

# Core competency paper essay



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The first competency that is discussed is: identifying as a professional social worker and conducting oneself accordingly. With this comes a heavy responsibility, not only the way a practitioner appears, how they dress or speak but also the way in which they conduct themselves fall into this category. Dressing appropriately to the agency that have enlisted the workers services, being aware various bias or preconceived notions (often misconceptions) about a particular person or group and having the capacity to put these feelings and thoughts aside to help it crucial.

Not only this but avian the knowledge to effectively advocate for a clients needs, understanding and abiding by professional boundaries, and making use of one’s peers, whether that be through supervision or consultation are key in this regard. It is also important to constantly be learning and participating in self-reflection as well as self-correction to grow in experience and maturity (giving taking help 21). The second of the aptitudes focuses on moral compulsion; Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

This a standard that upon first reading may seem very straight forward “ do this, and do not do that,” or letting one’s conscience guide their actions” however as the cases a practitioner may become involved in become more bizarre adhering to this competency may seem to be a matter of dabbling in shades of gray rather than a definitive black and white.

For example if individual is a practicing Buddhist and works at a government facility, this person will be able to share his or her beliefs freely even if they believe it could genuinely help the client.

It is paramount to recognize the personal beliefs one has as a social worker and still be able to make ethical decisions that agree with the social work code of ethics. When doing this, using ethical tools to help in making choices that can affect lives another skill comes into play (NASA). It is dangerous to make any type of decision based off of an emotional stance alone, in personal choices as well as in the field, critical thinking needs to be used as well so that the client may receive the best help he or she can.

Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. Some aspects of this skill are being able to use multiple sources of information; for example the newspaper, word of mouth, or even your own observations and exercise wisdom in the conclusions that are come to.

In this often times one's own personal bias can infect the thought process of a person and have a toxic effect on their decision making (NASA).

The fourth competency is, engaging diversity and difference in practice. Each person has their own quirks, people, things, habits that just rub them the wrong way, that 'set their teeth on edge' to borrow the expression. For this competency it is important to first become aware of the prejudices a person may have before beginning practice in the field. In this value it is important to know and understand how a culture may oppress a people or give people a privilege that other cultures do not.

Stepping into a new environment it is crucial not to view oneself as a 'savior of this culture?' but rather a learner, eager to better understand the people and behaviors they will be working with.

Because poverty is one of the most noticeable issues while working with diverse populations, particularly minorities, knowledge and the ability to fight for a community's economic justice is key (NASA). Advancing human rights and social and economic justice is the fifth of the core competencies of social work.

Everybody, no matter the tone of skin, or social status position has the basic human rights to freedom, safety, privacy, and adequate standard of living. A social worker believes this and sees that oppressed populations are not receiving this basic rights; because of this they will fight for change in the lives of those the rest of society has either forgotten, or chosen to ignore. This can be a daunting task, finding the best way to help a population group.

However conducting research is one way to find efficient and beneficial methods to help (NASA).

The idea of research is to discover new things, and these new discoveries can lead to better ways to help on a micro, mezzo, or macro level. This is one of the reasons that engaging in research-informed practice and practice, informed research is the next ability a social worker must be competent in. Using evidenced based interventions to better help their own models of practice can greatly improve the work of the researcher (NASA). The seventh competency may seem straight forward but it is more complicated than it seems; applying knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

One could make the argument that this is the most important of the competencies, but also the most challenging.

Learning about life cycles, behavioral theories, and cultural differences in the class room but applying them is a different story entirely. Using the theories you have learned to work with individuals for example an angered parent who is having their child taken away is difficult but it something that must be done. With this skill it is important to understand a person and their environment as they come to the social worker.

This being said, once a person can confidently see and identify people and their social structural problems one can more capably advocate for policy change that will help the community (NASA).

Engaging in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services. This is the eighth of the competencies that are discussed in the ERAS manual. As a social worker understanding that changing a policy will go a long way towards changing lives is crucial.

