

## Eight Abilities

Approved by MSASS Faculty, May 15, 2000

### ABILITY STATEMENT

- 1. INTENTIONALLY USE YOURSELF:** Students will demonstrate awareness of self, ability to use self professionally in achieving social work goals, and capacity to gauge the impact of self on practice.

Learning a set of skills and techniques is vital to social work as in other fields, but the professional social worker blends those techniques with a heightened awareness of human dynamics. Social workers do not necessarily utilize the sophisticated tools of our late century as much as they use a keen sense of self as a major tool.

The professional social worker serves as a role model, a guide, a coach, an advocate and/or a partner with client systems and, therefore, needs to understand strengths and weaknesses in each of those roles. Professional social workers need to possess the humility to recognize weaknesses as well as the confidence to utilize strengths. Social workers must seek out opportunities for personal and professional growth, understanding that only through that growth will they be able to assist on an ever-broadening range.

#### **Foundation Level:**

*Knowledge:* possesses awareness of own strengths and weaknesses; knowledgeable of the factors necessary in achieving a balance between work and personal issues in life; understands the need to place client/community needs over one's own; is able to recognize personal growth and skill and possesses confidence to initiate use of those skills.

*Values:* appreciates the need for and value of leading an integrated personal and professional life; committed to focusing on ways to enhance strengths and improve skills; identifies with the profession—can articulate and practice within a coherent and consistent value system; appreciates constructive criticism.

*Skills:* is flexible and adaptable in assuming various social work roles as they relate to needs of clients, systems, or communities; can effectively cope with change; is able to ask for feedback from supervisors; distinguishes need for and appropriately uses self-disclosure.

#### **Advanced Level:**

*Knowledge:* primarily outer-focused; understands own personal biases, judgments, and prejudices and is aware of how those impact work with clients or client systems; able to gauge this impact on others and adjust accordingly; possesses the ability to know when it is time to refer client elsewhere, obtain a consultation, or terminate.

*Values:* is committed to mentoring new professionals; is respectful of the mutual impact of the change process on the worker and the client; recognized the contributions of other's skills, knowledge, values and resources in the change process.

*Skills:* is able to accommodate own needs, strengths and weaknesses to the organizational structure; manages authority relationships in a professional manner; can identify and modify personal and professional barriers to effective practice.

**2. APPLY SOCIAL WORK METHODS:** Graduates of the MSASS master's program are prepared to function as advanced practitioners in a changing area of social work and social welfare. They demonstrate 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, communications, and professional use of self. They are able to assess problems, weigh intervention alternatives, implement change strategies, and evaluate results. Mandel School graduates are able to draw upon the knowledge of theory, research, policy, and practice in order to be effective change agents in community-based efforts with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities of various kinds.

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**

At the advanced level, MSASS students select a concentration in community and social development, or direct practice, and students in direct practice further specialize in a field of practice such as children, youth and families; mental health; aging; health, or substance abuse.

Students concentrating in Direct Practice develop advanced skills in problem identification, screening, assessment and intervention for work with a selected population. Students also gain advanced knowledge of the policies and service delivery system relevant for their area of specialization.

Students concentrating in Community and Social Development develop advanced skills in organizing, planning, development, policy analysis, advocacy, and research and evaluation, to strengthen and empower communities to bring about social change.

*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.

**3. INTEGRATE SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND ETHICS:** Students will integrate social work values and ethics into every aspect of their learning and preparation for advanced professional practice.

A historic and defining feature of social work is its focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Thus, its mission is rooted in a set of core values that are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. These values are: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These core values are reflected in the NASW Code of Ethics, which establishes a set of specific ethical standards to guide social work practice. The focus of the ability, Integrating Social Work Ethics and Values, is to enable students to understand the process of ethical decision making. Ethical responsibilities flow from all human relationships; specific applications of the code must take into account social, professional, and personal context. Reasonable differences of opinion may exist among social workers with respect to the ways in which values, ethical principles and ethical standards should be rank-ordered when they conflict. In a given situation, social workers must apply informed judgment and consciousness of the ethical standards of the profession to make decisions and actions that are consistent with the spirit and letter of the Code of Ethics. Social work ethical behavior will result from student's personal commitment to uphold the profession's values and act ethically.

