisory board to assist in program evaluation and planning.
Merging Self and Profession (Chapter 16)

Leadership Areas and Recommendations for Developing Leadership
Arrange for training on self-care and the prevention of burnout for staff. Obtain consultation on ways to promote the overall well-being of colleagues and students. Design incentives for staff members to engage in professional development and become involved in organizational improvement efforts.

Video Application Exercise 17.2

This interactive exercise suggests ways that students and beginning social workers can devise a plan for leadership development.

Although a few leaders are so-called born leaders, in reality most had to learn the skills of leadership much like they learned any other skill. Some professionals seek leadership roles so that they can contribute to the overall mission of an agency and bring their enthusiasm and skill to their work. Others have been told by others that they have leadership potential and have enjoyed support in developing their leadership skills. Not all leaders work in administration. Informal leaders who are skilled and respected can have great influence, which is another form of leadership. Aspiring leaders must consciously and continually cultivate the development of those qualities, ways of thinking, attitudes, and interpersonal skills that are associated with effective leadership. Leadership is the ability to make things happen and to inspire others to

join in the effort. It is the leader's vision that gives him or her the critically important sense of purpose, direction, and self-confidence needed to make difficult decisions. Equally important, a leader must be able to articulate this vision and explain it in words that others understand and will commit to. The vision must be one that can be translated into action steps and programs that are inspiring, yet feasible and realistic.

Effective leaders lead by example. Followers are inspired and motivated by such leaders' passion, resolve, courage, hard work, and sacrifices. Thus, leaders must model the behaviors they want to see in others. They should not ask others to do what they are unwilling to do themselves. Leaders must demonstrate respect and genuine concern for the wishes, values, and abilities of those whom they lead. In addition, they must be willing to curtail some of their own preferences and plans to avoid moving too far ahead of their followers. Delegating responsibility and empowering others are related skills that set a good example for others.

Effective leaders must maintain open and honest communication with those whom they lead. This communication must keep everyone focused on the goal while attending to the concerns, fears, and ambivalence they may have about investing their time, energy, and money in working toward this goal. Good leaders anticipate possible conflicts and disagreements among their followers, and they take proactive steps to prevent or resolve these conflicts before they can distract from goal achievement and splinter the followers into competing factions. Leaders must be skilled in the art of collaboration and building bridges between individuals and organizations. They must reward others for their cooperation and share the credit for success with others, even those with whom they may disagree. Leaders must be willing to compromise when this is a necessary step toward reaching the sought-after goal.

Self-Check 17.2

Effective leaders possess a high level of self-awareness. They understand their own strengths and limitations, and they constantly examine their own motives and behavior. They understand themselves well enough to see when their leadership style is effective and how others perceive them. They balance confidence in themselves and others with humility about what they know and don't know. They commit to collaboration rather than tending to dominate discussions and actions. Such leaders are open to feedback about themselves, seek consultation, and become increasingly aware of the ways in which they impact others. They assume personal responsibility for their decisions and the outcomes resulting from actions they take.

Self-Check 17.3

The exercise of leadership always occurs within a context of competing and conflicting forces. Leaders work to shape, guide, and redirect those forces, so they move in directions that produce the desired effect and move people toward the desired goal. Because leaders must function within environments and situations that are unpredictable and constantly changing, they must be willing to take necessary risks and cope with ever-present ambiguity and uncertainty. The ability to make difficult decisions in changing, fluid, and challenging situations is important, as is the ability to be proactive when all the information needed is not yet available.

Leadership Issues for the Future

Leaders in the social work profession can find themselves in the midst of public debates, tensions, competing points of view, and value systems that are on the far ends of the spectrum of public opinion. These contemporary discussions highlight the challenges of leadership in bringing together varying opinions, values, and preferred approaches to preventing or dealing with social problems and issues. For example, social work leaders must lead their organizations through discussions such as the following ones. Think about how you as a leader will negotiate these conversations in a way that fulfills the social work mission.

1. Social services as a right or a privilege

   What is the minimum level of social services a society should provide?

   _____

   _____

   Who has the power to decide who receives services?

   _____

   _____

2. The responsibility to prevent, address, and eliminate social problems

   Are those impacted by social problems responsible for solving them?

   _____

   _____

   What is the role of social services agencies in dealing with social problems?

   _____

   _____

3. Private and public responses to social problems

What are the government's responsibilities when dealing with social problems?

What is the role of private citizens in dealing with social problems?

What is the role of organizations in dealing with social problems?

4. Addressing social problems at the micro and macro levels

How does micro practice of social work inform and guide macro practice?

How does macro practice impact micro practice?

5. Impact of scarce resources to address social problems

How can a leader work effectively and ethically within an environment of scarce, dwindling, uncertain, or inadequate funding?

How can a leader obtain public and private commitment to funding services?

6. Balance of personal responsibility and social safety nets

How can a leader facilitate community conversations between parties who hold completely divergent opinions on client personal responsibility and the use of safety nets?

What can leaders do to strike a meaningful compromise between such divergent opinions?

Work hard to become a **transformational leader**, which is someone who understands and embodies the interpersonal and moral aspects of leadership. Using their passion, vision, deeply held beliefs, and strong moral values, transformational leaders inspire others. Their integrity leads others to trust them. Their genuine desire to see others succeed makes others more motivated and enthusiastic. This form of leadership, which is motivated by the welfare of everyone involved in a common effort, differs markedly from the form of leadership that pays attention only to the tasks at hand and focuses on management rather than leadership. Try to become the sort of leader who balances the work to be done with the professional and personal support of those working together. To determine which leadership qualities you already possess, seek out a leadership assessment tool that evaluates your potential as a leader. It is also helpful to consult leadership-style assessment tools that can help you identify and develop your attitudes and approaches to leadership.

Self-Check 17.4

Keep informed about the **emerging issues in social work leadership** that will require vision, innovation, critical thinking, and a willingness to improve practice over time. Because of societal and global changes in the social environment, social work itself must evolve to address and embrace those changes. The use of technology in practice offers many advanced methods for providing services, but also raises a number of clinical and ethical issues related to quality of services, confidentiality, and adaptations to practice approaches. The limits of funding for social services provides challenges to maintaining the highest possible quality of services in light of dwindling financial resources and pushes agencies at times to value performance and reports of accountability more highly than responsiveness to client needs. Additional emerging issues include the need to create knowledge through program evaluation and the development of best practices as identified by empirical evidence and solicited client input. Achieving these goals requires leaders and administrators who support social work professionals in their professional development. They must help social workers develop a **learning edge** that encourages professionals to embrace and lean into innovation and to develop a **learning culture** within their organizations.

Self-Check 17.5

Leaders committed to social justice must make positive things happen and prevent or block negative things from happening. To do so, they must focus on **building approaches** to social justice which are proactive, positive, and affirmative practices that promote planned social justice work. Such approaches capitalize on and promote change and support existing forces for change. By comparison, **blocking approaches** to social justice are those critical, resistance, and reframing practices that fight the

status quo and block forces opposing social justice. **Table 17.2** highlights these two necessary approaches to social justice work.

Table 17.2 **Phases of Social Justice Work and Leadership Approaches**

Phase of Social Justice Work	Building Leadership Approaches	Blocking Leadership Approaches
Assessment	Learn, anticipate forces for and against change, recognize problems and resources, clarify values, scan the social environment	Challenge surface-level answers, deconstruct myths, ask critical questions, resist the status quo, critique forces against change, challenge injustice
Building coalitions	Identify stakeholders, invite participation, identify common concerns, collaborate, mentor, empower constituencies, focus on solidarity, build relationships with opponents when possible	Avoid a silo approach to change, resist efforts to isolate stakeholders, challenge special interests, recognize and address resistance to change, avoid fragmentation of efforts, build relationships with opponents when possible

Phase of Social Justice Work	Building Leadership Approaches	Blocking Leadership Approaches
Planning and organizing	Develop vision, engage stakeholders, set goals and objectives, build capacity for change, encourage innovation, gain access to political power, develop intervention plan, select evaluation method	Avoid surface-level goals and objectives, reframe individual change to multilevel change, counter the scarcity paradigm for resources, block efforts to exclude stakeholders, address counter-organizing and splitting efforts, reveal funding sources of opponents
Implementation	Put the plan into action, influence the target system, supervise, monitor and adjust the plan as needed, maintain focus, deal with unanticipated issues	Challenge pessimism, resist consolidation of power, block cuts to funding, neutralize resistance, address efforts to undermine progress

Phase of Social Justice Work	Building Leadership Approaches	Blocking Leadership Approaches
Evaluation and dissemination	Evaluate effectiveness, transfer power to those impacted, share lessons learned, disseminate findings, contribute to body of knowledge, leverage success, sustain social change	Block efforts to return to the status quo, anticipate misinformation about results, address critiques of efforts, address efforts to discredit interventions

Self-Check 17.6

As you identify your leadership abilities and skills, and as you work to incorporate the characteristics listed earlier into your practice over time, also consider some very specific ways in which you can acquire the leadership abilities that will be required of you. Commit to lifelong professional learning that will keep you abreast of advances in the social work world. Identify mentors who can help you develop needed skills,

networking opportunities, and supervision. Engage in interdisciplinary work whenever possible to maintain a broad and inclusive view of social problems and solutions. Become a part of a **community of practice**, which includes mentors, colleagues, confidantes, and support persons from both social work and other professions. This community of practice will help you learn, grow, prioritize, focus, and maintain commitment in the midst of challenging practice situations.

Self-Check 17.7

Your practicum will soon come to an end, and your professors and agency field instructors will tell you that you are ready for professional social work practice. You will have earned the designation of a professional social worker by virtue of your academic preparation, your practicum experience, your commitment to the NASW **Code of Ethics**, and your sense of calling to promote social justice. You have all the tools needed to be a social worker, whether you are working with individual clients or focusing your efforts on large-scale social change. Those tools, including your knowledge, your commitment to helping others, and your helping skills, will all come together in a unique way as you become a professional social worker. In fact, you are the tool by which clients will be served and social justice will be furthered. Welcome to the proactive, progressive, and visionary profession of social work.

Self-Check 17.8

Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth

This chapter has guided you to recall and integrate classroom knowledge about leadership into your practicum experience. It has also asked you to apply your knowledge of leadership in your practicum setting. The next step is to use all this knowledge and experience to prepare yourself for leadership in professional practice. The following exercise is designed to help you take several more steps toward becoming a professional.

Metaphors for Social Work Practice

Consider the idea of describing your practice using metaphors which are visual and personal ways of thinking about what social work is, especially in regard to the overall social justice mission of social work. Using a metaphor for your work can help you personalize your commitment and continue to view it as a creative endeavor. The following list of common metaphors for social work practice can help you identify and use a metaphor as a foundation for your work. You may also develop your own metaphors.

Practice as journey	Social work practice is a journey with road maps, detours, mergers, one-way roads, traveling companions, and destinations.
Practice as tapestry	Social work practice is a tapestry woven of variegated elements, combined colors and textures, creative images, and opposing threads.
Practice as story	Social work practice is a story including a plot, surprises, an interesting cast of characters, a moral, and an ending.
Practice as art	Social work practice is an art combining color, perspective, interpretation, creativity, and mixed methods.
Practice as vision	Social work practice is a vision based on values, possibilities, purpose, forward thinking, and commitment to change.
Practice as dance	Social work practice is a dance involving background music, training, communication with an audience, and interpretation.
Practice as battle	Social work practice is a battle including commitment, enemies and allies, strategy, skirmishes, victory, and defeat.
Practice	Social work practice is evolution including

as evolution	gradual changes, mutations, progress, ongoing development, and shifts.
Practice as invention	Social work practice is invention based on creativity, recognition of an unmet need, trial and error, and innovation.

Video Application Exercise 17.3

This interactive exercise urges social workers to assume leadership in advocating for clients through policy practice.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How can social work leaders in your agency advocate for social justice?
2. What sections of the NASW **Code of Ethics** provide guidance to social work leaders? What are the ethical responsibilities of social work leaders to clients, to colleagues, and to organizations?
3. In what ways could a commitment to cultural competence and humility help a leader create a diverse and culturally competent agency and services?
4. What vision of the world do you have that, if achieved by you and others during your professional careers, would allow you to consider yourself effective in enhancing the social functioning of your clients and promoting social justice?

Suggested Learning Activities

- Subscribe to electronic listservs offered by professional organizations and advocacy groups to stay abreast of issues of importance to you, as well as legislative and social justice implications of their work.
- Locate training opportunities for leadership development and enroll in them to begin developing your leadership capacity.
- Ask your agency field instructor for examples of formal and informal leaders within your agency and community whom you could interview, work with, and learn from as you enter professional practice.

Chapter Review 17.1

Recall what you have learned from this chapter text by answering questions in this Chapter Review.

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Appendix A

Orienting Theories and Practice Theories for the Planned Change Process

Micro Orienting Theories and Application Examples (Individuals and Families)

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Behavioral Theory	Behavior is a response to reinforcement and consequences.	Children learn prosocial behavior through positive reinforcement.
Biopsychosocial Theory	Biological, psychological, and social factors interact to influence functioning.	Individuals with traumatic brain injury have friends who do not understand their personality changes.
Cognitive Development Theory	Cognitive abilities such as critical thinking and problem-solving develop in stages, enhancing emotional, social, and moral development.	Teenagers may not think about the consequences of their actions or understand the risks involved due to their level of cognitive functioning.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Crisis Theory	People in crisis are overwhelmed because normal coping skills are not sufficient.	A family who has lost a child to suicide cannot cope without direct support and help.
Cultural Identity Theory	Identity as a member of a cultural group emerges over time, influenced by experiences.	Native American teenagers who move from reservations to urban areas with their families may experience challenges developing a cultural identity.
Disease/Medical Theory	Biological characteristics and genetics underlie some mental illnesses and addictions.	Children of alcoholic parents have increased risk for developing the disorder.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Emotional Development Theory	Individuals develop the ability to recognize and manage their emotions.	A young adult who cannot manage emotions has relationship problems.
Family Systems Theory	Families are systems with mutually interacting members.	A family with a teenager acting out struggles to deal with the challenging behavior.
Humanistic Theory	People have the ability to choose and accept responsibility.	Parents who recognize their poor parenting can improve and mitigate the damage.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Identity Development Theory	Individuals develop their sense of self, values, and beliefs over time.	A college student changes majors in search of a profession, requiring self-examination.
Moral Development Theory	Individuals develop their own moral code in stages.	A young man engages in antisocial behavior and becomes involved in the justice system.
Multicausal Theory	Individual and family problems are a result of interacting factors.	Mental illness, unemployment, and high cost of living result in homelessness.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Social Behavioral Theory	Behavior is learned through observation and modeling.	Attitudes toward minority groups displayed in families are adopted by children.

Micro Practice Theories and Application Examples (Individuals and Families)

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Behavioral Models	Positive reinforcement may result in positive behavior changes.	Adolescents exhibiting emotional outbursts can reduce such behavior with consistent positive reinforcement of emotional regulation skills.
Client-Centered Models	Clients define problems, set goals, and select interventions with social work support.	A family with a child with serious mental health diagnoses chooses in-home services based on their needs and desires.
Cognitive Behavioral Models	Cognitive processes such as beliefs and problem-solving skills lead to behavior patterns.	Residents of pre-release programs identify and work to change self-defeating beliefs that have led them to engage in illegal and damaging behaviors.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Crisis Intervention Models	Clients in crisis that overwhelm coping skills can be supported to return to previous functioning.	A family whose son took his own life needs support and resources to help them cope with the crisis in ways that they are unable to identify themselves.
Emotional Regulation Models	Individuals who cannot regulate their emotions can learn skills to identify and manage them.	A woman who has experienced emotional and social crises can achieve emotional regulation through education and rehearsal of emotional management techniques.
Family Preservation Models	Families experiencing problems can maintain themselves through support and education.	A family who has been referred to child protective services can remain intact through their engagement with an effective intervention plan.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Family Reunification Models	Families who have been separated because of serious problems can be reconstituted with significant involvement in services.	Parents whose children have been placed in foster care for physical abuse due to substance abuse may regain custody if they demonstrate sobriety and parenting skills.
Family Therapy Models	Counseling and psychotherapy about family structure and function can lead to positive change.	Families can learn through counseling to meet each other's needs, deal with problems, and promote all members' functioning.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Harm Reduction Models	Efforts to reduce the potential harm of problems may be necessary when the problems cannot be eliminated.	Individuals with drug addiction who cannot maintain total abstinence can be helped to adopt healthier practices that will reduce potential harm related to substance abuse.
Motivational Models	Client motivation can be increased by using techniques that recognize their challenges and support individual choice.	A man seen as reluctant to recognize and deal with his addiction can be encouraged to engage in education and treatment by increasing his motivation.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Solution-Focused Models	A focus on solutions to client problems rather than on problems can lead to change.	A family with ineffective parenting skills can devise solutions without having to focus only on problems.
Task-Centered Models	A mutual focus by social workers and clients can identify tasks to be completed to achieve success.	A teen father wishing to better himself engages in a plan that involves clear tasks to be completed, timelines, and expected outcomes.

Mezzo Orienting Theories and Applications (Groups and Organizations)

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Chaos Theory	What appears to be chaotic can be predicted or understood by examining contributing factors.	Breakdown in a neighborhood occurs gradually over time.
Conflict Theory	Conflict occurs between groups in interaction.	Minority group members experience different treatment by law enforcement officials than do majority group members.
Critical Theory	Power differentials within groups impact members.	Unconscious racism causes conflict between clients and staff.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Multicausal Theory	Community problems result from a complex interaction of multiple contributors.	School shootings result from a combination of individual, legal, economic, and societal factors.
Political Economy Theory	Political factors influence the economic status of individuals, families, groups, and communities.	Minority groups are more negatively impacted by political decisions.
Social Constructionist Theory	Through their interaction, people and groups develop a shared social reality.	A disadvantaged group develops a positive sense of identity by preserving history and building its resiliency.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Social Learning Theory	Social behavior is shaped by interactions with social systems.	Youth acquire negative attitudes toward individuals with disabilities through adult modeling.
Social Movement Theory	Social movements develop in phases over time.	Residents of low-income housing respond to gang activity following an increase in violence.
Social Systems Theory	Social units form systems that interact with other social systems.	Law enforcement and homeless advocates with different, yet overlapping goals mutually influence each other.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Standpoint Theory	Perspective and meaning are influenced by social location.	Low income families view services differently because of the cost.
Strain Theory	Social struggles and movements develop as a response to a major societal strain that reveals and exposes significant challenges and conflicts.	Women empower each other to address sexual harassment and abuse after dealing with the problem for many years, choosing not to continue tolerating such behavior.
Structural Theory	Social problems are partially rooted in societal structures.	Social policies may restrict the offering of needed services in organizations.

Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Subculture Theory	Groups form within groups to meet needs formally or informally.	Single parents form alliances within neighborhoods.

Mezzo Practice Theories and Application Examples (Groups and Organizations)

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Group Psychotherapy Model	Professionally facilitated psychotherapy groups address shared concerns and issues, offering counseling and mutual support.	Teenagers who have witnessed intimate-partner abuse of their mothers are provided with counseling and support to deal with their trauma and to break the cycle of abuse.
Harm Reduction Model	Efforts to reduce the negative impact of a social problem or condition can help without requiring an abstinence approach.	A methadone clinic is offered by a medical provider to reduce harm of heroin use to those who cannot abstain.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Mutual Aid Model	Individuals with a shared problem provide mutual support and assistance to each other as they face issues related to the problem.	Women who have experienced intimate-partner violence meet to support each other as they deal with the impact of violence and make decisions about their futures.
Organizational Development Model	Organizations engage in planning and implementing changes to better address their mission and provide services.	An agency providing services to refugees engages in strategic planning and the use of consultation to develop effective programs.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Prevention Model	Social problems can be prevented by effectively addressing and targeting contributors.	After-school programs offer mentoring to high-risk adolescents who lack role models.
Psycho-educational Model	A professionally facilitated group that provides both education and support can assist clients with shared concerns.	A group serving divorced parents by designing parenting plans offers them education about legal issues and parenting while providing support for emotional turmoil.
Social Justice Model	Groups impacted by social problems can be helped by identifying and blocking social injustices.	A collaborative effort of public and private groups works to reveal and change discriminatory housing practices.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Social Planning Model	Groups and organizations engage in future planning to address social problems and promote quality of life.	A coalition of organizations and groups working to end homelessness sets goals, strategies, and timelines for the reduction of homelessness within the community.

Macro Orienting Theories and Application Examples (Communities and Social Policy)

Community Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Chaos Theory	What appears to be chaotic can be predicted or understood by examining contributing factors.	Breakdown in a neighborhood occurs gradually over time because of economic, social, and political issues.
Conflict Theory	Conflict occurs between groups in interaction.	Disagreements about the use of public lands for either economic or recreational purposes hinder progress.

Community Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Critical Theory	Examining power within communities reveals who holds power or is excluded from power.	Underlying racism and its impacts are identified by minority groups.
Multicausal Theory	Community problems have multiple interacting causes.	Child abuse rates increase because of individual, family, and societal contributors.
Political Economy Theory	Political factors influence the economic status of communities and society.	State elections change priorities for funding financial safety nets.

Community Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Social Constructionist Theory	Through interaction, people and groups develop a shared social reality and social goals.	A society develops and maintains a shared belief in supporting elders through social policies.
Social Learning Theory	Social behavior is shaped by interactions with social systems.	Communities which have been hurt by industry closures learn to advocate for themselves.
Social Movement Theory	In the face of social problems that negatively impact a social group, those impacted join together in response.	Frustrated and angry about gun violence, teens who have been traumatized by violence develop a social movement to make changes they see as necessary.

Community Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Social Systems Theory	Social units form systems that interact with other social systems.	Neighborhoods with many established residents interact negatively with diverse newcomers to the area.
Standpoint Theory	Perspective and meaning are influenced by social location.	Attitudes toward graffiti vary depending on the social location of those involved.
Strain Theory	Social movements are a response to societal strains	Lack of progress in salary equity provides an impetus for social action.
Structural Theory	Social problems are partially rooted in societal structures.	Lack of living wages and a high cost of living contribute to increasing homelessness.

Community Orienting Theory	Description	Application Example
Subculture Theory	Groups form within groups to meet needs formally or informally	Gangs form to provide a sense of belonging and protection to members in need of both.

Macro Practice Theories (Communities and Social Policy)

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Community Development Model	A community can enhance its social bonds, sense of community, and shared vision through coordinated efforts to build social capital.	Neighborhood councils identify and address problems by building on shared goals related to economic development and job training.
Community Organization Model	A community can reduce social problems by organizing and mobilizing citizens and professionals.	Law enforcement, health providers, and social services providers join forces to address gaps in services that have resulted in deaths from intimate-partner violence.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Harm Reduction Model	Efforts to reduce the negative impact of a social problem or condition can help without requiring an abstinence approach.	Advocates for those addicted to substances promote the decriminalization of drug use to encourage individuals to seek treatment without stigma and prosecution.
Prevention Model	Social problems can be prevented by effectively addressing and targeting their contributors.	Communities commit to the prevention of partner violence by implementing school education programs.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Social Change Model	Communities and societies can effect social change in attitudes, practices, and policies.	A community education and action effort is implemented to change attitudes toward the homeless.
Social Development Model	Communities and societies can enhance facets of their functioning through targeted efforts to improve their assets and resources.	A federal grant offers financing to community programs focused on youth development and employment.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Social Justice Model	Groups impacted by social problems can be helped by identifying and blocking social injustices.	National advocacy groups promote immigration reform for young people born to immigrants in this country.
Social Planning Model	Communities and societies engage in future planning to address social problems and promote quality of life.	Governmental agencies track, monitor, and measure opioid fatalities and prescription policies, and then promote laws aimed at reducing fatalities through education, treatment, and changes in laws.

Practice Theory/Model	Description	Application Example
Social Policy Model	The development of social policies to address social problems can be achieved by coalitions that formulate, pass, and implement legislation.	Effective treatment of addiction and mental health issues among prison populations can be mandated to reduce recidivism and harm to others.
Structural Change Model	Social structures and institutions can be targeted because they contribute to social problems.	A campaign to change and enforce laws about discriminatory housing practices can result in fair housing laws and safeguards.

Appendix B

Planned Change Process Practice Examples

Micro-Level Practice Example with Individual

A 26 year-old female has been admitted to the emergency department of a general hospital due to an overdose of heroin and is in need of inpatient chemical dependency treatment. Her family has decided not to support her because of her previous unsuccessful attempts to quit using substances and her abusive, manipulative, and threatening behavior toward them. She has experienced physical and sexual assault while actively using heroin, and is unable to maintain relationships, housing, or employment. The hospital social worker has been consulted to determine a placement or treatment plan for this client as soon as she is discharged.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (survival skills in spite of severe addiction, motivation to quit) • Ecosystems perspective (lack of family support, poor recovery environment) • Diversity perspective (gender issues, history of sexual assault)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Crisis theory (overwhelmed by situation and in need of immediate treatment) • Biopsychosocial theory (physical addiction impacting all areas of functioning) • Disease model (physical addiction in need of medical attention) • Family systems theory (client's behavior impacting family support)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Crisis intervention theory (physical illness and unstable life must be addressed) • Harm reduction theory (avoid physical effects of addiction if cannot abstain) • Motivational interviewing theory (enhance client’s level of motivation)

	• Family reunification (potentially reunify family depending on client progress)
Evaluate	**Evaluation** • Goal attainment (crisis services provided) • Follow up and aftercare (confirmation of abstinence) • Self-report of treatment effectiveness (client and family involvement)

Planned Change Process

Micro-Level Practice Example with Family

A 92-year-old man who has been cared for by his daughter and her family, allowing him to live in his own home, has been hospitalized due to pneumonia. The family cannot continue to care for him because of his declining health status and believe that he would be best placed in a nursing home. The client wishes to return home upon discharge. The family is working with medical social workers at the hospital and a nearby nursing home.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (family commitment to client, financial resources) • Ecosystems perspective (unsafe home environment, family overwhelmed) • Diversity perspective (generational differences in placement desires)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Crisis theory (decision needed quickly following hospitalization) • Biopsychosocial theory (dementia impacting all areas of functioing) • Disease model (dementia needs to be addressed) • Family systems theory (family supportive but unable to provide care)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Crisis intervention model (placement decision needed urgently) • Medical model (apply for available benefits for nursing home care) • Client-centered model (client given as much choice as possible)

Evaluate	**Evaluation** • Goal attainment (crisis services provided, placement and finances finalized) • Self-report and client satisfaction questionnair (family satisfaction, client safety addressed)

Planned Change Process

Mezzo-Level Practice Example with Group

The social worker in a rural community mental health program has been approached by several parents of 30- to 40-year-old children with serious mental illness, asking for help in designing and implementing a support group for themselves and others. They have expressed their need for mutual support, education, and resources to help them maintain their adult children in the community. They have learned about the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and want to explore affiliation with that organization, but do not believe they can do this work themselves.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (agency mission and capacity) • Diversity perspective (adults with mental illness in need of support)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Group development theory (stages of group development addressed) • Group dynamics theory (interactions, mutual aid, cohesion addressed) • Family systems theory (mental illness impacts family functioning) • Family life cycle theory (parents supporting vulnerable adult children)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Mutual aid model (parents supporting parents with mutual concerns) • Psycho-educational model (education about resources and treatmnet) • Empowerment model (support for members' choices and self-efficacy)

Evaluate	Evaluation
	• Client satisfaction survey (effectiveness of group) • Focus group (input on group formation process)

Planned Change Process

Mezzo-Level Practice Example with Organization

Because of increased need for emergency housing for homeless families, and in light of declining community funding for such services, two agencies providing housing programs are exploring the possibility of merging. The agencies share a commitment to preventing homelessness and housing insecurity, but their mission, funding, and other services differ somewhat. To determine the feasibility and desirability of an agency merger, they have become engaged in shared strategic planning.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (combined resources needed for both agencies) • Ecosystems perspective (vulnerability of separate agencies) • Diversity perspective (other agency missions and programs vary)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Political economy theory (financial resources necessitate collaboration) • Organizational development theory (evaluate need for reorganization) • Structural theory (structural contributors to social problem addressed together)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Organizational development model (strategic planning for possible merger) • Social planning model (needs assessment, capacity building, focus on future) • Prevention model (identify and address contributors to social problem)

Evaluate	Evaluation
	• Goal attainment (common concerns measured) • Implementation plan completed (staff development, clients informed, funds combined, services coordinated)

Planned Change Process

Macro-Level Practice Example with Community

A community negatively impacted by the decline of the coal industry and mine closures has experienced high unemployment, a reduced tax base, and discouraged citizens. A community development organization has proposed a collaborative effort between business, economic development agencies, a local community college, and concerned citizens that would design a plan to attract a renewable energy company to replace coal mining and to train employees and students in innovative renewable energy initiatives.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (innovative use of labor, business, and education) • Ecosystems perspective (mutual benefit of collaboration and development)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Political economy theory (community impacted by economic downturn) • Structural theory (capacity building, structural change, business model) • Critical theory (examination of power and influence needed to effect change) • Social systems theory (interaction between economics and social well-being)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Community development (enhance social functioning of the community) • Community organization (involve community groups to address problems) • Empowerment model (engage and mobilize those impacted by economics) • Social planning model (engage in planning for community change and growth)

Evaluate	**Evaluation** • Goal attainment (collaboration plan completed) • Goal attainment (funding sources identified, renewable industry contacts made) • Focus group (participant satisfaction with and suggestions regarding process)

Planned Change Process

Macro-Level Practice Example with Social Policy

Following a state legislative interim committee's report on all state statutes and processes surrounding sexual assault, a coalition of legislators, social services agencies, advocacy groups, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and citizen groups has convened. They will devise a strategy to change outdated laws and to draft and pass new laws better addressing sexual assault in areas of prosecution, treatment for survivors and perpetrators, education, and prevention.

Engage	**Perspectives Used** • Strengths perspective (identify and use community assets and resources) • Diversity perspective (examine gender socialization and attitudes) • Ecosystems perspective (cannot view statutes in isolation)
Assess	**Orienting Theories Used** • Social development theory (social well-being impacted by social policy) • Empowerment theory (involvement of stakeholders improves social policy) • Social systems theory (social institutions in mutual interaction)
Intervene	**Practice Theories Used** • Policy practice model (draft legislation and changes to existing legislation) • Structural change model (secure commitment of involved entities) • Social change model (work toward attitude and policy changes) • Social justice model (address justice for survivors through legislation)

Evaluate	**Evaluation** • Goal attainment (existing legislation changed) • Goal attainment (new legislation drafted and passed) • Focus group (stakeholder satisfaction)

Glossary

Administrative function of supervision
The facet of supervision that focuses on assigning, monitoring, and evaluation of services, including hiring, assigning, and supervising work; facilitating communication and monitoring effectiveness; and representing the agency to the public.

Agency
An organization authorized or sanctioned to act in the place of someone, on behalf of others, or in response to a particular social problem.

Agency policy
The processes, guidelines, rules, and procedures put into place in agency settings to provide structure, equal treatment, and clarity of operations within the agency.

Anticipatory empathy
Advance understanding and response to the potential range of emotions and reactions that clients may have in regard to interactions with social workers, including those specific to involuntary involvement with social services organizations.

Assessment
The second phase of the planned change process, during which information related to the client or client system social functioning is gathered, sorted, and interpreted, and in which goals and objectives for an intervention plan are identified.

Asset mapping

A process of measuring the resources available to a community that could be enhanced because they promote positive communities or that could be used to address negative aspects of communities.

Best practices
The practice models and techniques that have been empirically shown to be the most effective for particular practice situations and that are matched to client need and resources.

Blocking approach
An approach to community practice that identifies and strengthens community assets based on the belief that building strong communities will result in the enhancement of social functioning.

Breach of confidentiality
The purposeful or unintentional sharing of confidential information about clients with persons and entities when clients have not given permission for those persons or entities to receive such information.

Building approach
The approach to community practice that identifies and addresses community problems and gaps based on the belief that reducing such community problems will also result in the enhancement of social functioning.

Bureaucracy
An organizational structure characterized by a chain of command, hierarchical structure, clear policies, eligibility guidelines, standardized policies and programs, division of labor, centralization of power and communication, and supervision and formal communication patterns.

Burnout

Negative thoughts and behaviors that are the result of overwork, lack of support, and the inability to balance the demands of work with one's personal life.

Catalyst for change
The role of bringing individuals and groups together, contributing skills and knowledge, and stimulating positive movement or changes that would not have occurred without this effort.

Community
A group of people brought together by physical proximity or by a common identity based on shared experiences, interests, or culture.

Community development
Macro-level practice to support and improve community functioning.

Community needs assessment
An assessment of a community's needs undertaken by networks of individuals and groups interested in knowing which problems need to be addressed, whether those problems are getting better or worse, what the consequences of these problems are, and what the community wants to be done about them. Such an assessment is accomplished through surveys, interviews, focus groups, data sources, and participatory action research.

Community of interest and identification
A group of individuals who share a sense of identity and belonging because they share a characteristic, interest, or life experience such as ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, or occupation.

Community of place

A group defined mostly by geography and specified boundaries (e.g., neighborhoods, suburbs, towns, and cities).

Community of practice
A group of like-minded professionals who mutually interact as mentors, colleagues, confidantes, and support persons, which helps them learn, grow, prioritize, focus, and maintain commitment in the midst of challenging practice situations.

Community organization
Macro-level practice geared toward addressing specific community needs and problems through coalitions, networks, and those impacted by those problems.

Compassion fatigue
Emotional and physical fatigue that results from a caring and committed professional's tendency to extend himself or herself to clients beyond what is required, while not managing the impact of such behavior on the professional's own well-being.

Conceptual framework
An organized way of thinking about practice that provides a broad foundation for all interventions and that includes professional perspectives, orienting/explanatory theories, and practice theories/models.

Continuing education
A prescribed number of hours per year of ongoing professional education required by states to maintain a social work license in good standing.

Critical analysis of social policy

An analysis of social policy that identifies and shines a light on such influences as power, discrimination, diversity, and who actually benefits from the policy and its implementation.

Cultural adaptation
Changes made in practice models, agency policies and services, and research design so as to account for and address cultural differences.

Cultural competence
The ability to effectively partner with diverse clients in the planned change process, while utilizing culturally appropriate ways of engagement, assessment, intervention, termination, and evaluation.

Cultural humility
Realistic and modest assessment of one's own ability to work cross-culturally, which results in a recognition of one's limits and views cultural competence as a goal.

Cultural neutrality
An attempt to remain neutral in matters of cultural beliefs, values, and customs, which is likely impossible because of one's own ethnocentrism.

Cultural responsiveness
The ability to engage in practice that adapts to subtle and overtly expressed needs for culturally appropriate intervention.

Cultural sensitivity
The understanding of how diverse clients and client groups have been influenced by their culture and how cultural considerations must be a part of effective working relationships.

Culturally appropriate methods

A social work approach that is acceptable, relevant to, and appropriate for a specific cultural group, which necessitates involving the cultural group or client in the selection of the intervention.

Culture
The learned patterns of thought and behavior that are passed from generation to generation, including unspoken and unquestioned assumptions and ideas about the nature of reality, the human condition, and how life should be lived.

Culture of evaluation
An organizational commitment to and practice of program evaluation and the use of evidence-based practice models and techniques.

Cyber liability
Legal liability for breach of client confidentiality or privacy in the use of electronic means of communication.

Decentralization
The process of shifting responsibility for programs from one central location to various regional, state, or local locations.

De-escalation
The process of reducing the threat of client violence toward social workers by employing techniques specific to the situation and level of client threat and by protecting the social worker through targeted approaches that reduce the intensity of client emotion and behavior.

Defensive approach to social justice
Resisting, critiquing, and reframing practices that fight the status quo and blocking forces opposing social justice.

Devolution
The granting of power and responsibility from one level of government to a lower level, thereby giving the lower level of government choice regarding what is provided and how it is provided.

Diversity perspective
The professional lens that helps social workers view and focus on the impact of diversity on a client's social functioning.

Dual perspective
The ability to focus simultaneously on the attitudes, values, and customs of the larger society and the attitudes, values, and customs of the individual client or family.

Dual relationship
A relationship between social worker and supervisor, or between social worker and client, that mixes and blurs personal and professional roles. Such a relationship is inadvisable so as to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

Duty to warn
Legal obligation of professionals to report a client's threats of harm to an individual to the proper authorities.

Economic justice
That dimension of justice having to do with the material or economic aspects of a community or society.

Ecosystems perspective
The professional lens that helps social workers view and focus on the mutual interaction between clients and their social environments,

including the ways in which the social environment impacts clients both positively and negatively.

