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ORIENTATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICUM

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Introduction

Social work exists because it fulfills crucial social needs. Social work serves people and society where there is malfunctioning or inadequacy. Enhancing the human potential is another important aspect of social work. Social workers provide important services to help people solve problems that limit their functioning and services to enhance the quality of their lives (Morales & Sheaffor, 1995). These services may be direct counseling or working with clients individually or in groups to solve specific problems or enhance their general functioning. Indirect services are also rendered on behalf of individuals or groups to make the organizations and institutions more responsive to human needs. In most countries social work exists because society sanctions the services provided to fulfill the needs. However in countries like India, especially in the rural areas, despite the felt need for external help, people do not totally sanction the role of professional social workers.

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Social work has existed in India for centuries in the form of voluntary service. This makes it difficult for society to sanction the remuneration paid for social services rendered. In many cases, social workers render their services along with other professionals as a team (doctors, teachers and with those who provide basic necessities). Many social workers have rendered services under the guise of other professionals. As a profession, it has been extremely difficult for social work to establish itself. It is therefore twice as important in countries like India to thoroughly train students to maintain their own professional identity. It is important for students to make sure that their clients understand the services they render are from professional social workers and not confuse it with services of other helping professions.

A social worker requires training and skills in diverse areas to be able to effectively help individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations deal appropriately with their problems. The theoretical knowledge is provided by schools of social work and agencies and institutions in the society that offer practical training to reinforce the classroom experience. Practical training or field placement is the internship served by the social work student within an agency or community affiliated with the social work program.

The objective of this field placement is to enable the student acquire supervised social work experience to enhance the knowledge and skills learnt in the classroom. It is the practicum experience that allows the student to put the critical thinking skills taught in class into practice. It is an opportunity for the student to leave the classroom and enter the world of the social

work profession. This type of training under close supervision allows the student to apply the concepts learned in the classroom to real life client situations. Social work values and ethical dilemmas discussed in the classroom take on a new and deeper meaning when working with live clients and their life situations.

In India students are placed in agencies that help women and children, hospitals, psychiatric institutions, prisons and industries. Many schools of social work emphasize the placement of students in rural communities. Often it is not easy for field work coordinators from the social work program to get the field work plans to work as planned because the agency or community may have constraints in carrying out the plans. It is not easy to commute from one place to another in India. The roads are crowded and public transport is not very reliable. Students would probably go to one agency or field placement on a given day and not make it to two. Some schools of social work push students to go to two settings on the designated field work day, in order to give them a more diverse experience. Students from urban areas find the rural placements very difficult to handle emotionally and physically. It is a rude awakening to see that many other people do not live the comfortable life that the students were used to. Despite the difficulties in making the field placements structured, every effort is taken to ensure that the students get adequate opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge into practice.

Social Work as a Profession

A profession needs to have three unique characteristics (Morales & Sheaffor, 1995). There is a need for

professional autonomy, to be free from constraints that could limit its (professions) ability to act in the best interests of the clients. Society grants professional authority to people who have the required knowledge and skills to provide the needed services. Professional responsibility is required by developing codes that identify the expected ethical behaviour of practitioners and establish procedures for restricting unethical or incompetent practice. Social work therefore needs to provide responsible and competent service to be granted the exclusive authority to offer its services to people.

In reference to the discussion written earlier, it has been very difficult for social workers in India to establish the professional base and carve a permanent niche in the professional rank. Culturally it is believed to be an intrinsic right of the needy to be voluntarily helped by other humankind. It would take concentrated efforts to bring about this attitudinal shift. It is crucial for social workers to be ethical and conform to the codes of the profession. Society would be more open if they notice social workers being truthful about their professional background, not hiding behind other professions and being upfront about what service they can offer and their limitations. Students need to know that they can be proud of their professional identity. In a land that reveres engineers and doctors, many students have stumbled into social work because they did not meet the requirements for engineering and medicine. Schools welcome all types of students regardless of their aptitude and interests in order to maintain their enrollment quota. This perpetuates the low self esteem of students who start their social work career thinking that they are in a less sought after profession because

they did not have the higher competence required by the more sought after professions. Even if it is difficult for the schools of social work to raise their standards for entering the profession, there is a definite need to weed out students who have no interest in human services. There is a continued necessity to remove students once enrolled into the program, who show poor interest and embarrassment in the profession. On the other hand the teachers have to emphasize the importance of the profession and the crucial role it plays in fulfilling societies' needs. At a macro level, the community and agencies can work with media to portray a positive image of the social work profession.

According to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2) the historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society and environmental forces that create, contribute to and address problems in living. The profession of social work covers many practice areas involving a continuum of client systems. They may be individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities or combinations of any of these systems. The profession is committed to the values of service and social justice. Social work upholds the dignity and worth of the individual and emphasizes the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. These values differentiate social work from all other professions.

In India, supervision is an important component of social work program. The field work agency supervisor takes over the role of teacher and mentor. The supervisor gives the student the opportunity to see social work in

practice and be a part of the change process. Depending on the personal style of the supervisor and the agency policy the student may be allowed to work independently or under guidance with clients and see theoretical knowledge put into practice. The social work program coordinator makes sure that the field work supervisor knows what the student is expected to learn at the placement. The field work supervisor in turn ensures that the student is given enough exposure to learning skills and putting theoretical knowledge into practice. The student will draw upon the skills practiced in classroom role-plays as well. There are some skills that student can learn only by doing. Role plays and simulations can help but not really show the student the seriousness of helping clients. What seemed easy in the classroom may seem overwhelming in practice because of the anxiety involved with helping change some aspects of peoples' lives.

In the practicum experience students will begin to apply the skills learned in class to clients served by the agency. Some of the skills will be learned through observation of the supervisor or other social workers within the agency. Some agency policies may require that the student always work under supervision. In such situations the student can learn a lot from watching the supervisors doing their job. There may be clients who are very sensitive or the nature of the job may require licensed or professionals with the required qualifications. Here too the student can learn by sitting in on interviews and counseling sessions. Some situations may be regarded as too dangerous for the student. There may be such times when the student can learn by listening to the experiences of the

supervisors. Students sometimes get to simulate field work situations and work through solutions.

The student will also be faced with agency protocols and "real life" in work situations that affect both clients and employees in the agency. These experiences prepare the student to enter the practice field upon graduation with some experience and confidence in having already faced "real" situations. The experience gathered in the field help to alleviate the anxiety the student usually has in dealing with clients for the first time. With this out of the way, the job experience would be started with more confidence that can benefit the client, social worker and agency.

The student's skills and performance as an entry level professional social worker will be observed and evaluated by the supervisor. Instruction will be provided by the supervisor on ways to improve performance helping the student to gain the necessary skills and confidence to practice upon graduation. The field work supervisor gives feedback that encompasses skills in dealing with clients, families, agency staff, and the general community. The feedback could include some aspect of the student's attitude or behaviour that has a bearing on working with clients in the agency. It is important for the student to receive seemingly negative feedback in the healthy spirit of training to be a better social worker.

The student is also given the opportunity to give feedback about the field work supervisor and the agency. In some cultures even though feedback is invited by the supervisor the students are at a disadvantage purely because of the student teacher

distance that is usually kept at all levels of learning. It is only the positive feedback that can comfortably be given by the student.

In India, placements at times lead to job offers by the agency. Many times local students demonstrate their knowledge, skill base and ability to learn while undergoing field training. Supervisors spot bright students and readily offer jobs that are open. Students are also encouraged in India to make contacts during field placements for future job searches. Many students get certificates from the field work supervisors about their work at the agency to use as references for their first jobs.

Orientation to the Practicum

In most cases students will have a formal orientation to the field agency. During the orientation students will be provided with information such as the agency personnel and their roles, a tour of the building, where to find and file agency paperwork, how to request supplies needed for the job, agency policies and procedures, protocols for serving clients within the agency and expectations in terms of timeliness to work and professional dress code. Students must remember as they enter their field placements they will no longer be viewed as “students in the classroom” but as representatives of the agency. They should present themselves in both dress and demeanor as such. In addition, “unspoken rules” should be observed by the student. For example, observation of how the social work staff conducts their practice with clients is important to note. Actions that maintain confidentiality, such as discussing client cases behind closed doors

and only within the agency, making sure client paperwork is not open to public eyes, and following the guidelines of the agency in releasing confidential information are expected.

In India, even though girls can wear western style clothes to classes, they are advised to wear traditional dresses (salwar kameez, saree or something long and covering most of the body) in keeping with the culture. It is true that clients judge the social worker based on what they wear and how they conduct themselves. This judgment is harsher for girls and women in keeping with the prevalent culture. Some students may find it difficult to work with certain cultures where women are not supposed to raise their head when speaking to men. Such male clients may refuse to be helped by female students. Instead of taking this personally, students can respect the culture and observe and help in other ways that don't have this face to face interaction with men. Examples of such work would be working with the community, contact collaboration, funding or moving paper work in the agency.

There may be times when there are few or no cases to work with. Usually agencies have plenty of brochures, literature on their history and functioning in society for students to read. Students can discuss hypothetical cases or previous case files with the supervisors. Some supervisors in India plan the training period well and see that students get to do some research in the spare time. They allow the students to conduct case studies or mini surveys to support a hypothesis. Where supervisors are not as structured, students are advised to be assertive and ask questions and try to learn as

much as possible. Students come with so much enthusiasm and sponge as much information as possible. In some cases, students' zest for learning has been quelled due to apathetic field work supervisors or agencies that do not really respond to such earnestness. This could be avoided if the field work coordinator from the social work program had made adequate arrangements with field work supervisors and matching of students to appropriate agencies.

Students can learn from observing the supervisors at work. Their kindness to clients, maintaining confidentiality, showing respect, and being empathetic are qualities to uphold and practice. Some field work supervisors may be unkind to the clients like inmates in prisons, destitute women, abandoned children or families of sick patients. The supervisors may be overworked, overburdened with lots of cases or just feel superior to the helpless clients. Whatever the reason, it is important that the students note this as a negative and unacceptable behaviour and definitely not put it in practice. The student should show respect to the client especially because they feel helpless and that they are at a disadvantage. It is important to put into practice all the values and principles of social work learnt in the classroom even if they don't see it practiced around them. It is usually not proper for students to bring up such observations in the agency. However it is important to make note of the discrepancies in theory and practice and discuss it with the supervisor, field work coordinator and other students.

Students can and should take an active role in orienting themselves to the agency by researching information

regarding the client population served by their agency, reading and discussing the agency mission statement, reading literature/brochures about the agency, researching the history and role of the agency in the community, observing the interactions of staff and supervisors with the clients and asking questions in supervision sessions. Such preparation before starting the field work placement would really enhance the quality of the learning experience.

In India this is not as easy to research the agency or community because of lack of resources, literature and computers. However, staff and other related personnel have vast stores of knowledge and discussing various aspects of the agency and community with them would be really beneficial. Questioning students who were placed in the agencies earlier would be helpful. Making a list of questions to ask the supervisor or other staff members helps to channel the learning process and get some answers to make up for the dearth in literature. Student easily learn about forms to be filled, reports to be written, trail of paperwork, the basic functioning of the agency and its role in the community. It is not as easy to learn skills in working with clients and agency staff. Once the skills are conceptualized, they can be honed with practice. It is true that the more one works with clients the better one becomes.

