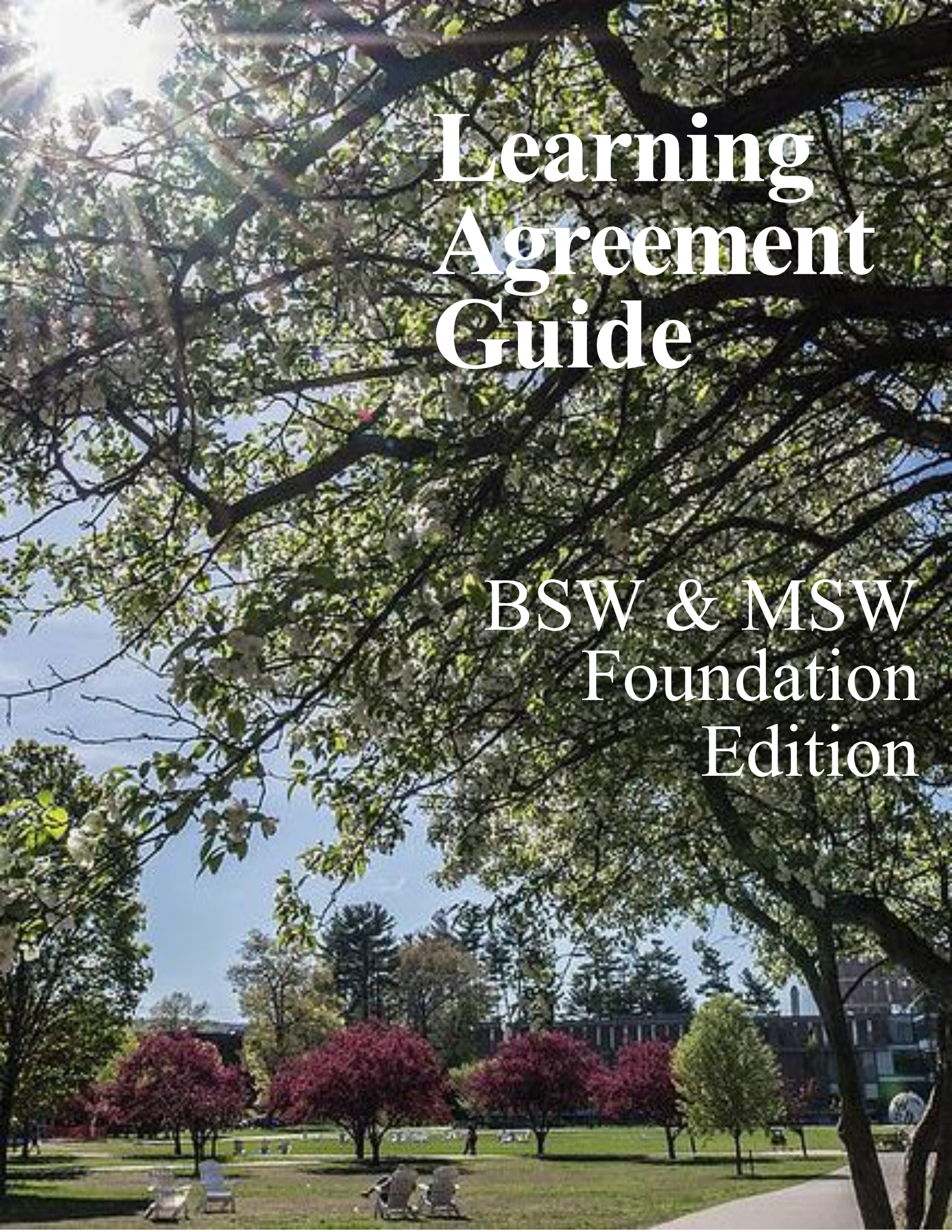


The background image is a vibrant photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, there are large, leafy trees with green and some pink blossoms. A paved path leads from the bottom right towards the center. In the middle ground, there is a large green lawn with several smaller trees, some of which have bright pink blossoms. A few people are visible sitting on the lawn. In the background, a large, multi-story building with a red roof and many windows is visible under a clear blue sky. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

Learning Agreement Guide

BSW & MSW
Foundation
Edition



OVERVIEW

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Social Work education is competency-based. Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being.

The framework for competency-based education includes a focus on the assessment of the student's ability to **demonstrate** the competencies rather than only on the assessment of inputs (such as coursework and resources). Social work practice competence consists of nine interrelated competencies, with specific observable behaviors for each competency. The overall objective of the practicum is to demonstrate competency for entry level generalist practice as identified in the nine social work competencies and specific observable behaviors.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and our social work program recognize a **holistic view of competence**; that is, the demonstration of competence **is informed by the holistic dimensions of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include the social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique practice situations.**

LEARNING AGREEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The Learning Agreement is developed collaboratively by the student, practicum instructor, and faculty practicum liaison. The Agreement will describe how the student will specifically apply the competencies in observable ways within the internship setting. The completed Learning Agreement then represents the student's specific objectives for the internship.

