

Advanced (Specialization) Competencies Second Year

v. Advanced Culturally Competent Social Work Practice in Aging

Advanced practice and specialization in aging requires *knowledge* of intra- and inter-group diversity as it relates to aging and late-life outcomes. This cultural competence is applied to effective intervention with older adults and their families, as well as to aging programs and policies.

5.1 Understand and direct the ways one's own values and biases regarding aging impact professional practice and ethical work with older clients, their families, and the provision of aging health and mental health services.

5.2 Integrate into the practice of social work an understanding of the life experiences and unique needs of older adults belonging to specific racial, ethnic, socioeconomic groups; of men and women; and of those with different sexual orientations.

5.3 Incorporate into treatment and service planning the relationship of race, ethnicity, and culture on health status, health belief, help-seeking behaviors, health practice (i.e., traditional medicine), and health outcomes. Include knowledge of:

- a. immigration and its impact on service use;
- b. acculturation /assimilation.

5.4 Intervene in elder mistreatment from a system's perspective and within context of the family, legal, and service delivery system.

5.5 Intervene sensitively and according to professional ethics to assist older adults and families who have diverse cultural, spiritual, and ethnic values and beliefs, including:

- a. different cultural perspectives, functional roles and contributions the elderly generation make in society;
- b. the areas of death & dying, hospice and palliative care, help-seeking, caregiving & family responsibility, physical & mental illness, and cognitive impairment; and
- c. work with translators and understand language/terminology unique or specific to diverse linguistic groups

5.6 Develop strategies to change policies, regulations, and programs to improve the well-being of older adults and their caregivers, particularly historically underserved groups.

VI. Advanced Practice with Older Adults

Specialization involves applied knowledge of *complex situations* and skills to making differential diagnosis and intervention with and on behalf of older adults. It involves an advanced level of professional and ethical practice in complex and challenging circumstances.

6.1 Engage, maintain rapport, and sustain effective working relationships with a wide range of older adults (including those with behavior problems, mental illness and dementia) and their family and caregivers.

6.2 Conduct a comprehensive geriatric assessment of psychosocial factors that affect older persons' physical and mental well-being.

6.3 Identify ways to ascertain the health status and physical functioning (e.g., ADLs and IADLs) of the older adult in order to provide assistance.

6.4 Conduct differential mental health diagnosis regarding dementia, delirium, depression with the interdisciplinary team and using diagnostic tools that are appropriate for use with older adults (e.g., depression scale, Mini-Mental Status Exam).

6.5 Design and implement service plans to help older people and their families manage/improve functioning with cognitive loss or mental health problems (e.g., depression, dementia, and delirium), health issues, and/or physical functioning.

6.6 Develop and implement service plans to assist older adults with health issues and difficulties in physical functioning.

6.7 Apply social work ethical principles to *decisions* on behalf of all older adult clients with special attention to those who have limited decisional capacity including:

- a. complex situations in which self-determination and dignity are challenged or inconsistent with safety and legal concerns;
- b. reporting and intervening with elder mistreatment such as neglect and abuse; and
- c. reporting and intervening with those in danger to self or others.

6.8 Develop and institutionalize educational interventions to enhance older persons' coping capacities and mental health.

6.9 Conduct assessment and intervention strategies for substance/drug/alcohol abuse in later life.

6.10 Educate families and others to improve communication with older people in light of sensory, speech, and cognitive limitations of older adults.

6.11 Provide comprehensive geriatric social work case management to link elders and their families to resources and services to assist them with multi-faceted problems and provide long-term care planning.

6.12 Intervene to assist individuals and families dealing with complex end of life issues regarding death, dying, bereavement, and loss.

6.13 Demonstrate collaboration skills and leadership with other disciplines in geriatric interdisciplinary practice with older adults, their caregivers, and in a variety of service setting including public social services, adult protection, advocates, rehabilitation services, Adult Day Health Care, and Hospice/Palliative Care.

6.14 Utilize family interventions with older adults and their families (e.g., promote safety, restore relationships) in order to assist caregivers to reduce their stress levels, maintain their own mental and physical health and promote better care of the elder.

6.15 Mediate situations with problem behaviors including angry or hostile older adults and/or family members.

6.16 Reevaluate and adjust service or care plans for older adults on a continuing basis.

6.17 Promote the well-being of older adults by actively campaigning for better services and policies.

6.18 Evaluate and conduct research into the effectiveness of practice and programs in achieving intended outcomes for older adults.

VII. Advanced Perspectives on Aging, Human Behavior and the Social Environment

Theories of human behavior and development relevant to social work practice require application to assessment, planning and interventions with older adults at the advanced level.

7.1 Apply concepts, theories, and research of biological, psychological, and social aging to social work assessment and intervention.

7.2 Understand the effects and interactions of multiple chronic conditions, medication, nutrition, and sudden or on-going causes of changes in cognitive states and functional capacity.

7.3 Relate social work perspectives and theories to practice with older adults (e.g., person-in environment, social justice, strengths-based perspective).

7.4 Design and conduct interventions related to losses, changes and transitions over the life cycle with particular attention to:

- a. the process of grief
- b. differentiation of grief from clinical symptoms of depression;
- c. management of chronic illness and social functioning;
- d. knowing the impact of change of residence.

7.5 Develop intervention based on the stages in the late life-family and intergenerational roles and interaction.

- a. Integrate understanding of caretaker's behavior (current and historical) that leads to engagement, withdrawal, disempowerment or empowerment of elderly relative.
- b. Support the multiple types of grandparent roles.
- c. Build interventions around cultural strengths and challenges in the intergenerational family.
- d. Recognize and support the diversity of family including same sex families, step-families, grandparent-headed families and other family types.

VIII. Advanced Aging Social Welfare Policy and Administration

Application of knowledge of policies to planning programs and changing institutions for the benefit of older adults and their families is part of advanced practice and specialization.

8.1 Assure appropriate access, utilization, continuity, coordination, and monitoring of the continuum of public resources for older persons including community-based care, residential care, nursing home, and health/mental health services.

8.2 Assess and address impacts of social and health care policies on practice with historically disadvantaged populations.

8.3 Develop program budgets that take into account diverse sources of financial support for older adult services.

8.4 Develop strategies to address service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact older persons, including intergenerational approaches.

8.5 Develop strategies to improve laws and public policies related to older adults and to encourage compliance with them, including elder abuse reporting, legal guardianship, durable powers of attorney, wills, advance directives, and Do-Not-Resuscitate orders.

8.6 Collaborate with service providers, community organizations, policy makers, and the public to address and advocate for the needs and issues of a growing aging population.

8.7 Engage older adults actively in planning and designing programs.

8.8 Adapt organizational policies, procedures, and resources to facilitate the provision of services to diverse older adults and their family caregivers.

- a. Contribute to the development of policies covering work site inspections and safety regulations that would apply to special needs of elderly such as special provisions made for the handicapped.
- b. Advocate for the development of new roles and new options in work settings for elders, such as, specialist, consultant, part time work, and flexibility in hours.

8.9 Evaluate and participate in continuous quality improvement to ensure the effectiveness of programs in achieving intended outcomes for older adults.

Reference

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Damron-Rodriguez, J.A. (in Press). Moving ahead: Developing geriatric social work competencies. In B. Berkman, et al. (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Social Work and Aging*. Oxford University Press.