When students are placed in rural communities or urban slums, very little is available in the form of literature. Much of the information gathered prior to the field work placement is purely from other students, staff and community members. Many times such placements are a surprise or total shock to students. It

is very difficult for students from relative comfort to see people live in squalor or with very little basic necessities and definitely no comforts. It is heart rending to see children with large bellies and brown hair and learn they are signs of malnutrition. Many people may wear rags, sleep on the bare ground and eat one meal if they are lucky. Much of the intervention done would be enabling people to get community support and mobilize funds. Students can learn a lot while working with mahila samaj, local panchayat or school teacher. Even if they do not see the fruit of their intervention students can be assured that they have sown the seed to change attitudes that are detrimental to development and educated the people to available resources. Learning at this level involves attitudes, emotions and behaviour. Classroom lessons or books do not prepare students for such exposure and deep learning. Different students learn varied lessons from such placements. While one student may think that his/her whole outlook to life and social work has changed after this placement, another student may think that it was a total waste of time because he/she may never want to work (after graduation) in such a place in reality because of little or no remuneration involved.

In some cases, where the number of cases to be worked is of paramount importance, then the quality of work with clients may be compromised. For instance while working on a team in a public psychiatric hospital, each member may be required to take on a heavy load of cases in the outpatient clinic. The social worker may have to work up many case histories or follow up procedures and hand over the final treatment care of the clients to the doctors. This would definitely improve

the interviewing techniques of the social worker. On the other hand the diagnosis, treatment, prognosis and social work intervention plan of the client may be decided by the doctors leaving out the crucial input of social workers. At some institutions in India, the social worker is required to work up about five to six new case histories (per day) and fifteen to twenty follow up interviews (per day). Some institutes require the head of team to involve all the students in determining the treatment plan or at least listen to it.

International Practicums through Student Exchanges

Social work practicum in a different culture is both challenging and rewarding. There is a need for positive mental attitude, good psychological make up and an open mind. A lot of preparation and planning goes into such placements. There is a dearth of literature regarding field education in general and international placement in particular. Patford (2000) analysed seven significant learning experiences (feeling at a loss and need to gain knowledge and skills; academic learning' operating solo' organizational constraints; discomfoting social interactions; regulating emotion; and reappraising his/her commitment to social work) and seven lessons (the embodiment of social work principles/values in practice; self-management; the impact of organizational structures and staff relationships on practice; the management of emotion; that life is fragile and unpredictable; the importance of process; personal suitability for particular social work roles in particular settings).

Pawar, Hanna and Sheridan (2004) write about two Australian students who were sent to India for their field work placement. The systematic preparation began a year in advance. The students' safety and convenience was given prime consideration. Direct meetings were held between the mentor (to provide personal and professional support) and the students, the field education supervisors, the students and the coordinator. The roles, tasks, expectations of the practica and communication channels were discussed along with bureaucratic and administrative procedures. There were orientation sessions to familiarize the students with the Indian customs, dress code, eating behaviour and religious beliefs. Personal preparation dealt with dealing with anxiety, health, food, dress, finance, legal requirements, travel documents and contacts. The academic preparation included familiarizing with language, culture, purpose of the placement, process of placement, considering a framework for critical incident analysis, reading field work manuals and attending and recording orientation sessions.

The learning objectives included being able to articulate the importance of the UN Convention on Child rights and to be aware of the issues and gaps in agency policies and procedures. They were required to identify the priorities within the agency and identify community needs. It was important to know the evaluation process in group work and give children the opportunity to talk. Another objective was to feel confident to discuss a range of cultural and learning issues with the supervisor and make use of constructive criticism. They had to be responsible, accountable for the work and be acutely aware of their values which are different in an

Indian context. They had to ensure that there is professional and personal growth and define the common themes used in group work and analyze and critically evaluate models used in practice.

To achieve these objectives, the students had regular discussions, read funding reports, policy manual and relevant Acts. Group work, practice of code of ethics, supervisory discussions, and daily record writing was an important aspect of the field placement. The issue of girl children in India was researched mainly due to the students' interest.

The objectives at the health setting included identifying the nature and limitations of the health project, Indian health and educational systems. The students had to identify a group with unmet needs, understand their perspective and need for social work intervention. They were required to prepare effective needs-based workshops for the group and work with relevant skills. They had to develop knowledge, ethics and values about social work practice in India and work effectively with staff and colleagues. The students' strengths and areas for future development needed to be recognized. There was a need to understand the role of educator in the group, the situation of Indian female adolescents, and to integrate theory and practice in group processes and recordings.

The activities included, visiting agencies, hospitals, observing doctor/patient interactions, social work intervention and formulating specific skill base. The students prepared, conducted, and recorded series of preventive and educative sessions for adolescent girls. They ran discussion group with hospital social workers

and students. They addressed differences and similarities in ethical issues in the two cultures and adapted to and learnt to work within time frames and health and education infrastructure.

Regardless of challenges encountered during the placement, the students believe that the benefits outweigh the difficulties. It is a unique opportunity to overcome challenges, gain insight into a new culture, observe social work in a different milieu, learn to be sensitive and work with Indian social workers with different values and attitudes.

Conclusion

The field of social work serves an important function in India by responding to the crucial social needs of individuals who are having difficulty functioning in a society in which these needs are not being met. The role of social work is to enhance human potential through the provision of services that allow these individuals to meet their needs and attain a satisfactory level of functioning. The development of theoretical knowledge and skills is an integral part of social work training. The objective of the field placement is to enable the student acquire supervised social work experience to enhance the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. The field work agency supervisor takes over the role of teacher and mentor in assisting the student to meet this primary objective through the practicum experiences. However, students must also take an active role in their learning through self-directedness in seeking out learning opportunities and researching various aspects of the agency and client

functioning. An international practicum is a unique opportunity to gain insight into a new culture and observe the practice of social work within a different milieu.

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Roles and Expectations in Social Work Practicum

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Introduction

The student will act as an agency staff member under supervision and as time progresses in the agency will be given more responsibility as a member of the agency team. Many agencies are multidisciplinary settings where a variety of professional groups are represented. In a hospital setting, for example, the student will work alongside other social workers, nurses, doctors, physical and respiratory therapists as well as clerical staff. The student will need to become familiar with each professional's role on the team. Protocol in resolving any conflicts must be understood and adhered to. It is important to understand the agency hierarchy and the mission of the agency. Students can find out this information prior to beginning the field placement by reviewing the literature or website of the agency. Further, students should ask questions during their orientation process that will help to define the roles of all professionals as well as the role of intern within the agency setting.

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In the classroom students explore many change theories that are applied to case examples in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of a particular intervention. While in the practicum, students may find that in “real life” client change occurs much more gradually. It is important for students to be aware of this and understand that the change process when applied to people takes time. Students may find themselves frustrated when clients do not seem to be “getting better”. This is a great topic for supervision. Learning the boundaries of a helper and our limitations as social workers is one of the most valuable lessons learned through the practicum experience.

Roles and Expectations in the Social Work Practicum

Field work is an interactive learning process in a structured environment. The social work curriculum does expect certain learning and teaching goals of students and supervisors. It is important for graduate students to develop specific expectations of the agency or setting field instructor.

In India, even though a formal contract or form is not usually signed, the social work program liaison arranges for the students to undergo field work training in various agencies. The student and the field work supervisor are made aware of the knowledge and skills that the student is expected to learn.

Role of a Field Work Student

The most important role is that of integrating oneself to the functioning of the agency or setting. At the

graduate level, the field work student would probably have earlier field work experience. However, there would be a first time experiences involved at some point of time. There is a need to understand the following areas in order to ease the integrating process (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007).

- 1) Understand the mission, services, population or community served policies and funding.
- 2) Find out what discipline and service is the primary focus of the organization.
- 3) Comprehend the knowledge, values and skills needed.
- 4) List the knowledge and skills expected to be learnt in the field work experience.
- 5) Acknowledge the strengths possessed that would help in this experience.
- 6) Familiarize the traditional roles that students have previously taken up.
- 7) List out questions that one would like to ask the supervisor.

Expectations from Student in Field Work

The initial field work may comprise of observing, attending orientation, reading manuals and literature. Such passive learning would progress to facilitating groups, meetings and case work. This could lead gradually to more autonomous working with clients. In some settings in India there is more structure than in others. In a hospital, the student would be expected to

attend rounds, treatment conferences and group work sessions. The student may or may not be allowed to autonomously conduct a treatment plan or group work session even at the end of the training period. This depends on the policy of the agency.

In a rural community, the student may attend balwadi (preschool), mahila mandal meetings (women's organization) and panchayat (village local government). The student may be allowed to enable the women to get bank loans for starting small businesses or arrange for the bank officers to talk to the women. The students at times work through the balwadi to reach out to the families who need help or information. The students may take up an issue with the panchayat or just observe its session. How active or passive the field work training in the community would depend partly on the particular community's openness, field work supervisors' limits and greatly on the students' initiative.

There are some general guidelines for students and field work instructors for optimizing the field work experience (Munson, 2002).

- 1) Observing experienced social workers perform their roles
- 2) Gain orientation to specialized cases and practice approaches
- 3) Engage in collaborative co-facilitation activities
- 4) Invite and accept feedback of work done
- 5) Request direct supervision
- 6) Develop more self awareness

- 7) Welcome support and encouragement
- 8) Obtain training in group work
- 9) Improve diagnostic skills

Expectation of the Student from Social Work Program's

Many social work programs are required to adhere to the accreditation requirements of the council on Social Work Education. There is flexibility in the method of delivery of the field work curriculum. In the United States of America the following tasks are required of students (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007):

- 1) Completion of practicum forms required by the agency and the school
- 2) Verification of health status and completion of health related requirements (immunizations, medical tests, or health related precautions and regulations)
- 3) Verification of malpractice coverage
- 4) Completion of personal information (background, criminal records, child abuse checks, health information, or drug screening)

In India, many of these tasks are not required. Students are however required to take health related precautions while working in hospitals and communities where there may be a risk of contracting contagious diseases. Students are also required to ensure that they do not pass on infections to susceptible patients (renal failure, burn or surgery patients).

Students are also required to respect different cultures prevailing in India. They are oriented to various religious practices and are required to abide by them to avoid offending clients because of ignorance. During home visits, they remove footwear before entering the client's houses. The proper form of address is required to be used while referring to elders.

Student's Expectations of the Field Supervisor

In general, the field instructor should support the student and facilitate learning by ensuring that the environment is conducive to acquiring knowledge and skills. A good balance between offering challenges and support would be best for the students' field experience. The student can expect the following tasks of the field instructor (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007):

- 1) Be committed to the educational growth and development of the student
- 2) Take on the role of a mentor
- 3) Show respect and fair treatment
- 4) Provide continued feedback of students' strengths and areas of growth
- 5) Communicate supervisors' expectations of student, evaluation philosophy, availability, supervisory sessions, contacts and resources
- 6) Support in developing a plan of learning (orientation of activities, staff, schedules; opportunity to observe instructor, staff and other

students; case assignments; staff student collaboration).

- 7) Provide information (agency, field work parameters, structure, organization's plan, students' role)
- 8) Clarify physical and emotional boundaries of the field work experience
- 9) Make available agency, field, professional, administrative and logistic information required for the student to function adequately
- 10) Inform student of dates and schedules of meetings, events and conferences
- 11) Making clear expectations of student regarding dress, behaviour, work hours, homework, and collaboration with staff and other professionals.
- 12) Provide adequate feedback regarding, writing, learning and skills.

