

POLICY, PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION (PP&A) **CONCENTRATION**

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POLICY, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION (PP&A) CONCENTRATION

OVERVIEW OF POLICY, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION CONCENTRATION

The PP&A concentration is a program of study that builds on the foundation curriculum and prepares students for leadership in human service organizations. The concentration is methods based and focuses on knowledge and skills required of PP&A practitioners to carry out a variety of roles in government, nonprofit, and community organizations. Students adapt course assignments and use their field placement experiences to pursue their interests in a particular field of practice, population group, or social problem. In addition, students may use their electives to enroll in an interdisciplinary specialization within the University, e.g. gerontology, substance abuse, or holistic health.

The PP&A concentration is maintained and developed by the Policy committee, a subcommittee of the curriculum committee. The Policy committee is composed of faculty members who have teaching assignments in the PP&A curriculum. Students and part-time faculty members serve on the Policy committee on an ad hoc basis. The PP&A coordinator administers the PP&A program and chairs the Policy committee meetings.

POLICY, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION CONCENTRATION GOALS

PP&A goals and objectives have been transformed into the types of knowledge and skill competencies in each academic course and the level of effort devoted to each. The field education component of PP&A provides students with opportunities to develop and exercise practice skills for designing, maintaining, and changing social systems. Analytic skill development focuses on operation, organization, and policy structures of the student's field placement agency and other related organizations. Interaction skill development focuses on effective communication with individuals and groups, within and outside of the field placement organization, as a means of gaining acceptance as a legitimate change agent in the operation of the organization. The field placement also provides opportunities for practicing technical skills, increasing sensitivity to perspectives of diverse populations, examining issues related to women, and becoming more aware of the role of social work values and ethics in PP&A practice. The field practicum component is highly integrated with the other components of the PP&A curriculum. The fieldwork setting serves as the means and the context for completing many of the academic course assignments. Agency-based field instructors and PP&A faculty advisors develop highly individualized placements and experiences that are mindful of students' work experience and responsive to their career interests.

The goals for students in PP&A are as follows:

- To develop skills in two overarching PP&A practice skill areas (analytical and technical) important to designing, maintaining, and changing community and/or agency social systems
- To increase sensitivity to, and awareness of, issues affecting women and how diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives are addressed in PP&A practice
- To integrate the values and ethics of the social work profession into their PP&A practice

- To become involved in, and learn from, PP&A tasks that are of special interest
- To acquire information and knowledge about a field of practice, a program, and/or an agency that is of special interest
- To observe and emulate models of PP&A practice
- To acquire knowledge and skill in PP&A practice through vicarious learning experiences such as observation, participant observation, co-participation, post-meeting analysis of PP&A practice activities, and events
- To become a professionally reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable, and developing social worker.

The objectives of PP&A field education are highly individualized and based upon the student's prior education and experience, career aspirations, and special interests. Specific student performance objectives are established by the student and made explicit in a written contract developed between the student and the field instructor. The work plan includes: specific tasks associated with the different objectives; deadlines for completing the tasks; estimation of the amount of time required for completing the tasks; and a graphic chart, e.g., GANTT, PERT, which integrates objectives, activities, length of time for activities, and expected task completion dates. All students are required to include in their learning contract objectives and activities related to diverse populations, a section that addresses student safety in the field placement, and social work values and ethics. The student's learning contract and detailed work plan are reviewed and approved by the field instructor and the faculty liaison.

POLICY, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION CONCENTRATION OBJECTIVES

PP&A students will gain knowledge of, and skill in, the following areas:

- Leadership in human service organizations, including application of leadership, theories, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving, and decision-making techniques
- Group processes and critically think about how to best work with project teams, committees, boards, volunteers, professional interdisciplinary teams, and funding entities
- Multidimensional assessment of policies, organizations, and communities
- Analyzing, formulating, and designing policies impacting organizations and communities
- Effective assessment, advocacy, and political skills in legislative, judicial, and administrative policy processes
- Global issues influencing social and economic processes and advocating effectively and promoting social and economic justice in local communities and organizations
- Organizational change, managing conflict, and demonstrating critical thinking and creativity in problem-solving related to organizations, special interest groups, and funding entities
- Application of social work values and ethics in PP&A practice and demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics
- Personnel, supervision, and program staffing issues and human resources management
- Conducting public testimony and presentations related to policy, planning, and administrative processes as it impacts consumers, agencies, and communities

