

# CSWE EPAS 2022 Social Work Education Competencies and Practice Behaviors

University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work April 1, 2023

2022 Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

"CSWE has adopted a competency-based framework for its EPAS.... Competency-based education rests on a shared view of the nature of competence in professional practice. Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes to practice situations in a culturally responsive, purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being." (CSWE, p. 7)

"Social work education is grounded in the liberal arts and a commitment to anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, which together provide the intellectual basis for the professional curriculum and inform its design. The integration of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion principles across the explicit curriculum includes anti-oppression and global positionality, interdisciplinary perspectives, and comparative analyses regarding policy, practice and research." (CSWE, p. 17)

### 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

### 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, anti-racist, 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

#### Social workers:

practice.

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

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice understand the use of ethical decision-making models as a professional praxis. This praxis requires integrating ethical decision-making models with knowledge of the influence that structural oppression and white supremacy has had in shaping the social work profession, policies, practices, and notions of professionalism. Social workers have a working knowledge of both the NASW and NABSW codes of ethics.

The social worker is self-reflective and engages in critical analysis, drawing from inclusive perspectives, when making decisions and determinations of behavior as a social worker.

#### Social workers:

- a. Interrogate concepts of professional ethics and professionalism within the context of structural and systemic forces;
- b. Critically examine the NASW & NABSW code of ethics; and
- Apply ethical decision-making models across different client settings.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice understand legal, political and fiduciary contexts, and recognize and analyze competing interests and values in macro practice.

They apply decision-making frameworks informed by principles of human rights, and center these decisions using rights-based, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses.

Social workers engage in ongoing measures of self-assessment of one's judgment, practice behaviors, and personal accountability.

Social workers understand the importance of lifelong learning as a commitment to improving social work knowledge, skills, and use of technology to yield relevant, effective macro practice.

- Conduct macro social work practice according to the values and ethics of the profession;
- b. Apply decision-making frameworks using a critical lens in varied macro contexts:
- Utilize reflection and self-assessment to examine one's judgment, biases, practice behaviors, and personal accountability; and
- d. Demonstrate openness to feedback and incorporate feedback to strengthen macro practice skills.

- codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- Demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- d. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

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.

#### Social workers:

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

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice understand community access to effective services as a human rights issue. They understand the serious intergenerational consequences of not having full access to services. They understand how community mental health and access to services are shaped by larger structural forces of privilege and oppression and how they have been used to enforce the values of white supremacist culture. They value systems of care developed within diverse and/or marginalized communities. They advocate to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

### Social workers:

- a. Critique clinical theories from a human rights perspective;
- b. Identify the ways agency policies can inhibit or facilitate access to services; and
- c. Participate in advocacy to mitigate the impact of injustice in the lives of their clients and their communities.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice effectively articulate conceptions of human rights and social, racial, economic, political, and environmental justice. Social workers understand power dynamics, the causes and effects of oppression, and their implications for human rights in all its dimensions.

They recognize historical harms perpetuated within the social work profession, identify ways to prevent and eliminate harmful practices, and promote healing.

Social workers build authentic community relationships and identify and practice acts of solidarity. They engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers and promote human rights.

- Demonstrate skills in analyzing power dynamics and causes and effects of oppression and identify strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers and promote human rights;
- Identify historical harms perpetuated by and within groups, organizations, and communities and discuss ways to prevent and eliminate harmful practices; and
- c. Engage in practice that builds community relationships and promotes solidarity.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

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 values. including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression.

### Social workers:

- Demonstrate anti-racist and antioppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels; and
- Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, selfawareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies,

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice value the importance of their own ongoing conscientization, to continually develop their understanding of how personal biases and life experiences reflect larger structural systems of white supremacy, power, privilege, and oppression contribute to adverse outcomes. They understand intersectionality and describe how culture and community context shapes experiences of health and healing. They are aware of how identity, power and racism impact clinical interactions. They acknowledge when harm at both the individual and community level has occurred.

#### Social workers:

- Demonstrate anti-racist and antioppressive social work practice by identifying how systems of structural power and white supremacy shape experiences of health and healing;
- Articulate how one's intersecting identities and positionality influence clinical engagement; and
- c. Apply a strengths-based approach to clinical social work practice to promote healing that honors culturally and contextually diverse narratives about health, healing and wellness.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice understand the ways in which organizations, communities, and policies are impacted by privilege and power, and assess the nature and impact of institutional, political, and economic (dis)empowerment.

Social workers identify internal and external strategies of resisting systems rooted in racism and oppression.

They engage in dialogue and reflection on the historical and pervasive impact of white supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice.

Social workers build a praxis of reflexivity, value different perspectives, and recognize the necessity and effectiveness of tailoring messages to varied audiences.

They acknowledge clients and constituencies as experts and center their lived experiences and desires.

