

# **THE INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE (IP)** **CONCENTRATION**

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# **THE INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE (IP) CONCENTRATION**

## **OVERVIEW OF INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE CONCENTRATION**

The interpersonal practice concentration (IP) provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary for advanced direct practice with individuals, families, and groups. The hallmark of interpersonal practice is the dual and simultaneous focus on both person(s) and environment and the interaction between them. Assessment and intervention in the context of the diverse interactions within the person-environment interface involves awareness of a complex set of forces which the social work practitioner and client(s) must sort out together.

Practitioners need to be skilled in assessing and designing appropriate intervention strategies for a variety of situations and client systems. Practitioners must conceptualize their activities in consideration of the bio-psycho-social functioning of the client, the realities of the community influencing client functioning and service delivery, and the values and ethics of professional social work.

Within the framework of empowerment, practitioners must consider issues of diversity such as race, culture, gender, socio-economic status, religion, and physical abilities and be prepared to advocate and broker accordingly.

## **INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE CONCENTRATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The IP concentration is organized around methods-based training across fields of practice such as mental health, child welfare, medical social work, corrections, family services court, and school social work. Methods taught in the concentration are advanced practice with individuals, families, and groups. These methods are complemented by advanced field education, a required course in psychopathology from a social work perspective, and electives. 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 IP concentration is maintained and developed by the Practice committee, a subcommittee of the curriculum committee. The Practice committee is composed of faculty members who have teaching assignments in the IP curriculum. Student members serve on the Practice committee on an ad hoc basis. The IP coordinator administers the IP program and chairs the Practice committee meetings.

## **INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE CONCENTRATION OBJECTIVES**

As a consequence of completing the IP concentration, students will be able to demonstrate:

- An advanced knowledge and skill in assessments, evaluations, and interventions with individuals, families, and/or small groups
- Understanding of the impact of coping and adaptive capacities on the psycho-social-biological functioning of clients

- Advanced social work practice knowledge and skill in the application of social work values and ethics with individuals, families, and/or small groups
- Knowledge and skill in applying a bio-psycho-social-cultural perspective, in a life-span context, in social work practice with individuals, families, and/or small groups
- The ability to apply individual, family, and/or small group practice skills within a variety of organizational settings and under a variety of auspices
- Knowledge and skill in conducting social work with special populations such as the developmentally disabled, frail elderly, incest survivors, abused/neglected children, and persons with AIDS or other chronic illness
- Integration into practice skills knowledge of human diversity including variation in culture, ethnicity, mores, values, religion, sexual orientation, social/economic status, and lifestyle
- The ability to apply research- and empirically-grounded processes to assess and evaluate practice frameworks, strategies, and outcomes in social work practice with individuals, families, and/or small groups
- Assess and evaluate the impact of social, agency, and/or family policy on social work practice with individuals, families, and/or small groups
- A commitment to and an integration of the principles of empowerment, a strengths perspective, and advocacy, with an emphasis on social work with clients of different ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and class, and especially those in the grips of poverty and various forms of racial, economic, and social oppression and inequality
- A critical understanding of supervisory functions and roles in social work

### INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE FIELD PLACEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The School of Social Work helps students strengthen their professional competencies by providing them with an opportunity to advance their treatment approaches through increasing knowledge and through formulating the linkages between the theories and constructs taught in the classroom with the operational principles and skills for working directly with affected persons. In this latter regard the student's field instructor is a crucial link in the teaching-learning experience.

Students are expected to meet the following activities in IP field education:

- Work directly and effectively with individuals, families, and/or groups
- Engage effectively with persons representing different cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and lifestyles
- Apply and integrate central themes and concepts of the IP concentration
- Apply and integrate relevant knowledge from the classroom
- Systematically assess and formulate appropriate intervention plans
- Examine and reflect on one's own feelings, thoughts, and actions in regard to one's professional activities and relationships with clients and colleagues
- Systematically evaluate one's own practice strategies, frameworks, and outcomes in working with individuals, families, and/or groups
- Apply and integrate social work values and ethics into their practice activities
- Assess and evaluate the relevance and impact of social and family policy on their practice with individuals, families, and/or groups

Additional expectations of students:

- Participate a minimum of 16 hours per week, per semester
- Develop a learning contract that is acceptable to the student, the agency, and the School which includes a section regarding student safety in the field placement
- Work with client systems for learning purposes throughout the academic year
- Effectively use supervision in the development of practice knowledge and skills
- Systematically record a portion of their work either by process, audio, or video recording as determined by the field instructor and faculty liaison
- Work with a variety of clients and problem situations
- Work with at least four client experiences per week, i.e., leading a group of incest survivors, working with a troubled teenager and his/her family, enabling elderly clients to maintain themselves in their own home through contacts with community-based services

### The Student

Each student carries professional responsibility for providing service in accordance with the ethics of the profession and the policies of the agency or organization and the School of Social Work. All students are expected to develop professional discipline, identification with the social work role, and professional competence in carrying out this role. It is particularly incumbent upon the IP clinician to develop the ability to critically examine the impact of his/her service activity upon the client and to demonstrate a capacity for self-awareness and self-discipline in the therapeutic use of self.

Interpersonal practice students are expected to develop skills in assessing, designing, and implementing appropriate intervention strategies for a variety of situations and client systems. IP students are expected to learn to conceptualize their activities in consideration of a culturally informed framework that includes the bio-psycho-social functioning of the client and the realities of the community influencing client functioning and service delivery. Within a framework of empowerment, the strength's perspective, and social justice, IP students should consider issues of diversity such as ethnicity/race, gender, socio-economic status, religion, physical abilities, and sexual orientation and be prepared to advocate and broker accordingly. In summary, IP students are expected to be active participants in the development of their professional capacities while understanding that the School and their field agency are partners with them in this endeavor.

### Field Hours

**The School of Social Work requires that M.S.W. interpersonal practice (IP) concentration students complete a minimum of 472 total hours per academic year. M.S.W. student pursuing the school social work certificate must complete a minimum of 500 hours. Advanced standing students complete 96 hours of field during Summer II semester in addition to 500 hours required during fall and spring semesters. Thus, all advanced standing students will complete a total of 596 hours of field during the three-semester placement.**

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.