



Stony Brook

School of Social Welfare

Office of Practicum Education

Competencies ... What? Why??

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the accrediting body of all schools of social work in the United States. In 2008 CSWE adopted a competency based education framework which moved from a model of curriculum design focused on content (what students should be taught) and structure (the format and organization of educational components) to one focused on student learning outcomes. An outcomes oriented approach refers to identifying and assessing what students demonstrate in practice (CSWE EPAS, 2022).

There are nine core competencies for undergraduate and graduate social work students. Each competency is operationalized into specific practice behaviors. The practice behaviors for the undergraduate and first year graduate students reflect a baseline level of knowledge, values and skill development. The practice behaviors for the second year graduate students reflect the expectation of a deepened grasp and execution of social work knowledge values and skills. This framework establishes thresholds for overall professional competence.

Competency based is about the process of learning and acquiring knowledge. Competencies are large skill sets which are broken down into practice behaviors. Practice behaviors reinforce one another from basic to advanced as learning progresses. (Council on Education for Public Health, 2011). Competence is not trained behavior but thoughtful capabilities and a developmental process (Barrie & Pace, 1997; Chappell, 1966). An individual social work student's level of competence is seen as developing and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning.

The advantage of a competence based social work education is that both the practicum instructor and student are clear on what needs to be taught and learned, and they can give input and feedback on the tasks assigned. Specific competencies provide direction for designing and implementing learning experiences and allow students to apply them in different contexts.

CSWE COMPETENCIES 1 & 2

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant policies, laws, and regulations that may affect practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand that ethics are informed by principles of human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize and manage personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that

self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Social workers use rights-based, antiracist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand and critique the profession's history, mission, roles, and responsibilities and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression in shaping institutions and social work. Social workers understand the role of other professionals when engaged in interprofessional practice. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure relevant and effective practice. Social workers understand digital technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights. Social workers are knowledgeable about the global intersecting and ongoing injustices throughout history that result in oppression and racism, including social work's role and response. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect for all. Social workers advocate for and engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.