- a. Identify, dialogue, and reflect on internal and external strategies of resisting systems rooted in racism and oppression;
- Demonstrate anti-racist and antioppressive macro practice by recognizing clients and constituencies as experts and centering their lived experiences and desires; and
- c. Recognize systemic factors internal and external to the agency context and assess the nature and impact of institutional, political, and economic (dis)empowerment.

acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

### 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 antioppressive 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.

#### Social workers:

- a. Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and
- 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.

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice value and affirm diverse ways of questioning, knowing, and experiencing the world. They identify and critically analyze different sources of evidence, interrogating who is centered, privileged, and (dis)empowered by its use. They recognize both the potential value and harms of using research to inform practice. They also recognize the necessity of practice experiences to inform future inquiries.

#### Social workers:

- a. Engage a critical perspective in their evaluation and selection of evidence that guides and supports practice related decisions; and
- b. Articulate how diverse sources of knowing that include community and client experience inform the generation of knowledge.

#### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice value and affirm diverse ways of questioning, knowing, and experiencing the world. They identify and critically analyze different sources of evidence, interrogating who is centered, privileged, and (dis)empowered by its use. They understand the value of evidence from an array of sources, such as quantitative and qualitative research, secondary data, community informed practices, historical documentation, as well as input from community and other relevant sources.

Social workers identify emerging practice trends and technological developments to inform macro practice. They intentionally utilize evidence to communicate and advocate for policy positions.

They recognize the potential value and harms of using research to inform practice and seek out community-centered approaches to community interventions and organizational leadership.

- Demonstrate the ability to discern between sources of information, utilizing critical thinking skills to assess the value of evidence from an array of sources; and
- b. Use and apply evidence to guide assessment, intervention design, and policy action.

### 5: Engage in Policy Practice

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects well-being, 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 rightsbased, 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.

#### Social workers:

- Use social justice, anti-racist, and antioppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; and
- Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice value the importance of policy practice as a key aspect of clinical practice. They understand how policies are developed. They are able to connect clinical realities to relevant policy issues. They can articulate informed positions on policy issues that impact the communities and clients they serve and can critique the substantive issues from an anti-oppressive perspective. They participate in advocacy to promote access to services and advance social, racial, and economic justice.

#### Social workers:

- a. Connect a policy issue to clinical practice implications and can connect clinical practice issues to policy practice implications; and
- b. Hold informed positions on policy issues that impact clinical practice and clinical settings.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice recognize that policy is made at local, state, federal, and global levels, as well as within organizations and communities.

They understand the history, power, limitations, and complexity of policymaking, distinguishing between legislative, executive, and judicial branch policy-making processes and various strategies utilized to shape policy in each process.

Social workers critically analyze policy using frameworks that consider social, racial, and political context, the use of symbols and narratives in policy communications, anticipated and unanticipated consequences, and the impacts for human rights and justice.

They utilize policy analyses as well as their knowledge of the political environment to identify and strategically pursue policy changes to strengthen policy alignment with social work values.

- a. Critically analyze social, racial, and political context, content, consequences, and impacts of organizational and governmental policy; and
- Apply strategy to pursue policy change within organizations and communities that align with social work values.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

### 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 selfreflective 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.

### Social workers:

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

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice explore the social and historical contexts impacting individuals, families, and groups and value the importance of these contexts to the engagement process. They consider how the experience of collective trauma may influence the engagement process. They understand how one's own positionality may impact the engagement process.

They recognize the significance of community strengths and wisdom and how this must be taken into consideration to be effective in a respectful engagement process. They are able to identify alternatives to standard engagement practices that may separate the client from their family and larger societal contexts.

#### Social workers:

- a. Apply principles of healing centered practice in the engagement process;
- Demonstrate awareness of their own positionality and how it impacts engagement with individuals, families, and groups; and
- Apply engagement strategies with diverse clients based on an intersectional understanding of systems of power, privilege, and oppression.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice demonstrate cultural humility and are culturally responsive. They are aware of the nature of shifting alliances in macrosystems and find common ground with those who hold differing priorities and points of view, without compromising the needs and interests of the communities served.

Social workers engage with communities and organizations in all aspects of practice, including assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation. Social workers focused on macro practice build, develop and deepen strategic alliances and relationships with policymakers, grassroots community members, advocacy groups, the media and other members of the policy community.

They understand that effective engagement with diverse constituencies requires self-reflection and awareness of one's own biases, power, and privilege.

Social workers focused on macro practice design oral and written communications that demonstrate an understanding of the needs and styles of various audiences.

- Identify opportunities to build, develop, and deepen strategic alliances and relationships, internal and external to the organization;
- Demonstrate self-reflection and awareness of one's own biases, power, and privilege when engaging with diverse constituencies; and
- c. Effectively design oral and written communications that respond to the needs and styles of varied audiences.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

### 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-inenvironment, 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

#### Social workers:

making.

