# Course Number and Name: 7750:493 Field Experience Social Agency I

## Course Rationale and Description

This course is the first of two consecutive courses of supervised internship in a social service setting. No academic credit will be given for previous life experience. This course facilitates the acquisition of practice skills and experience for generalist social work practice and prepares students for entry into the profession. Generalist practice is conducted in various practice settings with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities of diverse, at-risk, and vulnerable populations experiencing a broad range of problems, and is conducted in order to restore and enhance their capacity for social functioning, or to create conditions, including the advancement of social and economic justice, toward that end.

Generalist practice requires the application of social work values and ethics, eclectic and empirically-based knowledge, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, the strengths-based and ecological perspectives, the planned change process from engagement to termination, multiple methods of empirically-based interventions, relevant technological advances, and evaluation of outcomes and practice effectiveness.

The student is expected to integrate classroom learning -- in ethics, human behavior, practice, policy, and research -- and professional skills. Students are expected to be thoughtful and articulate about their practicum experiences. They are to carry out a continuous process of analysis, testing, and transferring of learning from one situation to another. They are expected to draw from their broad base of knowledge in analysis of data about the nature and extent of social problems, and the impact of social policy and services on those problems, and in application of knowledge gained from this analysis to a variety of client situations. Students are to grasp the importance of values in the helping process through exposure to diverse cultures, lifestyles, and other aspects of social diversity, becoming knowledgeable and skilled participants in service delivery in accord with social work values and ethics.

This is a three (3) credit, required course for all social work majors. Only a previous internship from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education may be substituted for this course. Each of the two internship courses is comprised of 225 hours in the field setting. This course is offered co-requisite with Introduction to Field Experience Seminar I, a two (2) credit course. The student should be a senior candidate for the baccalaureate degree who has completed Social Work Practice I, Practice I Skills Lab, and Practice II. The student should be a senior candidate for the baccalaureate degree.

# Mission and Goals of the Undergraduate Social Work Program

## Mission of BA|BASW Program:

Consistent with the mission of the University of Akron and the College of Health Professions, the mission of the undergraduate social work program is to prepare students for competent and effective generalist practice. We are committed to empowerment and strengths-based practice through the application of critical thinking skills. We engage the diverse populations of Northeast Ohio to strengthen systemic well-being.

## The goals of the undergraduate social work program are to:

* 1. Prepare students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession for competent and effective generalist practice with diverse client systems in various practice settings.
  2. Prepare students to identify the strengths and abilities of diverse client systems to foster empowerment toward social justice and systemic well-being.
  3. Prepare students to utilize theoretically-based social work research, knowledge, and critical thinking skills for effective and ethical social work practice.

# Social Work Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors

The School of Social Work is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). We support and abide by the CSWE Commission on Accreditation’s Educational Policies for social work education, including an approach that is competency-based. The University of Akron School of Social Work lists these competencies and practice behaviors in each syllabus to emphasize their importance in social work education. Each graduate of the School of Social Work is expected to demonstrate mastery of these competencies and practice behaviors. While not all competencies and practice behaviors are addressed in each course, all are listed in each syllabus. By the time students complete the social work major, they will be assessed on each of the competencies and practice behaviors identified in the syllabi. This process is part of the overall assessment plan of the undergraduate social work program.

The 2015 EPAS recognizes competence as holistic; this means that the demonstration of competence is informed by the appropriate knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes. Each of the nine social work competencies listed in the EPAS is followed by a paragraph that describes the competency. This description contains dimensions of the competency necessary for learning and developing competence throughout the course of a program.

The dimensions are:

* **Knowledge**
* **Values**
* **Skills**
* **Cognitive and Affective Processes**

The description and dimensions as written in the EPAS should be reflected in the generalist social work curriculum. This curriculum prepares students for the demonstration of competence through the behaviors associated with the competency.

**Understanding Generalist Practice and Areas of Specialized Practice**

**Generalist Practice is defined as practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.**

* Grounded in liberal arts and person-in-environment framework
* Uses scientific inquiry, ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo and macro levels
* Engages diversity in practice and advocates for human rights and social and economic justice
* Recognize and build upon the strengths and resiliency of all human beings

For generalist practice, baccalaureate and master’s programs are required to implement the nine social work competencies and any additional competencies in their curricula relevant to their context. For generalist practice, programs may use some or all of the behaviors listed in the EPAS or develop other behaviors that represent observable components of each competency that integrate the dimensions (CSWE Commission on Accreditation, 2017).

**Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior**

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession’s history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

\*make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;

\* use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;

\* demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;

\* use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and

\* use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

**Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

\* apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;

\* present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and

\* apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

**Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

\* apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and

\* engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice**

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:

\* use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;

\* apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and

\* use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

**Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

\* Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;

\* assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;

\* apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human

relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

\* apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and

\* use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

**Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

\* collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;

\* apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;

\* develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and

\* select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

**Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

\* critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;

\* apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;

\* use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;

\* negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and

\* facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

**Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

\* select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;

\* apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;

\* critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and

\* apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

## The University of Akron Learning Outcomes

The University of Akron has developed four essential learning outcomes for students enrolled in undergraduate programs. These outcomes are broadly defined to reflect the wide range of academic disciplines across campus. As a professional program, the School of Social Work BA/BASW program has developed a comprehensive and holistic approach to competency-based social work education. Therefore, the four major learning outcomes listed below are already included in the competencies of the BA/BASW program. The specific social work competencies and practice behaviors that address The University of Akron’s learning outcomes are listed below.

**UA Learning Outcome 1: Communication Skills and Information Literacy** - Students will demonstrate foundational competency in written communication, oral communication and information literacy.

