

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY



Department of **Social Work**

Program Commitments and Competencies

Introduction

This booklet describes the Humboldt State University Department of Social Work's context and commitments. We intentionally state our department *purpose* rather than mission because of the painful effects so-called "missions" have had on Indigenous Peoples here in California—where our programs are based—and throughout the world—where our programs reach.

We acknowledge the Wiyot people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which the Humboldt State University Department of Social Work stands. We also pay respect to the Chilula, Hupa, Karuk, Mattole, Tolowa, Tsenungway, Wiyot, and Yurok elders both past and present, and extend that respect to other Tribal communities on the North Coast and in the northern California region.

In consultation with Tribal communities, our program curriculum maintains an emphasis on working with Indigenous and other rural peoples and is designed to assist our students to engage in "decolonizing social work," which refers to (1) recognizing that most social work practice approaches and theories in the United States have been developed from Western-European paradigms that, in many cases, are not relevant to, or supportive of, Indigenous Peoples' values, beliefs, culture, and rights; (2) privileging and actively supporting the sovereignty, well-being, and cultural, spiritual, and land rights of Indigenous Peoples; and (3) working with Indigenous communities to implement traditional practices and philosophies in a contemporary context for the purposes of healing and empowerment of the community.

This booklet also describes the Humboldt State University Department of Social Work's *Program Competencies and Behaviors*. These are the outcomes all students should be able to demonstrate as professional social workers and are used for curriculum development, field education activities, and student/program assessment purposes. A glossary is included for words, phrases, and concepts that may not be familiar to all social workers.

The Council on Social Work Education—the sole accrediting body for social work education programs—states that the purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being through commitments to social, environmental, and economic justice; the prevention of conditions that limit human rights; the elimination of poverty; and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally.

The information in the following pages describes the Humboldt State University Department of Social Work's program commitments and competencies. Our fidelity to these standards maintains our program accreditation and strengthens our work as educators and community partners.

Purpose, Vision, Values, & Culture

Purpose

The purpose of the Department of Social Work at Humboldt State University is to:

- Provide high quality educational programs that promote excellence in the social work profession.
- Engage with tribal, academic, and professional communities to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, and enhance the physical and natural environments within which people live, with particular emphasis on rural Northwestern California.
- Offer students and community members opportunities to develop skills, leadership capacity, knowledge, practices, and methodologies for fostering change; bringing about social justice, environmental justice, and economic justice; and addressing and healing the ongoing effects of colonization.

Vision

The Department faculty, staff and students are viewed and utilized as highly skilled, innovative, creative, competent, and collaborative social work partners. Our reputation, activities, and partnerships attract students and other constituents from local, state, tribal, national, and international contexts. The Department actively contributes to making social work a liberatory profession and the world a more just place.

Values

- Academic Rigor
- Accessibility
- Compassion
- Criticality
- Excellence
- Professional Development

Culture

We strive to create a departmental culture for students, staff, and faculty that is characterized by:

- **Transparency**—In decision making, distribution of resources, staffing, special projects, administration, etc.
- **Mindfulness**—Thoughtful, centered speech and action.
- **Inclusiveness**—Embracing differences in background, experience, expertise, ideas, and perspectives.
- **Supportive Workplace Climate**—Mutual respectfulness, support, appreciation, and acknowledgment of each person's contributions, including humor and playfulness.
- **Culture of Inquiry**—Suspension of judgment, listening to learn.
- **Congruence**—Clear, direct, respectful communication; consistency between talk and action, including caring, respectful, mutually supportive behavior.
- **Sustainability**—Prioritizing long-term sustainability over short-term benefit; collective good over personal agendas.

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Competencies and Behaviors

Competency 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 at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

- 1.1 **Make ethical decisions** by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, **ethical conduct** of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
- 1.2 **Use reflection** and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- 1.3 **Demonstrate professional** demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- 1.4 **Use technology ethically** and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes;
- 1.5 **Use supervision and consultation** to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice.

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences 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 workers:

- 2.1 Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of **diversity and difference** in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- 2.2 **Present themselves as learners** and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- 2.3 **Apply self-awareness and self-regulation** to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

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

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society 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 workers:

- 3.1 Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to **advocate for human rights** at the individual and system levels; and
- 3.2 Engage in practices that **advance social, economic, and environmental justice.**

Competency 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 workers:

- 4.1 Use practice experience and theory **to inform scientific inquiry** and research;
- 4.2 **Apply critical thinking** to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings;
- 4.3 Use and **translate research evidence** to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

Competency 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 at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

- 5.1 **Identify social policy** at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
- 5.2 **Assess** how social welfare and economic **policies impact** the delivery of and access to social services;
- 5.3 **Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate** for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Social workers understand that engagement 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 value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- 6.1 **Apply knowledge** of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary **theoretical frameworks** to engage with clients and constituencies;
- 6.2 **Use empathy**, reflection, and **interpersonal skills** to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Social workers understand that assessment 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 understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