Knowing the history and the current structure of laws and standards can help the practitioner change it in a more efficient way.

This may involve peaceful protest, or even stating the case of the people in court, hangs is possible and being capable in this way helps make change on a larger scale possible. Responding to context that shape practice. This goes hand in hand with advocating for change in policy. Social workers are aware of the society contexts and are resourceful in responding and dynamically changing the setting of group (NASA).

The final of the core competencies are; engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families groups, organizations, and communities.

In professional social work practice these are all-encompassing proficiencies that a social worker must be comfortable with working on several different levels of interaction. The knowledge to apply these traits to individuals, families and larger group is possessed by the professional worker used in practice. In engagement the social worker must affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, etc. S well as using empathy and other interpersonal skills to help the client.

In assessing a person or a situation one must collect and correctly interpret data, such as the client's strength and weaknesses. Also developing a mutually agreeable set of goals to achieve. In intervention initiating actions to achieve those goals and prevention tragedies that enhance the client's abilities are important. One will undoubtedly find themselves in a position with which they must mediate and advocate for the clients, as well as facilitate transition and endings.

In evaluation social workers focus on the results of an intervention and discovering how it could have been more effective and efficient. At Cairn University there is a definitive focus placed on the directing students to practice a standard of living that is in accord with the school's mission statement.

“ Cairn University exists to educate students to serve Christ in the church, society, and the world as biblically minded, well- educated, and professionally competent men and women of character. It is a privilege to have the focus of the professors, and staff at Cairn in one accord this way. The unifying factor of each member being a desire to direct the individuals

who choose to attend here, whether we be seventeen year old freshman, or fifty six year Old postgraduate students, to walk a different path. To entertain the philosophy of education rooted in a biblical world view preparing men and women of faith to serve the Lord and in doing so change he world. This way of thinking, communes flawlessly with the department of social work’s mission statement at Cairn as well.

The Department’s mission statement is this: “ The Department of Social Work at Cairn University prepares students for entry into generalist social work practice by equipping them with professional knowledge, values and skills understood within the context of biblical world view. The purpose of its holistic education is to equip students to demonstrate competency and excellence as they lead in their service to all those in need with empathy, expertise, and integrity and to advocate for social change within the Christian church, society and the world. While reading this the similarity between the broader statement about the school and the more particular statement about this individual Department is easily discernible. In both of these statements there is an undeniable significance placed on equipping students with a biblically centered world view, and giving those same students the tools to leave and live out this mindset that is so different than that which an unbelieving world encourages.

” .. The purpose of its holistic education is to equip students to demonstrate impotency and excellence....

In this brief exert is found a key component of social work practice which is competency or professionalism. Using the skills that have been too taught to

them and refined by hours of field practicum's, and being willing servants God; students can work and be used to help not only change the physical, mental, emotional, or environmental state of a person but also the spiritual situation an individual is in. Students have the opportunity to become professionally prepared for future situations they may face as professional social workers. This being said, along with the

Department of Social Work mission's statement there are five goals that couple together for a more complete ambition of what students participating in this program are to be capable of undertaking and adhering to.

These goals align with the core competencies Of social work. The First Of these goals is Professional identity, ethics and values. As professing Christians and receiving the training they have faith is a central factor of the student's professional identity, and therefore will influence the way ethics and values of the profession are approached and practiced.

The second goal encompasses perversity, social justice, and advocacy.

A part of holding to a biblical world view is seeing individuals the way God sees them, with an unselfish and unashamed love. Understand that diversity shapes people groups and the way they are treated is important; but equally so is not viewing one individual person or group as lower than another, seeing each population in an equal light is key. Policy, analysis and action is the next goal on the list.

