

Advanced Macro Practice Competencies

Social work competence is the intentional integration and application of social work knowledge, values, and skills to promote human and community well-being in practice. **A holistic view of competence is multidimensional and involves:**

- Knowledge
- Values
- Skills
- Critical thinking
- Affective reaction
- Exercise of judgment

The nine competencies below represent the essential components of social work practice. Mastery of these competencies is demonstrated in an interrelated fashion. The process of learning is both developmental and dynamic and may involve focus on individual competencies. The goal of social work education is the integration of the competencies into holistic practice.

Each of the nine advanced macro practice competencies describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that comprise the competency, followed by a set of behaviors that integrate these components. These behaviors represent observable components of the competencies, while the preceding statements represent the underlying content and processes that inform the behaviors.

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice. Social workers apply principles of critical thinking to frameworks of ethical decision-making in practice. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions in inter-professional settings. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social work interns:

- Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior and appearance with awareness of differential norms across communities;
- Demonstrate self-reflection and self-regulation in macro practice;
- Actively engage in supervision, collaboratively setting an agenda and demonstrating openness to feedback and with increased initiative, independence, collaboration;
- Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes;
- Make ethical decisions in their practice using NASW Code of Ethics, other professional social work codes, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, and consultation;
- Communicate clearly and professionally in a timely manner in writing and verbally with sensitivity to the needs of differing audiences.

Boston University School of Social Work
Field Education Department

2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical in forming individual and group identity. As a consequence of difference, the experiences of individuals and communities may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Social work interns:

- Integrate knowledge of how diversity and difference shape their professional relationships and interactions with others, as well as dynamics of power and privilege within organizations and communities;
- Employ cultural humility in practice, integrating cultural self-awareness with knowledge of and openness to learning from community members about their own culture in planning and implementing change in communities and organizations;
- Build professional relationships with diverse consumers, constituents, communities and organizations to provide culturally competent services and programs.

3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice

Social workers understand that every person has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Social work interns:

- Use knowledge of the effects of oppression, discrimination and historical trauma on individuals and communities in developing project plans;
- Advocate for increased access to resources and services to ensure protection of human rights;
- Engage with, and support the empowerment of, community members who have the least power and are often the most vulnerable in terms of access to community resources, opportunities and decision-making forums;
- Advocate for inclusive change strategies that help all community members reach their full potential.

Boston University School of Social Work
Field Education Department

4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.

Social work interns:

- Utilize qualitative and quantitative research to understand the nature of communities and organizations and the best practices to improve well-being in these macro systems;
- Use research methodology from multi-disciplinary sources to evaluate the effectiveness of planning and implementing change strategies in communities and organizations ;
- Where possible, apply practice experience to the development of new knowledge through participation in research.

5. Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings and engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers identify social policies at the local, state and federal levels that impact the well-being of community members and the delivery of necessary services.

Social work interns:

- Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate and advocate for policy changes that advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice, especially for the most vulnerable.
- Actively engage in the policy arena on behalf of community and organizational interests, especially for the most vulnerable.

Competencies 6 - 9

There are several shared principles related to engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation of practice that apply to Competencies 6 - 9. These include:

- value the importance of human relationships, the basis of all social work practice;

Boston University School of Social Work
Field Education Department

- critically evaluate and apply theories of human behavior and the social environment, as well as theories of community and organizational development, to facilitate practice with individuals, communities and organizations;
- value the importance of inter- professional collaboration and communication recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary and inter-organizational participation;
- understand how their personal experiences, demeanor and affective reactions may impact their practice with and among individuals, communities and organizations;
- apply knowledge about human diversity that characterizes and shapes human experience and relationships.

6. Engage with Individuals, Groups, Organizations and Larger Systems

Social workers utilize strategies to engage the individuals within communities, organizations and larger systems to advance practice effectiveness.

Social work interns:

- Effectively engage with constituents as equal partners using empathy, self-reflection and other interpersonal skills;
- Develop partnerships with and among constituents, organizations and communities that are based on participation, empowerment, collaboration, and indigenous leadership;
- Utilize a range of skills that facilitate engagement e.g., outreach and recruitment, collaboration, coalition building.

7. Assess Groups, Organizations and Larger Systems

Social workers utilize a range of methods to ensure comprehensive assessment and recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process.

Social work interns:

- Formulate an understanding of the environment including precipitants to the issues being addressed, interpersonal dynamics, historically relevant events, and cultural influences;
- Identify assets, resources and needs of the constituents, community or organization;
- Engage formal & informal (nontraditional) sectors of the community in the assessment process and in developing agreed-upon goals.

8. Intervene with Groups, Organizations and Larger Systems

Social workers utilize methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed approaches to achieve community and organizational goals.

Boston University School of Social Work
Field Education Department

Social work interns:

- Collaborate with individuals, communities and organizations to identify desired process and outcomes objectives, and time and project management;
- Plan with communities & organizations to apply change strategies through a variety of models appropriate to local contexts;
- Create necessary documents for projects or actions, (e.g., strategic plan, grant proposal, personnel manual, marketing materials, documentation);
- Complete necessary steps in activity or project and transfer responsibility for ongoing maintenance where appropriate.

9. Evaluate Practice with Groups, Organizations and Larger Systems

Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

Social work interns:

- Utilize a variety of methods/tools to evaluate and document change strategies' outcomes and effectiveness (e.g., program evaluation, consumer satisfaction survey, external review);
- Utilize and demonstrate skill in a variety of process and output methods that emphasize participatory principles;
- Use evaluation results to inform and/or improve future change strategies.