Overview of Interpersonal Practice Concentration

Interpersonal Practice Concentration Goals and Objectives

Interpersonal Practice Concentration Outcomes

Interpersonal Practice Concentration Field Placement Goals and Objectives
  • The Student
  • The Field Hours
  • Employed Students
  • The Learning Contract/Evaluation
  • Field Seminars
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 IP committee, a subcommittee of the curriculum committee. The IP committee is composed of faculty members who have teaching assignments in the IP curriculum. Student members serve on the IP committee on an ad hoc basis. The IP coordinator administers the IP program and chairs its committee meetings.

INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE CONCENTRATION OUTCOMES

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 objectives 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 MSW interpersonal practice (IP) concentration students complete a minimum of 472 total hours per academic year. MSW student pursuing the school social work certificate must complete a minimum of 500 hours. Advanced standing students also complete 500 hours required during fall and spring semesters._
MSW field placements (with the exception of advanced standing students) occur during the Fall and Spring semesters only. Advanced standing placements occur during Summer II, Fall, and Spring semester. 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). 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.

If, at the end of the semester/session, a student more than 16 hours short of the required number of hours, the following steps must be taken:

1. The faculty liaison should issue a grade of incomplete for the semester/session (which is replaced by the liaison at the completion of the hours).
2. The student must submit a written plan signed by the field instructor, the student, and the faculty liaison addressing how and by when field hours will be completed.

If a student is requesting to attend their field placements between semesters or beyond the final semester of field for educational reasons, the following steps must be taken:

1. The student must file a Field Extension Request with the Field Coordinator following the format in appendix D.6 of the field manual to ensure coverage for the student under the university liability insurance policy.
2. The Field Coordinator forwards the request to the university business office and files a copy in the field office.

During extensions of a field placement, the Field Coordinator or the Assistant to the Field Coordinator will serve as the faculty liaison for the student and the agency unless other arrangements are made with the faculty liaison.

_Employed Students_

Students who are employed need to be particularly aware that they must be able to commit the requisite number of field hours per work week to their field placement. Completing the field placement is a big commitment and requires upfront planning by the student and his/her employer. Students should start working with their employers early on to develop a plan to change their work schedule by either modifying their schedule during the week or utilizing vacation time so that the field hours can be accomplished during the work week. Field placement agencies that are able to provide learning opportunities and supervision for a student in the evenings and on the weekends are limited.

Employed students may want to consult with their field instructor and faculty liaison regarding stretching their field hours beyond the semesters they are registered for. See
Field Hours sub-section under the BSW and MSW sections regarding extensions in the field placement.

**THE LEARNING CONTRACT/ EVALUATION**

The learning contract and student evaluation are contained in one document. (See appendix F). The learning contract is a plan for the field experience, which allows the student, the field instructor and the faculty liaison to focus on the knowledge, values, and practice behaviors necessary for the student to develop competency as a social worker.

The learning contract/evaluation are designed as a single working document to be added to as needed throughout the duration of the placement. The final page contains lines for the required signatures when the learning contract is written, as well as at the end of each semester when the evaluation components of the document are completed. All persons involved with the field placement need to sign the learning contract including the student, primary field instructor (and secondary if appropriate), and the faculty liaison. **All parties should keep a copy of this document each time it is signed.** The student's signature on the evaluation line means only that s/he has read the document, but does not necessarily connote agreement. Cooperation of the field instructor in completing these forms by the deadline is extremely important as the student will receive a grade of incomplete if the form is late.

The level of field placement should be identified in the learning contract/evaluation as well as the concentration if applicable. Contact information for all parties should be included, i.e. student, faculty liaison, primary and secondary field instructor/s.

Each learning contract/evaluation contains the Ten Core Competencies identified by the CSWE as necessary for social workers to be able to demonstrate:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Under each competency, a minimum of practice behaviors are listed on the learning contract/evaluation. Each practice behavior listed should be demonstrated by the student via an activity or product specific to their placement. Additional practice behaviors and/or activities or products may be added if approved by the field liaison. Any behavior or agency expectation which will be evaluated by the field instructor that is not already a part of the evaluation form, should be added such as: confidentiality, computer use, record keeping, policy and procedures, dress code, and any other substantive requirements or expectations of the agency.
The activities or products that demonstrate competencies should include areas of professional and interpersonal skill development, such as appropriate use of confrontation, supervision, self-awareness, and boundary development. Student attitude toward placement, clients and the student's level of comfort/discomfort should be areas to explore during placement. The student should identify any particular limitations or skills related to specialized interests as areas of potential growth.

The student should identify specific opportunities at the agency they will be involved in, e.g. work with groups, and community resources. These assignments may be those required by the faculty liaison, those related to the student's interests, and/or those requested by the field instructor. The safety check list and how the student will incorporate safety into their practice must be included in this section.

In writing the learning contract/evaluation, students should give consideration to the type of agency, the needs of the clients served, agency limitations and boundaries, and what the community needs from this agency. In addition, the student's learning style and the field instructor's teaching approach will need to be taken into consideration. Students use this learning opportunity to stretch themselves professionally and create goals that will take them beyond their current knowledge base and push them into new areas of professional experience. Students should note the on-going use of the NASW Code of Ethics as the guide for the development of their value and skill base.

Special attention should be devoted to the student's understanding of oppression and discrimination and the development of advocacy skills to promote economic and social justice.

Additional Information
The writing of the contract will reflect standards appropriate to the college level. Spelling, clarity, and conciseness are important considerations.

Field Seminars
MSW concentration students also participate in three (3) seminars which are scheduled by the faculty liaison during the concentration-year field placement. Students are required to attend 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.