

Area of Specialized Practice #1: Health and Mental Health Practice

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and ethical standards as they relate to practice in health and mental health settings. 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 practicing in health and mental health settings understand their role as part of an interdisciplinary team. Social workers understand the policies that regulate social work practice in health and mental health settings (for example end of life care, psychiatric commitment and patient/client privacy). Social workers understand frameworks for ethical decision-making and how to apply them in practice with persons with health or mental health conditions. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior, particularly when working in health and mental health settings. 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 in health and mental health settings. Social workers stay up to date on research which informs practice skills for working with clients and their families in the health and mental health fields. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice in health and mental health settings. Social workers:

- Make ethical decisions using the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics as a guide and within the laws and regulations related to practice within health and mental health settings.
- Use anti-racist/anti-oppressive lenses to examine and critique the roles and responsibilities of the social work profession to identify the ethical implications for practice working within health and mental health settings that have been shaped by contexts of oppression.
- Demonstrate commitment to using research evidence and lifelong learning to inform and update practice skills for relevant and effective practice in health and mental health settings.
- Use supervision to guide professional judgment and behavior within health and mental health settings.

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

Social workers understand that every person has fundamental human rights including the right to health and behavioral health care. Social workers understand the specific connections between

health and/or mental health and human rights. For example, the right to clean water, nutritious food, and adequate shelter is related to health and mental health outcomes. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society and within health and mental health settings, in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect. Social workers engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably, including access to health and mental health care. Social workers:

- Apply their understanding of social, economic and environmental injustice to advocate for human rights that promote health and mental health.
- Apply understanding of human rights to identify systems of oppression and engage in strategies to eliminate barriers to equitable distribution of social goods and services.
- Advocate for policies that protect the rights of persons who have health or mental health conditions.

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

Social workers understand that racism and oppression shape human experience. Social workers understand differences in health and mental health status, ability, and disability intersect with other dimensions of diversity as part of this experience. Social workers also understand that a consequence of diversity, a person may experience oppression, marginalization, poverty and discrimination or they may experience power and privilege including when engaging with social workers and other professionals in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice in health and mental health settings. 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 structural mechanisms that oppress or create power related to dimensions of diversity, impact health and mental health outcomes, contribute to health disparities, morbidity, mortality and access to health and mental health services. Social workers recognize that cultural structures and values influence help-seeking behaviors and receptivity to health and mental health care. Social workers understand that diversity shapes their own experiences as well as those of their clients and this experience impacts the therapeutic relationship. Social workers:

- Apply understanding of how difference shapes life experience and how that impacts engagement in order to demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice in health and mental health settings.
- 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.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Social workers working in health and mental health settings understand how to access the vast interdisciplinary knowledge base available and use this knowledge to inform their practice. Social workers use critical thinking to evaluate research findings. Social workers understand how to translate research findings to better understand client health and mental conditions, effective engagement, assessment and interventions. Social workers utilize qualitative and quantitative data from both practice settings and empirical sources to inform their practice. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of clients and constituencies in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the importance of using practice experience to influence scientific inquiry and research. Social workers:

- Translate and use research evidence to inform and improve practice with persons with health and/or mental health conditions.
- Identify and analyze data in order to improve outcomes and service delivery for persons experiencing health or mental health challenges.

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, medical and behavioral health service delivery. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy impacting health and mental health care. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in medical and behavioral health service delivery through rights based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation within their health and mental health practice settings with individuals, families, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings.

Social workers:

- Identify and assess policies at the local, state, and federal levels that impact access to and delivery of health and mental health service using social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses.
- Apply critical thinking to analyze policies that impact health and mental health services and formulate and advocate for policies that advance the human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice of persons experiencing health and mental health challenges.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals and Families

Social workers value the importance of human relationships and understand that engagement is an integral and ongoing part of social work practice with patients and clients in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, and the social environment, human development, life stages, trauma- and other theories that inform the engagement process. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients. Social workers understand that their personal experiences, affective reactions and position of privilege may impact effective engagement with diverse patients and clients in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the multi-disciplinary nature of providing services in health and mental health settings and use the principles of inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- Apply theories and inter-professional conceptual frameworks applicable to working with persons with health and/or mental health challenges to inform engagement with clients and their constituencies.
- Use empathy, self-awareness, reflection and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with patients and clients in health and mental health settings.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals and Families

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing part of practice within health and mental health settings. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, risk and protection factors, human resilience, human development and others. Social workers apply multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks to the assessment of patients and clients facing health and/or mental health challenges. Social workers understand the larger practice context and the multi-disciplinary nature of services for patients and clients in health and mental health settings and participate in professional collaboration in the assessment process of individuals and families. Social workers understand and use assessment of cognitive and behavioral functioning for identifying needs, strengths, development, lethality, coping, resilience and response to interventions. Social workers value self-determination and develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals with the individuals and families they work with. Social workers understand that personal experiences and affective reactions can influence the assessment process when working with patients and clients with health and mental health challenges. Social workers use reflection, supervision and consultation as needed to mitigate the effects of bias, power, privilege, personal values and experiences on their assessment and decision making process. Social workers:

- Apply theories of human behavior and the social environment, human development, the impact of trauma, and human resilience when assessing patients or clients in health and mental health settings.
- Apply self-awareness and reflection to minimize the influence of personal bias and affective reactions on the assessment process.
- Demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with patients or clients to develop mutually agreed-upon plans.
- Develop health and/or mental health intervention goals based on assessment data, empirical data, patient/client values and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals and Families

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing part of practice within health and mental health settings. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, human development, trauma, family systems and others. Social workers understand methods to identify and analyze research findings in order to become knowledgeable about evidence informed interventions for patients or clients facing health and/or mental health challenges. Social workers apply this knowledge to select culturally responsive interventions with patients and clients in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the multi-disciplinary nature of providing services and care within health and mental health settings and participate in professional collaboration in the intervention process with patients and clients experiencing health and/or mental health challenges. Social workers understand that the application of theory of human behavior in the social environment may turn the focus of social work intervention from patients and clients to their environment. Social workers use practice skills to mediate and advocate on behalf of diverse clients. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings. Social workers:

- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, risk and protection factors, and resiliency to develop interventions with clients in health and mental health settings.
- Identify and use critical analysis to choose evidence informed, culturally responsive interventions to be implemented within health and mental health settings.
- Facilitate effective transitions and endings towards client recovery, adaptation, adjustment and other health and mental health related goals.
- Use interdisciplinary collaboration as part of effective intervention with patients or clients experiencing health and/or mental health challenges.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals and Families

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing part of social work practice with patients or clients in health and mental health settings. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, risk and protection factors, human resilience, human development and others. Social workers apply theoretical frameworks to the evaluation of practice within health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the importance of evaluating practice intervention processes and outcomes in order to promote effective practice and service delivery for individuals and families facing health and/or mental health challenges. Social workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods in order to choose appropriate methods for practice and program evaluation. Social workers understand how to analyze practice evaluation findings in order to improve practice and inform policy and service delivery for individuals and families being served by health and mental health settings. Social workers understand the multi-disciplinary nature of health and mental health services and participate in professional collaboration in the evaluation of practice with individuals and families. Social workers:

- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, risk and protection factors, and resiliency to analyze assessment data from clients.
- Select and use culturally responsive methods to evaluate practice in health and mental health settings.
- Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness.
- Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness within health and mental health settings.