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.1*—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly**.**

* demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.3*—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

* demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups,

organizations, communities, and colleagues.

**UA Learning Outcome 2: Critical Thinking and Complex Reasoning Skills** - Students will demonstrate foundational competency in creating and evaluating reasoned arguments, and employing quantitative, qualitative, and normative information in such arguments.

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.3*—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

* distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom;

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.6*—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

* use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and
* use research evidence to inform practice

**UA Learning Outcome 3: The Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences** - Students will demonstrate foundational competency in knowledge of representative content and methods of inquiry of the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.7*—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

* utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and
* critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

**Learning Outcome 4: Responsible Citizenship in an Interconnected World** - Students will demonstrate foundational competency in knowledge and skills that promote personal, social and environmental responsibility. This foundational competency shall include an understanding of diversity, systemic relationships, and collateral effects and consequences within and across systems.

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.2*—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

* make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.4*—Engage diversity and difference in practice.

* recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.5*—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

* engage in practices that advance social and economic justice

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.8*—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

* analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being

*Social Work Educational Policy 2.1.9*—Respond to contexts that shape practice.

* continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services

# Values and Ethics

The students of the School of Social Work are expected to become familiar with and follow the

National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp)>and The University of Akron Sexual Harassment Policy (<http://wayne.uakron.edu/dotAsset/552835.pdf>) while a student in the school. Some subject matter may be controversial. While students may vary in strength of support for a certain position, it is expected that all students will be tolerant of other viewpoints and will develop an ability to listen and understand each other’s perspectives. In addition, students are expected to develop the ability to help clients develop their own views and perspectives rather than the students imposing their values and opinions on clients.

# Diversity

In Educational Policy 3.1, CSWE’s Commission on Accreditation indicates that each social work program must demonstrate a commitment to diversity, including age, class, color, culture, disability, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. The University of Akron School of Social Work takes this commitment seriously, and infuses content on diverse populations in each social work course offered at the undergraduate level.

# Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

This course requires 225 clock hours of supervised internship. This course has a required field course platform fee of $195.00 per student.

Assignments include, but are not limited to, readings assigned by the field instructor, opportunities for continuing practice with small and large client systems, attendance at staff meetings and other meetings appropriate to agency operation, and research projects. Students are expected to adhere to the Student Integrative Learning Contract developed in the first semester of field, in consultation with their field instructor and faculty liaison. The contract is based upon both the field program objectives and the student’s learning needs and serves as the guide for student learning throughout the field experience. The contract specifies the primary learning objectives and experiences planned for the student within three areas as follows:

**Direct Practice** has as its focus the client. Direct Practice refers to that area of professional practice in which students work in purposeful, face-to-face contact with identified client systems and with collateral persons and organizations relevant to those particular client systems. Such collateral contact may involve client advocacy within the field setting itself.

**Service Impact** has as its focus the agency. Service Impact refers to that area of professional practice where students contribute to changes in agency policies and services and in broader social policies affecting the populations they serve. This area also involves contributions to changes in organizational work cultures affecting agency and interagency work groups and staff relationships.

**Professional Learning** has as its focus the student. Professional Learning refers to the systematic study and documentation of professional practice in which students develop and maintain responsibility for the planning, content, and focus of their learning and professional development.

The student’s performance is assessed on an ongoing basis in regular supervisory conferences and in more systematic, comprehensive, and formal evaluations at the end of each semester of field. The field instructor submits an evaluation report and recommended grade each semester. These are reviewed by the faculty liaison who assigns the grade, which is then recorded by the Field Coordinator. The student is graded according to her/his performance in meeting the objectives of the field program as specified in the Student Integrative Learning Contract.

# Expectations for Student Behavior

The students in the School of Social Work are expected to become familiar with and follow the National Association of Social Workers **Code of Ethics** while a major in the school. Some subject matter may be controversial, and, while students may vary in their strength of support for a certain position, it is expected that all students will be tolerant of other viewpoints and will develop an ability to listen and understand each other's perspective. In addition, students are expected to develop the ability to help clients develop their own views and perspectives rather than the students imposing their values and opinions on them.

Students who believe they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Accessibility at (330) 972-7928.

# Course Outline and Specific Assignments

The Student Integrative Learning Contract, written in the first field semester, is used during this semester as well, but may be modified commensurate with developing student learning needs or changing agency context. Other assignments are at the discretion of the field instructor in consultation, as needed, with the faculty liaison.

**Direct practice** assignments include work with individuals, families, groups, organization, and communities as identified client systems, and with collateral persons and organizations. This practice takes the form of work with diverse client systems, including some experience with all phases of practice from initial assessment through termination; and work with at-risk and vulnerable client populations as related to clients’ age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

**Service impact** assignments include collaboration in ongoing and ad hoc work groups, such as agency and interagency teams, committees, staff meetings, and so on; work in intra-agency groups around service duplication, gaps, or collaboration; open discussion of the impact of agency and community policies, procedures and work cultures on clients, agency services, staff relationships and students; grant-writing; development of needs assessment surveys or program outcome measures; research around modification of agency policies, procedures, and services; development of new services; legislative action; agency board attendance; community education and outreach; and so on.

**Professional learning** includes collaboration with the field instructor regarding learning assignments focused on the ongoing documentation, examination and assessment of student performance through process recording, audio-visual taping, and/or observation showing how students actually perform under certain conditions and assess their own practice; content-oriented documentation of student performance showing how they use agency records of accountability, e.g., progress notes, proposals, memos, reports, and so on; meeting the learning objectives; and learning time, anger, stress management skills.

# Assignments

Direct practice and service impact assignments should include practice, as appropriate to the agency, with and on behalf of populations of special concern to this program -- those oppressed, at risk, and vulnerable as related to their age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

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