Educational function of supervision
The facet of supervision that provides formal and informal training and orientation and that arranges for formal in-service staff training required for staff to perform well and enhance their professional development.

Electronic communication
Forms of communication used within and between organizations in regard to agency operation and client records, which include e-mail, faxes, computerized databases, and voice mail, and which must always protect client confidentiality and privacy.

Engagement
The first phase of the planned change process, during which the client and the social worker establish an effective working relationship that forms the basis for effective assessment, intervention, and evaluation of planned change.

Environmental scanning
Ongoing process of assessing the multiple contexts of agency practice so as to coordinate with other entities, remain aware of trends and projections related to the work of the agency, and provide data for the purposes of strategic planning efforts.

Epidemiology
The incidence, prevalence, and impact of social problems.

Ethical competencies
The possession of and ability to use knowledge, skills, and values of professional ethics to effectively engage in ethical decision making,

resolve ethical dilemmas, and increase the ability of agencies and social policies to embed ethical principles into their mission and services.

Ethical decision-making framework
The process of using a framework for critically and thoughtfully incorporating ethics into the decisions made at all phases of the planned change process, into organizational development, and into larger-scale efforts such as research and social justice efforts.

Ethical dilemma
A situation in which the social worker has two or more ethical obligations, but cannot adhere to one principle without violating another because of their conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive nature.

Ethical violation
Intentional or unintentional failure to abide by professional codes of ethics or to engage in unethical behavior.

Ethics audit
A review of an agency's compliance with its own policies and ethical principles, which can be done at various time intervals with information gathered from a number of sources. It can then be used to assess the ethical operation of an agency.

Ethics committee
A group of professionals who convene to address complex ethical issues using a process that identifies options and consequences, making decisions or recommendations for resolution.

Ethnocentrism
The tendency to assume that one's own culture is normal and even superior, and that it is an appropriate standard for judging the beliefs and

behaviors of others.

Etiology
The causes or group of causes that explain the development of a social problem.

Evaluation
The fourth phase of the planned change process, during which intervention outcomes are evaluated against goals and objectives, and the professional relationship is terminated.

Evidence-based practice
Practice methods, theories, and models that are supported by research demonstrating their effectiveness.

Faith-based agency
An organization that provides social services based on a commitment to a particular faith, religious tradition, or spiritual belief and that may or may not develop programs in keeping with the tenets of that faith or tradition.

Following techniques
Techniques used to engage clients in the initial phases of the helping relationship, which can be used to involve clients enough that they will begin to trust the social worker and participate somewhat openly in the planned change process, including assessment, intervention, and evaluation.

For-profit agency
A business corporation that sells a set of services and is designed and operated to yield a profit for investors and stockholders.

Formal evaluation

A detailed review, rating, and comparison of performance with agreed-upon evaluation criteria and standards, which occurs at regularly scheduled intervals and which becomes part of an employee's work record.

Formal structure
The actual structure of an organization that is implemented in its organizational charts, policy and procedure manuals, official chain of command, and documents that explain the structure and function of various organizational units.

Furthering techniques
Techniques used to move the professional relationship and clients forward toward meeting their goals in the actual intervention and evaluation phases of the planned change process, and which build on the following techniques used to build effective working relationships with clients.

Generalist perspective
A way of viewing and thinking about the process and activities of social work practice at all levels, using a variety of orienting theories and practice models, engaging in a variety of social work roles, and adapting one's approach to the needs and circumstances of the client.

Generalist social work competencies
The knowledge, skills, and values acquired over time that provide a social worker with sufficient breadth and depth of professional competencies for use in generalist practice.

Grand Challenges for Social Work
Twelve significant social challenges for the social work profession identified by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare

based on social work values, research, and mission.

Help-seeking behavior
The ways in which individuals and groups think about, approach, and utilize professional or informal helpers for their problems in social functioning, which is at times influenced by cultural beliefs, customs, and practices.

High-risk settings
Social work settings that may potentially present a high risk for threats or actual client violence toward social workers owing to the nature of clients served and services provided.

Individuality
A focus on ways in which clients must be viewed as individuals, even though they are a part of groups that also influence their identity.

Influence
The capacity to increase the chances that a desired change may occur.

Informal evaluation
The ongoing verbal feedback and suggestions offered by a supervisor that takes place on a weekly or even a daily basis, and is provided both in scheduled meetings and as needed in practice situations.

Informal structure
Various networks of employees and unofficial channels of communication that operate through unwritten but universally understood rules.

Institutional discrimination
Beliefs and practices that are embedded in laws, social structures, economic systems, and governmental or organizational policy.

Interpersonal communication
The verbal and nonverbal interactions between social workers and colleagues, or between social workers and clients, throughout the planned change process to facilitate positive professional relationships and promote progress toward goals.

Intervention
The third phase of the planned change process, during which intervention plans are implemented, monitored, and modified as needed.

Knowledge
Understanding of professional terminology, facts, principles, concepts, perspectives, and theories to be used in social work practice.

Learning edge
The need for professionals to lean into innovation and emerging practice so as to pioneer new approaches and move beyond their existing competency levels.

Learning organizations
Organizations that seek to maintain relevance, work toward best practices, continuously evaluate their services, anticipate needed improvements, and base their growth on sound information and a commitment to their mission.

Learning plan
A written document that identifies learning goals, objectives, tasks, timeliness, and evaluation criteria for a practicum student, completed in collaboration with the practicum agency and the university social work program.

Least harmful

The principle in social work ethical decision making that encourages social workers to choose an intervention alternative that is likely to have the fewest negative impacts on clients.

Liberal arts education
College education focused on preparing graduates for living in a global society that requires critical thinking, understanding of complexity, communication skills, appreciation for diversity, and social responsibility.

Lifelong professional learning
Engagement in ongoing professional learning that keeps professionals abreast of new and evidence-based practices and that is required for those with professional licenses.

Malfeasance
Commission of an unlawful or wrongful act in practice.

Malpractice
The provision of professional services that is considered by the profession to be of lower quality than the minimum expected, and that causes harm as a result.

Mandated reporter
An individual, usually a professional, who is required by law because of his or her position and involvement with clients, to report suspected abuse or threats of violence to appropriate authorities.

Membership agency
An agency that derives some or all of its budget from membership fees, and in which members are involved in setting agency policy and developing agency programs.

Micro-aggression
Small slights, jokes, dismissals of others' points of view, and appropriation of an aspect of diversity, which accumulate and greatly impact the people toward whom they are targeted, intentionally or unintentionally.

Misfeasance
Commission of a proper act in practice in a way that is injurious or wrongful.

Negligence
A failure on the part of a professional to provide services with the level of care required of a prudent practitioner and that causes harm to a client.

Nonfeasance
Failure to act in accordance with one's professional responsibility.

Offensive approach to social justice
The proactive, positive, and affirmative practices that promote social justice and build on and capitalize on existing forces for change, resources, and values.

Office culture
The general ways that an agency operates based on agency history, values, theoretical underpinnings, policies and procedures, and staff interactions.

Office politics
The undercurrent of power dynamics created by factors such as conflict between various factions within an organization, uneven distribution of power between those in various levels, personal ambition, individuals or

groups jockeying for greater power, lowered staff morale, and efforts to lobby on behalf of a certain opinion.

Official lines of authority

The chain of command within an organization, which indicates authority in decision making, agency policy, supervision, and responsibilities of all agency staff.

Organizational climate

The "tone" of an agency, which includes relationships, level of teamwork, morale, communication, and the level of mutual support among employees.

Organizational communication

The oral and written forms of communication used within organizations to facilitate communication among employees, supervisors, and administrators about services, policies, and activities.

Organizational culture

The values of the agency that impact its programs and serve as the underpinnings of the services provided.

Orienting/explanatory theory

Specific types of conceptual frameworks that explain how and why people and families develop, which aspects of the social environment impact social functioning, what explains social problems, and how the social issues the framework addresses can be explained.

Outcome evaluation

The measurement of the results of the intervention process in terms of level of success, achievement of goals and objectives, and changes over time.

Planned change process

The central activity of social work practice at all levels of practice, consisting of the phases of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation, all of which are done in collaboration with the client or client system.

Policies of prevention

Social policies that attempt to prevent certain social and health problems from developing or increasing.

Policies of protection

Social policies that seek to protect people from harm and exploitation, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Policies of rehabilitation and remediation

Social policies intended to correct or minimize the impact of certain conditions.

Positivist view of knowledge building

The belief that professional knowledge is acquired through empirical, scientific means.

Postmodern view of knowledge

The belief that values the contributions of alternative theories and qualitative research to professional knowledge, and that encourages the deconstruction of assumptions that form the basis of knowledge.

Power

The ability to make change happen in some way.

Practice hypotheses

Expected outcomes at all levels of practice, including short- and long-term results, which are based on an understanding of clients' or client systems' needs and are utilized in combination with practice models likely to result in positive results.

Practice protection
Legal protections for clients, which allow only social workers to engage in the practice activities of social work.

Practice theory/model
Theories and models that provide specific guidance regarding interventions and strategies to be used in specific situations, are based on an understanding of clients and client systems, are well matched to clients' needs, and are supported by evidence of efficacy.

Practice wisdom
The collective professional experiences and observations of practitioners that supplement empirical knowledge.

Precursor
A preexisting condition or factor that influences the development of a social problem.

Primary role
The responsibility of a practicum student to learn, integrate academic knowledge into practice, and gain the competencies of a professional social worker.

Private nonprofit agency
An agency that is established by private individuals or organizations to meet an identified social need or address a social problem, and that does not have a profit-making motivation.

Privatization

The transfer of public responsibilities and power from public control to private entities, which has the potential to greatly change both the ways in which services are provided and what is offered.

Privileged communication

The principle that clients can expect that their social worker will not or cannot share information without their consent, because information shared with a professional social worker is protected by law.

Process of evaluation

The measurement of the intervention process in terms of fidelity, the stages of planned change, monitoring and adapting of objectives, and completion of intervention effort.

Professional boundary

The clearly defined separation between a professional's personal and professional lives, which protects clients from potential misuse of professional power and which helps professionals retain energy, enthusiasm, and optimism while also preventing discouragement and burnout.

Professional communication

Communication in all forms that is in accordance with professional and agency standards, that is constructive and collegial in its tone, and that facilitates both client and agency goals.

Professional education

The teaching and learning of knowledge, theory, and broad principles that can be applied in many practice settings; that is acquired through academic means such as reading, discussion, critical thinking, and testing;

that is related to the mission of the social work; and that is measured in terms of learning outcomes.

Professional identity
A clear understanding of the purpose of the profession, the roles and responsibilities as a social worker, the profession's core values and ethical guidelines, and the skills and knowledge needed to perform social work tasks and activities.

Professional liability/malpractice insurance
Insurance that provides for the costs of legal representation when social workers are accused of causing harm to clients through negligence and/or malpractice.

Professional licensing and certifications
The written sanction to practice social work in a particular state, based on that state's requirements for level of education for specific levels of practice, scope of practice, supervision requirements, licensing examination passage, and a prescribed number of continuing education hours per year.

Professional perspective
A professional view or lens intentionally used to focus on and examine a particular realm of social functioning so as to complete a thorough assessment for intervention (i.e., strengths perspective, diversity perspective, generalist perspective, ecosystems perspective, feminist perspective, and person-in-environment perspective).

Professional supervision
Supervision of a professional or a student in a particular discipline or profession so as to provide orientation, training, support, and encouragement for professional growth and development.

Professional training
Training provided by agencies in regard to agency-specific, established, standard, or typical approaches to social work. Such training is related to the mission of the agency, and is measured in terms of work outcomes.

Protective factor
Conditions and characteristics that buffer, inoculate against, and mitigate social problems.

Proximate cause
An act or omission that is considered to be the cause of harm or injury, and without such act or omission the harm or injury would not have occurred.

Public agency
An agency created by a legislative body at the federal, state, county, tribal, or community level, which is mandated, funded, or empowered to provide services in regard to needs identified within its jurisdiction.

Qualitative evaluation
The measurement of intervention outcomes using a non-numeric approach, which allows for the description of outcomes in subjective, individual, narrative, and nonquantifiable ways.

Quantitative evaluation
The measurement of intervention outcomes in a numeric manner, which allows for quantification of results, analysis of success, and demonstrated level of change.

Reciprocity
An agreement between states that an individual licensed in one state will be accepted for licensure in another state, albeit sometimes with

additional requirements specific to a particular state.

Reflexive practice
A professional commitment to continuous self-reflection on one's practice so as to achieve ongoing growth in knowledge and skills, often involving supervision to identify the need for self-awareness of professional gaps, biases, and need for growth.

Release of information
Written authorization given by clients to professionals and organizations, allowing them to release personal information about the client to third parties.

Resiliency factor
Conditions and characteristics that decrease the likelihood that individuals, families, groups, and communities will experience social problems.

Risk factor
Conditions and characteristics that increase the likelihood that individuals, families, groups, and communities will experience social problems.

Rollback or reversal of social policies
A change or reversal in existing social policy based on dissatisfaction with the results or philosophy of existing social policies.

Scope of practice
The defined areas in which social workers are trained and licensed to practice based on their education and possession of a license, and in which those without a social work license are not allowed to practice.

Secondary role
The responsibility of a practicum student to provide services to agency clients and to meet the expectations of the practicum agency.

Secondary/vicarious traumatic stress
The negative impact on social workers of bearing witness to the pain and suffering of others and taking on the pain and trauma themselves.

Self-awareness
An accurate view of oneself as it pertains to the use of self in professional practice, including how one is perceived by clients and colleagues.

Self-reflective practice
Seeking, thinking about, and making use of supervisory feedback; responding to both positive feedback; and changing one's practice based on suggestions for improvement.

Sense of community
Social bonds and a sense of belonging, which can lead to community involvement, civic engagement, and responsibility.

Skill-building continuum
The structured process and timeline by which a practicum student or social worker gains skills through practice, supervision, reflection, and refinement.

Skills
The behaviors of practice, which include the techniques and procedures used by social workers to bring about desired change and enhancement of the social functioning of clients or in social systems with which clients interact.

Social asset

A strength in social functioning that puts individuals, families, groups, and communities in a better position to insulate themselves from the negative impacts of the social problems they face and even to extricate themselves from challenging situations.

Social asset cluster

A set of strengths in social functioning that create and/or enhance each other, providing positive attributes and circumstances that can provide a buffer between the individual, family, group, or community and the social problems they face.

Social change strategy

An agency strategy to expand the number and types of life-enhancing opportunities available to people, take actions that will improve the environment in which people must function, and reduce or eliminate negative and destructive forces in their social environment.

Social condition

A factual reality that can be observed and measured. It can be positive or negative, and may or may not rise to the level of a social problem.

Social construction

The belief that knowledge of a social phenomenon is shaped and limited by the context in which it was studied by one's individual assumptions and values, by one's position in relation to the problem, and by the language used to describe it.

Social control strategy

An agency strategy to monitor and restrict the activities of those clients who exhibit self-destructive or dangerous behaviors.

Social functioning
The ability to fulfill desired and required social roles, meet one's own basic needs, make adequate contributions to family and community life, and achieve autonomy and satisfaction in the pursuit of one's life goals.

Social indicator
A measure of social conditions and social problems, including how those conditions and problems change over time and compare with similar communities.

Social integration strategy
An agency strategy to encourage and help people interact more effectively with other individuals and with the social systems or resources they need to function effectively and cope with problems.

Social justice
The basic fairness and moral rightness of the social arrangements and institutional structures that impact the people of a community or society.

Social network
An interconnected and mutually interacting social system that supports individuals and families and provides resources needed for social functioning.

Social policy
A decision made by public or governmental authorities regarding the assignment and allocation of resources, rights, and responsibilities, which is expressed in laws and governmental regulations.

Social policy analysis framework
A conceptual framework to guide an examination and analysis of the social policies that impact the operation of an agency and either support

or undermine the social functioning of the clients and groups of people.

Social policy practice
The level of social work practice that works for broad social change and for social policy formation that is instrumental in helping large numbers of people and in promoting social justice.

Social problem
A social condition that negatively impacts the social functioning of individuals or communities; as a situation in which the welfare, values, and well-being of at least a portion of society may be compromised.

Social problem analysis model
A structured format for identifying and assessing a social problem, including its definition, scope, scale, causes, impact, and interaction with other social problems, all of which can lead to an understanding of how to research, prevent, and intervene with the identified social problem.

Social role
An individual or family expectation that supports its social functioning or that of others (e.g., parent, partner, citizen, employee, neighbor).

Social services delivery system
The manner by which groups of agencies and entities that are connected through processes and agreements provide services in response to a social problem.

Social stressor
An event, series of events, or crisis experienced by a vulnerable individual, family, group, or community, which moves the social condition to the status of a social problem.

Social welfare policy
A social policy that focuses primarily on the distribution of economic, educational, and health benefits to those in need.

Socialization strategy
An agency strategy to assist and encourage people to understand, learn, and abide by the norms of society for their own benefit and for the benefit of their family, community, or society.

Stakeholders
A person or social system with a specific personal, financial, civic, or policy-making perspectives on the need for, design of, and goals for state and federal social welfare policies.

Standard of care
The type, level, and specific type of treatment or intervention that is indicated and appropriate for a specific client with a particular condition.

Standards of practice
The minimum quality of professional practice expected by the members of a particular profession.

Strategic planning
Engagement of agencies in a process of reexamination of their program effectiveness; review of their mission and goals; and adjustment of their objectives based on changes in the political climate, community need, or financial resources.

Subpoena
A formal notice that one's appearance is required in court in a specific proceeding.

Supervision
The process of educating, training, supporting, teaching, monitoring, and evaluating professional staff members and students, with the ultimate goal of providing the highest-quality services possible, and with the additional goal of preparing students for professional practice.

Supportive function of supervision
The facet of supervision that sustains staff morale, cultivates a sense of teamwork, builds commitment to agency goals and mission, encourages staff, deals with work-related problems among staff, encourages self-awareness among staff, and creates a positive work environment.

Tort
A private or civil wrong or injury that results from actions other than the breach of a formal legal contract and the commission of a crime.

Transformational leader
A leader who understands and embodies the interpersonal and moral aspects of leadership, inspires others, and is motivated by the welfare of everyone involved in a common effort.

Unintentional discrimination
Behavior that is rooted in denial of one's own racism or stereotypical thinking, and that can have a negative impact even though such a consequence was not intentional.