Thinking in a way that takes into account not only what is best for the client(s) on a biophysically level but also on a spiritual level can be both



challenging but is a dimension of working a biblically centered world view in the profession of social work. The fourth goal is integrating knowledge and research. As with all things in life, learning about something or somebody does not mean that one knows all there is to know about said person, emotion, event, situation, extra.

As being in a profession where ‘helping’ is the job, a dedication to lifelong learning is important.

The more knowledge one can attain, the more experience they can partake in from a professional stand point, the more wisdom they can glean, and as a result of these things the more people can be helped. Participating in research will help to establish this process that refines critical thinking, and efficient professional communication. The final goal established by this department is concerning relationship based practice and process skills.

This speaks to the interpersonal skills that need to be established to work with and help individuals off broke world.

Being spiritually sensitive to a client’s condition, and well as remembering that the difference between us as the social workers being the helpers and the client being the helped is the grace that God chose to lovingly bestow to us by grace, through faith we received Him, not because of any action we have done or achievement we have attained, it is a gift undeserved that has given us a Spirit of power to do the work of the Lord. This is paramount to remember as We go forward in professional practice exercising the ten competencies that were discussed earlier in the text.

Competency 1: Identifying professionalism and practicing it Last semester (the spring semester of 2014) was the first time that I truly identified myself as a professional social worker, I remember the day vividly, the smells of the city as I sleepily made my way toward the Sally Watson Crisis Nursery. The blaring car horns, the crisp morning air as the sun was still rising; and the feeling of anticipation as mentally prepared myself for the new responsibilities that I would be in charge of that day. As I opened the gate surrounding the property and walked up the porch stairs heard the familiar sounds of organized chaos from inside the office.

As Ms. Mary let me went straight to the office to begin making preparations for the first intake meetings that I would be conducting. You see, my supervisor was away on Emily business and the other staff that were working that week were all new (with the exception of Ms. Mary) and unfamiliar with the many basic functions Of the agency, much less the intake process so today way mine day in the forefront. In collected the necessary paper work and made sure they were in nicely stacked piles as I began to call and confirming times for the children who would need care during that week.

I had done this task a number of times before and the process had developed its own cycle. Call one client and have them not pick up, call another and have the pretend (or genuinely impolitely forget) about the times that they had scheduled, call the next name on the list and get cussed out by a parent or guardian other than the one who had called to make a schedule who was offended that I ‘ had a personal vendetta’ with them and thought they needed help. Finally, if it was a good day would have the

opportunity to talk to a polite and happy sounding individual on the other end of the line who was genuinely thankful for my call and time.

Today however was not a good day, time after time, no answer, phone slammed, an exasperated answerer but not the kind soul at the other end of the line. After this hour or so of ‘conversations’ was effectively put off, and really was not in the mood for answering questions to which the answers seem obvious, and in turn having to ask questions and having prying the answers out of the client being as difficult and painful as pulling teeth. The last thing I needed was a disaster, minor or otherwise to strike as the time to of the first intake session drew nearer.

Shortly after the confirming appointments over the phone there was a knock at the door. I looked at the clock and it was fifteen minutes before the tenting was supposed to take place and was shocked the client would arrive so early (this rarely happened, more often than not they would be around fifteen minutes late). Went to open the door and there stood a man who looked like a body guard, about 6’2” build of chondriated muscle, probably in his mid-forties, he was African American wearing a black suit and his eyes were hidden behind reflective sunglasses.

My initial thought was “wow you got off at the wrong shady train station” but luckily my filter kicked in. “Hi can help your asked, “Hi I am here from the health set-vices department and m here to.

..” So I let him in and he went about his inspection, Ms. Mary has left (because she was on the overnight shift and left shortly after I had arrived)

so I walked him through the agency and he asked me questions about the policies, and emergency protocols at the agency.

Thankfully had the opportunity to attend a meeting the previous week addressing the majority of these issues, so was able to answer the questions in both a polite, but professional manner.