- 7.1 **Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking** to interpret information from clients and constituencies;

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7.2 Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the **analysis of assessment data** from clients and constituencies;

7.3 **Develop** mutually agreed-on intervention **goals and objectives** based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies

7.4 **Select appropriate intervention strategies** based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Social workers understand that intervention 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 are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

8.1 Critically choose and **implement interventions** to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;

8.2 **Apply** knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary **theoretical frameworks** in interventions with clients and constituencies;

8.3 **Use inter-professional collaboration** as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;

8.4 **Negotiate, mediate, and advocate** with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and

8.5 Facilitate effective **transitions and endings** that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

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

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 recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- 9.1 **Select and use appropriate methods** for evaluation of outcomes;
- 9.2 **Apply** knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other **multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks** in the evaluation of outcomes;
- 9.3 Critically **analyze, monitor, and evaluate** intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- 9.4 **Apply evaluation findings** to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

MSW Advanced Generalist Year *Competencies and Behaviors*

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior.

Advanced generalist students learn to critique ethical principles with in complex environments. Model conscious use of self, exercise leadership roles, model integration and internalization of professional standards, and take initiatives in developing necessary alliances to advocate effectively for change

- 1.1. **Make ethical decisions** by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, IFSW/ IASSW ethical principles, and/or other social work ethical codes, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, and **ethical conduct** of research consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 1.2. **Use critical reflection** and mindfulness to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 1.3. **Demonstrate professional** roles, relationships, responsibilities, and boundaries in **behavior** and appearance, including oral, written, and electronic communication consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 1.4. **Use technology ethically** and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 1.5. **Use supervision** and **consultation** to guide professional judgment and behavior consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice.

Advanced generalist students learn to take on leadership roles that generate and support structures that empower people and mitigate forces that oppress, marginalize, alienate or create or enhance privilege and power. They promote collaboration and demonstrate the importance of difference.

- 2.1. Apply and communicate **understanding** of the importance of **diversity, ntersectionality, and difference** in shaping life experiences in practice across ecosystemic contexts consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 2.2. Present as learners who engage people as experts of their own experiences and **practice cultural humility** consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 2.3. **Apply awareness of power, privilege, and marginalization** to reduce the influence of personal biases and values in working with people consistent with advanced generalist practice

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

Advanced generalist students learn to work collaboratively with communities and across disciplines to design implement and interpret social work research.

- 3.1. Apply understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to **advocate for human rights, including Indigenous Peoples Rights**, at individual and system levels consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 3.2. Engage in practices that **advance Indigenous sovereignty; social, economic, and environmental justice** consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice.

- 4.1. Use practice experience and theory to **inform scientific inquiry and research** including Indigenous research methods consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 4.2. Apply critical thinking to **engage in analysis** of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 4.3. Use and **translate research evidence** to inform and improve practice, policy, programs, and services consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice.

Advanced generalist students learn to provide leadership in developing opportunities to conduct nuanced analysis, formulate collaboratively, and advocate with colleagues, clients, and agencies for policy change.

- 5.1. **Identify social policy** at the local, state, Tribal, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 5.2. **Assess** how social, environmental, and economic **policies** affect well-being, service delivery, and access to social services consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 5.3. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and **advocate for policies** that advance human rights, Indigenous sovereignty, and social, economic, and environmental justice consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Advanced generalist students learn to initiate actions to partner with clients from an empowerment perspective using interpersonal skills that challenge contexts and have rich knowledge of how experiences and histories shape various systems (i.e., individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities). Increased skills at community-based work, advanced knowledge of policies, legal and political systems in order to build stronger advocacy skills are taught to strengthen students' commitment for coalition building and community organizing.

- 6.1. **Apply knowledge** of human behavior and social environments, decolonization, relational worldviews, multilogical perspectives, and other **relevant theoretical frameworks** to engage with people and place consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 6.2. **Use empathy, critical reflection, and interpersonal skills** to engage with people and place consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Advanced generalist students learn to differentially, collaboratively, and autonomously, apply appropriate culturally relevant assessment frameworks to form multi-systemic assessment and develop intervention strategies across client systems that reflect strength based culturally relevant empowered oriented and globally aware approaches.

71. Collaborate with constituencies to **collect, organize, interpret, and critically reflect** on information consistent with advanced generalist practice
72. Apply knowledge of human behavior and social environments, decolonization, relational worldviews, multilogical perspectives, and other relevant theoretical frameworks in **the analysis of assessment data** consistent with advanced generalist practice
73. **Develop** mutually agreed upon intervention **goals and objectives** based on the assessment of strengths, needs, challenges, and barriers consistent with advanced generalist practice
74. **Select intervention strategies** based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of people and communities consistent with advanced generalist practice

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

Advanced generalist students learn to be skilled to handle more complex situations in practice across fields of practice; mental health, child welfare, wellness and sustainability across multiple systems of care to benefit individuals, families and communities impacted by a combination of these social issues

- 8.1. **Implement interventions** to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of people and communities consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 8.2. **Apply** knowledge of human behavior and social environments, decolonization, relational worldviews, multilogical perspectives, and other **relevant theoretical frameworks in interventions** consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 8.3. **Use inter-professional collaboration** as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 8.4. Support people and communities to **negotiate, mediate, and advocate** with institutions consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 8.5. **Facilitate** effective **transitions** and **endings** that advance mutually agreed upon goals consistent with advanced generalist practice

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

Advanced generalist students learn to evaluate more complex situations in practice across fields of practice; mental health, child welfare, wellness and sustainability across multiple systems of care to benefit individuals, families and communities impacted by a combination of these social issues.