Universality
A focus on ways in which clients must be viewed as deserving of equal treatment because of their humanity even though they are also individuals.

Value

A strong personal or professional preference rooted in one's deepest beliefs and commitments which affects an individual's personal or professional choices, decisions, and actions.

Vicarious liability

The legal principle that describes the liability that a supervisor assumes for the potentially ineffective or unethical actions of those persons whom he or she supervises.

Written communication

All forms of written documents within agency settings that guide, describe, document, and record organizational processes, both internal and external, and that must meet professional standards of quality, timeliness, privacy, and accuracy.

Video and Interactive Resources

This list includes all of the interactive media in the book.

Chapter 1 Purpose and Expectations for Practicum

- Video Application Exercise 1.1.
- Video Application Exercise 1.2.
- Video Application Exercise 1.3.

Chapter 2 Implementing a Learning Plan

- Video Application Exercise 2.1.
- Video Application Exercise 2.2.
- Video Application Exercise 2.3.

Chapter 3 Learning from Supervision

- Self-Check 3.1
- Self-Check 3.2
- Self-Check 3.3
- Video Application Exercise 3.1.
- Self-Check 3.4
- Self-Check 3.5
- Self-Check 3.6
- Video Application Exercise 3.2.
- Video Application Exercise 3.3.
- Self-Check 3.7
- Self-Check 3.8

Chapter 4 Organizational Context of Practice

- Self-Check 4.1
- Video Application Exercise 4.1.
- Self-Check 4.2
- Self-Check 4.3
- Self-Check 4.4
- Self-Check 4.5
- Self-Check 4.6
- Video Application Exercise 4.2.
- Self-Check 4.7
- Self-Check 4.8
- Video Application Exercise 4.3.

Chapter 5 The Community Context of Practice

- Video Application Exercise 5.1.
- Self-Check 5.1
- Self-Check 5.2
- Self-Check 5.3
- Video Application Exercise 5.2.
- Self-Check 5.4
- Self-Check 5.5
- Self-Check 5.6
- Self-Check 5.7
- Self-Check 5.8
- Video Application Exercise 5.3.

Chapter 6 The Social Problem Context of Practice

- Self-Check 6.1
- Self-Check 6.2
- Video Application Exercise 6.1.
- Self-Check 6.3
- Self-Check 6.4
- Self-Check 6.5
- Video Application Exercise 6.2.
- Self-Check 6.6
- Self-Check 6.7
- Self-Check 6.8
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Client concerns and agency policies that can address client concerns are shown in the table below:

Client Concerns	Agency Policy That Address Client Concerns	How Policies Address Client Concerns
Ambivalence about engaging in an intervention	Choice and right to refuse treatment	Example: Allowing clients to choose or refuse treatment empowers them and may help to resolve ambivalence.
Embarrassment and guilt at being an involuntary client	Confidentiality policy; Release of information policy; Privileged communication policy	blank
Difficulty understanding what will be required in a treatment or intervention	Informed consent policy	blank
Right to be offered	Best practices policy; Staff	blank

evidence-based practices	credentialing policy; Staff development policy; Supervision	
Desire to review one’s records	Documentation policy	blank
Belief that inferior services have been provided	Grievance policy and feedback on complaint	blank

The different social work policies and practices and the social work values they address are: Advisory board.

- Dignity and Respect
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Best practices policy.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Bill of rights.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency

- Cultural Competency

Choice and right to refuse.

- Dignity and Respect
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Service
- Cultural Competency

Code of ethics.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Confidentiality statement.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service

Conflict of interest policy.

- Safety and Protection
- Quality and Competency

Consultation.

- Safety and Protection
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Credential verification.

- Safety and Protection
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Documentation.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Ethical decision-making process.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service

- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Ethics committee.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Grievance policy.

- Safety and Protection
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Informed consent policy.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Length of service policy.

- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Payment policy.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Privileged communication policy.

- Safety and Protection
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality

Release of information.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection
- Privacy and Confidentiality

Staff development.

- Dignity and Respect
- Safety and Protection

- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

Supervision.

- Safety and Protection
- Equality
- Autonomy and Self-Determination
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Service
- Quality and Competency
- Cultural Competency

In this tool, the compliance terms are defined as:

- Compliance: Minimal risk to client, social worker, and agency
- Minor Noncompliance: Low risk to client, social worker, and agency
- Major Noncompliance: High risk to client, social worker, and agency

The agency policies and procedures listed are:

- Advisory board
- Best practices board
- Choice and right to refuse
- Confidentiality statement
- Conflict of interest policy
- Consultation
- Credential verification

The compliance terms are still defined as:

- Compliance: Minimal risk to client, social worker, and agency
- Minor Noncompliance: Low risk to client, social worker, and agency
- Major Noncompliance: High risk to client, social worker, and agency

The agency policies and procedures listed are:

- Documentation of services
- Ethical decision-making process
- Ethics committee
- Ethical violation policy
- Grievance policy
- Informed consent policy
- Length of service policy
- Payment policy
- Privileged communications policy
- Release of information
- Staff development and training
- Supervision

The ethical dilemmas provided in this figure are:

- Client wishing to be a friend
- Involuntary treatment of a client
- Use of social media to learn about a client
- Registration of sex offenders in treatment
- Parental notification regarding drug use
- Choosing an agency program to eliminate due to funding cuts

The different social work values and the type of laws that support these values are shown in the table below:

Social Work Values	Laws Supporting Social Work Values
Access to services	Disability accommodation laws; nondiscrimination laws
Empowerment of vulnerable populations	Child and adult protection laws; consumer protection laws
Equality in provision of services	Equal opportunity laws; nondiscrimination laws
Full disclosure	Informed consent; privacy laws
Least harm to clients	Client consent to treatment; consumer protection laws
Privacy and confidentiality	Privileged communication laws; release of information laws
Protection and safety	Orders of protection; duty to warn
Quality of life	Environmental protections; Landlord or

	tenant laws
Right to quality and competent services	Social work licensing and regulation; consumer protection laws
Self-determination	Advance directives for end-of-life care; right to refuse treatment

Common legal terms and their definition and application to social work practice are described in the table below:

Term	Definition and Application to Social Work Practice
Least Harm	Some practice situations require that a social worker make a decision that involves several less than perfect choices. Sometimes there are two “bad” choices. The principle of least harm means that the social worker considers the impact or consequences of each choice, and then tries to choose the path that causes the least harm to the client or others involved.
Malfeasance	Behavior or treatment by a social worker that is harmful, negative, and perhaps negligent or derelict. Such unprofessional behavior is below the standards of the profession and is hurtful to the client.
Malpractice	Negative, harmful, or negligent behavior that is subject to lawsuits from clients because it involved malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance.
Misfeasance	Situations in which social workers do not practice well, but do not intend to do harm. This could include social workers practicing beyond their skill level or not recognizing the need for services.

Negligence	Failure to use thoughtful, carefully considered and proper interventions with clients. In lawsuits against social workers, clients must prove that the social worker's negligence actually resulted in harm to them.
Nonfeasance	Ethical or legal failure on the part of a social worker to act when clients need action, support, or services. This could result in negative outcomes for the client, including such serious acts as suicide.
Proximate Clause	The causal relationship between harm to a client and a social worker's action or inaction. In malpractice situations, clients must prove that a social workers' action or inaction resulted in harm to them.
Prudent Practice	The concept that professionals should provide services that are reasonable, considered to be logical and effective by the profession, and would be seen as good choices by the general public. Engaging in prudent practice may provide some protection in lawsuits.
Standard of Care or	The expectation within a profession about what services should be provided, and to what minimum

Practice	standards.

The different practice situations presented are:

Practice Situation
A client who may not be mentally competent to make legal, medical, or financial decisions
A minor client in need of services and whose parents may or may not be informed
A client who puts himself or herself at risk by refusing or withdrawing from treatment
A client known to have or suspected of having committed a serious crime
A client who has been ordered to receive services from your agency
A client who has lied, withheld information, or falsified an application to become eligible for benefits or services
A client who states the intention to bring a lawsuit against a social worker or agency

How to proceed when a client asks to read or copy the records in his or her case file

How to obtain a client's permission to release records to your agency or another one

When and how to report suspected child or elder abuse or neglect

How to obtain a client's informed consent to participate in programs and receive services

How to handle and record the receipt of gifts from a client

How to respond to a subpoena for client records or to be a witness in a trial or court action

The description of each of the phases and principles of the planned change process are:

Phase or Principle	Description
Engagement	Social workers at all levels of practice engage with clients and client systems to establish effective working relationships that form the basis for effective assessment, intervention, and evaluation of planned change. • A positive working relationship is necessary to engage in the planned change process. • The better the engagement, the more accurate and comprehensive the assessment. • Effective engagement can help make the intervention a partnership. • Professional perspectives are used in the engagement phase (e.g., strengths, diversity).
Assessment	Social workers gather, sort, and interpret information related to client or client system functioning (including strengths and needs); identify goals and objectives; and develop intervention plans based on client input and an understanding of orienting or explanatory theories. • Assessment begins early in the planned change process, but continues throughout the intervention as additional information emerges.

	• Good assessments require a variety of tools and sources of information. • Clients are the experts on their lives. • Clients' values, perceptions, desires, and preferences are paramount in assessment and goal setting. • Orienting theories that explain and describe the behavior and development of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities are used in this phase.
Intervention	Social workers implement intervention plans, monitor progress of planned change efforts, and adapt intervention plans as necessary to achieve desired change. • Intervention plans are directly derived from assessment data. • Intervention plans have broad goals and specific objectives. • Intervention plans are reasonable, feasible, ethical, and client-centered. • Client strengths identified in the assessment phase are used to address problems in the intervention phase. • Intervention plans are adapted as needed and when circumstances change.

Termination and Evaluation	Social workers evaluate effectiveness of intervention plans toward desired change using a variety of measures, terminate the planned change process when appropriate, and incorporate the results into future planned change processes. • Termination may be at the discretion of the client or the agency. • Both client and social work definitions of success and effectiveness are included. • Evaluation of intervention is based on success in reaching goals and objectives. • Partial success or failure of interventions can be instructive and provide insight.

The different client, social worker, agency, and community characteristics are:

Client characteristics.

- Definition and meaning applied to situation
- Goals and desires
- Personal values
- Self-awareness and insight
- Level of motivation and engagement
- Voluntary or involuntary status
- Social support available
- Issues of diversity

Social worker characteristics.

- Knowledge base
- Training and preparation
- Personal values
- Professional values
- Level of rapport and engagement
- Ability to complete high-quality assessment
- Skill in variety of practice models

Agency characteristics.

- Agency mission
- Available programs and services
- Agency priorities
- Agency resources

- Level of cultural competence in agency
- Timeliness of services
- Use of evidence-based practices

Community characteristics.

- Community assets
- Community needs and problems
- Sense of community
- Attitudes toward and support of clients

The different community and social policy characteristics are:

Community characteristics.

- Attitude toward and support of agency
- Informal resources available to supplement agency services

Social policy characteristics.

- Existing laws regulating practice
- Existing laws mandating services
- Laws limiting or prohibiting services
- Political context of social policy formation
- Value base of social policies
- Effectiveness of social policies in meeting client needs

The different phases of the planned change process and their appropriate perspective, theories, models, or tools are: Phase 1 Engagement. Perspectives.

- Provide lenses with which to view clients and client systems
- Help social workers focus on specific facets of social functioning

Phase 2 Assessment. Orienting and Explanatory Theories.

- Describe development of client and client systems
- Explain social problem etiology

Phase 3 Intervention Practice Theories and Models.

- Build upon orienting theories and the information they yield
- Guide selection and implementation of intervention

Phase 4 Termination and Evaluation. Evaluation Tools.

- Measure effectiveness of intervention
- Measure client and client system progress

The table below shows common pitfalls that occur when working with diverse families, individuals, or groups are shown with the negative impact the pitfall can have and suggestions for how to avoid the pitfall:

Pitfall	Negative Impact	Avoiding the Pitfall
Avoid the discomfort of cross- cultural interactions	Engagement with the client is not possible	Understand and embrace discomfort as a vehicle for growth
Assume that training is sufficient	Closes off additional avenues of learning and assumes knowledge is sufficient	Think of training as the beginning of growth rather than the end
Attack, discredit, or demonize those who challenge or criticize you	Cuts off communication and raises the level of conflict	Think of challenges or criticism as necessary for growth
Dismiss others' feelings and experiences	Leads to anger and curtailed communication	Listen without dismissing or judging
Expect diverse	Communicates that	Come to terms with the

individuals to dismiss the past	you do not understand	impact of history on the present, including your relationship
Misinterpret emotion	Shows you do not understand that anger or hostility may be rooted in pain or fear	Work to understand and accept emotion without responding in kind or taking its expression personally
Associate primarily with those who share your beliefs and experiences	Confirms your beliefs and biases and does not challenge you to think differently	Bravely associate with people different from yourself and challenge yourself to truly listen and learn
Adopting ideas and language of diversity training without internalizing them	Limits your learning to a surface level and helps you avoid conflict or critical reflection	Commit not to become “politically correct” without personal reflection

The learner characteristics and outcomes are:

Characteristics of Learner	Outcomes
Authentic desire to grow	Leads to deeper understanding of self and others
Intentionality	Organizes growth potential in planned manner
Expectation for unexpected learning	Recognizes unplanned opportunities to learn
Willingness to unlearn	Identifies and deals with biases and assumptions
Self-reflection	Reveals personal growth and need for growth
Consideration of context	Recognizes impact of individual and systematic issues
Examination of power	Understands impact of having or not having power

Examination of privilege	Understands impact of having or not having privilege
Community of practice involvement	Grow together through support and challenge
Cultural identity development	Clarifies cultural impact on self and others
Openness to learning	Willingness to reflect more deeply
Openness to emotional reactions	Accepts anger and frustration of oppressed
Humility	Recognizes limits of understanding and competency

The table below shows different belief barriers and how each belief effects cultural competence:

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence
"All people are alike"	Devalues difference
"People are more alike than they are different"	Devalues difference
"As long as I care about my client, I don't need to adapt"	Ignores or dismisses difference
"Clients should learn to adapt"	Shows naivete about need for cultural competence
"All . . . Act the same"	Shows lack of understanding of the need for diversity adaptations in intervention
"How can people move forward if they continue to focus on the past?"	Reveals stereotypes and overgeneralizations
"Agency policy requires us to	Dismisses individual and cultural

treat everyone the same"	history or oppression
"I have no biases"	Devalues difference
"How can I be expected to understand all cultures?"	Reveals defensiveness and resistance to growth
"There is too much emphasis on being politically correct"	Dismisses meaning and importance of language
"If a client doesn't tell me something, how should I know?"	Dismisses communication differences
"These people are so amazing"	Romanticizing of diverse groups
"... are so resistant and unmotivated"	Misinterprets meaning of client behavior

The table below shows different belief barriers and how each belief effects cultural competence:

Belief Barrier	Resulting Barrier to Cultural Competence
"The reason this person is doing this is because of his or her culture"	Attributes too much to cultural difference
"This is how we deal with . . ."	Reveals stereotypes and use of inappropriate intervention
"Don't be disappointed if they don't do well"	Identifies low expectations for diverse groups, blaming client for ineffective intervention, and not recognizing client definition of success
"Every time I ask an honest question about culture or diversity, I am attacked"	Shows inability to understand that strong language comes from those who are tired of questions they think have been answered or are offensive

The organizational development and interactions with client groups are:

Organizational Development	Interactions with Client Groups
Learn the history of the diverse groups served by the agency.	Conduct outreach activities.
Develop inclusive written materials.	Design an inviting physical environment.
Train staff in cultural competence.	Develop culturally appropriate agency policies.
Diversify staff.	Develop culturally appropriate practice models.
Develop culturally sensitive agency policies.	Include feedback from diverse groups in the program evaluation.
Recognize the limitations of a charity orientation to providing services.	Commit to have the client base reflect the makeup of the community.
Remember the impossibility of	Learn about and develop best

being culturally neutral.	practices in cross-cultural social work.
Include commitment to diverse groups and cultural competence in the agency's mission.	Develop a comprehensive and varied referral network.
Maintain compliance with federal laws on antidiscriminatory practices.	Provide accommodations for persons with disabilities.
Maintain compliance with state and local laws on antidiscriminatory practices.	Provide accommodations for persons whose first language is not English or who use sign language.

The questions presented are as follows. Questions for students seeking to grow.

- What if I make mistakes when with people different than me?
- How can I discover what "I don't know" so that I don't offend or harm someone?
- How can I keep from being defensive when challenged or corrected?
- Is it ethical to practice without training in diversity?
- How can I ask clients to share their experience without asking them to speak for all people in their particular group?
- How can I become aware of my biases if biases are by nature unconscious?

Questions for students who have experienced oppression or discrimination.

- How can I use my experiences to make me a good social worker?
- How can I make sure my negative experiences do not negatively impact my clients?
- How can I best get others to recognize their privilege and understand how it has put them in a position of power I have never been in?
- What should I do when someone asks what I consider to be an uninformed or offensive question?
- What should I say when someone tells me he or she didn't mean to insult me, and that the intention was to help?

The different statements listed are:

- We do not serve many diverse clients.
- Clients of color tend to go to agencies that focus on their specific needs rather than coming to us.
- It shouldn't matter if our employees are mostly white.
- We don't discriminate. We offer the same services to people from all groups.
- We provide annual training in cultural competence to all of our employees.
- Some group expect accommodations that are not reasonable and that we cannot provide.