Finally he was done with his examination and with several final questions left the agency. In this experience believe that I competently behaved as a professional worker in handling this unexpected situation. While being trained for going out into the field the competency that was stressed to us as students the most was that of professionalism. I can still hear Professor Campbell-Farrell telling the girls not to go to an interview ‘dressed in their nighttimes’.

Looking like a professional is paramount in the field. I am a young half Caucasian half African American man who got lost on his first trip to placement.

Did I look young? Yes, out of place? Yes, nervous as could be? Absolutely. However, because of the attire that I had chosen to wear I also looked like an individual with a plan and a purpose, someone who could be accepted among the ranks of professionals. But what is professionalism? Is it merely the way a person dresses, whether they wear loafers, and a three piece suit, what is the full scope of professionalism in the social work profession? In the code of ethics NASW 2.1 it states: “Identify as professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly..”

. ” There are two key terms that we will focus on in this statement, identify and conduct. But what does it mean to identify? I know when I think of identification? Merriam-Webster Dictionary helps to reveal the meaning of this word “ to know to show who someone is or what something is. At the Sally Watson Crisis Nursery I knew that the position that I help was one of a professional nature; though I did not get paid for my work a high level of performance was expected from me by both my supervisor and the other employees at the office.

In fact while introducing me to clients or new employees my supervisor would refer to me as a ‘ professional intern’ who they could go to with questions and concerns. Being called a professional helped me to identify myself in this way.

It was expected that know what I was doing, the various regulations and details about the agency and demographic that utilized the services so that could both speak and act with confidence. But being called a professional and identifying oneself as a professional are two different positions. In the definition of identify it says to, show who someone is.

This requires action, a certain behavior and type of ‘ conduct’ are required as one grows into the role that is described in the first competency.

One cannot simple has the title professional and be unaware of what is required of them. It would be a terrifying experience to be a passenger on a plane who pilot was ignorant of how to land the vehicle. The same principle pertains to social work, emotionally it could be equally as damaging to a

client who had come for counseling if the counselor was oblivious of how to connect with them or identify the problem.

Professionalism pertains to an individual's physical appearance, but also to their level of preparation, training and mindset.

In the example described near the beginning of this section is the first time during my one day placement that I truly identified and conducted myself as a professional social worker. First I was dressed in a fitting manner, “ look good feel good”. When opening the door and finding the sharply dressed individual I was not immediately made self-conscious of what was wearing the way I would have been if I was sporting sweatpants and a t-shirt.

Next I was prepared, I had been pestering my supervisor for several weeks previously on details about policies and even what to do if a situation like this one where an outside professional came into inspect the agency.

Although had been at this location for months was still attempting to learn more and to grow into the role of a social worker.

Thirdly, I had attended a training seminar on emergency procedures, newly implemented policies in Youth Services (the parent organization to Sally Watson) and how to handle outside relations in a proper manner.

I knew the answers to his questions and was able to answer them to his satisfaction. Finally, my mind was right. I was focused and even though this was an unexpected occurrence did what I could to manage it in a proficient manner. In addition to this used interpersonal skills while walking through our

building. There is only so much two can say about the location of a fire extinguisher, or the emergency exits.

We were able to talk about his career experiences, the Eagles, and our mutual hope for Chip Kelly to deliver a Super Bowl to Philadelphia.

Now, understanding at least a portion of what identifying and conducting oneself as a professional is, by no means do I view myself as flawless in my performance the way was described earlier. When relating the events of this day to my supervisor the next week she was shocked that I had allowed this situation to unfold. She was not angry but she sternly explained a number of the risks that I inadvertently exposed, the agency, its employees, the clients, and myself to. The first was obvious and yet while welcoming this inspector in did not even think about it. Ever asked or saw any kind of documentation or professional identification of who this man was.