**Foundation Level**

- A. Understands and is committed to the mission of social work: enhancing human well-being and helping meet basic human needs of all people, client empowerment, service to people who are vulnerable and oppressed, focus on individual well-being in a social context, promotion of social justice and social change, and sensitivity to cultural and ethnic diversity.

*Knowledge:* understands the basis of social work from micro and macro points of view; understands social work values and ethical principles; is cognizant of the limits of confidentiality to clients; knows the requirements of informed consent; understands the vagaries of self determination.

*Skills:* establishes professional relationships built on regard for individual worth and dignity; engages the individual/client group in making independent decisions; facilitates active participation and partnership in the helping process; assists client systems to obtain needed resources; advocates effectively for the development of social institutions that are more humane and responsive to human needs; validates the feelings and views of others; displays a commitment to social justice, a vision of community and global connectedness and identification with the purposes and ethics of the social work profession.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* identifies underlying values in a situation, problem or concern.

- B. Understands the ethical and legal regulations related to social work.

*Knowledge:* comprehends the purposes and content of the NASW Code of Ethics; understands the Standards in the Ohio Code of Conduct and their application in social work practice; is familiar with current judicial decisions and liability issues which have defined practice.

*Skills:* distinguishes between privileged communication and confidentiality; describes common waivers of privileged communication; engages in behaviors which reduce vulnerability to malpractice lawsuits; provides accurate information to clients about their legal rights.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* articulates the major sections of the Code that impact on social work practice at the direct service, supervisory, and administrative levels; describes major features of the Code of Conduct of the Ohio Licensing Law; completes a comparative analysis of the standards in the Code of Ethics and the Ohio Code of Conduct; describes legislative and judicial decisions which have influenced the Code of Ethics.

Aware of personal value system and its impact on professional work.

*Knowledge:* is aware of his or her personal values, biases and prejudices and the impact they have on client/organization/group; is cognizant of personal strengths and limitations.

*Skills:* identifies issues which promote self analysis; identifies and separates personal issues and values from professional practice in the context of diverse population, client systems, agency personnel and multidisciplinary systems; examines the relationship between own values and action, identifying congruence among values and between values and behavior; accepts and utilizes constructive feedback regarding values.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* examines behavior patterns for the values expressed through journaling, simulations, and case studies; engages in personal value clarification; identifies areas for personal growth and implements a corrective plan.

### **Advanced Level**

#### **A. Develops skills in the systematic analysis of ethical dilemmas.**

*Knowledge:* understands the characteristics of ethical dilemmas; knows a framework for ethical decision-making.

*Skills:* anticipates and clarifies conflicting values and ethical dilemmas; assesses and develops a plan of action; takes a position on an ethical issue, defends it, gives evidence, and provides alternatives.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* assesses and engages in ethical decision making in relation to specific ethical situations; analyzes the ethical implications in specific social policy.

#### **B. Develops competency in the identification of one's own ethical stand in relation to controversial issues.**

*Knowledge:* understands the use of relationships, conscious use of self, and the concept of readiness

*Skills:* thinks critically and articulates the beliefs, ethics, and value system with knowledge and skill; handles conflict responsibly; assumes responsibility for personal ethical conduct; discourages and aides in the correction of unethical conduct of colleagues; promotes ethical practices of the organization with which he or she is affiliated; assumes responsibility for the quality of practice and secures opportunities for continuous growth in professional knowledge and skills.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* analyzes ethical situations encountered in terms of the hierarchy of personal values; negotiates a conflictual situation posed in a role playing exercise; identifies areas for personal growth and implements a corrective plan.

- 4. VALUE A DIVERSE WORLD:** Students will integrate into their practice the knowledge, skills, and values needed for understanding and appreciation of a diverse world, and for ongoing development of competence in working with diverse populations.

From its inception, social work has dealt with diverse people. Historically, social workers served the poor and oppressed, and those who were discriminated against by the larger society on the basis of race, gender, religion, behavior or other factors. Although today social work serves persons from all classes and walks of life, it retains a special mission to serve the poor, oppressed and disenfranchised as reflected in the School's mission.

As we move into the 21st century, Valuing a Diverse World becomes even more essential for effective social work practice, in the United States and around the world. Not only is our world becoming more diverse, we recognize that our diversity is something to be valued. Diversity is reflected in the composition of American society – we are a nation of many different historical, cultural and racial origins, of diverse political and religious views, and of various socioeconomic classes and behavioral norms. This diversity is reflected in the composition of the social work profession itself, requiring us to understand and work effectively with persons different than ourselves in all aspects of social work practice.