Expected client behaviour, social worker goals, and possible de-escalation or intervention approaches are shown in the table below:

Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or intervention approaches
High-risk situation: stress, anxiety, fear, anger	In control of own behavior but exhibits unusual response	Prevent violence	Recognize potential for high-risk situation to escalate; use active listening and empathy to allow the client to be heard and work toward resolution of concerns

Expected client behaviour, social worker goals, and possible de-escalation or intervention approaches are shown in the table below:

Situation	Client Emotions	Client Behavior	Goal	De-escalation or intervention approaches
Escalation of Potential for Violence	Escalation of emotions and irrational thoughts	Verbal venting or unusual quietness; client starting to lose control over own behavior	De-escalate violence	Assess potential for violence; utilize nonthreatening, respectful, and calm responses to client statement and behavior; avoid arguing and challenging client; seek solutions satisfactory to client; use non-threatening body language
Threats	Feeling attacked, angry, disrespected, vulnerable,	Verbal attacks, intimidation, and threats of physical violence;	Deal with threats	Set limits on speech and behavior; develop a potential escape plan;

	mistreated, unheard	client close to losing control over own behavior and statements		avoid giving orders or returning threats; call for assistance
Violence	Extremely angry, sees no alternative to violence	Threatening actions, actual violence; client has lost control over own behavior	Deal with violence	Use self-defense measures; if safety cannot be ensured, leave or escape; cooperate with responding law enforcement or others who arrive to assist
Post-incident	Remorseful, embarrassed, released from tension	Client has regained control over behavior	Review incident to provide support and learn	Consult with supervisor and administrators; provide critical incident debriefing and

			from incident	support as needed

The different approaches to the different types of clients who pose a threat are described in the table below:

Clients who pose a threat	Approaches
Involuntary client	Provide as much choice and autonomy as possible.
Client with a history of threats or violence	Use anticipatory empathy to understand that involuntary clients feel a lack of power. Remain calm and matter-of-fact. Consult agency records prior to meeting with a potentially violent client to inform yourself of any previous threats or violent behavior. Notify colleagues when planning to meet a client with a history of violence.
Angry client	Provide the client with as much privacy as possible without compromising your own safety. Allow the client to vent angry feelings and maintain a calm and confident attitude. Do not touch or stand above the client and give him or her personal space.
Fearful client	Recognize that fear can turn to aggression when clients feel targeted. Acknowledge the client's emotions and provide reassurance if possible. Speak and act in ways that lessen the client's need to fear you.

Client with escalating emotion and behavior	Recognize physical signs of emotional escalation, such as rapid breathing, teeth grinding, dilated pupils, loud speech, clenched fists, and threatening movements. Reduce threatening stimuli to de-escalate emotion and threat. Increase structure and boundaries to de-escalate emotion and threat.
Client under the influence of substances	Identify the level of client impairment. Identify the extent of inhibition due to substance use. Remember that reasoning with the client may be ineffective due to impaired judgment.
Client with access to weapons	Assure the client you intend no harm. Remember that weapons may be kept in kitchens or bedrooms. Remember that any object can be used as a weapon.
Client threatening you with a weapon	Do not attempt to disarm a client with a weapon. Do not endanger yourself by remaining in the situation; use any escape route available.
Client involved with illegal	Recognize that you pose a threat to the client and what you have seen. Find a reason to exit the

activities	situation.
Client who makes you uncomfortable; active shooter	Trust your instincts and assume that you have a built-in unconscious mechanism that can recognize danger more quickly than your rational thought processes. Utilize a predetermined excuse to leave or seek help. Train all staff in the response to an active shooter inside or outside the building. Rehearse all training to reinforce learning and improve crisis response.

Examples of approaches that can be taken to manage potential agency-based risks for different facets of the organization are described in the table below:

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Quality of services; exterior of office	Provide services in a timely and professional manner to reduce client frustration. Avoid waiting lists when possible and reduce waiting periods for eligibility determination. Ensure that the exterior of the agency and the parking area are well lighted. Make entrances and signs friendly, clear, and inviting.
Environmental stimuli	Keep waiting rooms and offices clean, and create a pleasant and inviting physical environment. Avoid an unkempt or impersonal appearance that may convey disrespect to clients and generate frustration and hostility.
Agency policy regarding unacceptable behavior	Post a statement in waiting rooms and in other prominent places explaining that alcohol, drugs, and weapons are not allowed in the building. Post a statement that security officers or police will be called and legal action may be taken when clients become threatening.
Meeting space	Designate a specific office or room for meeting with potentially threatening or violent clients.

	Select a room that is easily and frequently observable by others.
Policies and protocol	Develop policies on how staff members should assess danger and respond, including bomb threats, hostage taking, and hazardous materials management. Develop policies on when and how to seek police assistance, including a written agreement with the local law enforcement agency. Review and revise policies as needed.
Staff training	Provide training for all staff on personal safety, including repetition of training over time. Rehearse and provide drills to reinforce staff understanding and ensure effective response.
Identification of high-risk clients	Devise recordkeeping systems that use color codes or other markings to identify clients with a history of threats or violence. Share information with all staff, especially when staff members are new to the agency.
Safety measures and devices	Install a call button in each office. Utilize code words and phrases for letting others know that help is needed.

Reporting and documentation	Encourage all staff to report threats or attempts of violence. Maintain a log of all threats so staff can identify those clients who present a risk. Review actual incidents to determine the effectiveness of the agency's response, and make revisions as necessary to protect staff.

A continuation of the examples of approaches that can be taken to manage potential agency-based risks for different facets of the organization are described in the table below:

Facet of Organization	Approaches
Legal actions	Develop agreements with law enforcement and court system to enlist their support for agency policy. File criminal charges against those clients who harm or threaten physical injury to either staff members or their families.
Staff support	Provide counseling, emotional support, time off, and other services to lessen the effects on staff members and their families. Offer critical incident debriefing support to all staff, even those not involved in an incident.

The table below discusses the approaches to mitigating risks during different facets of a home visit:

Facets of a Home Visit	Approaches
Preparing for a home visit	Learn as much as possible about a potentially dangerous home, its occupants, and its neighborhood.
	Seek the assistance of another social worker or law enforcement if necessary.
	Assign two staff members for potentially dangerous home visits.
	Inform your agency of the time and place of all home visits.
	Unless there is a good reason to visit a home unannounced, call ahead to schedule a visit.
	Consider meeting a client in a neutral location unless the home needs to be visited.

	Educate yourself about drugs and illegal drug labs so that you can recognize the dangers inherent in entering such a place.
Entering a home	Enter a home only after identifying any signs of risk, including sounds of violence.
	Identify yourself, show identification, and clearly state your reason for the home visit.
	Check in with your agency when you arrive, during your home visit, and when you leave.

The table below continues the discussion of the approaches to mitigating risks during different facets of a home visit:

Facets of a Home Visit	Approaches
Managing a home visit	Be aware that weapons may be kept in bedrooms and that kitchens contain knives and other potential weapons.
	Do not sit in a chair or couch from which you cannot quickly get to your feet. A hard and movable chair could also be used as a shield against a threat.
	Watch for hazardous materials such as those in a methamphetamine lab and for objects such as syringes and chemicals.
	Observe any changes in emotion or behavior that could indicate clients are upset.
Escape Plan	Have an escape plan ready in case you need to flee, including an escape excuse.
	Identify possible escape routes.

	Park your vehicle in a way that allows for quick escape if necessary.
	Keep your vehicle in good running order and full of fuel so you do not become stranded.
	If you are being followed, go immediately to a police or fire station or to a public place.
	Do not go to your home if you believe someone is following or watching you.
	Wear shoes and clothing that permit running.
	Carry a means of calling for help (e.g., cellular phone, emergency signal).

The table below describes the purposes and examples of quantitative vs a qualitative evaluation:

Purpose	To measure intervention outcomes in a numeric manner that allows for quantification of results, analysis of success, and demonstrated level of change	To measure intervention outcomes using a non-numeric approach that allows for the description of outcomes in subjective, individual, narrative, and non-quantifiable ways
Examples	Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, surveys, questionnaires, external review	Interviews, client satisfaction instruments, narrative evaluation tools, self-evaluation, and report by client/client system

The table below describes the purposes and examples of process evaluation vs outcome evaluation:

Purpose	To measure the intervention process in terms of fidelity, the stages of planned change, monitoring and adapting of objectives, and completion of intervention effort	To measure the results of the intervention process in terms of level of success, achievement of goals and objectives, and changes over time
Examples	Completion rates, assessment of fidelity to intervention model, process recordings	Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, surveys, questionnaires, goal attainment scaling, logic model, and longitudinal studies

The table below describes the purposes and examples of evaluation of social work performance vs evaluation of client or client system progress:

Purpose	To measure the quality and level of performance of a social worker, organization, or social program in achieving the intervention goals and objectives	To measure the quality and level of progress of a client/client system, which is the target of change in terms of the achievement of the intervention goals and objectives
Examples	Supervisory feedback, self-assessment, quality assurance, peer review, external review, agency compliance with standards, program evaluation, client satisfaction instruments, advisory board input	Pre- and post-tests, standardized instruments, achievement of goals and objectives, goal attainment scaling, self-evaluation and report of client/client system, observation, level of functioning scales

The definitions and uses for different evaluation concepts are:

Evaluation of Concept	Definition	Uses
Standard of Care	Generally agreed-upon minimum standard for provision and quality of services	Provides a basic level of expectations for services as understood by practitioners, agencies, and professional organizations
Accepted Practice	Generally agreed-upon approach to the provision of services to clients with specific needs and resources	Provides a common, standardized approach for services to clients with similar needs and resources
Emerging Practice	Innovative and promising approaches that are based on advances in orienting/explanatory theories	Promotes the development of improved services and

	and the practice models associated with them, but that are not yet fully evaluated empirically	outcomes for specific populations, allows for adaptations of accepted practice, and incorporates emerging knowledge into existing practice
Evidence-based practice	Empirically tested and affirmed approaches that are based on accepted orienting/explanatory theories and that have demonstrated effectiveness over time	Provides standardized and effective services based on empirical testing and allows for ongoing testing of innovative approaches
Best practice	Recommended practice approaches found to be the most effective and of the highest quality, combined with guidelines for incorporation of those approaches into practice	Promotes the highest standards for service provision, provides criteria on which to build

	at the individual, agency, social policy, or research level, and selected because they are best practices for a given situation based on client preference and suitability	interventions, and ensures quality of practice at all levels

The client and client systems contributors for ineffective interventions at the micro level are:

Individual Client	Family
Lack of ability, self-efficacy, capacity, and motivation	Lack of ability, unity, capacity, and motivation
Little social support	Dysfunctional patterns and skills
Multi-problem situation	Complex family situation
Involuntary involvement	Involuntary involvement

The client and client systems contributors for ineffective interventions at the mezzo level are:

Group	Organization
Lack of group cohesion and goals	Lack of clear mission and goals
Lack of participation by all members	Insufficient resources and funding
Lack of motivation	Political factors impeding interventions
Involuntary and disruptive members	Culturally insensitive practices and services

The client and client systems contributors for ineffective interventions at the macro level are:

Community	Social Policy
Factions working against each other	Political climate and debates
Negative social conditions within the community	Lack of cohesion, partners, and coalitions
Political factors impeding community development	Inappropriate timing
Lack of resources and funding	Low prioritization by policy makers

Some avenues for growth for personal insights are:

Personal Insight	Avenue for Growth
Biases identified	Identify and reduce biases over time
Values clarified	Act on personal and professional values
Need for openness and nondefensiveness	View insights as helpful and not self-critical
See impact of work on well-being	Deal with stresses and challenges productively
Personal issues not addressed adequately	Engage in counseling to avoid impact on clients

Some avenues for growth for interpersonal insights are:

Interpersonal Insight	Avenue for Growth
Recognition of position and privilege	Address impact of your privilege on others
Become aware of assumptions	Refrain from making assumptions about others
Recognition of counter-transference	Maintain professional boundaries
See impact of self-disclosure on clients	Use self-disclosure for client benefit only
Become aware of your impact on others	Use self as mechanism for positive impact

The evaluation pitfalls and potential outcomes for an evaluation with a low level of commitment are:

Evaluation Pitfalls	Potential Outcomes
Evaluation done because of external requirements only	Design, implementation, and dissemination not used for program improvement
Adequate time and resources not committed	Design and implementation likely to be substandard
Agency goals unclear and hard to measure	Measures and results not accurate or meaningful

The evaluation pitfalls and potential outcomes for an evaluation with low quality design and implementation are:

Evaluation Pitfalls	Potential Outcomes
Confusing the process with the outcome	Process measures do not evaluate outcomes
Failing to use multiple measures	Achieve limited results
Using only qualitative or quantitative measures	Achieve partial view of program
Failing to include client input and feedback	Client-centered services compromised
Lack of rigorous evaluation design	Poor design does not show real outcomes
Staff not trained in evaluation	Poor design and implementation
Failing to address diversity in design	Diverse client views left out of results

The evaluation pitfalls and potential outcomes for an evaluation where the results are not used for program improvement are:

Evaluation Pitfalls	Potential Outcomes
Results not shared with all staff	Staff unable to use results for program improvement
Results not related to mission and goals	Results not meaningful in relation to mission
Results not integrated into program planning	Reduced chance that program will improve

The different factors that contribute to professional satisfaction at the individual level are:

- Knowledge and skills necessary for effective practice
- Personal values consistent with professional goals
- Balance of collaborative and autonomous approach to work
- Optimism, enthusiasm, self-efficacy, ability to manage stress, and belief in possibilities
- Flexibility, openness, and commitment to professional growth

An example of a goal that could be used to maintain professional satisfaction is:

- Engage in ongoing professional training to enhance knowledge and skills

The different factors that contribute to professional satisfaction at the organizational level are:

- Agency support, training, and supervision
- Reasonable workload and adequate organizational funding
- Opportunities for professional growth and creativity
- Inclusion in agency vision, mission, and program development
- Collegiality, sharing of responsibility, and empowerment

An example of a goal that could be used to maintain professional satisfaction at the organizational level is:

- Take advantage of available agency education, training, and supervision

The different factors that contribute to professional satisfaction at the societal level are:

- Political economy supportive of social justice efforts
- Positive societal attitudes toward clients and profession
- Effective social policies that support social work efforts
- Societal commitment to prevention of social problems
- Societal commitment to promotion of social justice
- Societal support of social work mission

An example of a goal that could be used to maintain professional satisfaction at the societal level is:

- Engage in policy practice to advocate for socially just policies

The examples of stressors that can be encountered are: Physical stressors.

- Fatigue
- Overwork
- Neglected health and fitness

Intellectual stressors.

- Continual need to learn new techniques and expand knowledge

The examples of the strategies that can be used to deal with different stressors are: Physical strategies.

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Healthy practices

Intellectual strategies.

- Continuing education
- Professional reading

Psychological strategies.

- Counseling
- Stress management
- Peer support

Social strategies.

- Nurturing of positive relationships
- Family time
- Social outlets

Cultural strategies.

- Learn about cultures
- Practice own culture

Spiritual strategies.

- Engage in spiritual practices
- Nurture beliefs

The examples of stressors that can be encountered are: Psychological stressors.

- Work
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Guilt
- Countertransference
- Inadequate coping skills

Social stressors.

- Impact of work on relationships
- Dealing with colleagues and supervisors

Cultural stressors.

- Cross-cultural work
- Discomfort with diversity

Spiritual stressors.

- Impact of work on values and belief system

The examples of the strategies that can be used to deal with different stressors are the same as they wore in the previous image. They are: Physical strategies.

- Exercise
- Nutrition

- Healthy practices

Intellectual strategies.

- Continuing education
- Professional reading

Psychological strategies.

- Counseling
- Stress management
- Peer support

Social strategies.

- Nurturing of positive relationships
- Family time
- Social outlets

Cultural strategies.

- Learn about cultures
- Practice own culture

Spiritual strategies.

- Engage in spiritual practices
- Nurture beliefs

The areas of professional development provided are: Knowledge attainment.

- Continuing education
- Research

Skills Acquisition.

- Advanced training
- Specialty development

Social Work Role Mastery.

- Seeking supervision
- Using mentoring

The areas of professional development provided are: Credentials.

- Degrees and certificates
- Licensure

Professional collaboration.

- Social work community of practice
- Interdisciplinary community of practice

The examples are as follows.

- Personal or Professional Values. Example: Commitment to the welfare of others.
- Changes Experienced. Example: Keeping my commitment impacts my personal life negatively.
- Plan for a Values-Driven Profession. Example: Examine and adjust professional work life.

The table below discusses the contributions and limitations of different sources of knowledge:

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Theory	Orienting theories provide guidance for describing and understanding.	Orienting theories are guides only, and do not always consider individuality and diversity.	Example: Theories explaining human development are too general at times, not accounting for differences related to gender.
Theory	Practice theories provide models and techniques for intervention.	Practice theories must be tested and used with intention.	blank
Empirical Evidence	Research tests for effectiveness.	Research can lead to a tendency	Example: Studies do not always

		toward reductionism and adopting a deterministic view of clients.	suggest ways that agencies can implement their findings.
Empirical Evidence	Research leads to evidence-based and best practices.	Interventions are only considered best practices when they are best for and matched to individual clients and systems.	blank
Postmodern Thought	Postmodern thought suggests that not all knowledge needed for practice is empirical.	Empirical knowledge must be accompanied by postmodern thought to be complete.	Example: It may not be ethical to try techniques that have not yet been tested on vulnerable clients.

Postmodern Thought	Postmodern thought avoids conclusions based on empiricism alone.	Postmodern thought is broad and can be difficult to test or apply.	blank
Practice Wisdom	Practice wisdom promotes self-reflection and professional growth.	Practice wisdom alone is incomplete.	Social workers who rely only on their practice wisdom may be too limited in their understanding.
Practice Wisdom	Practice wisdom provides opportunities for refinement of knowledge.	Knowledge gained in practice may be biased and untested.	blank
Client Accounts	Client accounts are reminders that	Client accounts may be	Clients can provide insight, but

	clients are the experts on their lives.	incomplete, biased, and lacking in insight.	that knowledge doesn't apply to everyone.
Client Accounts	Client accounts are reminders of whose values are central.	Client accounts may not take into account other perspectives.	blank

The table below continues the discussion of the contributions and limitations of different sources of knowledge:

Source of Knowledge	Contribution to Knowledge Base	Limitations	My Observations of Source of Knowledge
Interdisciplinary Knowledge	Knowledge outside social work provides a broad scope of information.	Knowledge outside social work is not based on the same values as social work.	The ethics of other professions may focus less on social justice than the ethics of social work.
	Knowledge outside social work provides the basis for intervention.	Knowledge outside social work must be synthesized into a coherent whole.	