Observable behaviors are listed below each competency. In the subsequent text boxes, please describe the specific activities the student will complete at the internship setting for each observable behavior listed. These activities should provide opportunities for mastery of each competency, demonstrated and informed by the holistic dimensions of knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with general examples of activities for the observable behaviors listed under each competency to assist in supporting your development and creation of site-specific activities.

The activities associated with a specific observable behavior can look very different in working with different populations and settings. Faculty Practicum Liaison, Practicum Instructor/Supervisor and student should make every effort to assure a learning plan for all competencies and observable behaviors. In the rare occasion that a particular competency/observable behavior appears completely unavailable at that site, the Faculty Practicum Liaison should collaborate with the student and practicum instructor to explore the ways in which that competency may be mastered in the setting. Please consider demonstration of the behavior through simulation as a possible alternative prior to an "N/A" being utilized.

BSW & MSW FOUNDATION COMPETENCIES

COMPETENCY 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behaviors

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.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- b. demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- d. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

EXAMPLES:

- Refer to the NASW Code of Ethics when encountered with an ethical issue to identify ethical dilemmas, any potential strategies to resolve those ethical dilemmas, and will demonstrate emerging knowledge of ethical decision-making models in collaboration with practicum instructor.
- Recognize ethical dilemma in practice and seek out appropriate assistance from practicum instructors in coming to a resolution of the dilemma and can identify all relevant ethical principles that apply to specific cases.
- Read and review agency Code of Ethics and compare with NASW Code of Ethics. Discuss this in supervision.
- Recognize the differences between a personal response to a client and a professional response during an interaction with a client and provide the rationale for your professional response.
- After each client interaction, reflect on what occurred and consider personal strengths and opportunities to improve when interacting with each client. During supervision time, discuss these reflections with my practicum instructor and identify personal values that are in agreement and/or conflict with agency and client population.
- Practice behaviors that demonstrate commitment to appropriate roles and boundaries, increase practice skills, increase self-awareness, and utilize feedback to develop and implement plan for self-correction (e.g. not exchanging personal contact information with clients, being mindful of use of social media, etc.).

- Use professional language (verbal/nonverbal) when dealing with clients and other professionals in the workplace, and refrain from use of derogatory language in written and verbal communication.
- Read and follow agency policy and procedures regarding professional behavior, dress code, and communication (e.g., case notes, memos, e-mail, etc.).
- Exhibit a professional attitude by arriving to the Practicum Site dressed appropriately, with a positive outlook, prepared mentally and emotionally to engage with staff and clients, and prepare to learn.
- Demonstrate awareness of agency policy regarding use of technology and verbalize to Practicum Instructor.
- Use strategies of ethical reasoning to address the use of technology in all client and/or constituency settings and be cognizant of its effect on client rights.
- Evaluate the ethical and appropriate use of technology to facilitate practice outcomes with individuals, families and small groups.
- Meet weekly for individual supervision, manage and learn from constructive feedback, demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking, self-examination, insight, insight in self-awareness, and display increasing initiative and independence within the agency structure and in keeping within the lines of authority and the student role.
- Discuss a case with practicum instructor, supervisor, or other agency staff before, during and/or after client contacts/agency activities and follow up with recommendations and listen to feedback regarding strengths and opportunities to improve.
- Demonstrate the effective use of consultation and supervision to guide ethical decision making in one's own 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.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels; and
- engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

EXAMPLES:

- Use knowledge gained in the classroom about the effects of oppression, discrimination, structural social inequality and historical trauma on clients and/or constituencies to guide intervention and/or project planning.
- Apply principles of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights within the scope of the organization's mission.
- Identify agency population being served and social policies that have created and/or continue to create oppressive circumstances for the life course of the individuals/group.
- Explore agency initiatives regarding gaps in access to services for underserved populations (e.g., attend NASW LEAD Day, attend NASW Advocacy Day, etc.).
- Evaluate needs of clients, barriers in meeting them, and establish creative, cost-effective solutions consistent with agency mission/goals.
- Attend relevant trainings, community outreach events, and public policy meetings.