Diversity is reflected also in the increasingly global connections among peoples throughout the world. Political, socioeconomic, and technological changes are bringing us all closer together such that events in our country impact people throughout the world just as events in other parts of the world impact us. Thus, we take Valuing a Diverse World quite literally to mean that we must be competent to deal with diversity throughout the global community.

Diversity is not seen in isolation, however. Although we want to learn to appreciate difference, we do not lose sight of the fact that we are all part of the human family. Just as our differences distinguish us and add value to the human experience, our shared humanity and commitment to the well-being of the larger community binds us together.

At the Mandel School we believe Valuing a Diverse World is a life-long developmental process in which we continuously strive for a better understanding of ourselves and those we serve. Competence in dealing with diversity begins with ourselves and the particular background and experiences we bring to our work, and includes the biases and “veils” as well as the strengths that arise out of our differences. To work effectively with persons different than ourselves we need also to understand others – people from other racial, ethnic and cultural heritages, and people whose values, beliefs and experience are different than our own. Central to this is an understanding of structural and institutional discrimination and oppression based on differences.

To be an effective practitioner in a diverse world, however, social workers must be more than self-aware and knowledgeable of other groups, they must be competent in interpersonal skills and intervention methods suited to the particular client group with whom they are working. Thus, at the advanced levels of competency students are expected to learn intervention methods and techniques suited to the particular client populations they will be working with at their selected level of social work practice (direct practice, management, community development).

We recognize that it is impossible for any social worker to be thoroughly knowledgeable about all of the different ethnic and cultural groups they are likely to encounter throughout their career. Thus, competence in Valuing a Diverse World includes the ability to develop new competence as needed. This involves learning to recognize when new competencies are needed, knowing how to develop the requisite new competencies, and implementing the competencies effectively.

We believe the ability of Valuing a Diverse World is best developed in a climate where students and faculty come together as a community of learners. Faculty and students work proactively to create a place where students can safely explore sensitive issues of values and beliefs, and work to develop positive personal and professional identities which take into account their personal uniqueness.

Valuing a Diverse World involves six levels of learning, four which occur primarily in the foundation curriculum and two in the advanced or concentration curriculum:

## Foundation Level

Level 1. (self-awareness) Personal and professional awareness of one's own cultural values and biases, and how these impact one's ability to work effectively with others.

*Knowledge:* has knowledge of his/her own racial and ethnic heritage, socioeconomic class, gender and sexual orientation, and how it personally and professionally affects his/her understanding of self and others; is aware of the impact of racism, discrimination and oppression on his/her beliefs and values; is aware of his/her social impact on others in interpersonal situations.

*Skills:* is able to give and receive constructive criticism and feedback from others; is able to take various perspectives; is able to integrate one's values, beliefs and behaviors

*Values:* recognizes the need to develop personal and professional competence in working with persons different than oneself; recognizes the need for honesty and personal integrity in developing one's professional self; subscribes to the profession's code of ethics as it relates to nondiscrimination.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* describes and analyzes one's own identifications and experiences; invites constructive critical feedback; interacts openly with peers and the instructor; comes to an initial assessment of his/her diversity-related experiences and identifies areas for future growth.

Level 2. (knowledge of diversity; knowledge of oppression) Understands the worldviews of persons of difference, particularly persons of African-American and Hispanic origin, women, the poor and underclass, gay men and lesbians, and other populations as individual learning needs require. Understands how social and institutional factors historically have influenced patterns of inequity among diverse groups.

*Knowledge:* understands how cultural, economic, political dynamics, and other differences affect human development and social behavior; understands how social and institutional factors historically have influenced patterns of inequity among diverse groups; is aware of the cultural bias implicit in theories of human behavior; in particular is knowledgeable with persons of African-American and Hispanic origin, women, the poor, and gay men and lesbians; understands individual and group strengths and resources.

*Skills:* knows how to use resources to develop knowledge of groups different than one's own; able to take the perspective of people of difference and state how it may influence one's personal identity, understanding of the world, and views toward help giving and help receiving.