A brief summary of how each chapter discussed different leadership areas and recommendations for leadership is below:

- Student Learning (Chapters 1 and 2). To facilitate the learning of other students, seek out a relationship with a nearby university where you contract with practicum students for your agency. Take advantage of school of social work training on the supervision of practicum students and learn from other agency field instructors how they make use of students. Develop standardized yet flexible learning plans and opportunities for practicum students to help them become generalist practitioners and engage in professional growth, as you needed to do.
- Supervision (Chapter 3). Do your best to acquire formal training and certification in social work supervision. Research, understand, and commit to NASW Best Practices in Social Work Supervision (NASW, 2013). Promote a variety of forms of supervision, including clinical, peer, virtual, ad hoc, observation, modeling, and group.
- Organizational Context of Practice (Chapter 4). Prepare for potential changes in your position within your agency that involve opportunities to assume leadership. Identify organizations that have effective leadership and determine what accounts for their success. Research the best practices related to the work of your organization, determine how a respected leader could incorporate those practices into his or her work, and describe the ways this would enhance programs.
- Community Context of Practice (Chapter 5). Seek out community leaders in social work from whom you want to learn and include them in your community of practice. Seek out leaders outside social work and interview them about skills and approaches they believe have been effective in their leadership roles. Join community

organizations that promote issues you care about, and volunteer to work on committees or task groups leading social change efforts.

- Social Problem Context of Practice (Chapter 6). Engage in cutting-edge research and seek current knowledge about the etiology of social problems. Commit to the prevention and elimination of social problems through the use of best practices in your field. Research the social indicators related to a social problem you care about. Determine how community leaders could support positive indicators and reduce negative indicators of that problem.

A brief summary of how each chapter discussed different leadership areas and recommendations for leadership is below:

- Social Policy Context of Practice (Chapter 7). Engage in social policy practice that supports vulnerable and underserved populations even if such work is not in your formal job description. Utilize resources of policy advocates, clearinghouses, and research organizations to inform and promote effective policies. Study the social policies impacting your organization and clients, and join a coalition working to change policies to make them more effective.
- Professional Social Work (Chapter 8). Assist colleagues and students in achieving licensure, certifications, and credentials that enhance practice effectiveness. Promote and provide continuing education for social workers. Provide input on current and emerging social issues to schools of social work to help them provide relevant training to their students.
- Communication (Chapter 9). Enhance your oral and written communication skills to prepare yourself for assuming leadership roles. Provide training to colleagues and students in effective use of communication skills with clients, professionals, the media, and policy makers. Identify and emulate the communication skills of leaders you admire and respect.
- Social Work Ethics (Chapter 10). Abide by NASW Code of Ethics. Engage in an ethics audit of your organization and respond to its results. Devise a process for ethical decision making in your agency in collaboration with others, and train colleagues and student in the use of this process.
- Legal Issues (Chapter 11). Develop a relationship with an attorney who can advise you on legal matters related to your work. Obtain professional liability and malpractice insurance, and make certain to

understand the provisions of your insurance policy both to guide your work and to avoid lawsuits. Learn about the laws regulating social services organizations in regard to employees.

- Planned Change Process (Chapter 12). Train colleagues and students in the use of specific practice theories and models relevant to your client base. Provide in-service training for colleagues and students in ways to make the planned change process relevant to diverse clients. Review and revise the assessment tools used in your agency to assess clients and families or the needs assessments used to plan future programs.
- Diversity (Chapter 13). Commit to NASW Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (NASW, 2015). Promote diverse workplaces through education, client input, diverse employees, and cultural sensitivity training. Find and associate with leaders of minority, indigenous, and multicultural groups to learn about diverse leadership styles.
- Personal Safety (Chapter 14). Design, support, and implement policies that protect social workers in your agency. Adhere to NASW Guidelines for Social Worker Safety in the Workplace (NASW, 2013). Provide support and intervention for colleagues and students affected by violence or threats of violence.
- Evaluating Practice (Chapter 15). Review the program evaluation of your organization and determine whether and how the results of such evaluations are used to improve services and plan for future needs. Design and use tools soliciting meaningful client feedback and incorporate data into agency training, recruitment, and programs. Work with or organize a client/stakeholder advisory board to assist in program evaluation and planning.
- Merging Self and Profession (Chapter 16). Arrange for training on self-care and the prevention of burnout for staff. Obtain consultation on ways to promote the overall well-being of colleagues and students. Design incentives for staff members to engage in professional

development and become involved in organizational improvement efforts.

The different leadership approaches are shown applied to the different phases of social justice work below:

Phase of Social Justice Work	Building Leadership Approaches	Blocking Leadership Approaches
Assessment	Learn, anticipate forces for and against change, recognize problems and resources, clarify values, scan the social environment	Challenge surface-level answers, deconstruct myths, ask critical questions, resist the status quo, critique forces against change, challenge injustice
Building coalitions	Identify stakeholders, invite participation, identify common concerns, collaborate, mentor, empower constituencies, focus on solidarity, build relationships with opponents when possible	Avoid a silo approach to change, resist efforts to isolate stakeholders, challenge special interests, recognize and address resistance to change, avoid fragmentation of efforts, build relationships with opponents when possible

Planning and organizing	Develop vision, engage stakeholders, set goals and objectives, build capacity for change, encourage innovation, gain access to political power	Avoid surface-level goals and objectives, reframe individual change to multilevel change, counter the scarcity paradigm for resources, block efforts to exclude stakeholders, address counter-organizing and splitting efforts, reveal funding sources of opponents
Implementation	Put the plan into action, influence the target system, supervise, monitor and adjust the plan as needed, maintain focus, deal with unanticipated issues	Challenge pessimism, resist consolidation of power, block cuts to funding, neutralize resistance, address efforts to undermine progress
Evaluation	Evaluate effectiveness, transfer power to	Block efforts to return to the status quo, anticipate misinformation about

	those impacted, share lessons learned, disseminate findings, contribute to body of knowledge, leverage success, sustain social change	results, address critiques of efforts, address efforts to discredit interventions

The different metaphors for social work practice are:

Metaphor	Example
Practice as journey	Social work practice is a journey with road maps, detours, mergers, one-way roads, traveling companions, and destinations.
Practice as tapestry	Social work practice is a tapestry woven of variegated elements, combined colors and textures, creative images, and opposing threads.
Practice as story	Social work practice is a story including a plot, surprises, an interesting cast of characters, a moral, and an ending.
Practice as art	Social work practice is art combining color, perspective, interpretation, creativity, and mixed methods.
Practice as vision	Social work practice is a vision based on values, possibilities, purpose, forward thinking, and commitment to change.
Practice as dance	Social work practice is a dance involving background music, training, communication with an audience, and

	interpretation.
Practice as battle	Social work practice is a battle including commitment, enemies and allies, strategy, skirmishes, victory, and defeat.
Practice as evolution	Social work practice is evolution including gradual changes, mutations, progress, ongoing development, and shifts.
Practice as invention	Social work practice is invention based on creativity, recognition of an unmet need, trial and error, and innovation.

The different stakeholders' expectations for a social work practicum are described in the table below:

Stakeholder	View of Student Role	Supervision Process	Evaluation Process
Student	Primary role as student and learner; secondary role as professional providing services	Integration of theory and practice supervised by university; Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor	Academic grade assigned by university; Ongoing evaluation done by agency field instructor
University	Primary role as student and learner; secondary role as professional providing services	Integration of theory and practice supervised by university; Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor	Academic grade assigned by university; Ongoing evaluation done by agency field instructor
Agency	Primary role as professional providing	Daily tasks supervised by agency field instructor;	Ongoing evaluation done by agency field

	services; secondary role as student and learner	Integration of theory and practice supervised by university	instructor; Academic grade assigned by university
Client	Primary role as professional providing services; secondary role as student and learner	Not aware of supervision process but expects high-quality services	Not aware of evaluation process but expects accountability of agency

The different components of learning that are bridged by a social work practicum are described in the table below:

Dimension of Learning	Advantages of Each Dimension of Learning
Academic knowledge versus real life application	Academic preparation offers theoretical foundations for practice, social work identity, faculty supervision, and preparation for practicum. Real-life application offers opportunities to apply academic learning, integrate theory with practice, and analyze the differences between classroom and real-life practicum experiences.
Structured and planned versus unplanned learning	University learning agreements and plans are based on their commitment to helping students acquire competencies, and to ensure a broad and comprehensive experience related to social work. The realities of agency work bring unexpected learning experiences, both positive and negative, both of which enrich the practicum. Often, unplanned learning brings increases in self-awareness.
Student professional goals versus agency and university goals	Students enter practicum with specific professional goals for themselves as social workers and have ample opportunities to integrate them into their learning plan. Agencies and universities have goals for student learning, and

	they provide the basis for generalist social work practice upon which students can build.
Responsibility to provide services versus role of a student	Students are expected to function as professional social workers, are given assignments tailored to their level of knowledge and skill, and are supervised by both the university and the agency. Students are recognized as persons who are entering the profession, are not expected to function independently at a high level of competency, and are allowed to learn from their mistakes.
Generalist training versus specialist training	Generalist learning experiences are broad, varied, and targeted toward preparing students for working at multiple levels, playing a variety of social work roles, and utilizing an array of theories and models for practice. Specialization training allows students to pursue their professional interests in one area in more depth while also focusing on generalist practice as a foundation.

In this self-assessment, students are asked to determine whether they have the skill, it is in progress, or they do not have the skill.

The areas they are asked to assess themselves on are: Motivation to learn.

1. Open to new learning experiences
2. Willing to assume new responsibilities
3. Open to developing self-awareness and professional competence
4. Adequate time and energy to devote to the practicum
5. A sense of "calling" to the profession
6. Committed to using supervision

Attitudes and values.

7. Empathetic, caring, and concerned for clients
8. Personal values, beliefs, and perspectives that are compatible with the agency's mission
9. Personal values, beliefs, and perspectives that are compatible with the NASW's Code of Ethics
10. Committed to achieving social justice
11. Respectful of diversity among clients and communities
12. Non-judgmental toward clients and colleagues

General work skills.

13. Writing skills (reports, letters, professional records, using technological tools)
14. Able to process information quickly, understand new concepts, and learn new skills

15. Able to receive and utilize supervision and feedback for professional growth
16. Able to organize, plan, and effectively manage time
17. Able to meet deadlines and work under pressure
18. Able to follow through and complete tasks

The remaining areas that students are asked to assess themselves on are: Social Work Skills.

19. Able to listen, understand, and consider varied views, perspectives, and opinions
20. Able to communicate verbally with a variety of people and groups
21. Able to make thoughtful and ethical decisions under stressful conditions
22. Assertive and self-confident in professional relationships with clients and colleagues
23. Able to identify a need and formulate a plan to meet that need
24. Able to solve problems creatively and effectively

Knowledge.

20. Self-awareness of how one's values, beliefs, and experiences impact work and other persons
21. Knowledge of how laws, rules, regulations, and policies of agency impact practice
22. Knowledge of assessment tools, methods, and techniques
23. Knowledge of theories and models of social work
24. Understanding the process and steps of planned change
25. Knowledge of how the community context impacts agency function

Prior Experience Related to Practicum.

31. Experience in a setting similar to the agency
32. Experience with clients or client systems similar to those served by the agency

33. Experience applying theory to practice

34. Experience working with professional teams

35. Experience playing social work roles

36. Training in professional skills related to those needed in practicum

The specifics of the different skill building domains for each of the different levels of social work practice are shown in the table below:

Skill Building Domain	BSW Student	MSW Student	Entry-Level Practitioner	Advan Practit
Learning context of professional development	Classroom and practicum as learning context	Classroom, practicum, and previous experience as learning context	Agency practice as context for professional development	Agenc practi leader role as contex profes develo
Theory base of professional development	Understanding and beginning application of orienting and practice theories	Understanding, critiquing, and application of orienting and practice theories	Application of orienting and practice theories and measuring the effectiveness of practice theories	Applic orienti practi theori measu the effecti of pra theori theory buildir
Level of experience in using a skill or	First attempt at using a skill	Building on previous experience in using a skill	Using a skill for entry level practice, independently	Using for ad practi indepe

practice behavior			but with supervision	while teachi skill to
Learning context of professional development	Classroom and practicum as learning context	Classroom, practicum, and previous experience as learning context	Agency practice as context for professional development	Agenc practi leader role as contex profes develo
Value base of professional development	Identification and acquisition of professional and personal values	Deepening understanding and use of professional values	Ongoing examination, development, and use of professional values	Advan develo use, a teachi profes values
Evaluation of professional development	Supervisor and faculty evaluation with self-evaluation encouraged	Supervisor and faculty evaluation with self-evaluation encouraged	Supervisor evaluation with self-evaluation required	Self-evalua peer re self-evalua require expect

				to eva others

The seven generalist competencies for Social Work Practice are described in the table below:

Competency	Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
Generalist Competency 1: Practice at all Levels	Practices at multiple levels (micro, mezzo, and macro) both separately and simultaneously and moves between systems and levels of practice based on client/client system needs, resources, and likelihood of success to enhance social functioning and facilitate social change.	Practices at multiple levels because of the complex nature of social problems, and because social functioning, social change, and social justice are supported by interventions at all levels of practice.	Uses interpersonal helping skills, communication skills, relationship building, and interviewing. Engages in coordination, group facilitation, advocacy, education, consulting, and mediation. Engages in planning, community development, program management, research, social policy formation, and administration.

Generalist Competency 2: Play a Range of Social Work Roles	Plays a broad range of professional roles individually and simultaneously to promote social justice, enhance social functioning, and promote social change. Generalist social workers may play several roles in any given situation and can move between these roles as needed.	Plays a broad range of professional roles because of the variety of client/client system needs and resources, as well as to enhance social functioning, promote social justice, and promote social change at multiple levels of practice. See the connections between professional roles and understand the importance of using them	Selects the social work role based on the client/situation needs, conceptualization of the location of the problem being addressed, and targets for change. Plays roles at all levels of practice, including some roles specific to one level of practice as well as others that can be played at all levels of practice.

		prescriptively, matching roles with need.	
Generalist Competency 3: Use a Variety of Professional Perspectives	Uses a variety of discrete yet interacting lenses, conceptual frameworks, and paradigms to guide practice, including the strengths, ecosystems, and diversity perspectives.	Understands that clients, groups, organizations, communities, and social systems cannot be understood in isolation, and that understanding the interaction between these entities is essential to effective interventions.	Incorporates a variety of professional perspectives into all phases of the helping process. Uses professional perspectives to identify targets for enhancing social functioning and improving the fit between clients and social systems.

The seven generalist competencies for Social Work Practice are described in the table below:

Competency	Competency Description	Rationale for Competency	Skills Related to Competency
Generalist Competency 4: Use a Range of Orienting Theories	Uses a variety of orienting (explanatory) theories to guide practice, including human development theory, group theory, social systems theory, organizational theory, community development theory, social movement theory, and social development theory.	Understands the development of individuals, families, social systems, groups, organizations, and societies as part an effort to comprehend the social conditions faced by clients and to implement effective interventions.	Incorporates orienting (explanatory) theories into all phases of planned change (engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation at all levels).

Generalist Competency 5: Use a Variety of Practice Theories and Models	Uses a variety of practice theories and models to guide practice and address client needs and resources, including task-centered casework, crisis intervention, client-centered casework, empowerment model, family systems model, mutual aid model, structural model, organizational development model, community organization model, and	Uses practice theories and models to design individualized interventions that are empirically based, grounded in best practices, methodologically sound, creative, and matched to the situation at hand. These theories and models provide practitioners with a versatile repertoire of techniques, help them avoid limiting themselves to a single approach, and afford the opportunity to combine approaches for	Incorporates practice theories and models into interventions at all levels of practice based on client need and resources. Combines practice theories and models creatively to address multiple social issues faced by clients and client systems.

	social change model.	effective interventions.	
Generalist Competency 6: Use the Planned Change Process at All Levels	In partnership with client systems, uses the planned change process of assessment, planning, intervention, termination, and evaluation at all levels of practice.	Uses the planned change process to enhance social functioning and promote social change, because a sound assessment creates the basis for an intervention plan that can be implemented and evaluated based on identified goals and objectives.	Engages clients, builds productive professional relationships, assesses client problems and strengths, designs sound intervention plans, implements effective intervention plans, and evaluates outcomes.
Generalist Competency Level 7: Use	Is guided by the National Association of	Understands how personal and professional	Incorporates social work and client

NASW's Code of Ethic	Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, incorporates social work values into interventions at all levels, and uses a process for ethical decision making and resolving ethical dilemmas.	ethics and values underlie codes of conduct, client choices, community development, societal attitudes, definitions of social problems, development of social policy, and research.	values into all interventions. Uses NASW Code of Ethics in ethical decision making and to resolve ethical dilemmas.

The thoughts a supervisor might have about beginning students are:

- I look forward to having a student. Practicum students are enthusiastic, and they tend to look at the work of this agency from a fresh perspective.
- The student can help ease the workload of our staff, so we will give them tasks right away.
- I like student questions because they encourage me to think critically about what I do and why.
- I remember how important practicum supervision was to me, and I want to pass this good experience on to another student.

The thoughts a supervisor might have about beginning students are:

- This student better catch on quickly, because I don't have a great deal of time to supervise.
- I hope this student is ready for a dose of reality, because real social work is different than the theories taught in the classroom.
- I worry about students overstepping their bounds. I don't want to fix their mistakes.
- I hope the student has the skills to start providing services right away.

Examples of the attributes of desirable learning behaviors are: Attitudes.

- Demonstrate enthusiasm for learning
- Show initiative and willingness to take responsibility
- Take all assignments seriously
- Volunteer to take on tasks

Communication with supervisor.

- Inform your supervisor of your previous experience
- Keep your supervisor informed of your work and plans
- Ask questions when you are uncertain or uninformed
- Consult with your supervisor when problems arise

Building of relationships.

- Show ability to accept and use guidance and feedback
- Seek opportunities to work with mentors
- Maintain personal and professional boundaries

Examples of attributes of desirable work behaviors are: Preparation.

- Prepare yourself well for all meetings, client sessions, and supervisory sessions
- Read all agency manuals, procedures, websites, and other materials to understand what your agency does

Timeliness.

- Complete all assignments on time, allowing for time to do them well and not at the last minute
- Alert your agency field instructor of any necessary absence or change in schedule

Assuming responsibility.

- Do your best to understand an assignment the first time and ask for any clarification you need
- Take responsibility for any mistakes you make

Organizational skills.

- Keep your workplace organized and neat
- Abide by all requirements for appearance and grooming

Ethical behavior.

- Abide by the NASW's Code of Ethics in all interactions
- Be extremely careful to guard client confidentiality

The attributes shown for the client are motivation, ability, self-efficacy, hope, values, voluntary or involuntary, opportunity, diversity, and experience. The attributes shown for the social worker are knowledge, skills, values, practice experience, supervision, and choice of intervention. The attributes shown for the context are timing, social support, resources, services and programs, services and programs, social policies, and economic and political environment.