In India, there is a more submissive role adopted by the student in relation with any teacher. Unlike in the United States of America, the students defer to the higher teacher's authority. Students address the teachers with "Sir / Ma'am". It is the social work program and the field work liaison's plan that determine what the student should expect and learn at the field work placement. In most cases the students' personality and motivation to learn, determine the amount of knowledge and skills garnered at field work training. A relatively shy student or one who does not really care about making the most of the field work placement, coupled with supervisors who do not make sure that the student fulfills the obligations of the field work

training, would result in little learning during the field work training.

Student's Expectations of the Faculty Supervisor

A faculty supervisor or liaison can be a valuable support and resource in India. A supervisor who is particular about structure and believes in the importance of enabling the students to optimize the field work placement would really make sure that the student acquires adequate knowledge and skills. There are some field work liaisons that offer the student some flexibility and encourage the student to help in making the learning goals and plans. There are still other laissez-faire field work liaisons who may give the student the whole freedom and responsibility to make sure they learn something during the field work placement. In this case the student must have the motivation and initiative to make the most of the field work placement.

The following are the general expectation a student can have from the faculty supervisor (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007):

- 1) Serve as a link between the agency, field instructor and social work program
- 2) Orient the student to the field work process and social work program expectations
- 3) Inform and assist the student about the learning agreement, tasks, activities, evaluation criteria and outcomes
- 4) Respond to questions regarding field work, mediate conflicts, advocate on behalf of the student

- 5) Serve as a consultant to field work agencies and instructors in establishment and evaluation of field work plans, structure and roles
- 6) Monitor the field work experience to ensure goal achievement
- 7) Remain available throughout the field work experience to assess goals, interests, skills and aspirations
- 8) Provide a safe space to process field work experiences and challenges.

Learning Expectations while Working with Individuals, Families and Groups

At this level the focus is on the systematic application of focused theory and development of skills, knowledge and techniques conducted with professionalism (Dore, Epstein & Herrerias, 1992). The focus would be on problem solving and empowerment while the practice may be multilevel, multimethod and theoretically eclectic. The emphasis would be for the student to learn assessment and intervention skills.

Dore, Epstein & Herrerias, (1992) have identified eight specific areas of skill, knowledge and value development that are critical for micro-practice learning.

- 1) Specific micro practice skills including engagement of client system, exploration of problems and feelings, goal setting, contracting, termination and application of appropriate treatment strategies (relationship building, empathy, cultural competence, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation)

- 2) Capability for critical thinking (conceptual understanding and integration of values and theory)
- 3) Capacity for self directed learning (e.g. management of dependencies and ability to seek and accept new knowledge)
- 4) Professional competency (flexibility, self- initiative, and risk taking).
- 5) Leadership ability (e.g. Communication, advocacy, and commitment to social change)
- 6) Caseload management (e.g. Knowledge of community resources and time management skills)
- 7) Interpersonal skills (e.g. Use of self in the helping relationship, relational capacities and ability to engage in effective collaboration with and on behalf of the client)
- 8) Administrative skills (e.g. Case preparation and presentation and self-evaluation).

In the Indian context, the student would get more than adequate opportunity to work with individuals. At agencies helping children, women and in those that work with clients with medical, psychological and substance abuse issues, the students are able to develop knowledge and skills. They learn skills in building relationships, identifying the problem area, assessing needs and resources, make prognosis and finally work with the treatment plan. It may be more difficult to work with groups and families. In institutions, there may be opportunity to form groups

and acquire skills in group work. It is usually more difficult to work with whole families. Many times the breadwinner cannot take time off and other family members may be busy especially in rural areas. When it comes to women's problems, very few husbands would support the wife asking for external help. They either deny the problem or try to conceal it. In still other cases, the family members are expected to get help from within the family which comprises of the joint or extended family members too. The student usually works with parts of the family at different times or just works with the few available family members.

Group work comprises of groups differing in goals, sizes, formats and agendas. The general skills required are communication, mediation, negotiation, education, leadership and knowledge of members' roles. Even if the primary method of intervention for some social workers may not be group work, many engage in groups at some part of their practice. It is considered to be cost effective and used with clients and in management and administrative duties. According to the NASW Code of Ethics, enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities is considered to be paramount to the function of social work.

In general Yalom (1995) suggests that the social worker is the group leader and needs to be emotionally stimulating, caring, interpreting feelings, group process, and executing group rules, and limits. The group leader is flexible, aware of clients' issues, has insight into group process, able to confront, clarify, interpret and support. The social worker is also

expected to respond appropriately to frustration and resistance. Three models of group work are briefly described followed by the roles that the social worker may be expected to take on (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007).

- 1) Social goals model is based on problem-focused interests and goals. It could include neighborhood safety, parent-teacher, community development task force, coalition of professionals advocating for improved welfare legislation. The social worker may be an initiator, convener, organizer, facilitator, advocate or act as a resource.
- 2) In the reciprocal goals model the groups are based on mutual aid and self-help in which members support one another through sharing common experiences. It could include 12-step programs (Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Al-anon, and Alateen), grief support groups, caregiver support groups, or disease specific patient support groups (cancer, leukemia, multiple sclerosis, renal failure). The social worker fulfills roles of facilitator, mediator, educator or support.
- 3) The remedial goals model is based on the philosophy that the group member interactions facilitate change. It includes psychotherapy groups, marital therapy groups, child abuse perpetrators groups, trauma survivors groups. The social worker is the therapist, clinician, educator or mediator.

Various group leaders draw their styles and behaviours from multiple areas depending on the situation at hand and required response. Even though social workers

would predominantly have one of the following styles, they are expected to adopt any of the following depending on the response required by the group situation:

- 1) The energizer who is charismatic, energetic, supportive and attacking. They set stringent rules and limits.
- 2) The provider conveys meaning and caring to group members and effects positive outcomes with minimal risks.
- 3) The social engineer uses group process and support.
- 4) The impersonal leader is more distant, minimally caring, and rigid in rules and high level of stimulation.
- 5) The laissez-faire leader is minimally caring and attends to procedures.
- 6) The manager uses structured interventions.

Learning expectations while working with organizations and communities

Social workers can bring about large scale change among many clients through systemic solutions when working with organizations, communities and policy change. In India, the students rarely get an opportunity to work with organizations and deal with policy change. In some cases they get the chance to work with social activist groups that work for women's development, environmental issues and other social and religious causes. Students get adequate opportunity to work in communities. Many schools of social work make it a

point to place students in rural communities. This is a unique opportunity for students from the urban areas. Whatever area of specialization is chosen by the student, there is a required placement in a rural village or urban slum. In large cities where the rural community would be a great distance, the community placement may be in a slum district which functions as a separate community. This experience is very different from that of a rural village. In the urban slum, the student may get to work with transient workers, problems of construction workers, social action with leaders working against eviction of slum dwellers, enabling the dwellers to get water or electricity and such issues. The nature of this community is not permanent and therefore the students' work would be directed towards helping dwellers to get benefits and better their situation.

In the United States of America, social workers working at this level may be social planners, program developers, administrators, executive directors or organizational developers. Breuggmann, (1996) suggests the following skills required by social work administrators.

- 1) Budgeting and financial management
- 2) Working with boards
- 3) Organizational design, development, assessment and diagnosis
- 4) Computer information systems and other technology
- 5) Human resource management (selection, training, supervision and staff compensation)

- 6) Management (including use of affirmative action principles)
- 7) Marketing management techniques
- 8) Networking
- 9) Financial resource development
- 10) Media relations

Community development social workers, community organizers, social activists or social researchers are expected to possess the following skills (Breuggmann, 1996).

- 1) Program development, implementation and evaluation
- 2) Fundraising (grant writing)
- 3) Coalition formulation and maintenance
- 4) Planned change techniques
- 5) Macro-level; advocacy
- 6) Community analysis
- 7) Inter-organizational planning
- 8) Leadership development and citizen participation
- 9) Small-group decision-making techniques
- 10) Community organizing
- 11) Task force membership
- 12) Membership development and retention
- 13) Economic development techniques

14) Computer information systems and other technology

Social policy analysts, lobbyists or elected officials are expected to have the following skills (Breuggmann, 1996):

- 1) Legislative (advocacy and lobbying skills)
- 2) Policy analysis and management
- 3) Issue analysis techniques
- 4) Social policy research
- 5) Legal (e.g. ability to use the judicial system or draft legislation)

The skills grouped under different headings share a symbiotic relationship in practice. Practitioners in one area are often required to possess other related skills too. To be an effective group worker, the social worker must have knowledge of working with individuals and families. The same could be said of working with communities too. Knowledge of one method helps in utilizing other methods of social work. The level of skills required by the social worker depends entirely on the type of agency or community and the situation at hand. It is important for the social work student to possess a wide repertoire of knowledge and skills in order to meet the field work demands.

Conclusion

Field work is an interesting and interactive learning process. There are various roles a student has to perform while learning to practice social work. A student has certain expectations from field work, and the field

supervisor. A learner gets several opportunities to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and have certain learning expectations while dealing with numerous situations.

The aim of this chapter is to provide you guidelines to understand the various roles and expectations in social work practicum. We have discussed in detail the student's expectations from the field work supervisor. The chapter provides you an understanding on the systematic application of focused theory and development of skills, knowledge and techniques associated with professionalism. This chapter will enable you to recognize how social workers can bring about large desired changes among their clients through systematic interventions while working with individuals, groups, families, organizations, communities and policy formulation.

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7

ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK TRAINING INSTITUTE

**Patricia Lager, B. Hamann, Neil Abell*

Introduction

Role and expectations of the social work training institute is a unique chapter in the entire social work curriculum of IGNOU. In social work practicum there are several persons and institutions involved which include the student, staff at the school/college/department of social work, functionaries at the agency, faculty supervisor, agency supervisor and the client system. Each of these units have specific role and contributions to be made in the training a para-professional. The social work institute could be an independent college of social work (we have several in India in the conventional system), college having one department and universities having one department or a school/college of social work. For example college of social work is one of the colleges within the Florida State University and School of Social Work is one of

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the schools established by IGNOU which has the mandate to develop and launch programmes of study in social work.

In this chapter we shall describe the minimum criteria required for social work training institute in identifying suitable agencies for field placement and in providing the much needed guidance for supervision by agency supervisors. Apart from discussing the criteria set by IGNOU, This unit also examines the policies of the college of social work, Florida State University which has regular students, distance learners as well as online programmes of study in social work. Field work standards and activities are very important in social work practicum. We have described the same along with employment based practicum and guidelines for in-service placements which are relevant to several IGNOU BSW and MSW students. Students learning expectations and responsibilities, placement contents, student education contract, university –agency partnership contract in the case of FSU and the international policies regarding accreditations and standards are other matters that will be discussed in this unit.

This chapter will be of great help not only to you as a student, but also to agency supervisors and faculty involved in extending the much needed guidance of students of social work.

Minimum Criteria for Social Work Training Institute

Identification of suitable agencies in the area where field work can be done and securing their cooperation

and consent for the same is an important function of the field work supervisor. Agencies are now found in most parts of the country and the selection of suitable sites for training students is based on the following criteria established by IGNOU:

- An agency that is registered is preferred over an agency that is not registered.
- An agency that has professional social workers employed who are available for guiding learners is preferred over an agency that does not have trained social workers.
- The agency should have a well defined structure and well defined roles for its employees as opposed to a loosely structured agency with informal lines.
- An agency that provides a variety of services from simple to complex so the learner can obtain a diverse experience.
- An agency that reflects the philosophy and practice of social work.
- An agency committed to providing quality educational experiences to the learners and help them become good social workers.