*Values:* understands that there are many cultures and many worldviews and recognizes the strengths that exist in all cultures; appreciates the strengths and personal resources of members of diverse groups; recognizes the heterogeneity within groups and the need to individualize each new situation; acknowledges that cultural and other differences have an impact on social work services.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* performs a critical comparative analysis of the history, life experience, and worldview of a group different from his/her own, with an awareness of commonalities and differences and shows how these factors may impact an individual or group's development and their ability to use social work services; based upon learning needs becomes actively involved with persons of difference outside the educational or professional setting so knowledge of difference is more than academic.

Level 3. (skills of engagement) Develops skills in engaging persons of diverse cultures and groups.

*Knowledge:* understands the cultural biases implicit in traditional intervention methods and approaches; understands barriers that interfere with minority persons' use of services; is knowledgeable about intervention theories and approaches that are culturally sensitive and empowering; understands the dynamics of dialogue and conflict resolution.

*Skills:* able to take the perspective of persons of difference in the helping relationship; able to communicate effectively and with individuals and groups different than him/herself, engages in dialogue to explore differences and commonalities, capably works to explore and, where possible, resolve conflict, expressing respect and understanding for the other person.

*Values:* demonstrates respect for others' beliefs and values, including religious beliefs, which may affect the social work process; respects the values of client self-determination and client empowerment; recognizes the need to become conversant in the client's language and experience rather than expecting the client to adapt to the social worker's experience.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* establishes a professional relationship with persons of difference and critically analyzes his/her ability to be culturally sensitive and understood and accepted by the other person; incorporates feedback/confirmation from the other person.

## **Advanced Level**

Level 4. (develops new competencies) Develops competency in new areas of diversity as required by the needs of the practice situation, and demonstrates its effective application nationally or internationally.

*Knowledge:* can identify those situations in which new competency is needed; knows how to develop new competency and assess its effectiveness in practice situations; demonstrates the new knowledge that results from developing the new competence.

*Skills:* can engage a client system of difference in a social work intervention in a way that is culturally sensitive and builds on the client system's inherent strengths.

*Values:* recognizes the need to continually increase her/his ability to value diversity as new situations arise, realizes that changing economic, political, and social conditions influence and alter the perception and reality of diversity.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* engages a client system of difference in a social work intervention process and demonstrates effectiveness, including confirmatory feedback from the client system.

Level 5. (personal/professional identity) Develops a positive personal/professional identity based on one's own race, gender, sexual orientation, and other relevant factors.

*Knowledge:* understands the developmental stages of racial identity and sexual orientation; understands the impact of personal identity on professional identity; is aware of his/her own level of development.

*Skills:* can accurately assess his/her personal/professional identity; uses his/her own personal/professional identity intentionally and appropriately in social work practice situations.

*Values:* acknowledges how one's own identity influences worldview and behaviors; is committed to his/her own personal and professional growth and development.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* student describes accurately his/her stage of identity development, and how it impacts his/her professional identity and capabilities.

Level 6. (self-assessment) Evaluates and analyzes own ability in Valuing a Diverse World, identifies areas for further professional growth, and plans for developing the needed competence.

*Knowledge:* has comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of his/her current competencies and limitations in Valuing a Diverse World.

*Skills:* is able to assess his/her ability realistically, and seeks periodic confirmation from learning colleagues and supervisors; can articulate one's ability to professional colleagues, clients and prospective employers.

*Values:* recognizes one's limits in valuing diversity and subscribes by the ethical obligation not to practice in situations beyond one's competence; recognizes the need for continual self-assessment and professional development in the area of diversity.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* makes a realistic assessment of his/her ability to value a diverse world, recognizes areas where new competencies were developed, identifies areas for future growth, develops

plan for acquiring the needed competence.

**5. THINK CRITICALLY:** Graduating students will be able to think critically about their practice and its knowledge base, and about the social problems and situations they encounter.

For social workers the aim of learning to think critically is quite simple and practical, namely, to assist clients. Clients can include individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities. Do clients benefit or not from our policies and programs?

Critical thinking is an approach to existing knowledge, knowledge development and knowledge utilization. As an approach to knowledge it examines the evidence and the assumptions upon which claims are based. As an approach to knowledge development it is empirical and accumulative, building on what we know and do not know. As an approach to knowledge utilization it is parsimonious and efficient, in other words, what works.

The critical thinker operates with a healthy skepticism; knowledge claims, regardless of who makes them, are weighed exclusively against the evidence to support them. The critical thinker scrutinizes the legitimacy and utility of ideas, facts and opinions. Critical thinkers are neither deterred by ambiguity and complexity nor are they distracted by authority, dogma, popularity, jargon, tradition or any of the many other impediments to problem-solving.