Examples of feedback that an agency field instructor could give are:

- I don't think you understand what we are asking you to do.
- You will need to be more assertive if you want to be effective here.
- What can I do to help you be more effective?
- I don't think you realize how you impact clients when you interview them.

Examples of feedback that a client could give are:

- I'm not sure I want to work with a student.
- You haven't experienced what I have. How could you possibly help me?
- You don't understand anything about me.
- I thought you could help me more.

The table showing the knowledge, skills, and values needed at different stages of an intervention is below:

Competency Building	Knowledge	Skills	Values
Preparing and Designing an Intervention	Which orienting theories apply in this situation? How do I know what skills to use? What if I don't know what to do?	Which social work roles are indicated? How can I learn to use a practice model? How will I know if I am being effective?	Which ethical issues need to be addressed? How do I tell my clients I am a student? Is it ethical to practice on clients?
Initial attempt at an intervention	Which practice theories apply? How can my client's goals be included in the intervention? What do my client's behaviors tell me?	Which helping skills are needed in this case? How can I use my assessment to guide my intervention? Do I have the skills needed for this practice model?	Is it ethical to be developing skills as I work with clients? How can I trust my judgment? Is it acceptable to adjust the model as the intervention proceeds?

Reflection on and adaptation of intervention	What knowledge do I need that I do not possess now? How can I learn about evidence-based models? How can I prepare for the next client?	What should I do differently next time? How can I perform less mechanically? How can I evaluate my professional growth?	Am I able to focus on my client's issues rather than my own? How would my client define success? How can I get better at ethical decision making?
Refinement of intervention skills	What is the best way to get feedback? What will I need to know to work in more challenging situations? What continuing education is required of	How can I individualize treatment plans? How can I enlist client involvement? How can I work with unmotivated and involuntary clients?	Will this work with diverse clients? What biases or stereotypes have I become aware of? What does the NASW's Code of Ethics say about competency?

	social workers?		

The different supervisory styles for the different tasks required of supervisors are described in the table below:

Supervisory Task	Supervisory Style
Functions of Supervision	Fulfills the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision
	Fulfills one or two functions of supervision more than other functions
	Fulfills the function of supervision required by the situation
Balance of Process and Outcome	Emphasizes the processes of interventions
	Emphasizes the outcomes of interventions
	Emphasizes both processes and outcomes
Attention to Detail	Focuses on details of work
	Focuses on the broad mission and leaves the details to others

	Focuses on both details and the broad mission
Delegation of Work	Delegates work when necessary
	Delegates work easily and generously
	Delegates work depending on the situation
Monitoring and Evaluation of Work	Monitors work closely to avoid mistakes and problems
	Allows the supervisee autonomy and assumes success
	Monitors work depending on the situation
Use of Power	Retains power over supervisees and their work
	Shares power with supervisees and

	empowers them
	Uses power depending on the situation

The supervisory questions for the engagement and assessment stage of the panned change process are: Engagement.

- How did you prepare for the first meeting with your client or client system?
- Was your client voluntary or involuntary?
- How did you explain that you are a student?
- Did you fully understand what your task and goals were?
- Which interviewing skills did you use to engage your client?
- What was your client's level of motivation?
- Did you experience any challenges in engaging the client?

Assessment.

- Which client problems and issues were identified?
- Which client strengths were identified that can be used in interventions?
- What were your client's goals and desires?
- Which knowledge and skills did you draw upon as you assessed your client?

The supervisory questions for the intervention and termination and evaluation stage of the panned change process are: Intervention.

- How did you decide upon the intervention plan?
- Which responsibilities did you and your client assume?
- Which theories and models guided your intervention?
- Which evidence or research guided you?
- Which ethical standards or issues were at play, and how did you handle them?

Termination and evaluation.

- To what degree was the intervention a success?
- What did you use to measure outcomes?
- Did your client view the intervention as successful?
- How was termination handled?
- What did you learn from this intervention?
- What would you do differently next time and why?

The different student and supervisor experiences for the different stages of the practicum are described in the table below:

Stages of Practicum	Student Approach to Supervision	Student Responsibilities	Supervisor Approach to Supervision	Supervis Respons
Orientation Stage	Enthusiastic, excited, anxious, unsure, overwhelmed, confused, ready, motivated, confident, worried about making mistakes, hesitant to be observed	Develop learning plan, participate in orientation and training, become familiar with agency staff and programs, attend agency meetings, visit other agencies	Motivated to teach, hopeful that student will be competent, challenged to find time to supervise student	Provide orientati training, guidanc direction provide encoura assist in selectio learning activities support attempts practice behavio identify compete and limi
Exploration and Skill Building Stage	Less anxious, more realistic, motivated, growing in	Implement learning plan, take on responsibilities, develop	Confident in student competence, allowing more	Monitor complet learning activities provide

	confidence, willing to be observed, motivated by successes, learning from mistakes	professional skills and knowledge, integrate theory and practice, gain exposure to all facets of agency practice, gain experience in all levels of practice, play variety of social work roles, identify strengths and address limitations	student autonomy, aware of student strengths and limitations and need for supervision	instructi correcti feedbac build on experier assist st in integr theory a practice student more challeng tasks
Beginning Competency Stage	More confident in skills, increased insight, self-aware, motivated for professional position,	Identify own professional growth needs, experienced in most aspects of practicum experience, need less supervision	Confident in student as an entry-level practitioner, affirming of student competence	Help stu refine sk assign b range of at all lev practice autonom perform help stu

	appreciative of supervision	and direction, identify tasks independently, integrate theory and practice, refine skills		generali learning other se and pop

Descriptions of different approaches organizations can take regarding social problems are described in the table below?

Approach	Description	Agency Name
Prevention of a Social Problem	Stop a social problem from occurring across all populations	
	Stop a social problem from occurring in a high-risk population	Blank
Enhancement of Social Functioning	Provide services to those impacted by a social problem	
	Provide services to those contributing to a social problem	Blank
Social Change Efforts	Address and change societal conditions that produce or contribute to social problems	
	Promote social functioning by reducing the negative impact of social problems on society	Blank

Sample hypothesis for micro-level practices are:

Micro-Level Practice	Sample Hypothesis
Practice with individuals	Intimate-partner violence can be reduced by using a combination of legally mandated services and offering supportive counseling to victims of intimate partner violence.
Practice with families	Child neglect can be prevented by providing services to single parents with mental health challenges.

Sample hypothesis for mezzo-level practices are:

Mezzo-Level Practice	Sample Hypothesis
Practice with groups	Mutual aid groups for families of persons with schizophrenia can help members cope with the challenges by offering the support of others who have the same experience and can be empathetic.
Practice with organizations	A diverse workforce trained to deal with a variety of people will lead to more culturally appropriate service delivery.

Sample hypothesis for macro-level practices are:

Macro-Level Practice	Sample Hypotheses
Community practice	Community organization that builds dementia-friendly communities is best accomplished by involving those families directly impacted by dementia.
Policy practice	Effecting social policy changes in mass incarceration will be achieved through collaboration between social and criminal justice systems and communities of color.

The different organizational practices and policies and the value these practices and policies demonstrate to clients are described in the table below:

Organizational Policies and Practices	Organizational Value Demonstrated to Clients
Clear mission and goals	Commitment to clients and needed services
Well-trained, diverse, effective staff with low turnover rate and adequate staffing level	Commitment to quality services and competent staff
Effective, affordable, accessible programs and services	Program evaluation, access, and quality improvement
Fair and inclusive eligibility requirements	Inclusion and access
Welcoming physical setting	Dignity, respect, and access
Standardization of services to ensure equality	Equality and nondiscrimination

Individualization of services to match services to client need	Client-centered focus
Safety policies	Security and protection
Good written and electronic materials	Access, readability, and commitment to outreach
Clear description of practice theories and models used	Evidence-based practice that is relevant and based on sound theoretical and research foundations
Adequate funding levels	Quality and availability of services
Clear and fair policies and procedures	Clarity, organization, and fairness
Value placed on client input	Respect, dignity, and inclusion
Clear place in continuum of care	Congeniality, cooperation, and commitment to seamless services

Commitment to diversity	Culturally relevant services, diverse staff, and nondiscrimination policies and practices
Client input and feedback	Client-centered focus and relevance of programs
Values and ethics	Clear ethical expectations and standards for staff and services

Organizational responses for different contextual factors are described in the table below:

Contextual Factor	Organizational Response
Current and projected client need	Enhance or modify services
Current and projected social problems	Plan for emerging social problems
Political economy and funding challenges	Plan for future funding opportunities and funding challenges
Social and political forces supporting the status quo with negative impacts	Counter forces supporting the status quo and impeding progress in addressing social problems
External barriers to service delivery	Address barriers such as societal attitudes, funding challenges, and lack of resources
Current and emerging social policies	Abide by current social policies and advocate for emerging policies with positive impact

External research on social problems	Utilize research to inform the agency's approach
Emerging and empirically based services	Incorporate new services into the existing program
Cultural shifts in the social environment	Address diverse clients and communities appropriately
Professional standards for practice	Abide by current standards and promote changing standards to improve services and protect clients
External regulations, licensing, and accreditation	Comply with all external regulations and use results of the self-evaluation for program improvement
Existing and needed continuum of services addressing social problems	Coordinate with all agencies addressing similar social problems to provide seamless services

The different community dynamics and the questions that can be asked regarding how the dynamics affect the work of the agency are described in the table below:

Community Dynamics	Questions that could be asked regarding how dynamic affects the agency
Historical events and experiences	Which past community events or experiences influence whether my clients are defined as valued members of the community? (Example: History of environmental damage from industry abuses leads to community empowerment efforts to protect the physical environment.)
	Which past community events or experiences indicate whether the community is united in its approach to the social problems addressed by my agency? (Example: Recovery from natural disaster results in community bonds.)
Sense of identity	Does the community see itself as responsible for solving the social problems my agency addresses? (Example: The community's view of itself as "family-oriented" influences the quality of education.)
	Does the community view itself as welcoming to clients like mine who wish to participate in the community and socialize them as being included? (Example: Formal and informal social networks encourage involvement of newcomers.)

Values and beliefs systems	What community values coincide with the values of your agency? (Example: Community sense of acceptance results in an adequate supply of volunteers for persons with disabilities.)
	What values influence whether your clients and their needs are viewed as high priority? (Example: Neighborhood councils set priorities based on diverse values and beliefs.)
Networks	Are all the community networks that could support your agency's work involved? (Example: Groups with a shared interest in children collaborate to build playgrounds.)
	What social capital could be utilized to enhance your agency's work? (Example: Neighborhoods work to increase safety and in so doing build social bonds.)
Conflict	Which existing conflicts could slow the social changes promoted by your agency? (Example: Differences of opinion slow a decision about the nature of downtown development.)

	Which conflicts and divisions might need to be addressed to further your work? (Example: A vote on infrastructure development shows a lack of support by certain age-related groups.)
Forces supporting change	Are there forces for change that can be identified to help the work of your agency? (Example: Successes in attracting business to economically disadvantaged areas provide momentum for neighborhood renewal and employment opportunities.)
	How can forces for the social change that your agency promotes become resources for the agency? (Example: Positive outcomes of grants for building a dementia-friendly community lead to additional private and public funding.)
Forces supporting the status quo	What forces would not support the changes supported by your agency? (Example: The wish to maintain the historical authenticity of the downtown area discourages the removal of historical buildings.)
	What forces would actively resist the change desired by your agency, seeing it as unnecessary? (Example:

	The community votes to improve low-income housing rather than build new structures.)

The remaining different community dynamics and the questions that can be asked regarding how the dynamics affect the work of the agency are described in the table below:

Community Dynamics	Questions that could be asked regarding how dynamic affects the agency
Diversity	What differing perspectives on your work and your clients need to be addressed? (Example: Cultural groups provide input on interactions with law enforcement procedures.)
	What aspects of cultural diversity need to be promoted to increase awareness of your work? (Example: Forums on racism increase awareness of differential treatment based on diversity.)
Power	Which powerful groups or individuals could help your work? (Example: Voter registration campaigns for teenagers increase the youth vote.)
	In what ways does lack of power negatively impact your clients? (Example: Violation of landlord–tenant laws leads to resident protests.)

Building goals are goals that strengthen community aspects. Blocking goals are goals that address community problems. Examples of building goals contrasted with blocking goals are:

- Support social functioning of individuals and families vs. address problems that undermine or reduce social functioning of individuals and families
- Identify and enhance community assets vs. identify and address community problems and gaps
- Build social capital vs. address barriers to building social capital
- Empower individuals and groups to identify, own, and reach goals vs. address barriers to community participation by citizens and impacted groups
- Create community conditions that facilitate both broad and specific community development vs. address community problems that impede overall and specific community development
- Engage in community organization efforts directed toward specific community problems vs address overall conditions responsible for community problems
- Build coalitions, networks, and partnerships to affect community change vs. reduce conflict, strain, and power differentials between groups
- Create social change desired by community vs. address barriers to social change efforts

The three questions are:

1. What community problems are addressed by your agency?
2. Has a needs assessment been completed on those problems?
3. Has an asset map been completed on resources to address those problems?

The 3 questions shown are:

1. What are the various visions for the community in regard to the problems?
2. What building goals are in place to strengthen community resources to address the problems?
3. What blocking goals are in place to prevent or reduce the problems?

Examples are provided for each of the areas described. They are:

Social Problems	Impact of Social Problems on Clients
Example: Addiction	Loss of family, employment, health

Social Asset	How it Addresses Social Problem and Promotes Resilience
Example: Social Support	Provides sober environment; promotes sobriety through accountability, encouragement, and rebuilding of relationships

Social Asset Clusters	How They Combine to Enhance Social Functioning
Example: Social support, coping skills, accountability, spiritual development, health promotion	Social support and accountability, in combination with coping skills, allows people with addictions to deal more positively with their life challenges. Success in remaining sober in spite of problems leads to a stronger sense of purpose in life, and healthy life choices result in energy that can be used to maintain sobriety.

The steps in the Social Problem Analysis Method are: Social problem addressed by the agency.

- What social problems are addressed by your agency?
- How are these social problems defined and understood?
- How do your agency mission and programs address the social problem?

Status of the social problem.

- What is the scope and scale of the problem?
- In recent years, have these problems worsened, stayed the same, or improved?
- How does their level of severity compare with the same problems at the state or national level?

Theories of causation and etiology.

- What are the various theories that attempt to explain the social problem?
- What is the basis of these theories (such as values, research, experiences, politics)?
- How does taking an ecosystems perspective on this social problem enhance an understanding of why it exists and persists?

Values surrounding the social problem.

- What societal value would be upheld if this social problem did not exist?
- What human rights are compromised by this social problem?

- What social justice issues are raised by the presence of this social problem?

Perspectives on the social problem.

- What groups in your community see this problem as real and significant?
- What groups in your community do not see this problem as real and significant?
- What other social problems are connected to the social problem addressed by your agency, and how do they interact and influence each other?

Impact of the social problems.

- In what ways does the social problem affect the social functioning of your clients?
- How does this social problem affect the community?
- How would the absence of this social problem change societal well-being?

Evidence-based practice.

- What research can be relied upon to provide an accurate measurement of the social problem?
- What research is available on evidence-based approaches and best practices to address the social problem that your agency addresses?
- What program evaluation is done by your agency to measure its impact on the social problem it addresses?

Prevention of the social problem.

- How can prevention be measured to see if the steps taken actually prevented the social problem?
- What social conditions, if enhanced, would help to prevent the social problem from occurring or worsening?
- What social conditions, if reduced or eliminated, would help to prevent the social problem from occurring or worsening?

Research and knowledge building about the social problem.

- What practice models addressing the social problem at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels need to be studied for effectiveness?
- What demonstration and pilot programs would you recommend to test emerging and promising approaches to dealing with the social programs?
- How can clients' understanding of the social problems be included in knowledge building?

The different approaches social workers can take to address social problems are:

Identify social problems and raise public awareness	Social workers identify, name, and highlight social problems so that they and others can see them. They shine a light on the existence, scope, and depth of the problem; show the negative impacts on all levels of society; explain the complex causation of social problems; standardize definitions of social problems; give voice to impacted populations; and illustrate the relevance of diversity on social problems.
Intervene to address social problems	Social workers, in collaboration with stakeholders, set goals and objectives and design programs to address social problems. They de-stigmatize the problem, work to shape attitudes, appeal to commonalities, clarify societal values, incorporate diverse stakeholders into the intervention, and anticipate forces for change and opposition. They incorporate best practices and innovations into plans. They include social systems in change efforts and also in evaluation of outcomes of interventions and programs.
Conduct and utilize research on social problems	Social workers identify evidence-based practices to apply to social problems and engage in program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of interventions and programs. They utilize a variety of evaluation approaches, including process, outcome, quantitative, qualitative, and action research. They include client groups in the evaluation. They use

	research results to understand causes and contributors to social problems, and disseminate this information to practitioners, social planners, policy makers, and educators.
Engage in social policy practice to address social problems	Social workers utilize program evaluation data to inform clients, stakeholders, and policy makers about the need for social policy formation or change. They make recommendations for new policy initiatives and for policy amendments based on findings. They formulate social policies that will address social problems and offer amendments to existing social policies.

The approaches and examples provided are:

Approach	Examples
Apply the prevention strategy to the given population	Educate all school children about healthy relationships to prevent partner violence.
Apply the prevention strategy to a high-risk population for the social problem.	Assist teen parents to complete their education to address their risk for poverty.
Apply the prevention strategy to those impacted by the social problem.	Provide case management to those with traumatic brain injuries to prevent secondary disability.

The approaches and examples provided are:

Approach	Examples
Making a general population aware of a social problem and its impact, hoping to stimulate action	Conduct a public education campaign about the relationship between mental illness and shorter life expectancy.
Build resiliency and protective factors that prevent social problems	Teach girls self-efficacy and empowerment to reduce their risk for abuse.
Counter vulnerability and risk factors leading to social problems	Enact laws that penalize parties engaged in human trafficking.
Measure and monitor effectiveness of approaches in reducing problems	Measure the impact of in-home services to older adults and families in reducing nursing home placements.
Design and implement laws that address social problems	Require education and training for university students, faculty, and staff about the role of consent in sexual assault.

The different domains and social welfare policies associated with each domain are: Type.

- Social insurance
- Health insurance
- Cash assistance and family support
- In-kind assistance
- Public programs and services such as education, corrections, and public health

Goals.

