

## CalSWEC Aging Practice Definition and Curriculum Principles

### PRACTICE DEFINITION

CalSWEC AI chooses the term, “Aging Competencies” to indicate that practice with older adults encompasses both geriatric and gerontological social work. CalSWEC adopts the definition of aging social work practice articulated by the U.S. Bureau of Health Professions in the Geriatric Social Work White Paper (Berkman, Dobrof, Damron-Rodriguez, and Harry, 1997). This definition of social work with older adults was modified from the National Association of Social Worker’s Standards for Classification of Social Work Practice to focus on older adults.

Professionally responsible intervention to 1) enhance the developmental, problem solving, and coping capacities of *older people and their families*; 2) promote the effective and humane operating of systems that provide resources and services to *older people and their families*; 3) link *older people* with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities; and 4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policies *that support persons throughout the lifespan*. (Italics are words added to focus on aging)

This definition of aging social work encompasses direct practice, community organization, and policy levels of social work, thus aiming at skills required to work with older adults at both the micro and macro levels of practice. This definition is both gerontological practice with an emphasis on late life growth and development, as well as geriatrically grounded practice to meet the needs of older adults for health, mental health, and human services.

### CURRICULUM PRINCIPLES

1. The goal of services for older people is to maintain independence; optimize physical, psychological, and social functioning; and maximize the quality of life.
2. Services for older persons should be guided by the individual’s goals, strengths, needs, and concerns, with appreciation for the interconnectedness among physical, psychological, and social aspects of well-being.
3. Family relationships should be respected and fostered, with the goal of strengthening reciprocal bonds, enabling family care over time, and preventing undue hardship.
4. The growing diversity of the older population in ethnicity, language, culture, and immigration status must be reflected in culturally competent staff and program design.
5. Racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination influence the opportunities of individuals over the life course and systems of care for older people must address the needs of those who have been marginalized or disadvantaged during their lives.
6. Older persons have the right to live in their homes and communities as long as possible supported by community services.
7. Older persons whose cognitive capacity is diminished should be provided with legally mandated, humane, and protective services from family or public systems.
8. Services across a full continuum should be available, accessible, coordinated, timely, and effective.