One who thinks critically is always questioning and willing to be questioned. The critical thinker strives to understand and is accountable for presenting positions so that they are understood. These are not easy tasks because we tend to hold sacred our ideas, approaches, and practice wisdom.

Critical thinking is crucial at every stage of the change/helping process. Whether at the micro or macro level, it requires attention to what we know works in engaging, assessing, diagnosing, formulating, planning, intervening, evaluating and terminating with clients. Just as important is attention to what does not work and is not helpful. The critical thinker recognizes both the limits of professional knowledge and of his/her expertise. In all endeavors the critical thinker embodies humility and an openness to evaluating one's practice.

There are a number of components that comprise how critical thinkers approach problem definition, formulation, and intervention. These components include: clarity; precision; accuracy; relevance; depth; breadth; logic and significance. These features define the critical thinker's strategy for assessing any knowledge claim or problem. To think critically entails disciplining oneself to search rigorously for alternative explanations and solutions.

The ability to think critically is here broken down into knowledge, skills and values to be learned and demonstrated at the foundation and advanced levels of the master's curriculum.

**Foundation Level**

*Knowledge:* demonstrates mastery of foundation course content. Demonstrates the ability to examine and articulate similarity and difference, agreement and contradiction in content within and among the foundation courses (policy, practice, research, theory, and field). Articulates a theoretically-based, empirically grounded rationale in analyzing a problem.

*Values:* demonstrates respect for clients. Acknowledges range of personal feelings and begins to examine them and their relationship to work with clients. Acknowledges anxiety inherent in assisting clients and takes steps to become a more effective social worker. Uses informed consent (NASW Code of Ethics, 1.03a). Uses the Code of Ethics to present and defend a position.

*Skills:* translates the knowledge and value indicators above into foundation practice with clients in the field practicum. Inquires about missing information and alternative explanations. Identifies areas of weakness in one's practice, solicits feedback on such and develops and executes a plan of improvement. Uses criteria to evaluate cited sources and research studies. Uses research to inform practice. Distinguishes explanatory from applied research. Completes a comprehensive assessment.

**Advanced Level**

*Knowledge:* demonstrates mastery of advanced course content. Demonstrates the ability to examine and articulate similarity and difference, agreement and contradiction in content within and among the advanced courses (policy, practice, research, theory and field). Among alternatives, selects, defends and articulates a theoretically-based, empirically grounded rationale in analyzing a problem and developing a strategy.

Examines the pros and cons of policies, problems, interventions, etc. and presents a sound rationale for their equivalence or difference and uses that information as a basis for decision making. Synthesizes disparate information and sees a pattern. Develops a position and conclusion that are based on a comprehensive examination of the evidence, an exploration of reasonable alternatives, and an evaluation of consequences.

*Values:* modifies approach as a result of feedback from supervisor, clients, data, classroom instructor, self. When faced with an ethical dilemma, uses the Code of Ethics to present and defend multiple positions then chooses a course of action.

*Skills:* translates the knowledge and value indicators above into advanced practice with clients in the field practicum. Integrates multiple units of analysis (intrapsychic, developmental, interpersonal, familial, societal) into formulating and operationalizing an intervention. Bases treatment plan on priorities that increase the likelihood of clients' succeeding. Uses research as a basis for practice. Evaluates one's effectiveness dispassionately by using data, supervision, and feedback from classroom instructors, peers, clients, and self.

**6. Communicate Effectively:** Graduating students will have the oral, written, and attending skills that will enable them to communicate effectively and appropriately in relation to their setting and audience. They will make appropriate use of audiovisual and information technology.

Communication is the linchpin of the social work profession. It is the vehicle that is used to empower clients or communities, to advocate for social change, and to maintain the integrity of an organization. It is the premise of the work of the profession in that communication is key to fostering understanding of self and others.

All levels of human communication are involved in the work of a social worker. One must know how to compose articulate and cohesive case notes and reports. A social worker must possess keen presentation skills, whether used in presenting a case, in explaining to a family or community a proposed intervention, or in delivering testimony. Social workers need to be cognizant of the messages, positive and negative, sent through body language, eye contact, and other nonverbal forms of communication. Computer technology and audiovisual skills are also a necessary component of a social worker's communication abilities.