College of Social Work : FSU policies

Florida State University (College of Social Work) has a set of policies which lays down certain criteria as necessary conditions for agencies to meet in order to be a field placement site for students. The agency must agree to:

- Provide opportunities for students of the school in accordance with the cooperative planning by the faculty of the school and the agency staff. This should include individual, family, and group experiences.
- Meet the expectations of the program in the provision of diligent supervision for students with a qualified field instructor who is an MSW with at least two years experience in the field.
- Assist in the orientation of the students to the agency policies and procedures, and provide access to equipment and records as necessary for teaching purposes.
- Provide work space for the students to the extent feasible through mutual planning and learning materials appropriate to the student's responsibilities during the period of placement.
- Assist in the evaluation of students' learning and performance.
- Provide students with experiences and supervision that meets the ethical standards of the profession and inform them of the ethical and legal requirements regarding confidentiality of communications and records with regard to the agency's clients.
- Make provision of orientation of students and faculty members of the school to the facilities, philosophies, policies, and programs of the agency.
- Provide an interdisciplinary team experience, if possible.

- Allow the student to participate in social histories, progress notes, treatment plans, and other appropriate documentation.
- Assignments for students will be planned by the faculty of the school in cooperation with the supervisory staff at the agency.
- Faculty, supervisory staff, and students will work together to maintain an environment which provides quality service to the client and student learning.
- Arrange for agency field supervisors and field students to meet with representatives of the school at least once during the term of the placement for a joint review of the student's progress. These individuals will communicate more often as needed.
- Refrain from discriminating in the assignment of social work students to the internship program because of race, color, creed, national origin, disability, or gender.

Field Work Standards and Activities; Employment Based Practicums

When the social work programme contracts with a training institute to provide a practicum site for students, a number of expectations are communicated during the process of evaluating the agency as a potential site for students to obtain a positive learning experience.

It is an expectation of the social work programme that field work supervisors have the following necessary

qualifications: an earned MSW from an accredited school of social work; two years of post-masters work experience in an agency setting; and an interest in students and willingness to accept the role of field instructor. If a qualified MSW is not available, undergraduate field students can be supervised by a BSW field instructor with extensive practice experience. Field instructors are expected to be competent and ethical social work practitioners in one or more areas of service and to be willing to work within the program's philosophy of social work education and general field learning objectives.

Students are expected to meet with their MSW field instructor for a minimum of one hour of supervision each week. In agencies where there is no MSW field instructor on-site, the agency is expected to provide an external off-site MSW to supervise masters students. The agency then agrees to identify a task supervisor qualified to provide on-site guidance regarding appropriate assignments and agency policies and procedures. The task supervisor maintains close contact with the field instructor and actively participates in the evaluation process.

In general, the field work supervisor's responsibilities include coordinating with the social work program to provide a field experience that augments and complements classroom learning; orienting the student to agency policies, procedures, and population served; coordinating involvement with other staff members; scheduling weekly supervisory conferences; and assisting the student in developing professional work habits. In order to assist the student in the development of professional skills, knowledge and values, the field

work supervisor maintains an ongoing evaluation of the student's progress, prepares a written evaluation of the student's performance at the mid-term and at the end of the field practicum; and communicates regular feedback to the student about his/her performance. The field supervisor is also expected to keep the faculty liaison informed about the student's progress and advise the liaison of concerns, after having first discussed them with the student. In addition, the field supervisor provides feedback to the field program about various programmatic issues involving curriculum, placement content and expectations, and field policies and procedures.

Employment Based Practicums

Traditionally, social work field placements are educationally focused, unpaid training experiences in social work settings that are selected on the basis of the student's level and/or concentration in their programme of studies. There are some situations, however, in which paid employment can meet the standards for field placements therefore can be accepted by the field work programme as a suitable practicum alternative.

The guiding principle for these exceptional decisions is that the field placement experience must constitute new learning, appropriate supervision, and an opportunity to apply theories and knowledge from the classroom in a practice setting. The social work programme organizes course requirements and field instruction in a particular sequence, which is structured in that way for educational reasons. Therefore, this **new learning opportunity** must fall at a certain point

in the program of studies and additionally must meet our established guidelines for field placements.

Problems Confronted in in-service Field Placement

There are a number of potential problems which may arise when students attempt to combine jobs with field placement. (1) The agency may emphasize productivity of the student employee, rather than the student's own learning. (2) If job duties change, the position may no longer meet the criteria for social work activities for that student's concentration. (3) Both the student and the agency may be less willing to disclose problems that arise during the field placement, such as inadequate supervision, activities that are incongruent with placement expectations, situations that threaten their employment status, etc. This could lead to a delayed intervention by the field work program, sometimes resulting in "Unsatisfactory" or "Incomplete" grades for the field placement. In our experience, paid employment can present many complicating factors which limit students' full utilization of this educational opportunity and should be weighed carefully by the student and the employer.

Guidelines for in-service Placements

The field work program cautions students about the potential problems of these placement situations and reserves the right to approve paid employment sites as field placements based on the following guidelines. These would apply to new jobs as well as to existing employment.

- 1) All of the required field hours must take place under the supervision of a **new** (to the student) MSW field

supervisor. This supervisor must meet the educational standards of the social work programme.

- 2) The activities must be congruent with the student's concentration or level (graduate or undergraduate) in the program. Some jobs that are assigned the title of "Social Worker" do not meet the expectations of the practice activities for a particular field experience. Students are responsible for the understanding and adhering to the course objectives for field instruction.
- 3) The activities themselves must constitute **new** learning for the student (i.e., a new population, utilizing new treatment methodology, and/or in a new field of practice).
- 4) There must be caseload control (if applicable) in this position in order to ensure that the student's educational goals are the primary focus, not simply the needs of the agency.
- 5) The employment date or date of reassignment within the agency **must** be no more than **90 days** from the first day of the semester in which the student is registered to start the placement, in order to ensure that the field instruction experience falls in sequence with academic course work as structured by our program of studies.
- 6) The student must have demonstrated a clear understanding and endorsement of the educational principles involved. The Office of Field Instruction retains the right to grant this employment-based exception **only** for students who demonstrate high

standards of professional and ethical behaviour and a strong academic record.

- 7) Students will only be given permission to complete **one** employment based internship during the course of their programme.

Based on the above principles and other basic standards of the programme regarding acceptance of placements and supervisors, the field work programme will allow an exception to our standard practice of having employment separate from an internship. This decision will incorporate faculty experience and judgment in evaluating the appropriateness of the exception request. According to the School of Social Work's (FSU) student policy, the field work programme has the authority and responsibility to carefully select and assign field placements; students should not assume that these placements will be automatically approved.

In order to be considered for this special placement request, the student is responsible for the completion of the Proposal for Employment Based Internship and must submit it to the field work programme at least one month (30 days) prior to the beginning of the placement. The decision will be made by the field work director with feedback from faculty involved in the student's placement planning. The decision will be communicated directly to the student as soon as possible.

Student Learning Expectations and Responsibilities

The field work programme encourages all students

entering field to identify their individual learning needs and assume responsibility for shaping their educational process. Prior to beginning the field practicum, students are required to attend an orientation meeting in which the expectations and responsibilities of the field programme are communicated, both verbally and in written handouts. The content of the planning meeting includes field policies and procedures, the field application and interview process, deadline dates, expectations regarding supervision, the integrative seminar, field agency requirements, the role of the liaison and the MSW field instructor, field placement objectives, the Learning Contract, termination policies, sexual harassment and safety issues, liability insurance information, and the field evaluation process.

Placement Contents

Students are also given information on preferred placement content based on the learning objectives of their concentration. The following content areas are communicated to both students and field instructors as minimum expectations when structuring the internship experience:

- 1) Provision of a comprehensive orientation of the student to the agency staff, client systems, agency policies and procedures, safety concerns, supervision expectations and requirements, casework requirements, legal and ethical requirements, etc.
- 2) Substantial amount of client contact with approximately 50 per cent of the time at the internship involving direct work with clients. The

student is expected to eventually begin carrying a small caseload of his/her own.

- 3) Exposure to one or more theoretical practice frameworks (with individuals, couples, families, or groups), either directly or through observation.
- 4) Experience with case management and networking responsibilities.
- 5) Experience with case recording and developing intervention plans.
- 6) Completion of a bio-psychosocial assessment, process recordings, and/or video or audio recordings with feedback from the field instructor.
- 7) Exposure to agency administrative meetings, policies and procedures, and case staffings.
- 8) Exposure to inter-agency meetings or staffings.
- 9) Exposure to a diverse client population.
- 10) Exposure to advocacy experiences on a macro level, if possible.
- 11) Completion of a learning contract outlining specific learning objectives and activities consistent with the objectives of the student's concentration.
- 12) Provision of open communication with the field instructor and faculty liaison on the quality of field experiences and learning needs, in addition to areas of concern.
- 13) Opportunity to participate in an agency-based research project, if possible.

Student Educational Contract

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify roles and responsibilities regarding the student's field work experience and to clarify how educational goals and objectives are to be met. The student and field instructor develop this portion of the contract together. It will specify educational goals, student assignments and educational learning experiences. This should be submitted to the student's faculty liaison and/or seminar instructor no later than the 3rd week of placement. It is recognized that specific content may change in response to the developing needs of both the student and the agency. If changes in this contract are necessary, they should be agreed to by all parties involved. In order for students to meet field requirements, assignments should begin immediately and **not** be deferred until the contract is completed.

University-Agency Partnership: The Contractual Agreement

A well defined agency-university partnership is an integral component of a successful field work programme and practicum experience for social work students. Agencies that have met the minimum criteria for acceptance as a field practicum site are expected to sign a written agreement detailing the overall expectations of the social work programme in assuming responsibility for meeting the educational objectives of the programme. The agreement details what the agency's tasks are in meeting the expectations of the student and programme during the course of the placement. It also includes the duties assumed by the social work programme in the placement of students

at the agency and how specific expectations of the training institute will be met. The overall purpose of this agreement is to guide and direct a working relationship between the agency and the school in providing learning experiences for students during their internship as a partial requirement for a degree in social work.

International Policies regarding Accreditation and Standards

In the *Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession* (International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2004), members of the IASSW provided clear guidance on a range of issues governing the ethical conduct of social work education in general, and field education in particular. As emphasized elsewhere in this curriculum, the development of the *Standards* document was intentional and contentious, resulting in a set of guidelines to be regarded as a meaningful starting point in what would remain an ongoing, dynamic dialog among member nations. As Sewpaul summarized.

The global standards document is characterised by flexibility, with an overarching and embedded human rights and social justice emphasis, yet with a simultaneous emphasis on historical, sociopolitical, economic and cultural context specific realities. Of absolute premium is the document's emphasis on dialogue within and across nations and regions (2005, p. 213).

In that context, a set of guidelines were proposed including, among other topics: field curricula; structure,

administration, governance, and resources for field programs; and values and ethics for the conduct of social work field education. Selected elements of the *Standards* are inserted below (retaining their exact wording from the complete document cited above).

Standards with Regard to Programme Curricula including Field Education

With regard to standards regarding programme curricula, schools should consistently aspire towards the following:

- Clear plans for the organization, implementation and evaluation of the theory and field education components of the programme.
- Involvement of service users in the planning and delivery of programmes.
- Recognition and development of indigenous or locally specific social work education and practice from the traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups and societies, in so far that such traditions and cultures do not violate human rights.
- Ensuring that the curricula helps social work students to develop skills of critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of reasoning, openness to new experiences and paradigms, and commitment to life-long learning.
- Field education should be sufficient in duration and complexity of tasks and learning opportunities to ensure that students are prepared for professional practice.