- 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; and
- b. Demonstrate respect for client selfdetermination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice value the responsibility and accountability that they hold when gathering information about individuals, families, and groups with whom they work. They can critically interrogate, choose, and apply an assessment strategy and related tools with an understanding of the conceptual lens through which their assessment practice is held. This includes an awareness of how power differentials and carceral values may be at play and how standard assessment practice may disproportionately focus on pathology and separate the client system from societal contexts. They seek to understand the strengths that all individuals, families, and groups bring.

#### Social workers:

- a. Describe how to assess for strengths; and
- b. Critically analyze, choose and apply assessment strategies appropriate for individuals, families, and groups.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice co-create and apply strategies to assess communities, organizations, and the policy context for macro-level change utilizing person-centered language. They understand and critically analyze the many and varied dimensions of power, internal and external contexts for change, and the ways in which these shape macro practice.

Social workers assess their individual positionality within the context of community change efforts they seek to join, and demonstrate critical consciousness in assessing their own roles and strengths within these efforts.

- a. Co-create and apply strategies to assess internal contexts for change, including organizational capacity, dimensions of power, motivation, and resistance; and
- Co-create and apply strategies to assess external contexts for change, including the social, economic, and political climate and dimensions of power.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

practice. Social workers understand

selecting culturally responsive

families, groups, organizations, and

implementing evidence-informed

interventions and participate in

interventions with clients and

## Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work theories of human behavior, person-inenvironment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in constituencies, including individuals, communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and interprofessional collaboration to achieve client and constituency goals. Social

#### Social workers:

endings.

a. Engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidenceinformed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and

workers facilitate effective transitions and

b. Incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice hold the values of healing centered practice within the identification, formulation, and application of intervention strategies with individuals, families, and groups. They hold a sense of accountability and intentionality throughout their work to bring change to the client system. They can identify the assumptions underlying theories of intervention including how dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression are present. They understand that interventions for healing may be directed at all systems levels. They are able to reconceptualize what it means to intervene so that they can intentionally engage with change.

#### Social workers:

- a. Identify the assumptions of intervention theories including how dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression may be present; and
- Consider how the principles of healing-centered practice may be included in the identification, formulation, and application of intervention strategies.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice analyze and apply various theoretical approaches to designing, refining, and implementing interventions in partnership with communities and organizations. They identify and engage in community-driven change activities within organizations, communities, and macrosystems.

Social workers focused on macro practice understand and intentionally apply antiracist and anti-oppressive strategies for navigating change in collaboration with community.

Social workers demonstrate reflexivity while engaged in community change efforts and adapt their practice in ways that are responsive to racial justice, equity, and dynamics of power and privilege.

- Demonstrate strategic thinking in designing, refining, and/or implementing community-driven change activities alongside community members;
- b. Exercise reflexivity while engaged in community change efforts and adapt their practice in ways that are responsive to racial justice, equity, and dynamics of power and privilege; and
- Identify and apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive strategies in partnership with communities while navigating change.

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

#### **Generalist - Foundation**

### 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 antiracist 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

#### Social workers:

practice effectiveness.

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

### **Specialized - Clinical**

Social workers focused on clinical practice incorporate ongoing evaluation within clinical practice. They assess clinical interventions in terms of their fidelity as well as assess the efficacy of any adaptations to the intervention. They value client feedback so they can authentically partner with clients to understand what constitutes improvement. They can critically assess evaluation strategies in terms of their inclusion of client and community knowledge and experience, underlying assumptions, and how power, privilege and oppression are shaping the clinical process.

#### Social workers:

- Design evaluation processes and methods relevant to the clinical practice context including identification of measures, data collection, and data analysis processes;
- Recognize how observed outcomes are connected to selected evaluation methods to improve practice effectiveness; and
- Use multiple strategies to gather client feedback and incorporate self-reflection to improve social work practice.

### **Specialized - Macro**

Social workers focused on macro practice understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of macro practice and recognize the complexity of evaluation due to the divergent agendas involved, changing policy contexts, and the ways in which racism, white supremacy, and oppression inform valued sources of evidence and choices of measures.

They differentiate between needs assessment, formative, and summative evaluations and how each is used within the intervention process. Social workers clearly define and interrogate problems and examine root causes when evaluating macro interventions.

They differentiate between program inputs, outputs, and outcomes, as well as between goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. Social workers focused on macro practice effectively collect, organize, and interpret data in order to assess progress, identify accomplishments, and refine strategies to achieve stated goals.

- Demonstrate the ability to create a program logic model;
- b. Recognize the complexity of the divergent agendas involved in the evaluation process, such as changing policy contexts, racism, white supremacy, and oppression; and
- Design evaluation processes and methods relevant to the practice context, including clear identification of measures, data collection, and data analysis processes.