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- 9.1. **Select and use methods for evaluation** of outcomes in collaboration with people and communities consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 9.2. **Apply** knowledge of human behavior and social environments, decolonization, relational worldviews, multilogical perspectives, and other relevant **theoretical frameworks in the evaluation** of outcomes consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 9.3. Collaboratively **analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention** and program processes and outcomes consistent with advanced generalist practice
- 9.4. **Apply evaluation findings** to improve practice effectiveness across ecosystemic contexts consistent with advanced generalist practice

Glossary

Advanced generalist practice refers to innovation, leadership, insight, and respect in social work across multiple fields of practice and multiple system levels (i.e., individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Humboldt State's MSW program embraces an advanced generalist conceptualization because we believe this best describes the orientation necessary for effective work in rural and Indigenous Communities. Social workers must engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate in collaboration with people to make sense of distress and build on existing strengths in rural and Indigenous Communities. Advanced generalists perform complex roles and have rich knowledge of how experiences and histories shape various systems (i.e., individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities). They are also acutely and reflectively aware of their own position in broader contexts and how this interacts with their practice.

Critical reflection involves deep exploration of our pre-existing beliefs and how they are influencing our interpretation of the meaning of an experience. The focus of critical reflection is to reveal hidden power dynamics and how they influence the way we think about the experience. Critical reflection is less interested in "how" we act or react in a given situation than it is in uncovering the thought process behind "why" we act that way.

Adapted from Stephen Brookfield, "The concept of critically reflective practice," in *Handbook of adult and continuing education*, edited by A. Wilson & B. Hayes, 2000; John Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*, 1990; and Edward Taylor & Patricia Cranton, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2012.

Decolonization is a process of understanding that before European powers set to confront Indigenous peoples where we/they lived since time immemorial, we/they were free and had absolute authority over our/their lives, we/they were born into and lived in a universe which was entirely of our/their own. This process also asks us to understand the extent to which colonization has and continues to oppress people's spirit, body, and mind along with the impact of colonization on our past, our present, and our future. Finally, it urges us to develop skills, knowledges, strategies and technologies to resist colonialism (historical and modern) in all its forms and expressions.

Ecosystemic contexts refers to a perspective on thinking and organizing knowledge that emphasizes the interrelatedness and interdependency between individuals and social systems (e.g., families, groups, organizations, communities, societies). The social worker's focus expands from what takes place within systems to include what goes on between them. From this point of view, development is a continuous process of adaptation and accommodation between individuals and their environments. That is, human development does not happen in a vacuum but, rather, is the product of continuous transactions between individuals and the physical, social, class, and cultural environments in which they grow.

Adapted from Carel Germain & Alex Gitterman, "Ecological perspective," in *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, edited by A. Minahan, 1987; Magaly Queral, *The Social Environment and Human Behavior: A Diversity Perspective*, 1996.

Indigenous and rural communities refers to social work practice with people who originate or occur naturally in and are native to a particular place. This includes social work that is practiced in isolated communities with limited access to specialty services and resources all of which often contribute to more complex challenges than those of their counterparts in urban cities

Intersectionality is a framework for social justice that starts with the understanding that our identities are socially constructed and exist at the intersection of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. These parts exist simultaneously. Our experiences of race affect our experience of gender; our experiences of class affect our experience of ability. Systems of power, privilege and oppression reinforce each other, overlap and intersect; they do not function independently of each other. Forms of resistance, activism and advocacy must be intersectional in order to address the cumulative effects of these systems. As a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. The framework of intersectionality was developed by women of color in the 1970s; the term intersectionality theory was first coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality helps make visible the complexity that shapes our experiences.

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Multilogical perspectives seek to understand new frames of reference as a result of recognizing that there are many ways of being in the world, many vantage points and that one perspective is not more legitimate or deserving of privilege than another.

NASW Code of Ethics, IFSW/IASSW ethical principles refers to those principles established by the National Association of Social Workers, International Federation of Social Workers, and International Association of Schools of Social Work.

Scientific inquiry and research are systematic processes through which students develop and discover knowledge and use this knowledge to solve problems and inform social work practice. Scientific inquiry and research can include gathering new knowledge through surveys, interviews and focus groups. Additionally, scientific inquiry can also include gathering previous knowledge from sources such as literature and documents.

Department of
Social Work

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