COMPETENCY 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Practice

Social workers understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice. Social workers understand how diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that this intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Social workers understand the societal and historical roots of social and racial injustices and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers understand cultural humility and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and 10 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards values, including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels;
- b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences

EXAMPLES:

- Discuss barriers to services faced by clients, and when assessing client problems, considers impact of economic, racism, political, and social and institutional oppression on client functioning.
- Demonstrate knowledge and respect of differences in relation to age, class, color, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation in social work generalist practice.
- Identify structures and values that contribute to oppression and marginalization. Describe with supervisor the ways in which clients have been marginalized and the cultural and societal dynamics which promote the marginalization (i.e., ethnicity, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, rural vs. urban environment, gender, sexual orientation, ageism, etc.).
- Participate in professional development to learn about diversity issues (i.e. Refugee populations, UNI NCBI training, poverty simulation, etc.)
- Engage in continuing education to develop specialized knowledge and understanding of the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups served.
- Sit quietly in an intake or waiting room area and observe the atmosphere, conversation and behaviors of persons entering the service delivery system, as well as of those who serve them.
- Recognize when personal biases may impact/influence ability to serve client.
- Acknowledge negative emotions associated with difficult ethical decisions.
- Seek consultation and support from peers and colleagues and values differing opinions regarding ethical dilemma.



COMPETENCY 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Social workers use ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches in conducting research and building knowledge. Social workers use research to inform their practice decision making and articulate how their practice experience informs research and evaluation decisions. Social workers critically evaluate and critique current, empirically sound research to inform decisions pertaining to practice, policy, and programs. Social workers understand the inherent bias in research and evaluate design, analysis, and interpretation using an anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspective. Social workers know how to access, critique, and synthesize the current literature to develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses. Social workers demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, and they interpret data derived from these methods. Social workers demonstrate knowledge about methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of clients and constituencies. Social workers understand the value of evidence derived from interprofessional and diverse research methods, approaches, and sources.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs;
- b. identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work

EXAMPLES:

- Use a client situation or issue to research scholarly information (i.e., domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, truancy) and begin to connect underlying issues.
- In consultation with practicum supervisor, identify an agency problem or issue that needs to be addressed and formulate a problem statement.
- Through observation of staff workers and practicum instructor, learn about planned change process and be able to understand the definition and discuss how it is implemented in helping clients achieve their goals.
- Review, evaluate, and appraise current agency services, as well as needs and trends in the communities in which services are being provided.
- Take initiative to locate a peer reviewed article that provides research information on population served at internship, using material learned from Research Methods class, critically analyze the findings and share thoughts with practicum instructor.
- Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings, and develop informed practice initiatives, while working with individuals, families, and small groups.
- Take initiative to locate peer reviewed articles that provide research evidenced-based practice interventions and share with practicum instructor the implications for practice on the agency, assigned clients and/or projects.
- Gain knowledge on state/national policies relevant to agency and discuss implications of policies with field instructor.
- In supervision with practicum instructor, discuss best practices and evidence-based approaches used in the agency and how they could potentially be improved or how they have evolved.

COMPETENCY 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects wellbeing, human rights and justice, service delivery, and access to social services. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in service delivery through rights based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation within their practice settings with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; b. Analyze policies at the agency level and advocate for agency policies that enhance client access and the delivery of effective services.
- b. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice

EXAMPLES:

- Describe social policies, laws, and practices that impact the client system or delivery of services.
- Review federal, state and/or local policies that impact agency services/activities and (process it during supervision and/or apply it to a case/example.
- Identify the evolution of social policies at the local, state, and federal level and analyze how they impact well-being, service delivery, and access to social services for individuals, families, and small groups.
- Recognize the relationships between funding sources, public policies and client systems that are served by placement and discuss with supervisor the impact on client's and constituencies served.
- Identify and apply a framework that assesses how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services for individual, families, and small groups.
- Identify both the intended and unintended consequences of policies for clients and how policies impede access to services and/or service delivery.
- Collaborate with agency to identify tasks to help resolve an identified social problem that is impacted by policy at the agency, community, local, state or federal level.
- Use information from policy classes to apply critical thinking and analysis on the best way to advocate for services needed by clients and/or clientele.
- Anticipate development of barriers to service delivery (e.g., budget cuts, negative publicity regarding target population) and propose strategies to prevent disruption of services.

COMPETENCY 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies;
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies

EXAMPLES:

- Apply preparing skills prior to engagement activities at the micro, mezzo and/or macro levels and process it during a supervisory session and/or apply it to a case/example.
- Identify and integrate theoretical frameworks to prepare for and build relationships with individuals, families, and small groups.
- Read case files and any other pertinent information to prepare for engagement with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Receive feedback from field instructor during supervisory sessions regarding engagement skills (attend, seek, clarify, reflect) and follow through with recommendations.
- Establish rapport with the client system and “start where the client is.”
- Listen attentively to clients and work to accurately grasp feelings and understand circumstances of client.