- Planned co-ordination and links between the school and the agency/field placement settings.
- Provision of orientation for fieldwork supervisors or instructors.
- Appointment of field supervisors or instructors who are qualified and experienced, as determined by the development status of the social work profession in any given country, and provision of orientation for fieldwork supervisors or instructors.
- Provision for the inclusion and participation of field instructors in curriculum development.
- A partnership between the educational institution and the agency (where applicable) and service users in decision-making regarding field education and the evaluation of student's fieldwork performance.
- Making available, to fieldwork instructors or supervisors, a field instruction manual that details its fieldwork standards, procedures, assessment standards/criteria and expectations.
- Ensuring that adequate and appropriate resources, to meet the needs of the fieldwork component of the programme, are made available.

Collectively, this section of the *Standards* specifies the wide range of activities to be considered in planning and sustaining social work field education. From an institutional point of view, the expectations are quite large, and require a dedicated professional staff to manage and implement. As far-reaching as these components are, they are seldom considered "complete".

Once a working program is in place, it requires nearly constant maintenance and revision as communities, service organizations, and the individuals working for or served by them change. To function successfully, all parties must know their roles and be willing and able to fulfill them. Administrators, as indicated in the next section, must keep their attention on all these issues while also attending to the bureaucratic and management concerns necessary to support them.

Standards with Regard to Structure, Administration, Governance and Resources

With regard to structure, administration, governance and resources, the school and/or the educational institution should aspire towards the following:

- Social work programmes are implemented through a distinct unit known as a Faculty, School, Department, Centre or Division, which has a clear identity within the educational institution.
- The school has a designated Head or Director who has demonstrated administrative, scholarly and professional competence, preferably in the profession of social work.
- Where the school offers distance, mixed-mode, decentralized and/or internet based education there is provision of adequate infrastructure, including classroom space, computers, texts, audio-visual equipment, community resources for fieldwork education, and on-site instruction and supervision to facilitate the achievement of its core purpose or mission, programme objectives and expected outcomes.

- The school develops and maintains linkages within the institution, with external organizations and with service users relevant to its core purpose or mission and its objectives.

Organizational structure can never be overlooked. To function effectively, schools of social work must hold positions of respect among their peer organizations in the larger university environment, and be directed by leaders who are themselves respected both within and beyond their professions and academia. Like the issues raised in the preceding section, neither of these can be assumed to be permanent or static. Priorities change within universities and the larger governmental structures within which they operate, and program leaders are continuously challenged to stay on top of emerging issues, opportunities and obstacles alike, that impact the programs they direct. As addressed in the following section, administration and governance also depends on anticipating resolution of problems and disputes, and on provision of a structure within which to assess and, when necessary, sanction violations of ethical codes.

Standards with Regard to Values and Ethical Codes of Conduct of the Social Work Profession

In view of the recognition that social work values, ethics and principles are the core components of the profession, schools should consistently aspire towards:

Registration of professional staff and social work students (insofar as social work students develop working relationships with people via fieldwork placements) with national and/or regional regulatory

(whether statutory or non-statutory) bodies, with defined codes of ethics. Members of such bodies are generally bound to the provisions of those codes.

Ensuring that every social work student involved in fieldwork education, and every professional staff member, is aware of the boundaries of professional practice and what might constitute unprofessional conduct in terms of the code of ethics. Where students violate the code of ethics, programme staff may take necessary and acceptable remedial and/or initial disciplinary measures, or counsel the student out of the programme.

Taking appropriate action in relation to those social work students and professional staff, who fail to comply with the code of ethics either through an established regulatory social work body, established procedures of the educational institution, and/or through legal mechanisms.

Ensuring that regulatory social work bodies are broadly representative of the social work profession, including where applicable social workers from both the public and private sector, and of the community that it serves including the direct participation of service users.

Upholding, as far as is reasonable and possible, the principles of restorative rather than retributive justice in disciplining either social work students or professional staff who violate the code of ethics.

The collective cultural wisdom reflected in codes of ethics provides a firm foundation for consideration of problems in professional behaviour. As detailed elsewhere in this curriculum, such text covers

considerable ground in defining what is “right” and “wrong” in social workers’ interactions with clients, peers, supervisors and administrators, and the wider communities where practice takes place. Still, it cannot be taken for granted that all actors involved in a dispute will share a common view, or agree spontaneously to solutions to their problems. In this section, advocating that all members of the field enterprise (students, faculty, supervisors, and administrators) be joined as members in professional organizations provides one basis for establishing common ground.

When problems persist despite best efforts to find mutually agreeable resolutions, the principles of restorative rather than retributive justice are recommended. Restorative justice, whose aim is to establish or reinforce positive skills in the person found at fault, the goal is more than retribution or punishment. As one would hope in an educational field setting, when problems have been recognized and defined, the best choice is always to help all parties learn from their mistakes, and follow a path towards better, wiser decisions in the future.

Conclusion

Social work professionals are expected to approach a problem from a wide variety of perspectives. The intent of social work training institute is to provide a solid base of skills in working at the micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice. In this chapter we have presented the roles and expectations of the social work training institute by setting certain minimum criteria for practical training. The discussion also covered the

policies of school of social work, IGNOU and the college of social work, Florida State University. We have also seen the field work standards and activities, employment based practicum of FSU, guidelines for in-service placements, student learning expectations and responsibilities, placement contents, student education contract, university agency partnership and the international policies regarding accreditation and the standards set by International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2004. On the whole this unit is expected to provide adequate information and knowledge to distance learners about the roles and expectations of the social work training institute with regard to field practicum in social work.

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8

Principles and Skills for Social Work and Agency Practice

**Gracious Thomas, Nita Kumari*

Introduction

Every profession has certain principles to be followed by the professionals. These principles are applicable in most practice situations, regardless of client characteristics, practice settings or roles assumed by the professional. Knowledge becomes useless if the person is not able to communicate properly. Therefore it is expected that a professional social worker should have adequate knowledge and training in communication skills in order to successfully practice social work. He should also have capability to carry out all the documentation and other similar tasks needed while working with any Govt./NGO or other private organization. In this unit we have borrowed extensively from the writings of Sheafor and Horejsi (2003), which will be of immense use to social work students in Open and Distance Learning System. We have also considered the local situation while developing this unit.

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Principles for Social Work Practice

Principles are basic rules or guidelines which enable a practitioner to be competent in his/her profession. These principles are to be applied with careful and thoughtful analysis. Sheafor and Horejsi (2003) in their book "Techniques and Guidelines for social work practice" have explained 24 fundamental principles that should guide social work practice. They have divided these principles into two parts. First six principles have been focusing on social workers and the remaining eighteen principles are concerned with the social worker's interaction with a client/client group viz. an individual, family, small group, organization, neighbourhood, community, or even a larger social structure. Let us briefly highlight the salient features of each of these principles.

Principles that Focus on the Social Worker

1) The social worker should practice social work

A student of social work is taught knowledge, skills, values, ethics and principles of social work in the theory papers. Therefore one is not expected to behave in an unprofessional manner. For example a student may come across a client who met with an accident. When he/she went to meet the client he/she may become emotional and weep. In such a situation, the worker is not expected to express his/her emotions with the client (say by shedding tears). Remember the principle of controlled emotional involvement. As a professional you should do what you are sanctioned and trained to do. You should use your professional knowledge, values

and skills while dealing with the client in a given situation.

2) **The social worker should engage in conscious use of self**

As a para-professional, you should work within your own abilities, capacities and limitations. Neither should you make false promises to the client nor impose your own style and beliefs, values, and attitudes on the client. As a professional the worker should develop a feeling of trust and welfare in the mind of the client.

For example, as a student placed in a community you should not make false promises to the community that you will provide them job, a "pakka road" in the village or start an income generating activity.

Worker should keep in mind their social background and culture. Let us take an another example. The worker is a vegetarian and the client is a non-vegetarian. The worker should not impose his/her life style on the client and expect the client to follow the lifestyle of the worker. A worker must be consciously aware about one's own beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours that may have an impact on their professional relationships, as these personal attributes will surely affect the ability to be helpful to the clients.

3) **The social worker should maintain professional objectivity**

As a social worker you are expected to behave in a professional manner with the client by maintaining a certain distance and not getting involved personally. For example a client may request the worker to help

him/her by providing financial assistance for his/her sister's marriage. In such situation, you need to be very clear about your roles and limitations and maintain professionalism to deal with the situation tactfully.

4) The social worker should respect human diversity

As a para-professional, you should not discriminate the client on the basis of his/her cultural background, religion, sex, physical and intellectual abilities. For example a worker is dealing with a client who belongs to a minority community. It is not appropriate for a professional social worker if he/she starts avoiding the client by not visiting his/her family fearing negative reaction from the rest of the community. The social worker is expected to respect every client as human being without any judgemental attitude. A social worker must appreciate the variations within any group. He should avoid making assumptions about any one person's cultural identity, beliefs, or values on the basis of the person's external characteristics or membership in a particular population or demographic group.

5) The social worker should challenge social injustice

Social worker believes that every individual has certain basic rights, such as those spelt out in the constitution, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations. All members have the same basic rights, protection, opportunities, obligations and social benefits. Therefore, a social worker must be always prepared to do the needful to contribute to social justice by fighting social injustice.

6) The social worker should seek to enhance professional competence

A social worker should not sit aside by assuming that he/she knows each and everything on any issue under the sun. He/she should update his/her knowledge by interacting with wide range of people, seeking ideas from available and updated literature and through all means of communication including the web. He/she should also keep himself/herself up-to-date with new concepts and theories by attending workshops, conferences, refresher courses and participation in social and academic deliberations. In fact every profession demand that the professionals must keep themselves well informed. Social work professionals are not exempted either.

Principles that Focus on Individual Clients and Client Groups

1) The social worker should do no harm

As a social worker, you should work towards bringing about change in the lives of your clients. Therefore you should develop programmes or activities in such a manner that they do not underestimate the client's feelings and positive life styles. Your main focus should be the care and welfare of your clients.

2) The social worker should engage in knowledge-guided practice

A professional social worker is expected to equip himself/herself with the latest and most professional knowledge while dealing with the clientle group. Therefore, a worker should not deal with the client without adequate study and analysis of the problem in

the present day context. He/she should carefully study similar conditions and intervention approaches to that condition. This is very essential in the Indian context where we have numerous groups with social, cultural and geographic diversity.

3) The social worker should engage in value-guided and ethical practice

Every human being has his/her own values and work on those values. A social worker must always try to recognize the client's value system to bring about change in his/her situation. He/she should not impose his/her beliefs on his/her clients. The social worker must recognize that values are powerful forces in human behaviour and be guided by values of social work profession.

4) The social worker should be concerned with the whole person

As a social worker you should deal with the whole person including one's biological, psychological, social and spiritual aspects instead of studying one dimension of the problem. You should look at the client's problem from past, present and future perspectives. For example a child is arrested in a criminal case. The worker studies past history of the child, the family background, friendship circle etc. in addition to some of the factors that might have contributed to make him/her a criminal. As a worker you should also be focusing on present situation and the future consequences from various angles. The worker should also focus on both the short-term and long-term implications of the change process for the

client and other people who may be affected by the client's behaviour.