To be an effective communicator also means interacting with client systems or communities in a non-judgmental manner. In the many roles that a social worker fulfills, a client or community can be biased by a spoken or unspoken message and social workers must possess an awareness of both positive and negative. The non-judgmental stance is vital in honing the social worker's skills in attending and listening.

**Foundation Level:**

*Knowledge:* possesses an understanding of the basic components of good composition, including grammar and sentence structure; elements of effective public speaking, including presentation without notes, how to capture the attention of an audience; basic computer skills.

*Values:* understanding of the power of written and verbal communication; awareness and respect for non-judgmental communication.

*Skills:* composes clear and logical papers and statements, with attention to structure and tone; utilizes basic grammar and composition skills; listening skills; effective presentation skills, including awareness of time limits, cultural sensitivity, creativity, and voice modulation; audio visual skills; is able to use a computer and navigate through basic software programs.

**Advanced Level:**

*Knowledge:* Is familiar with the components of a case record and its necessary data; knowledgeable of a client report and its typical content; and possesses the ability to discern the difference between the two; understands the value of collaboration; is familiar with search engines and other research avenues on the internet.

*Values:* understands the appropriateness of expressing professional opinions; is comfortable with the need to communicate with people at different levels.

*Skills:* possesses listening skills and is able to demonstrate understanding of the power of silence; able to document case records and reports; deliver testimony, communicate effectively as a team member; can facilitate a conversation as a negotiator; client interview skills; able to use advanced computer applications such as presentation software, spreadsheets, graphing programs and database management.

**7. ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Students will value Advocating for Social Justice as one of their primary responsibilities and will possess the knowledge, skills, and values needed to be effective advocates for social justice.

The early history of the social work profession is replete with examples of activists who viewed themselves as reformers, directing the attention of the public toward social injustice and seeking to rectify societal wrongs. As social work sought to increase its standing as a profession however, it began to lessen its emphasis on its advocacy role believing that such a de-emphasis was a necessary concession for increased professional status. In moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we at the Mandel School believe that such concessions are unnecessary and contrary to the best practice principles of our profession. Instead we believe that the truly professional social worker must come to value *advocating for social justice* as one of her /his primary responsibilities and must possess the tools and knowledge necessary to identify specific, achievable ways that positive change toward social justice can best occur.

Valuing *advocating for social justice* involves first understanding the many ways in which “social justice” can be defined depending upon the economic, social and political ideologies of those who do the defining. From that understanding then comes the ability to understand the implications of policies developed according to the various perspectives.

Valuing *advocating for social justice* also involves a deep sensitivity to the needs of all people but most especially to the needs of the poor, oppressed and disenfranchised. It embraces a global perspective, believing that an injustice to one is an injustice to all. We believe that a vital aspect of the social worker’s education, both in graduate school and beyond, is immersion in the values of social justice, equality and empowerment.

In addition to development of core values, it is also necessary that social workers possess knowledge and skills related to advocacy. These assure that they can understand the continuum of ideologies through which social policies and institutions have evolved, that they can understand the dynamics and consequences of social and economic injustice and that they can effectively develop and work within a definition of social justice.

Social workers must understand the major economic, political and social forces that have shaped the development of social policy both in the United States and globally. This historical knowledge must be matched with the ability to analyze current trends to determine forces that are likely to influence change efforts. Social workers must know and understand how policy is developed at the local, state and national levels. They must be able to identify the key policies that influence their own practice settings, be able to analyze them and be able to assess the impact that those policies have on the individuals, families, groups and communities with whom they work.

Social workers must have the ability to work collaboratively to marshal resources needed to advocate for social justice, to empower their clients and communities, to work with them collaboratively as members of a team and to enlist the support of those in positions of power. They are required to know a range of advocacy strategies that further the achievement of individual and collective social and economic justice.

We believe that this ability is best developed in a setting which emphasizes cooperative learning, that provides students and faculty the opportunity to take part in social action movements and that models active involvement of all members of the learning community in efforts to advocate for social justice.

The ability *Advocating for Social Justice* has been broken down into knowledge, skills and values to be learned at the foundation and the advanced levels of the master’s curriculum.