- Developing and managing budgets as well as understand financial reports and audits in human service organizations
- Program planning processes that include an assessment of problem and needs, formulation of goals and objectives, design of service programs and integration/coordination with other community efforts resulting in a fully-developed and detailed funding proposal
- Organizational collaborations, joint ventures, mergers, and affiliations and the resulting impact on communities
- Strategic planning, including: mission, values, organizational goals and their interrelationship with other community-based programs
- Fund development techniques such as annual campaigns, capital campaigns, endowments, grants, and special events
- Major governmental and private funding and regulatory systems including federal, state, local, foundations, and third-party reimbursement
- Different organizational structures, rules, regulations, and governance for non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations
- Assessing and critically thinking about outcomes and evaluate programs
- Understanding and sensitivity with diverse populations, including women, minorities, consumers of service and other groups in PP&A practice
- Understanding, sensitivity, and cultural awareness to the social and economic impact of poverty and other social injustices
- Understanding and sensitivity to how organizational change should embrace staff and consumers of all cultures
- Understanding and skills in use of print and electronic media to influence or persuade public attitudes, policy, and programs.

POLICY, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION CONCENTRATION FIELD PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES

Codification and analysis of activities students can perform in field practice are necessary for several reasons. Students and field instructors must have an understanding of the range of tasks students can undertake and of the complexity within specific tasks. Codification leads to partialization (subtask analysis) and specification of behaviors that comprise a task and each behavior may require different kinds of instruction. Codification also attends to the sequencing of behaviors or to matters that must be attended to concurrently. Students can make an informed decision about the project they want to undertake because they can assess the demands of the activities. Codification facilitates examination of the conceptual, interactive, and technical demands of tasks and expedites placement decisions. The demands of the activities can be matched with the abilities and learning needs of students.

Codification per se is instructive to those who have not been formally trained in PP&A or to those who have experience but not the conceptual or analytic tools. Field instructors who have examined the codification of tasks report their surprise as to what a student can do or discover ways to improve organizational modes of operation. Examples of PA&A tasks include:

Grant Application: Students may write the narrative description of the proposal, formulate the budget, obtain letters of support or cooperation from agencies, seek intra-

organizational support for the grant application, contact the grantor to acquire specific information about the prospects of funding, and obtain clarification of application instructions.

Social Problem and Needs Analysis: Students may use demographic data, survey research data, citizen involvement techniques, structured group interviews, or data from agency records to assess needs or the scope of a social problem, the number of people affected, and whether the problem or need is differentially distributed among population groups. Examples of such tasks are: a study of transportation problems of the elderly, a study of the health needs of rural people, a study of the legal problems and needs of incarcerated offenders.

Developing a Management Information System: Students may assess the agency's current means of collecting, storing, retrieving, and analyzing information. They may inventory the reports the agency is required to make, and the amount, type of information, and deadline that is required for each report. They may confer with staff to determine what use is made of the reports by the agency or the external units that require the reports. The cost-benefits of alternative information systems may be analyzed. Staff and board advisory committees may be organized and staffed to provide opportunities for participation in the development of the system. The student's final product may consist of a codebook, forms for gathering information, dummy tables, and a statement about the logistics of managing the information system.

Program Coordination: Students may conceptualize a program, formulate objectives with staff or board members, implement or manage a program, develop a therapeutic milieu, schedule the clients' activities, facilitate client movement from one activity to another, and involve clients in an evaluation of their program. One student coordinator designed the activities of juvenile offenders in a detention facility, involved them in discussions of how they wished to use their time, and conceptualized and coordinated staff roles during free time, e.g., the teacher, the guards, and the child care workers.

Budget Analysis: Students may estimate the cost of personnel, equipment, or new programs; analyze expenditures; analyze the allocation of increments among departments, programs, or staff; determine the programs that may be in need of further support and development; determine the cost per unit of service; formulate budgets; and allocate resources.

Program Evaluation: Students may use data that are collected routinely by the agency for official purposes to analyze the characteristics of clients and to evaluate the agency's claims as to whom it thinks it is serving. Program evaluation may involve an assessment of client satisfaction with the agency, quantitative or qualitative report writing concerning the achievement of agency objectives, or analysis of contract compliance.

Personnel Management: Students may analyze the agency's personnel policies and practices and compare them with the codes of NASW or agencies in the community, classify roles and positions, provide administrative support to staff and board personnel committees, formulate revisions of the personnel code, develop an affirmative action plan, recruit personnel, and develop evaluation and grievance procedures.