5) **Social worker should serve the most vulnerable members of society**

A number of programmes have been initiated and the policies have been formulated for the vulnerable section of the society both by the national government and United Nations. However, several vulnerable sections are unable to benefit from such provisions. Therefore a social worker must do work for this section and should fight for their rights to bring about social change and social justice. The social worker must do advocacy for the people who are poor, mentally or physically disabled, those from a minority race or culture, and who otherwise are treated as devalued. They often face special challenges of discrimination, ostracism, and neglect by the dominant society while struggling to bring about social change.

6) **The social worker should treat the client with dignity**

Every individual deserves to be treated with dignity, regard and respect. A social worker should accept the client as he/she really is, including his/her strengths and weaknesses, his/her positive and negative feelings, attitudes and behaviour with a non-judgemental attitude. This does not mean that you should approve every behaviour of a client. The social worker must treat the client as a person who is valued and deserves to maintain his/her dignity throughout the period of helping process. The social worker's non-judgmental attitude helps the clients to overcome the common fear of being judged by others. This will enable in developing

positive helping relationship rather than defensive action on part of the client.

7) The social worker should individualize the client

Individualization is the recognition and understanding of each client's unique qualities and the differential use of principles and methods in assisting each one towards better adjustment and participate in the changing process. A social worker must treat his/her client not merely as a human being but a human being with his/her personal differences. The social worker must individualize the client, because for every client the situation and problem may be unique. What works with one client may not work with another.

8) The social worker should consider clients expertise on their lives

A social worker may have great extent of theoretical knowledge of human functioning. However he/she may not know the actual situation of the client. Therefore in a helping relationship he/she should consult the client, who is the primary experts on his/her life. The client knows about himself/herself much better than the worker. In fact, the worker is not expected to know all about his/her client. The client may prefer to keep certain information to himself/herself and may not share all facts.

For example a worker may try to motivate a client to take up a job which might involve night shift. The client may have limitation at his/her home including relationships with spouse, children, aged parents etc. In such situation rather than imposing his/her idea,

the worker must try to understand the circumstances in which client lives.

9) **The social worker should lend vision to the client**

In the helping process, a worker gives positive hope and a clear vision to deal with the present problem of the client. Worker may introduce the client to new and better ways to cope up with the situation. However the worker should not forget to let the client become familiar with the limits while offering new perspectives. It is essential to note that the clients are not given false hopes. The social worker must be realistic and honest about limits and possibilities while offering new perspectives, encouragement, support, and techniques for social change.

10) **The social worker should build on client strengths**

Every individual has some weaknesses and strengths. A worker should not resort to negative way of thinking. Worker should try to understand the strengths, abilities and potentials of the client. For example in the case of a disabled client, the worker must address his/her abilities instead of thinking that he/she is a disabled and can do only limited activities. You should realize that it is the client's abilities and potentials that are most important in helping to bring about desired changes.

11) **The social worker should maximize client participation**

A social worker must encourage the client to give his/her full participation so that a meaningful and long lasting change can take place. A meaningful change

will occur only if the client understands the need for change and is willing and able to take action. In order to enhance client participation, the social worker should 'do with the client' and not "to" or "for" the client.

12) The social worker should maximize client's self-determination

A social worker should give freedom to the client for stimulation and to think independently and rationally on his/her own problematic situation and arrive at a decision, for himself/herself. The client is capable and legally competent to make decisions in relation to self and others. However, it is easier said than done. In order to reach this stage, a worker has to consciously work with the client for a considerable length of time. The job of the worker is to enable the client to explore alternatives as well as analyze the implications of outcomes.

13) The social worker should help the client learn self-directed problem-solving skills

To make the client independent and self-reliant, a worker must help the client learn self-directed and problem-solving skills. By learning these skills a client can cope up easily with his/her day to day problems without having dependency on the worker. For example the social worker should teach their clients how to identify and make use of resources such as family members, relatives, friends, employer, service clubs etc. that might be found in their immediate environment.

14) The social worker should maximize client empowerment

In our Indian society one can easily find out the victims of various forms of discrimination and oppression. It is not possible for a social worker to be available everywhere and every time with a client to save him/her from such practices. Therefore, it is necessary to empower the client to fight against such discrimination and to manage future situations on one's own. For this the social work should make efforts to help people gain control over their lives and circumstances, to obtain the much needed information and resources, to develop skills needed to make the decisions, take the actions necessary to attain a higher level of self-reliance and modify one's social and political environment. In order to empower a client, a social worker should place emphasis on encouraging, teaching, facilitating, collaborating and sharing decision making within the professional relationship.

15) The social worker should protect client confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to professional relationship. It is the foundation for any therapeutics relationship with a client. Therefore worker should keep confidential the information which is being shared by the client. Sharing such information unnecessarily with outsiders can easily break worker client relationship. Only a professionally qualified worker can practice this principle in letter and spirit. For example the social worker must be cautious regarding what information is placed in agency files, and care must be taken in preparing clerical staff employed in the agency to

respect the confidential nature of any materials they may type, file or inadvertently overhear. The social worker must carefully plan the location of interviews to protect confidential information and should not discuss all information during professional consultations with other people and service organizations.

16) The social worker should adhere to the philosophy of normalization

A worker should not discriminate and isolate a client who is mentally or physically weak. This will create barrier for the client in gaining social acceptance. Worker should treat a differently abled client as he/she treats other clients so that he/she should not feel himself/herself a different person.

17) The social worker should continuously evaluate the progress of the change process

Evaluation is an appraisal or judgment of the worth and effectiveness of the process designed to meet the desired objectives. A worker should continuously monitor and evaluate the progress of the change process. Evaluation enables the worker to discover to what extent objectives have been achieved. Well planned evaluation helps the worker to formulate new objectives and to eliminate unsuited objectives.

18) The social worker should be accountable to clients, agency, community, and the social work profession

In social work practice a social worker should be accountable not only to the client but also to all those

associated with the client, particularly to the agency and the community.

Though the worker should attempt to be accountable to all the parties, the client should be given utmost priority. Social workers are obligated to give their best service to all the clients at all times. They must be accountable to those individuals, families and groups they directly serve. Social workers must be accountable to their employing organizations by carrying out their work as effectively and efficiently as possible. The existence of a professional monopoly demands that the members of a profession are also accountable to the community and to the profession itself.

Communication Skills for Social Workers

Basic communication skills are essential for almost every job or relationship one pursues. Similarly in social work profession too, a professional will have to interact with the clients, whether the client is an individual, a family, a small group, an organization or a community. The professional has to communicate in such a manner that another person can understand it clearly. Communication is a process where one individual conveys information to another either intentionally or unintentionally. It depends on whether a person perceives a message in the words or behaviour of another. Communication can be verbal or non-verbal in nature. It is to get across what one really means to another person. The lack of proper communication is a common cause of problems within families, organizations and other social systems. Generally, communication problems develop under different circumstances:

- Often speak for others rather than letting them speak for themselves.
- Often one does not listen to what others say.
- Often one keeps things to oneself because of fear that others will disapprove of what he/she believes and feels.
- Sometimes one assumes that others know, or should know what one thinks and how one feels.
- Sometimes one allows prejudices, stereotypes, and presumptions to modify what others say.
- Sometimes one keeps silent fearing that he/she does not have anything worthwhile to say.
- At times one suppresses communication by ordering, threatening, preaching, patronizing, judging or blaming.

It is also important to recognize that a person's ethnicity, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status can also have a significant impact, on communication. Let us briefly describe some of the important aspects Sheafor and Horejsi have written about basic communication and helping skills in their work: "Techniques and guidelines for social work practice". For more details, you may like to read the original work (Sixth edition).

Basic Communication and Helping Skills

1) Creating an Effective Helping Relationship

Relationship is the channel through which the capacity of a client is made possible. It is also the medium

through which a client is enabled to state his/her problem and through which attention can be focused on problems. In a helping relationship client and worker meet with the purpose of the intervention. In such meetings the client is being encouraged to make the much needed change. However, doing so is not very easy and can prove to be stressful for the client, to some degree. The key characteristic of a helping relationship include:

Empathy

It refers to the ability of entering into another person's mental state and to feel the latter's feelings. Empathizing with a person in a predicament involves the imaginative viewing of the situation as he/she sees it, understanding his/her feelings and transferring to oneself those particular feelings.

Positive regard

The client must be treated by a worker, as a person of inherent worth and capable of positive change. He/she must be given respect, regardless of appearance, behaviour, life circumstances, or reason for becoming a client. To judge the rightness and wrongness of other people's behaviour, positive regards are very important. Keeping a judgmental attitude is a major barrier for maintaining effective helping relationship.

Warmthness

In personal warmth, a social worker responds to clients in such ways that make them feel safe and accepted. It is mostly a non-verbal communication which is expressed in the form of smile, a soft and soothing voice,

appropriate eye contact, and gestures that convey acceptance and openness.

Genuineness

It refers to a worker being himself/herself or being real. Whatever he/she says matches what he/she does. When a professional has a negative feeling toward a client's behaviour, he/she may exercise self-discipline so it does not damage the professional relationship or harm the client.

2) Verbal Communication Skills

The ability to speak clearly and concisely, and to convey information or articulate an opinion is very essential. Generally a social worker makes frequent use of two broad categories of communication skills:

- Those intended to facilitate interpersonal helping and
- Those intended to facilitate the exchanges of information within an agency, between agencies, and among professionals.

The foundation of good communication stated by Sheafor and Horejsi, are:

- A willingness to understand that every human being is unique: consequently, each person experiences and perceives events and interpersonal exchanges in a unique manner. Thus, a worker should anticipate some degree of misunderstanding and take steps to minimize the problems of miscommunication.

- A willingness and desire to organize one's thoughts and present one's message in a way that will make it easy for others to follow and understand.
- A willingness to listen carefully to other people and to lower your defenses so that you can hear and understand what others say.
- A willingness to take responsibility for one's statements and behaviours.
- A willingness to take the time needed to communicate effectively.

While listening or receiving a message, the worker should remember some points:

- Stop talking. You cannot listen if you are doing all the talking.
- Demonstrate verbally and nonverbally that you want to listen. Show your attention. Let the person know that you care for what he/she is trying to say.
- Be gentle and make allowances for poor behaviour. Try to be calm and to use tact, even if the impaired person is loud or abusive. Try to respond to any negative statements with understanding comments until the angry outburst ends. Sometimes the person will say things that hurt you very much, will use language that offends you, or will speak in a way you do not like. At these times, it is important to remember that, while these things do hurt, they are not meant personally and exclusively to hurt you.

- Do not interrupt. Be patient with the message sender.
- Ask questions if needed, to clarify his/her message.
- Put the message sender at ease. Remove distractions while getting the message.

When sending a message remember to:

- Make use of clear and simple language, speak distinctly and not too fast.
- Do not overload the receiver with information.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact and utilize gestures.
- Ask for comments, questions or feedback to know whether you are being understood properly.

3) **Nonverbal Communication Skills**

Messages conveyed by means of facial expressions, eye movements, gestures and voice qualities such as tone, pitch and resonance, comes in the circle of non-verbal communication that mainly occurs during a face-to-face exchange. Observing nonverbal behaviour may also tell the worker what the client is saying in words truly reflects his/her thoughts and feelings.

Eye-contacts

Eyes reveal much about our emotional state and our sensitivity to and understanding of the immediate situation.