### **Foundation Level**

*Knowledge:* knows the history, mission and philosophy of the social work profession, the history and current patterns of provision of social welfare services, the role of social policy in helping or deterring people in the maintenance or attainment of optimal health and well-being, and the effect of policy on social work practice. Knows a range of ideologies that have been used to define social justice and understands the types of social programs that evolve from each of these ideologies; knows how laws and policies are developed at the federal, state and local levels; knows about key social policies affecting the

poor, oppressed and disenfranchised; understands how policy at the macro level impacts all aspects of practice. Understands how to interpret a selected policy, how to determine its impact and how to explain that policy to clients and to the community.

*Skills:* able to analyze a selected social policy to determine its impact - intended and unintended; able to use individual client needs or issues to identify social policy needs.

*Values:* is committed to using knowledge and skills to improve the lives of individuals and the community; values the rights of individuals and all of their differences and diversities; values the concepts of social justice and equality; is sensitive to people's needs; has a broad perspective; has a world view.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* articulates a range of ideologies that have been used to define the concept of social justice; articulates a historical perspective on the development of a particular social policy; analyzes a particular social problem and develops a proposed plan for social change; analyzes a selected social policy and determines its impact on specific individuals, families, groups and communities; assesses the degree to which particular social and economic policies enhance various concepts of social justice and equality; researches, develops and can defend her/his own definition of a "poverty line".

### **Advanced Level**

*Knowledge:* has knowledge in a substantive area of social welfare policy; knows how to effectively advocate for clients on a range of levels; knows specifics of social policies in at least one area of specialization.

*Skills:* able to engage in advocacy, empowerment and social change activities; can cope effectively with change by anticipating, shaping and adapting to change.

*Values:* values being a change agent and advocate; displays a commitment to social justice, a vision of community and global connectedness and an identification with the purposes and ethics of the social work profession. Advocates for vulnerable populations regardless of the practice setting.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* Participates in a "citizen advocacy" project designed to combat social and economic injustice; engages in lobbying, organizing and /or legislative change efforts; empowers individuals, groups or communities to advocate for social change; participates in an advocacy project in the field placement setting.

**8. SUCCEED IN THE WORLD OF WORK:** The masters program at MSASS aims to produce graduates with the ability to be life-long learners committed to their ongoing professional development and able to succeed in the world of work. Students develop knowledge, skills, and values at foundation and advanced levels in the areas of professional development, work habits, and leadership development.

In our present society of rapid change and constantly shifting priorities, it is estimated that individuals can expect to change careers approximately 4 to 6 times throughout their work lives. Yet within those career positions, an individual's values, skills, and knowledge are constant and transportable, enabling the individual to be successful in the world of work in general.

The field of social work practice reflects the larger society with political and social changes defining the appropriate skills of today and tomorrow's professional social worker. Therefore, we see that the more successful social worker possesses a wide breadth of skills. As always, the social work professional must understand the individual client, but he must now also understand the impact of the local, national, and global environment in which that individual functions.

In addition, the approach that is taken with the client is now strength-based rather than the previously pathology-based in its perspective. This means that today's social worker strives to identify the strengths or assets a client brings to the situation and capitalizes on those in the intervention planning. This approach calls upon today's social worker to be insightful, resourceful, and respectful in ways that demand more knowledge and skill than in the past. As a result, today's social worker must be willing to engage in ongoing self-assessment, be open to continual self-development, and must possess a clear sense of her identity as a cultural being, and to be able to define who she is as a person in the context of the profession of social work.

Contemporary social work students should emerge from an academic program with an awareness of the need for interpersonal, technical, and organizational skills. The individual social worker must be attuned to the maintenance and enhancement of one's needs and opportunities for professional development, to honing of work habits, and to leadership development. Today's social worker must understand himself in relation to clients, co-workers, and the profession, in general, as well as the many multidisciplinary perspectives of team or flat (non-hierarchical) organizations. This awareness serves to make a difference in the way an individual views his job and performs at work.

The professional ladder of a social worker generally runs parallel to changes in the world of work, where opportunities for continuous learning and development serve as the rungs on the career ladder\*. Individuals must understand the structure of the new world of work. The changes dictate that social workers now carry their portfolio of skills and experiences with them from agency to agency rather than spend their working lives with one agency. The successful professional must, therefore, be able to self-assess, recognize growth opportunities, be willing to take calculated risks, and understand how to negotiate change.

### **Foundation Level - Professional Development**

Is able to attain and maintain professional credentials, license, etc.; is aware of commitment to planning for continued professional development.