- Societal well-being
- Prevention of social problems
- Reduction in and remediation of social problems
- Basic needs and safety met
- Protection
- Demonstration project

Values Base.

- Self-sufficiency
- Altruism
- Dignity
- Minimum standard of living
- Rights
- Personal responsibility
- Governmental responsibility

Human Rights Base.

- Equity
- Access
- Freedom from restriction and exploitation
- Right to life and liberty
- Social justice and economic justice

Assumptions.

- Social support for vulnerable populations results in self sufficiency
- Social support for vulnerable populations results in dependency
- Social support is necessary
- Social support is unnecessary

Funding.

- Taxpayer funded (federal and state budget)
- Employee and employer contributions through payroll
- Pilot program
- Pass-through funding from federal to state government

Eligibility.

- Means testing
- Entitlement
- Documented need

The remaining domain and social welfare policies associated with the domain are: Social benefits.

- Social well-being
- Growth
- Prosperity
- Upward mobility
- Public health
- Solidarity

The dimensions of social policy, their ideal trajectory, and their actual trajectory are described in the table below:

Dimension of Social Policy	Ideal Trajectory	Actual Trajectory
Value base	Societal values regarding social well-being	Political compromise or based on values of those in power
Knowledge base	Full understanding of the social problem and its etiology	Partial understanding or biased beliefs about the social problem and its etiology
Scope	Comprehensive and universal	Limited, partial, and piecemeal
Time orientation	Timely and future-oriented	Slow development or reaction to crisis
Stakeholder base	All stakeholders involved, including the client base and those personally impacted by the social problem	Stakeholders with political power and influence involved, while excluding those impacted by the social problem

Empirical base	Based on facts and empirical research	Based on interpretation of facts and emotion
Relationship to existing and future policy	Built upon effective policy and allowing for future growth	Detached from effective policy future orientation
Rationality	Purposeful and planned	Reactive and unplanned

The steps that form a model of social policy analysis are: Description.

- Authority and auspices of the social policy (federal, state, or local law)
- Official name and legal citation

History.

- Reasons for the social policy's development, including various societal conditions
- History of amendments and changes

Approach to Social Problem.

- Definition of the social problem within the law
- Assumptions, beliefs, and values upon which the law is based
- Stated purpose, goals, and objectives of the law

Implementation Process.

- Key provisions, programs, and services
- Funding processes
- Rules and regulations put into place to implement the overall policy
- Mandated or voluntary nature of the policy
- Relationship to existing policies

Evaluation of Policy Effectiveness.

- Ability to promote the well-being of affected groups
- Reduction in or elimination of the societal problems

- Impact of incentives and disincentives of the policy
- Benefit to social services agencies
- Strategies or requirements for dissemination of the evaluation results

Improvements and Ongoing Amendments.

- Needed changes in the social policy related to unintended consequences
- Identified gaps and inequities in service
- Recommendations by stakeholders in regard to maintaining, improving, or abolishing the policy

The contributions and pitfalls of the three common political perspectives are described in the table below:

Political Perspective	Contributions	Pitfalls
Conservative	Keeps the best of the various historical efforts and successes; promotes individual liberty through minimal legislation	Resists needed and desirable change; lack of regulation has potential for harm
Moderate	Promotes stability in social policy; is nonreactionary to crisis situations	Supports minimal but insufficient change; does not respond quickly to social problems
Liberal	Views progressive change as desirable; promotes the rights of vulnerable populations	May dismiss historical policy achievements; does not see negative results of over-regulation

The principles of achieving social justice through policy practice are: Importance of Policy Practice.

- Social policy practice is a vital arena for social workers because social policy strongly impacts the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and society.
- Social policies are social contracts based on societal values and commonalities.

Value Base of Policy Practice.

- Human rights are universal and should be protected through social policy.
- Social policy should be based on values of social justice such as equity, access, dignity, worth of the individual, opportunity, and fairness.
- Policy practice requires a vision that can be translated to legislation.

Goals of Policy Practice.

- Social policy should proactively promote social functioning.
- Social policy should work to address, reduce, prevent, and eliminate social problems.
- Social policies should address social problems at all levels of practice.

Process of Policy Practice.

- Social policies should be based on historical, current, and future orientations.

- Social policies should be based on an understanding of social problems, including their causes.
- Policy practice uses valid and accurate information provided in legislative testimony, policy briefs, tracking of trends, and public information campaigns.
- Policy practice requires a commitment to methodical and sustained work over time, because change is often partial and incremental.
- Clients, constituents, and stakeholders must be involved in social policy development.

Politics of Policy Practice.

- Windows of opportunity for social change can be utilized in policy practice.
- Building of coalitions and garnering support is necessary.
- Opposition must be anticipated and intentionally addressed.
- Cooperation, seeking common ground, and compromise are necessary to effect change.

Evaluation of Policy Practice.

- Social policies should be measured and evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.
- Individuals and communities impacted by social policies should be consulted and included in the evaluation.
- Evaluation results should be incorporated into social policy improvements.

The different attitudes associated with professional conduct are described in the table below:

Attitude
Committed to mission, colleagues, and clients
Respectful of others and diverse perspectives
Collegial and cooperative
Shows decorum of the profession
Possesses integrity and honesty
Reliable and dependable
Positive and supportive
Focused
Work ethic

The different behaviors associated with professional conduct are described in the table below:

Behavior
Communicates well orally and in writing
Assumes responsibility
Anticipates needs and responds to requests
Seeks input in an inclusive manner
Engages in professional development
Abides by ethical standards
Deals well with conflict
Separates personal and professional lives
Seeks and uses supervision and feedback

The difference between the student role and the social worker role are described in the table below:

Student Role	Social Worker Role
Learns passively	Learns actively and applies learning
Engages in theoretical discussions and hypothetical decisions	Applies theory to real clients
Has occasional absences from class or practicum without consequence to self or client	Needs to be fully present to ensure quality
Defers to others in decision making and intervention	Takes the initiative in developing and implementing interventions
Bases work on theory and academic preparation	Bases work on academic preparation as well as accumulated experience and practice wisdom
May take client feedback personally and react emotionally	Sees client feedback as crucial to professional growth

The different type of people who contribute to community practice are those who:

- Help broaden the view of social problems or clients
- Bring needed or missing information to shared work
- Engage in collaborative projects
- Provide consultation in challenging cases
- Assist with legal aspects of practice
- Assist with ethical aspects of practice

The different skills needed for the different social worker roles at the micro level are described in the table below:

Social Worker Role	Social Worker Skill
Advocate	Identify resources and gaps
Broker	Match services to clients through appropriate referrals and linkages
Case manager	Monitor, manage, and coordinate services
Counselor	Utilize practice models to address clients' psychosocial needs
Educator	Provide education to address identified needs
Mediator	Utilize techniques to resolve conflicts that promote social functioning
Networker	Promote linkages between individuals and/or social systems

The different skills needed for the different social worker roles at the mezzo level are described in the table below:

Social Worker Role	Social Worker Skill
Administrator	Utilize techniques of supervision and administration
Facilitator	Promote communication within social systems and progress toward mutual goals
Mediator	Utilize conflict resolution techniques that promote the interests of the involved parties
Program developer	Utilize organizational skills to develop programs to address identified needs

The different skills needed for the different social worker roles at the macro level are described in the table below:

Social Worker Role	Social Worker Skill
Community developer	Support community goals to strengthen the community's ability to support its residents
Community organizer	Promote social change that focuses on an identified social need or problem
Policy analyst or developer	Build coalitions, mobilize, and effect social change through policy formation
Researcher	Conduct research to build a knowledge base and evaluate programs and policies
Social planner	Systematically influence societal attitudes, policies, programs, and institutions

The table below shows the different effective attending skills and the positive impact they can have on a professional relationship:

Effective Attending Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Active listening	Enhances accurate understanding; communicates an intent to understand
Building rapport	Establishes an effective working relationship; provides the foundation for intervention
Genuineness	Demonstrates a real intent to communicate; promotes trust and openness
Use of open-ended questions	Promotes the power of the listener to select the response; deepens the level of sharing
Listening to underlying messages	Shows a desire to understand what is not communicated; deepens the level of understanding
Nondefensive attitude	Allows for increased honesty; reduces misunderstanding

Respect	Promotes a reciprocal respectful response; fosters the ability to understand diverse viewpoints
Self-awareness	Promotes conscious use of the self; reduces the chance of misinterpretation
Allowing adequate time	Demonstrates motivation to hear and understand; reduces the chances of misunderstanding
Structuring physical environment	Reduces environmental barriers to communication; increases opportunities for effective communication
Managing emotions	Lowers potential interference emotions; promotes mutual exchange

The different ineffective skills are alongside the negative impact they can have on a professional relationship are described in the table below:

Ineffective Attending Skill	Negative Impact on Professional Relationship
Dominating conversation	Discourages mutual communication; demonstrates a lack of interest in understanding
Rushing rapport	Assumes trust without establishing a relationship; suggests a hidden agenda
Missing cues	Suggests a lack of interest in the message; reduces the level of understanding

The table below provides a continuation of the description of the different ineffective skills alongside the negative impact they can have on a professional relationship:

Ineffective Attending Skill	Negative Impact on Professional Relationship
Missing underlying messages	Results in surface-level understanding; demonstrates a lack of interest in what is not said
Using closed-ended questions	Results in factual and limited responses; reduces opportunities for deepened responses
Not allowing adequate time	Communicates disinterest in allowing adequate time; reduces the chances of mutual understanding
Defensive attitude	Discourages the sender from communicating; reduces the receiver's ability to hear the message
Failing to show respect	Shuts down open communication; reduces the receiver's ability to hear the message
Asking excessive why questions	Builds listener defensiveness; increases the respondent's need to justify response

Failing to observe client nonverbal communication	Misses opportunities for advanced understanding; misses what is left unsaid
Stacking questions	Confuses the listener; results in inadequate responses
Asking leading questions	Intimidates the listener; pushes the respondent toward a certain response

The table below describes effective expressive skill along with the positive impact it can have on a professional relationship:

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Clarity of expression	Increases mutual understanding; reduces time spent trying to understand
Nonjudgmental response	Promotes trust and openness; communicates good faith

The table below is a continuation of the description of effective expressive skills, along with the positive impact they can have on a professional relationship:

Effective Expressive Skill	Positive Impact on Professional Relationship
Paraphrasing	Communicates motivation to understand; demonstrates understanding
Seeking common ground	Encourages deepened communication; reduces defensiveness and divisiveness
Fostering dialogue	Communicates a desire to understand; promotes exchange of ideas
Seeking mutual understanding	Provides a foundation for action; demonstrates willingness to hear and be heard
Checking for accuracy	Demonstrates a desire to understand; promotes precision for both sender and receiver
Matching language	Reduces language barrier misunderstandings; enhances understanding by tailoring terminology

Compromising	Signals a willingness to see both sides; allows give and take
Negotiating	Enhances partnership; signals openness to diverse opinions
Summarizing	Consolidates content and meaning; allows for an effective end of communication

The table below describes ineffective expressive skills along with the negative impact they can have on a professional relationship:

Ineffective Expressive Skill	Negative Impact on Professional Relationship
Interrupting	Demonstrates a lack of respect for the speaker; discourages further communication
Sending confusing or unclear messages	Reduces the clarity of content; reduces trust and openness
Responding judgmentally	Reduces the speaker's desire to share; reduces trust and openness
Sending mixed or confusing messages	Reduces accurate understanding; confuses the listener
Assuming	Closes off genuine inquiry; results in limited and distorted understanding
Trying to prove a point or win an argument	Suggests that the communication is a contest; sets up an adversarial relationship

Environmental barriers	Reduces the chances for connection; demonstrates lack of a wish to communicate
Failing to match language	Increases the chance for misunderstanding; demonstrates an inability to connect with the speaker
Lacking genuineness	Reduces the chance of an honest response in return; shows a lack of real interest
Misinterpreting	Distorts understanding; results in flawed intervention

The table below shows the furthering techniques used in the engagement phases, along with the purpose of each technique.

Following Techniques	Purpose of Techniques
Active listening	Show interest in understanding the client
Empathy	Help the client feel heard and understood
Open-ended questions	Empower the client to tell his or her story
Building rapport	Develop a helping relationship and trust
Use of genuineness	Convey a real concern

The table below shows the following techniques used in the assessment phases, along with the purpose of each technique:

Following Techniques	Purpose of Techniques
Active listening	Assess the client's needs and resources
Empathy	Support the client's emotions and beliefs
Open-ended questions	Encourage the client to assess the situation
Building rapport	Encourage the client to share information
Clarification	Obtain a clear understanding of the situation
Seeking concreteness	Help the client move from generalization to concrete ideas and experiences

The table below shows the furthering techniques used in the intervention phases, along with the purpose of each technique:

Furthering Techniques	Purpose of Techniques
Paraphrasing	Convey understanding
Prompts	Encourage sharing
Focusing	Help the client focus until progress is made
Contracting	Set expectations for both client and social worker
Interpretation	Help gain insights in thoughts and behavior
Reflection of content and meaning	Help the client recognize issues
Reflection of feeling	Help the client recognize emotions
Confrontation	Point out the client's need to change

Cognitive restructuring	Assist the client to change thoughts and beliefs
Reframing	Assist the client to view the situation differently

The table below shows the furthering techniques used in the termination and evaluation phases, along with the purpose of each technique:

Furthering Techniques	Purpose of Techniques
Encouraging	Assist the client to maintain progress
Summarizing	Highlight progress made
Consolidating gains	Showing how the client's work has impacted functioning
Evaluating	Help the client measure outcomes and effort
Closing	Terminate the relationship

The different techniques that can be used with involuntary clients are shown with the impact they can have. The first technique has an example statement provided:

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients	Example Statement
Sharing power	Empowers clients who are feeling powerless to resist participation	Example: I know you rather not be here, but I will do everything I can to give you choices about how our time together will be spent.
Offering choice	Promotes self-determination to the greatest degree possible	blank
Remembering details of clients' lives	Communicates interest in knowing the client	blank
Showing respect	Reduces the stigma of being required to participate	blank
Using clear and	Avoids	blank

concise communication	misunderstandings in stressful situations	
Suspending disbelief	Suggests that clients are not seen as untrustworthy	blank
Recognizing one client emotion as masking another emotion	Avoids misinterpretation of negative emotions and behaviors	blank
Being truthful and honest about possibilities and potential outcomes	Clarifies expectations and consequences	blank
Treating clients fairly and equally	Minimizes the fear of receiving unfair	blank

	or unequal treatment	
Avoiding assumptions and judgements	Communicates an open and nonjudgmental view of the client	blank
Customizing interventions	Helps the client feel his or her needs and goals are being considered	blank
Recognizing all client efforts	Shows appreciation for the client's work, even if it is involuntary	blank
Ensuring transparency	Reduces fear of a hidden agenda or misuse of records	blank
Listening to	Promotes client	blank

understand	willingness to share information	

The continuation of the list of different techniques that can be used with involuntary clients and their impact on involuntary clients is shown in the table below:

Technique	Impact on Involuntary Clients
Accepting resistance as normal	Shows understanding of what it feels like to be forced to accept services and engage in the treatment plan
Avoiding defensiveness in response to client behavior	Demonstrates the ability to hear the client's emotions without reacting emotionally

The do's and don'ts for using telephone, text, email, and fax communication are: Do's.

- Use separate professional and personal telephones for professional and personal purposes, as the use of a personal device for professional reasons can result in subpoena of all personal devices.
- Send text and email messages to clients only for professional purposes.
- Select wording for text and email messages to clients and colleagues in a professional manner to avoid misunderstandings.
- Remember that text messages and emails can be forwarded to others who may not have ethical or legitimate reasons to view them, and that they can never be completely deleted.

Don'ts.

- Avoid checking cell phone messages when meeting with clients out of respect for your client's time and to communicate that you are fully engaged with them.
- Do not use automatic location setting on cell phones to protect against clients who may monitor your whereabouts.
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A continuation of the do's and don'ts for using telephone, text, email, and fax communication are as follows: Do's.

- Restrict fax access to those persons who need it, and design policies regarding safeguarding of faxed documents, both sent and received.

Don'ts.

- Avoid judgemental or personal descriptions of clients in telephone, text, email, or fax communications.

The do's and don'ts for web presence and use of the internet are: Do's.

- Use the agency's website to describe its mission and services and provide links to additional information. Verify the accuracy of information on links that are recommended to clients.
- Use blogs and relevant apps to provide education and resources for clients on topics of interest.
- Use the internet judiciously and only if necessary to obtain information on clients who may pose a threat to you or your agency so as to guard their privacy.

Don'ts.

- Refrain from including excessive political content on the website to maintain a focus on the agency's services and mission and to avoid unnecessary controversy.
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- Do not violate client or colleague privacy by conducting internet searches on them or their family and friends without a compelling need to do so for safety or legal reasons.

The do's and don'ts for social media are: Do's.

- Remember that social media postings can become public and post only content and images that will not threaten or undermine your professional status.
- Use the privacy settings to protect your privacy and recognize that they are not always universally secure.
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Don'ts.

- Do not engage in social media contacts with clients but focus on maintaining professional boundaries and avoiding potential misinterpretations of your relationship.
- Refrain from posting comments or identifying information about your clients on social media, even in professional online groups.
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The do's and don'ts for provision of services via technology are: Do's.

- Conduct electronic meetings and training sessions professionally.
- Provide online services to clients with the same attention to quality and privacy as you provide face-to-face services.
- Supplement electronic services with personal contacts to ensure quality of services.
- Utilize technology to provide social work supervision and consultation, including written and face-to-face methodology.

- Educate yourself about licensing laws and state reciprocity when providing services to clients in other states or countries.
- Use the same standards of service provision for online clients and face-to-face clients.

Don’ts.

- Follow up electronic meetings and sessions with face-to-face or written communication if possible.
- Do not rely solely on online services if face-to-face services can also be provided.
- Do not assume clients have access to and the capacity to utilize technology to obtain services.
- Do not use remote supervision without making personal contact and creating documentation as needed.
- Avoid providing services across state or national lines without knowing if licensing and specific forms of documentation are required.
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The do's and don'ts for agency policies and procedures are: Do's.

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- Train and support staff in the use of technology, including the content and importance of abiding by agency policies.
- Develop policies about protocols to be used in the event of disruption of services or breach of privacy.

Don'ts.

- Do not develop policies that are impractical or impossible to implement or follow.
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