Gestures of Greeting

The social worker must be alert to cultural differences while using gestures of greeting. For example, a firm handshake suggests aggression for people from Asia and Middle East. Among the people of Japan and Thailand, bowing is the appropriate gesture while in India greeting with folded hands are common.

Body Positioning

It conveys various attitudes and intentions. Facing a client at a 90 degree angle suggests safety and openness while facing directly may communicate aggressiveness. Leaning slightly towards the client shows interests and acceptance.

Facial Expressions and other Movements

It is often facial expressions that reveal a worker's disapproval of a client, even when the worker is trying hard to be nonjudgmental. Smiling, frowning, nodding and shaking the head and lip quivering convey our thoughts and emotions. Crossed legs, arms folded across the chest, and body rigidity usually shows defensiveness, while arms and hands at the body's side or in an outreached position suggest openness to others.

Tone of Voice, Dress and Appearance

A loud, forceful tone suggests aggressiveness, control and strength while a monotonous or flat voice suggests lack of interest. Similarly, dressing is also one of the important forms of non-verbal communication. A social worker must give careful thought to his/her choice of

clothing and hairstyle. He should wear the dress according to the situation. For example dress acceptable to adolescent clients may be offensive to elder clients. Sometimes, it may also be appropriate to consult supervisors for guidance on such issues.

4) Helping Skills

Helping skill means a message conveyed by the practitioner to the client which will have a beneficial effect on the client's thinking, feeling and behaviour. These basic skills have been explained by Sheafor and Horejsi, in the following points:

Getting Ready

Before a meeting with the client, the worker should imagine what the client might be thinking or feeling. By anticipating such thoughts a worker mentally prepares to address the client's initial feelings such as anger, fear, confusion etc. and identify ways to initiate the client into the helping relationship.

Getting Started

The worker must clarify the purpose of the meeting and worker's role during the intake and engagement phase of the change process and also at the beginning of each session with the client. Each session with a client has three time phases:

- i) getting started
- ii) the central work of the session, and
- iii) drawing the session to a close.

Asking Questions

A social worker uses various types of questions to get information from the client and assist in expressing his/her thoughts and feelings. He/she uses open and closed ended questions. During a counseling session, a worker usually asks open- ended questions. A social worker should remember that instead of asking why, use questions that focus on the what, where, when and how of the client's behaviour and situation.

Active Listening

In active listening a worker attends both the verbal as well as non verbal communication of the client and get back to the client in order to let him/her know that his/her message has been accurately understood. Encouragement, clarification, paraphrase, reflection, summarization, and exploring silence are some of the skills of active listening.

An encourager refers to single words, short phrases and non-verbal gestures that encourage the client to continue talking. Clarification refers to asking a question designed to encourage a client to become more explicit. The skill known as paraphrase is a rephrasing of the literal meaning of the client's statement, whereas the skill termed reflection of feeling is an expression of the feeling or emotional component of the message. The skill of summarization refers to pulling together the content and affective components of several messages while exploring the client's silence refers to efforts to gently probe the silence. For example if the client is in a thoughtful silence, the worker breaks the silence by saying: "you appear to be puzzled over

something". Can you tell me what you are thinking about? If the silence is a long one, the worker should attempt to explore the silence.

Three important skills to be remembered in this context are:

- Displaying understanding skill means verbal and non-verbal communication intended to demonstrate that the social worker comprehends and can identify with the client's thoughts and feelings.
- The skill of putting the client's feelings into words refers to the articulation of what the client is feeling but has stopped just short of expressing in words.
- Self-disclosure refers to a worker's statements that reveal some of his or her own thoughts, feelings, or life experiences. As a general rule, a social worker should avoid the use of self-disclosure in the early stages of relationship building and sparingly at other times.

While dealing with the client, it is very important to increase or sustain a client's motivation in order to make change in the current behaviour or situation.

The skill which are helpful in a change process include:
Skill of partialization: This means breaking down a insolvable problem into smaller and manageable parts.
Skill of staying on track: This refers to keeping the client's attention focused on a specific concern. In addition to this, skill of building a communication link, in which worker builds a connection between the client and the person with whom he/she wants to communicate: skill of challenging the client's avoidance

of change which points out the client's resistance, and skill of identifying emotional blocks in the way of progress are some of the important ones used by a worker.

5) The I-Statement

I-Statement makes it possible to send a clear, direct message and reduce the chance that the person receiving the message will be put on the defensive. It is very useful in conflicting situations as it allows the sender to express disappointment, anger, or frustration while minimizing the chance that the discussion will turn into a fruitless argument.

Most of the time we send the messages with statements such as "you should wash your cloths", "you should do hard work" or giving orders e.g. "you better forget that idea and take my advice" and most disturbing form is the "if-then-threat i.e." "if you will not follow me...., then I will..." The idea of a sender may be to bring about a needed change in title behaviour of another person, but it usually ends up creating added resistance to change. Instead of using your statement, worker should make use of I-statement, which does not accuse or blame. For example "this is how I feel", I trust you, to decide what step should be taken in this case" etc.

6) Understanding emotions and feelings and responding to defensive communication

A social worker deals with different type of clients with different problems. He/she should have the ability to accurately read and tune in to human emotions and feelings. While dealing with the client, a worker may find the client who is very confused, frightened, or overwhelmed by their emotions. Sometimes it may be

possible that client does not express his/her feelings in a healthy manner. Therefore a worker must be able to discuss the nature of emotions in ways that clients understand and in ways that help clients learn how to gain greater control over troublesome feelings and emotions.

Sometimes, a client may use a number of defence mechanisms to keep a social worker at a distance and to avoid or minimize the interaction because he/she is angry, fearful or somehow feel threatened or may not like worker's behaviour or style. Some of the defence mechanisms generally used by a client include: denial, projection, blaming, labelling, avoidance, helplessness, using crisis or distraction or being fragile. A social worker can reduce a client's defensiveness by resorting to the following guidelines.

- i) The worker should try to know what might be the client's underlying fear: what makes him/her to feel threatened and try to remove that cause. Be an active listener and make it as easy as possible for your client to verbalize feelings.
- ii) A worker must be tolerant to his/her client's defensive behaviour as there may be a past history associated with present behaviour such as rejection by parent, breakup of one's family, separation from loved ones or a frightening event like major personal problem, family violence, or a life-threatening illness.
- iii) A worker should use mirroring techniques with such clients. He/she should speak at the client's pace and in a manner that matches his/her nonverbal behaviour.

- iv) A worker should use the words and phrases that match the client's dominant mode of receiving information, which are visual, auditory and touch. For example. "Do you have a clear picture of what I am suggesting"? (visual). "Is this plan ok for you" (auditory) or "I think the plan you have suggested is one we can both get hold of" (touch). The client should be given opportunities to make choices and remain in control of what is happening in his/her life. A worker always uses words such as we, us, together etc. with the client.
- v) Never label or categorize your client. Arrange your office and your own seating position in such a way that client does not feel trapped.
- vi) In some situations where it is critically important to engage the resistant client as in case of a child abuse, a worker need to be assertive and deal directly with the issue. If your client uses abusive language, you need not to be aggressive, but remain calm and do not respond in ways that might reinforce the behaviour.

7) **Elements of professional behaviour and making ethical decisions**

For a social worker it is very important to continually examine his/her performance to check whether their behaviour is of a professional nature. A professional may have the following professional behaviour:

- i) A social worker should be committed to his/her professional values and actions. His/her practice is based on a body of knowledge learned through a process of formal education and training and decisions on facts, analysis, and critical thinking.

- ii) He/she makes use of profession's values, principles and code of ethics to identify and resolve ethical issues. He/she updates his/her knowledge and skills continually in order to improve services to the client and keeps accurate and complete records of decisions and actions.
- iii) His/her primary concern is the well being and needs of the client instead of meeting his/her own needs within work-related relationships. He/she develops a purposeful and goal oriented relationship with the client.
- iv) A social worker tries to understand the root cause of client's problem, his/her frustration and anger, but do not take his/her expressions of negative emotion personally. He/she keeps his/her emotions under control and exercises self-discipline. In addition to this, a social worker clarifies ethical issues and makes practice choices that are consistent with social work's ethical principles and professional values.

8) Cross - cultural helping

Another point which is worth mentioning here is that, a social worker must be very sensitive to the significance of cultural differences in the helping process. He/she must be alert to the existence of prejudice, including his/her own, and constantly assess, modify, and suspend his/her prejudices so that these beliefs do not lead to discrimination or in any way, cause them to harm their clients. He/she must be alert to the existence of institutional discrimination and be prepared to address and combat it, lest it affects their clients negatively.

Guidelines for Agency Practice

A student of social work has to do field work usually in an agency/organizational set up. After completion of the programme of study, most of the students opt for working in organizations where they struggle with two interrelated sets of tasks i.e. managing the time and managing the required office related work. In any agency setting a worker may be expected to carry out documentation (including paper work or related clerical assignment, recording etc.), communicate either directly or indirectly with the client, send letters to the concerned persons, do report writing and other similar tasks.

During the period of education and training in social work, a student is expected to do substantial amount of writings which are aimed at helping him/her to be an efficient report writer. Apart from his/her regular response to the assignments and exercises under "check your progress" questions, he/she is also expected to write his/her field diary and field work journal regularly. A social worker will also be engaged in writing reports and preparing other documents both in the agency and as part of his/her learning activities. Therefore a social worker will be getting extensive exposure for engaging in several activities which will help him/her to master skills that are required for working with an agency. In the following pages, let us briefly discuss some of the essential guidelines for agency practice described by Sheafor and Horejsi.

1) Report Writing

It is mandatory for a social worker to write reports. A

report can be anything from the two-line hand written memo to a bound volume with hundreds of closely typed pages. It may deal with the client system, interventions, survey report, case study, or fate of the national economy and be read by government officials or it may be read by other agency officials, media personnel, as well as social work professionals. The key principle of report writing could hardly be simpler. It is a question of identifying the key facts of a particular matter, and then presenting them in the right order as simply and directly as possible. Writing a report may involve laborious research, narration of facts and figures to present the gathered information in an effective and meaningful way. But it is almost always worth the effort. A report that is inaccurate, incomplete or unclear, creates misunderstanding. The quality of report can be improved by following the guidelines explained by Sheafor and Horejsi:

- i) Before doing any writing, you must analyze who the readers will be and what information they need and expect. Always think how the readers will interpret your words or perhaps misinterpret what you have written.
- ii) Determine the type of format and writing style that are appropriate for the report. For example, is a formal and highly organized report needed, or is a more informal, memorandum-type format appropriate? As a general rule, a more formal type of report writing is required for interagency communication whereas memos are acceptable for communication within an agency or organization.

- iii) Organize the information to be presented into a logical structure, before you begin to write. Construct an outline that include the main topic and the various subtopics. Present your ideas in an orderly way to make the reader understand your message.
- iv) Use the number of words which are necessary. Use simple, clear and direct language. Avoid words that have different meanings in different contexts. Also avoid using slang phrases that might offend the reader.
- v) Keep your sentences short, usually 15-20 words or less. Use the active voice whenever possible and give special attention to paragraph construction. Each paragraph should focus on a single idea.
- vi) Do not use weak and evasive language such as "It seems as though" and "there is some reason for believing". Such phrases give the impression that whether the writer is not sure of what to say or does not want to take responsibility for what is being said. Another point to remember is that the writer should avoid wishy-washy language. For example, instead of saying, "I feel placement is necessary" the writer must say "I believe placement is necessary" or simply "I recommend placement for this person". This reflects the professional competence and confidence of the writer.
- vii) Be sure of what you are trying to say before producing the final version. Also read the draft aloud: if it does not sound right, revise it. You should be committed to your ideas and not to your

words. The more you revise, the better would be the final report.