*Knowledge:* understands license requirements; is aware of legislative issues regarding licensing standards; is knowledgeable of new certification and developments in the field.

*Values:* recognizes the importance and value of the social work license to oneself and to the profession; understands the protection provided to the client by licensing and its recognition as a regulator.

### **Advanced Level - Professional Development**

*Knowledge:* possesses knowledge that passing the LISW exam is evidence of professional competency; is aware of resources for continuous self-development (seminars, conferences); possesses knowledge of self in terms of desirable employability skills and strengths and weaknesses!

*Skills:* has the capacity to conduct continuous self-evaluations; able to create a personal resume; able to successfully conduct self in a variety of interview settings.

*Values:* holds a commitment to continuous learning; is committed to maintaining the integrity of self and profession, organization, or agency.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* Registers for LISW exam and passes exam; participates in assessment activities, such as Personal Profile Survey, Myers Briggs, Learning Styles Inventory, etc.; creates work plan for continuing education, creates a resume and professional portfolio; conducts a mock interview.

### **Foundation Level - Work Habits**

Is flexible, adaptable, able to compromise, committed to job, willing to go beyond job description, able to manage time effectively, is respectful of clients, co-workers, and other professionals; can work effectively in an interdisciplinary team; is a clear and concise communicator, both verbally and in writing.

*Knowledge:* understands the changing needs of society in a global world; has an understanding of how to budget time; recognizes the major contributions of other professions to the field of social work and social work to other professions; understands need to continue to develop job skills; knowledge of organizational structures.

*Skills:* is capable of setting priorities, delegating responsibility, budgeting time; possesses effective communication skills; respects other professions; can directly address a concern with peer or counselor.

*Values:* has a commitment to lifelong learning in the profession; has respect for the client's personal value system; views creativity with respect and humility; recognizes supervision as a learning method; respects clear, direct communication.

### **Advanced Level - Work Habits**

*Knowledge:* comprehends the politics and nuances of authority relationships; understands how motivation, goals, and values drive people's actions.

*Skills:* invites and uses constructive criticism; is able to collaborate; integrates knowledge of other professions to own knowledge base; exercises problem solving skills, decision making skills, and negotiating skills; is able to recognize when current systems are not working for a client and makes creative use of other resources.

*Values:* possesses respect for self, others, and other professions; respects the value of criticism; can work for change within organizational structures.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* In Box/Out Box exercise for prioritization and time allocation; creating a daily schedule for one month, indicating times set aside for leisure, learning, work, etc.; role plays case studies simulating need for negotiation skills, receiving criticism, and team projects.

### **Foundation Level - Leadership Development**

Is able to attain, maintain, and move into positions of increased responsibility in social work profession, has strong work ethic, knows how to be prepared, follows through on commitments, works independently, knows when and how to use supervision, shows initiative, balances personal and professional roles to avoid stress/burn-out; is able to achieve comfort with competing demands and standards.

*Knowledge:* is knowledgeable in techniques of conflict resolution, motivational theory, and leadership theory; is aware of resources in community; student is able to state what he knows and does not know and when to seek help; possesses knowledge of learning styles, desirable management skills, personality types, and desirable leadership skills; understands how the work environment impacts or interacts with personal life; understands the concept of measurable outcomes.

*Skills:* is flexible; makes rational decisions based on knowledge; recognizes supervision as opportunity to learn; is available as a resource to strengthen the morale of the institution and the profession.

*Values:* values compensation that respects one's skills, experience, and education; uses knowledge wisely; views seeking supervision as a strength; views problems as an opportunity for learning.

### ***Leadership Development - Advanced Level***

*Knowledge:* possesses knowledge of the work environment such as career ladders, personnel practices, and social work practice; has a knowledge of the importance of organizational culture.

*Skills:* is able to deal effectively with conflict; possesses self-awareness and self-assessment; take risks; (is able to communicate a vision for the organization or program).

*Values:* is committed to bring forth professional expertise and resources, (be all you can be); is dedicated to the enhancement of the profession and society; is willing to mentor and pass on knowledge gleaned from experience; possesses integrity.

*Possible Assessment Activities:* Writes essay on view of leadership in a social work agency and assess self in relation to the essay in terms of present situation and plans for leadership development; role plays confrontational situations where leadership is necessary; articulates personal and professional capacities to highlight in a mentoring situation.