COMPETENCY 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision making.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS:

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies;
- b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan

EXAMPLES:

- Be aware of, and appropriately utilize, standardized measurement and diagnostic tools.
- Effectively articulate summaries of assessments, and auxiliary documentation to assist in the development of a tentative treatment plan for clients.
- Be able to display the ability to collect and organize data by utilizing tools such as genograms and Eco maps, and correctly interpret data gathered from assessment tools as evidenced by discussions during meetings with field instructor.
- Applies knowledge of multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks (i.e., human behavior, person-and-environment, among others) in assessing information from clients and constituencies.
- Identify conceptual frameworks that explain development and impact on a client system.
- Do role-playing with the practicum instructor or others to try out new skills and techniques.
- Engage client participation verbally and have client state goals and objectives.
- In collaboration with client system, be able to develop clear and timely service goals and develop measurable objectives designed to meet agreed upon goals.
- Observe, reflect, and apply practice skills that assist individuals and/or groups to enhance their well-being from a strengths-based perspective.
- Select an intervention strategy. Documentation of the strategy will include an informed consent form signed by the client that defines the intervention, why it was mutually selected, and a contract that specifies a tentative duration of the treatment.
- Understand developmental stages of client population and integrate into the assessment.
- Considers possible levels of intervention (micro, mezzo, and macro) and articulates reasoning behind choice of intervention target.



COMPETENCY 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings

OBSERVABLE CHANGES:

- a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals;
- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

EXAMPLE:

- Selects appropriate intervention strategies based on assessment, research knowledge, values and preferences of clients and constituencies.
- Initiate and implement interventions to achieve client-directed goals.
- Identify and apply social work theories as they may apply to the process of assessment, intervention or evaluation of clients within the agency.
- Apply contracting phase skills during intervention activities at the micro, mezzo and/or macro levels and (select one or more) reflect on it in a summary of learning(s), process it during a supervisory session and/or apply it to a case/example.
- Use a strengths and empowerment perspective as well as the bio-psycho-social-cultural-spiritual theoretical frameworks learned in the academic classroom to collaboratively develop interventions with clients and/or constituencies.
- Identify and discuss with Practicum Instructor, Faculty Practicum Liaison, or peers in practicum seminar, various theories about human behavior as may be observed when working with clients (biological, social, cultural, psychological, and/or spiritual).
- Effectively collaborate with other professionals, such as through interprofessional treatment teams, to achieve beneficial practice outcomes for individuals, families, and small groups.
- Connect client to community resources.
- Utilize collaborative relationships formed with other providers to secure beneficial services.
- Help clients identify interpersonal strengths, as well as network of familial and community resources to address problems.
- Demonstrate knowledge of community resources and facilitate referral process of client to another agency, when appropriate.
- Distinguish when it is appropriate to advocate rather than broker on behalf of individuals, families, and small groups to build client capacity to negotiate and advocate for their selves.
- Actively discuss with clients and/or constituencies potential transitions and terminations from the beginning of the treatment process in order to be prepared for, planned or unplanned transitions or terminations.
- Actively plan for termination process with clients by anticipating common responses among clients (e.g., feeling of loss, anxiety, recurrence of old problems, development of new problems).
- Assist clients in developing maintenance strategies (e.g., relapse prevention strategies, utilize other formal resources, utilize informal support systems)

COMPETENCY 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers use qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

OBSERVABLE CHANGES:

- a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

EXAMPLES:

- Identify specific measurements for evaluating progress for each activity on intervention plan at micro, mezzo and/or macro level.
- Identify alternative evaluation methods that factor in qualitative outcome measures, in addition to only quantitative measures.
- Apply knowledge of family and group development/dynamics to design proactive services (e.g., marital enrichment programs; parenting education, classes; social skills groups for teens, etc.).
- Identify variables in the social context that could potentially impact evaluation process or outcomes.
- Apply various stage theories to assess development of strengths and psychopathology (psychodynamic, object relations, family life cycle, stages of change, group formation and process).
- Demonstrate knowledge of self-determination and various aspects of human behavior on evaluation and outcome measures.
- Continuously evaluate intervention, not only at termination, but also throughout process, and be able to evaluate results that test the efficacy of interventions used and monitor successes, failures, and progress in achieving outcomes.
- During supervisory sessions, discuss and evaluate an intervention technique in a practicum program and identify evaluation mechanisms at agency.
- Evaluate results that test the efficacy of interventions used and monitor successes, failures, and progress in achieving outcomes.
- Identify strengths and potential future changes with evaluation process at the agency that could lead to improved outcomes for clients and client systems.
- Apply data interpretation to changes at the agency at the micro, mezzo and/or macro levels.
- Synthesize the process and outcome data from practice with individuals, families, and small groups to improve program and agency practice.

**A variety of Learning Agreements from social work programs across the country were reviewed in addition to the competencies and learning activities from our own students at WSU as part of the development of this Guide. We would like to acknowledge review of, and in some cases have adapted, documents from the publicly available websites of University of Michigan School of Social Work, Social Work Program of Ramapo College of New Jersey, Whitney M. Young School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh, Warner Pacific College, Western Illinois University, University of Montana School of Social Work, University of Northern Iowa, Salem State University, University of New England, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck, and Northern Central University.