- viii) Take help of dictionary if you are not confident about the meaning of a word. correct spelling, whether a word should be capitalized, how the word should be divided at the end of a line. correct punctuation i.e. hyphens, accents, and whether a hyphen should be used in a compound word.
- ix) With the advancement of technology and its use across the board, it is very important for a social worker to be familiar with computer as computer programs now include a thesaurus, spelling checks, and grammar checks which are needed in writing.

2) **Letter Writing**

Letter writing is very essential. A well constructed letter can help you to improve and develop your relationship with the client. Sheafor and Horejsi, have suggested some points for good letter writing.

- i) Plan carefully before writing a letter. Your image as a professional is shaped by the appearance and quality of your letters.
- ii) A professional letter should contain the parts such as: letterhead, date, inside address, reference line or subject line, salutation, body, typed signature (name), and written signature.
- iii) Proper titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Dr., Prof., Your Excellency, Your Eminence, Your Lordship, etc. should be properly used.

- iv) Do not include material that would violate confidentiality if read by persons other than the intended recipient of the letter. In India it is acceptable to mention on top of the letterhead/over the envelop "confidential".
- v) You should be alert to the fact that an agency's name and address on an envelope may reveal the client's involvement with an agency.
- vi) The person who receives your letter should feel that he/she is dealing with a real person and not an impersonal representative of an organization. Therefore you should humanize and personalize your letter, especially to clients.
- vii) Revise and polish all drafts of letters and proofread the final version.
- viii) Complaint letter should be written with directness, clarity and authority. While you are angry or frustrated while writing such letter, do not send it on the same day. After one or two days, reconsider what and how you have said, and how it is likely to be perceived by the recipient. This may prevent you from saying something that will cause regret later.
- ix) You should remember to keep a copy of all letters for agency files. Use certified or registered mail when necessary to document that a letter was delivered.
- x) It is possible that several replies could be in the form of e-mails. Always keep a print out of the same in the appropriate files.

3) Talking on the telephone

When quick response is needed, telephone is a good source and your voice is your sole means of communicating over the telephone. Even so, watch your body language and facial expression – they affect the way you sound. For improving telephone communication, follow the underlying guidelines:

- i) Use the normal speaking voice because the person at the receiving end is not able to observe your body language. The entire communication will be by your voice. If you slump, for example, you often will sound tired or breathless. To keep a bright tone in your voice, smile when talking on the phone.
- ii) Do not answer phone in a rush. Pause a moment, take a deep breath, and then breathe out slowly as you pick up the receiver. You will sound more relaxed. If you recognize the other person's voice, use his/her name in your greeting. Use it gain during the conversation and when parting. With the advancement in communication network, you are also able to identify the caller ID both on landline as well as on a mobile.
- iii) Identity yourself by name. organization and department while receiving or making calls. Jot down the major points you wish to cover before placing the call. Take notes while on the phone and summarize the information you intended to convey and the information you received before putting down the phone.
- iv) Whenever talking to a person, interject brief

comments at intervals like 'OK'. 'Yes'. 'I see' or 'I understand'. This will make the caller realize that you are listening. Steer your caller to the main point if he/she gets sidetracked.

- v) Master the skills of using your agency's phone system such as transferring calls, using voice mail, and similar tasks. When transferring calls to other lines, let callers know what you are doing: Tell them the name and title of the person to whom they will be speaking and why you are transferring their call. When you may like to leave the phone for a while, explain why: "please hold on for a few seconds while I get that file". Unless you are sure you will be away for only a few moments, tell your caller that you will call back. If you have left the phone, alert your caller to your return call before resuming the conversation: "Hello" or "Thanks for waiting" or "I have that file now".
- vi) Do not receive the phone, if you are busy, talking to another caller.
- vii) Whenever leaving a message, keep it short by telling your name, phone number, reason for calling and suggest them to return your call on a specific time. If you want to save your time rather than waiting for the call it is better to call him/her again.
- viii) It is unethical to answer or call people while consuming food/drinks. You can politely tell the caller "excuse me for a while" and get back to the caller once you are comfortable.

4) Using information technology and maintaining case notes for narrative recording

A social worker must have knowledge of Information technology. He/she should be skilled in the use of word processing, spreadsheets, database programs, computerized assessment instruments, research related software online resources and internet resources. Now a days most of the organizations/ institutions embrace new technology to get the work done fast. It is easy for a social worker to get latest information on various topics through internet. One can find related articles and books on line. On line library facility can also be accessed by a social worker. Besides potential benefits, a social worker must be aware about the dangers associated with this technology. Sometimes it can be misused such as the risk to confidential information when transmitted electronically. Therefore, a social worker must know how to use it in an appropriate and responsible manner. Another issue to discuss is narrative recording which is used by certain organizations because of their flexibility. A worker writes into records, the things which are important. For example:

- i) The worker creates many handwritten notes and then, after weeks or even months reviews those notes and prepare a summary of his/her works with the client.
- ii) The handwritten notes record the day-to-day actions and activities related to a specific case (e.g. "Mr. A, B's teacher, called to say...") and help the worker keep track of what has happened. Some

notes are merely reminders (e.g. "Contact Mr. C and request".)

After taking all the information, the worker does the entry into the agency record. Though this method is very time consuming and many organizations have moved towards using brief progress notes, computer assisted systems and other structured and concise formats are in use.

5) **Process Recording**

Process recording is a detailed form of recording often used to assist students and new workers in learning practice skills. It is also used when a worker is having unusual problems with a client and wants to create a record that can be examined by his/her peers, supervisors, or consultants as basis for making suggestions on how the worker might overcome the problems.

Some of the components that can be included in process recording include:

- i) Name of those in attendance at interview or meeting
- ii) Date, location, length and purpose of the session.
- iii) Students plan for session.
- iv) Description of interaction and content – such as:
 - a) How session began and what were the significant exchanges during the session by the client and by the student as well.
 - b) Specific topics discussed, decisions reached and plans made.

- c) New facts and information obtained by the student: mood and feeling tone of session; and how session or meeting ended.
- v) Student's role and activities during session and techniques and skills used by the student.
- vi) Student's assessment of client's concern, situation, or problem and client's current response and reactions to student social worker and to the helping process.
- vii) Student's assessment of his/her own performance during the session e.g. problems encountered, strengths and limitations.
- viii) Student's plan for the next meeting or interview with the client.

Though process recording is a time consuming activity, it is one of the best teaching tools. Audio or videotape recordings are, in many respects superior to process recording as a teaching tool but it is not possible for many organizations to have video equipment: even if they do, it requires that an interview should take place in a studio atmosphere to escape background noise.

6) Managing Time at Work

Most social workers are engaged in too much of work to complete within a time frame. Therefore, time management is of utmost importance. Some of the guidelines are:

- i) Organize yourself. Understand your agency's mission and your job description. If you are not clear about your assignments and responsibilities,

discuss with your supervisor. Set priority for your tasks and assignments.

- ii) Recognize that in order to be effective and efficient, your job must be consistent with your personal and professional values, goals and style. You and your colleagues can be frustrated if there is mismatch between what your agency expects from you and what you can do.
- iii) Prepare a list of things-to-do and give estimated time to complete each task on the list. Anticipate deadlines, and tackle lengthy tasks before those that can be completed in a short time. Work on the most difficult task when your energy level is high (e.g. morning time) and reserve some time at the end of each day for clearing your desk.
- iv) Plan your work and set priorities. You can also develop daily and weekly plans. You can also plan your tasks into different categories such as tasks that must be completed today; tasks that should be started today; and tasks that can wait for a few days. You can also change your priorities accordingly.
- v) Do not delay the things. Do not leave work for tomorrow. Plan for the unexpected. Allow time in your schedule for emergencies. Make decisions in a timely manner. If you are afraid of making mistakes, you are likely to delay making decisions. When you make a mistake, learn from it instead of repeating the same.
- vi) Keep, up to date, your agency's policy and procedures. Insert the new information on time and

discard the old. You must develop a system for the storage and fast retrieval of frequently used information (e.g e-mail address, telephone numbers, mailing address of professionals and agencies you contact frequently).

- vii) Limit the time spent in meetings by properly defining the purpose; attend only for the time needed to make your contribution; start on time and end on time: Evaluate the success of the meeting and agree on necessary changes in future meetings.
- viii) You can save your time by scheduling all meetings in a given locality for the same day.
- ix) Keep the things, you are working on in front of you and clear your desk of other materials. Avoid jumping from one task to another. Focus on one thing at a time until you either finish the task or reach a preset time limit for that activity.
- x) Do not let papers pile up on your desk. If you pick up a paper/report/request, take action or discard it if no action is to be taken. Learn to use office machines and communications systems, such as word processor, email, fax, computer etc. It will increase your efficiency.
- xi) If you find some kind of training will be useful for you to increase your knowledge and skills, approach your employer for a specific training you need. You can also take their suggestions for how to reduce the time spent writing agency records and routine reports. Try to communicate with accuracy and have clarity in your writing and your speech.

- xii) Do not try to compensate for someone else's incompetence. Avoid being drawn into doing other people's work. Remember to keep track of how you spend each day and week and analyze how much time you save.

7) **Controlling Workload**

You as a social worker can be placed in the organization where you will be assigned a number of tasks. Sometime due to shortage of staff or incompetence of other staff you may have to do additional work. To control an ever-growing workload, say no to additional work assignments or ask other staff for their assistance. Sometimes you do not say no to your boss in order to avoid conflict or feeling guilty and say yes to an additional work. Nevertheless, you must take responsibility for managing your workload and this requires saying no to some requests. Some of the guidelines are:

- i) Decide if the proposed assignment or request for your time is reasonable, given your job description and current workload. Ask yourself: Is this is a matter of high priority? Am I responsible for this matter or is someone else? If I say 'yes', will I soon regret it and feel angry and put upon? Am I tempted to say 'yes' mainly because I want to avoid a conflict or the appearance of selfishness?
- ii) When unsure, if the request is reasonable, obtain more information before saying yes or no. If still in doubt, ask for time to think about the request and set a deadline for making the decision (e.g. "I'll let you know in half an hour").

- iii) If you must refuse, say firmly and calmly. It may be appropriate for you to give a straight forward explanation of why you said no, but do so without saying "I'm sorry" or offering excuse and rationalizations. If you have a good reason for refusing. there is no need to apologize.

If you want to take assistance of others, explain why you are taking his/her help. However, if your request is rejected, accept the answer graciously and respond by saying "I understand". "I know you have to do your work also" etc. You can also ask the person, if you can take his/her help at a later time or date.

Conclusion

The decisions and actions of social workers influence a large number of populations either directly or indirectly. Social workers are delivering a wide variety of services directly to clients while working in hospitals, civic courts, schools, private practice, businesses and a myriad of social agencies. They are working towards positive community and social changes. The whole society benefits from social workers activities because improving the quality of life for an individual, a family, or the people of community will ultimately have an impact on the general society. It elevate the health, happiness, safety, standard of life, and productivity of all its members.

The purpose of a social interaction with the client determine the types of relationship a worker attempts to develop. He/she provides direct services, develops a professional relationship, and help them out from the difficult circumstances, keeping the basic principles,

knowledge and skill in mind. In this chapter we have presented some of the most important guiding principles, communication skills and skills essential for agency practice.

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