

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The ability to engage in effective, advanced, social work practice requires the application of abilities in the areas of valuing a diverse world, integrating values and ethics, advocating for social justice, succeeding in the world of work, critical thinking, communication, and professional use of self. It also involves the capacity to engage, assess, plan, intervene, and evaluate.

Graduates of the master's program at MSASS are advanced practitioners in a social work environment that is undergoing major transformation. In part, these changes reflect external forces, such as devolution, privatization, welfare reform, and managed care. They also reflect the creative efforts of social workers themselves to redesign services and reshape practice to make services less fragmented and reactive, more comprehensive, integrated, flexible, and responsive.

Social work in this environment requires a revitalization of the profession's tradition of community-oriented practice. Social workers need to analyze and apply knowledge of bio-psycho-social variables that affect individual development and behavior. But they also need to understand and intervene in the patterns of interaction that generate or perpetuate problems involving multiple system levels (such as family, neighbors, school, and social service or justice systems). Community-based social work practice sees lasting solutions to problems as arising from the strengths of the community and culture of the individuals and families concerned. It recognizes that clients are involved in larger patterns of formal and informal helping that may involve social networks including family, church or temple, friends, neighbors, or community organizations as well as other professionals. Social work practice sees itself as one part of this larger pattern of helping, its effectiveness depending on how the whole pattern works to ensure that individual, family, and community needs are met. Social workers intervene at all levels, with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, with the aim of building partnerships with those involved to strengthen the caring capacity of communities as they work to resolve issues of immediate concern.

Community-based social work practice:

- Embraces an inclusive definition of community
- Values community as process
- Views the individual in the context of a pattern of relationships that includes family, groups, organizations, and communities
- Integrates community and individual practice
- Builds interventions on the strengths and assets of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Emphasizes participation, teamwork, collaboration, and partnerships at all levels
- Recognizes that comprehensive interventions are shaped by all interactions and exchanges within the social ecology
- Involves interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches
- Facilitates empowerment through a reciprocal, educational process of lifelong learning
- Encourages innovation and improvement of services.

These principles are elaborated in the statement on Community-Based Practice adopted by the faculty in April 1999.

Graduates of the MSASS master's program are prepared to apply these principles as they function as advanced practitioners in a changing area of social work and social welfare. Community-based practice offers principles and a perspective that are applicable both in generalist practice and in advanced practice with a specific population, social problem, or level of intervention.

Integrating all the other core abilities necessary for effective social work practice, Mandel School graduates are able to assess problems, weigh intervention alternatives, implement change strategies, and evaluate results. They are advanced practitioners who draw upon their knowledge of theory, research, policy, and practice in an area of concentration in order to be effective change agents in community-based efforts with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities of various kinds.

The ability Social Work Practice, *in addition to involving integration of all the other core abilities*, is here broken down into knowledge, skills, and values to be learned at the foundation and advanced levels of the master's curriculum.

Foundation Level

Knowledge: critically analyzes and applies knowledge of bio-psycho-social variables that affect individual development and behavior. Analyzes and applies theoretical frameworks for understanding patterns of relationship among individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Evaluates research relevant to practice situations and applies findings.

Values: awareness of and initial commitment to the principles of community-based practice. Values the strengths and assets of the individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and cultures involved in practice situations. Values teamwork, partnership, and collaboration in practice that promotes social justice and empowerment in communities.

Skills: is able to identify and define problems and issues relevant to client systems at multiple levels. Is able to collect and assess data relevant to the identified problems or issues, including a community resources/assets assessment. Can plan and contract with clients. Is able to identify alternative interventions at various system levels, implement a plan of intervention from an empowerment and strengths perspective for populations-at-risk, terminate, and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Is able to organize, conduct and evaluate interviews with clients and client systems for the purpose of gathering information and analyzing problems and strengths. Can conduct basic screening procedures including, but not limited to genograms, eco-maps and social network maps. Applies screening and interview information to assessment and goal planning efforts with and on behalf of clients and client systems. Can present information on confidentiality and issues related to decision making and client rights.

Advanced Level

Knowledge: Synthesizes and applies a broad range of practice knowledge from prevalent contemporary theoretical perspectives on intervention in an area of concentration.

Values: Is committed to using own advanced practice knowledge and skills to promote social justice and empowerment in communities. Brings commitment to community-based practice principles to bear on assessment and intervention at all system levels. Values clients and other community members as contributors to resolution to their own concerns and those of their community, and as partners in the design, delivery, and oversight of services.

Skills: Demonstrates skills of advanced, community-based social work practice in an area of concentration. Applies research findings to practice and demonstrates own research skills. Empirically evaluates own practice and the interventions of others.