Staffing a Committee: Students may help the committee to determine its mission and the manner in which it should carry out its functions and tasks, facilitate agenda preparation

for committee meetings and help the committee to set priorities, conduct investigations or studies in behalf of the committee, meet with committee members privately to acquire intelligence about their positions on issues and to influence desirable outcomes.

Staffing a Community Group: A student may serve as a staff member to a group of citizens who are interested in community development or social action, help the group to conceptualize its mission and to acquire the resources to achieve objectives, arrange for the group to meet with elected officials, serve as an advocate and spokesperson for the group, and formulate position papers for the group's consideration.

Staff Development and Training: Students may assess the learning needs of staff; the way in which needs will be met; design, manage, or conduct the training program; and design instruments to evaluate training outcomes.

Policy Development and Training: Students may systematically analyze the scope, parameters, and implications of policies that are developed by the agency, funding sources, state, or federal departments. These policies might involve budget considerations, personnel practices, or program guidelines. Included in this task might be the writing or codifying of new and/or changed policies for the host agency.

Legislative Analysis: Students may monitor current legislation at the various levels of government to ascertain potential bills of interest to the host agency, analyze the legislation to determine the possible impact of the legislation on the agency and/or consumers, draft position papers, offer amendments, present testimony before committees.

The Student

Fundamental learning experiences for students refer to the acquisition of knowledge and skill by reading organizational documents, participatory observation, conferences about organizational experiences, and analytic exercises. Fundamental learning experiences are primary modes of learning for virtually all PP&A students during the initial phase of the field placement. It provides students with an opportunity to test their interests and to experience a range of PP&A activities. Fundamental learning experiences are also structured throughout the academic year, especially for inexperienced students, but after the initial phase the emphasis is on the assumption of at least one major task. An illustrative list of fundamental learning experiences follows:

- Read and study a grant application
- Read and study an agency charter, by-laws, constitution, personnel policies, and affirmative action plans
- Attend board meetings and board committee meetings. Confer with the field instructor or his/her designate after the meeting to conduct a post-meeting analysis of the exchange and what was accomplished
- Attend staff meetings and staff committee meetings. Participate in debriefing about the meetings
- Observe the executive at budget hearings. Evaluate the adequacy of the documentation and the interaction between the executive and the funding sources.

- Attend hearings before commissions or legislative committees. Evaluate the adequacy of testimony and the model of presentation of the speakers.
- Observe how issues related to women and diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives are addressed in PP&A practice
- Examine agency organizational structure and study agency programs via observation, interviews, and study of organizational documents
- Study and analyze agency reports
- Observe a case staffing; study interdisciplinary relationships
- Examine how social work values and ethics are addressed in PP&A practice
- Study an agency budget
- Study the agency's means of collecting, organizing, storing, and retrieving information

Field Hours

The School of Social Work requires that policy, planning, and administration (PP&A) concentration students complete a minimum of 472 total hours per academic year. Advanced standing students must complete a minimum of 596 hours; this includes 96 hours of field during Summer II semester and 500 hours during the academic year (fall and spring).

Students begin field placement in the fall and continue through the spring semester (September - April). Field placement requires approximately a 16-hour per work week commitment. The idea is to log approximately 16 hours per week to allow for a full range of learning experiences, over time, which should go until the end of the semester. It is important for these learning experiences to build over the course of each semester. Students are encouraged to log a few additional hours to cover an unexpected absence or an illness, but the bulk of the required hours must be logged continuously and contiguously over the course of the semester(s). Students, at times, may also be required to attend their field placements during the University breaks for a few hours so that client relationships are maintained. This is decided between the student and their field instructor. Some activities outside the agency may be counted as field hours if approved by the field instructor and faculty liaison; examples include attending Legislative Education and Advocacy Day or attending a conference on a topic related to work in the field agency.

Field Seminars

M.S.W. concentration students also participate in an orientation meeting and three (3) seminars which are scheduled by the faculty liaison during the concentration-year field placement. **Students are required to attend orientation and all scheduled seminars.**

The seminars focus on the students' field experiences and provide a forum to discuss their placement with their peers and the faculty liaison. There are also opportunities to discuss the integration of their field experience with other concentration courses that they are taking or have completed. Seminar assignments may include written and oral work. Usually the first seminar is held

in the middle of the fall semester, the second early in the spring semester, and the third towards the end of the spring semester.