As think back on it this could have been a genuinely terrible situation, this may not be a likely situation, but he could have lied about how he was and kidnapped or even killed any of the individuals in the office at the time. I don't mean to be a drama queen but this was a rougher section of the city and is not outside the realm of possibility. Second, I never asked for or was given a way to contact him after he left the office.

If he had given me a list of problems that would then need to be rectified how would we as an agency go about contacting him or the company that he worked for after the corrections were made? During our conversation, particularly regarding the eagles my level of professionalism fell, and was never truly reestablished. Seeing this happen he did lose some of the respect

with which he had been treating me and the conversation ebbed from that point on.

Looking back on this experience has been an interesting exercise, it feels like so long ago, as the weeks and months have passed by.

I gained valuable experience as the Sally Watson Crisis Nursery; as well as a greater understanding of my role in an organization as a developing social worker. From this experience I now see the traits that attribute as part of professionalism looking the part, being prepared, whether that be official training or one's own personal preparation, and an individual's mindset. Each of these traits may kick different to somebody else and may be carried out in different ways, however as social workers living to a standard of professionalism is a universal goal no matter how one approaches it.

#### Competency 2: Applying Ethical Social Work Principles

When considering the profession of social work, often a person will focus on the idea of helping other people.

Of course this is true as social work is a helping profession however, the focus of helping is to help empower individuals equipping them with the support, tools, and confidence to make permanent change. Social workers use changeable methods to do this by advocating for the client. Working so closely with a person, family, or group invites emotional connection from the worker to the client(s); this being said the importance of having a guiding set of values is imperative to directing the repressions into ethical practice.



The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) established a Code of Ethics that has been accepted and used for years. The six ethical values that they recognized are: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

These standards were instated with several very distinct purposes in mind. Each one of them leads enhancing the human qualities of the client, making establishing connection to them and a higher, more genuine level of care a more attainable task.

This is not to say that social workers merely view the liens they may have as a 'to do list' but rather holding to these ideals helps aid the level of empathy they can have for their clients. Next this code was put in place to help professionals not become overly involved with the people they are helping emotionally; helping the professional to recognize the relevant needs when ethical uncertainties arise. The code also helps the general public, primarily those who are being helped and their families to hold social workers to an expected standard that is expressed in the morals that are discussed.

In short for the social worker this document lays down a specific set of core standards that help to guide one in the decision making process as well as showing how social workers should act in varying situations.

Emotions are powerful influences, because of this they can effectively cause a person to act in an inappropriate fashion, whether it be as a friend, or as a professional; but adhering to this document can help protect a person

choices made strictly on an emotional level. Before we continue lets expound on the six values that elected to the Code of Ethics.

The first is service. It was mentioned before that the social workers main goal is to help people. Will doing this service comes into play, the social worker will practice a biblical principle of selflessness in choosing the client above themselves.

By putting the needs and interests of the one being helped above the helpers own can lead to great success in the field. The next value is social justice. As a social worker seeing an injustice leads to an emotional reaction combining angry, frustration, and sorrow.

To for example to see the African American population being discriminated against in Ferguson, Missouri shouldn't leave anyone affected much less a social worker.

Fighting against social injustice is a key element of the profession and it also lends itself to biblical principles. In James 7 is says " If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. " A social worker sees what is wrong, realizes it can be changed and goes about changing it for the better.

The third of the values that is listed is the dignity and worth of a person. From a biblical world view this may be the most important of the values, the bible says that people are made in the image of God. This means that each person has worth that is difficult for us as humans to comprehend.

In the code of ethics this means valuing a person by treating them in a respectful fashion, being aware of the client(s) diversity, and to see the client's ability and capacity for change.

This closely relates to the fourth of the values; this is the importance of human relationships. Life is about relationships, as Christians we are to serve God, the way we do this is by living out His love and that requires relationships. The ironic point of this is that relationships are also the most difficult part of life. They are obviously rewarding, but they can also be messy painful, destructive, and crippling. However as social workers it is imperative that we recognize and embrace the importance of relationships.