Competencies and Behaviors
2nd-year MSW Specialization:
Community Partnerships

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Social workers apply the profession’s values and ethical standards to inform community partnerships practice. Working with groups, organizations, and communities requires the social worker to be intentional in having to address ethical issues and conflicts in relationship to a group, organization or community’s wants and needs.

- Integrate personal reflection, self-correction, and feedback in your professional leadership role in working with organizations and communities
- Identify professional strengths, limitations, and challenges
- Engage in ethical decision-making in working with organizations and communities
- Manage conflicting priorities that emerge from working in community partnerships

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Social workers embrace diversity and difference as pillars in working with groups, organizations, and communities. The success of community partnerships practice rests with diverse perspectives and stakeholders at the table at all times.

- Leverage diversity and difference to build and/or strengthen community partnerships
- Engage in community partnership practices that incorporate diverse perspectives

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Social workers operate from the perspective that fundamental human rights and justice issues shape the practice of community partnerships. Such work requires participatory processes that are inclusive of all voices and engages those individuals, groups, and communities who have been marginalized to be empowered to build healthy organizations and communities.

- Analyze ways in which differential power and privilege shape communities and society
- Advocate for/engage in participatory processes that are inclusive and increase empowerment for those organizations/community groups who have been marginalized or excluded

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Social workers advance community partnerships practice by engaging in community-based participatory research that is inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives. Social workers in community partnerships practice are expected to share and apply research findings in their work with groups, organizations, and communities.

- Advance research that is participatory and inclusive of the community
- Use evidence-informed research to inform community partnerships practice
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice
Social workers acknowledge the impact of both organizational and social policies on viable solutions and outcomes that are the results of community partnerships practice. Social workers also recognize the importance of advocating for organizational or social policy change to shape a more effective design and delivery of community programs and services.

- Engage in community partnerships practice that reflects synthesis of organizational policies, internal/external considerations, and their overall impact on the design and delivery of community programs and services
- Engage in community partnerships practice that reflects synthesis of social policies and their impact on service delivery

Competencies 6-9
As stated in the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation are each presented as an “ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice” (pgs. 8-9). In community partnerships practice, these four components are not linear, and intervention activities may be conducted as part of engagement, assessment, and evaluation. In addition, Competencies 1-5 are integrated in operationalizing Competencies 6-9.

Competency 6: Engage with Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Social workers embrace ongoing engagement as a foundation in effective community partnerships practice. Reciprocal, respectful, and fluid communications is key in working with groups, organizations, and communities to build trust and to identify common purpose, interests, and focus. Social workers involved in building or strengthening partnerships do not take engagement for granted and recognize that genuine engagement requires attention at all steps of a task or project.

- Apply a range of professional written, oral, and electronic modes of communication to build relationships; interact with groups, organizations, and communities; and support community partnerships intervention strategies
- Identify and define a group, organization, and/or community as a client system
- Identify common interests, key stakeholders, and mutual areas of focus
- Initiate and sustain connections with stakeholders and other community entities
- Create, sustain, and/or strengthen defined collaborative relationships that foster healthy communities

Competency 7: Assess Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Social workers engage with stakeholders in assessing needs and assets of groups, organizations, and communities that lead to the setting of shared goals and outcomes in defining what success will look like. Human rights, diversity, justice issues, and marginalization are critically applied in assessing needs and assets at the point of intersectionality between individuals/groups and their environments. Intervention strategies focus on how best to use and access current and new resources and partnerships to accomplish outcomes.

- Identify and assess group, organizational and/or community needs and assets
- Contribute to the development of shared goals/outcomes for practice with groups, organizations, and/or communities
- Contribute to the development and selection of strategies and tactics for practice with groups, organizations, and communities
- Assess the interconnection between individuals/groups and their environment in developing community partnerships intervention strategies
Competency 8: Intervene with Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers in community partnerships practice employ an interactive process in implementing strategies for change. This non-linear process encourages social workers to apply critical and creative thinking in creating, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating effective and innovative interventions to accomplish shared goals and outcomes. Interventions focus on capacity building of groups, organizations, and communities through collaborative efforts.

- Contribute to the creation of a resource development strategy and identify diverse funding sources and other resources in the context of an identified purpose and proposed outcomes
- Create, sustain, and/or strengthen programs/services that advance the needs and capacities of the community and maximize human potential
- Monitor and evaluate how policy impacts groups, organizations, and/or communities
- Create, facilitate, and/or evaluate training and educational opportunities for strengthening individual, group, organizational, and/or community leadership capacity
- Create, monitor, and/or evaluate communications strategy as an intervention or as a component of an intervention
- Engage in project management from initiation to evaluation

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers in community partnerships practice use evaluation as a means to strengthen engagement, assessment, and intervention with groups, organizations, and communities. Evaluation is an ongoing, inclusive, and participatory task for community partnerships practitioners and stakeholders. Through focus groups, surveys, interviews, and other participatory research methods, social workers and their partners evaluate outcomes and develop action plans to identify next steps. The application of logic models provides a framework in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and initiatives.

- Apply research methods in evaluating work with organizations, collaborations, and/or communities
- Develop and communicate an action plan based on evaluation findings

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1Some of the 2nd-year behaviors have been adapted from MSW/ACOSA EPAS Matrix for core Macro Practice Competencies [http://www.acosa.org/CO_ACOSA_EPAS_Core_Comps.pdf]

2These core competencies have been modified to support the advanced practice curriculum of the MSW program’s sole specialization of community partnerships. Direct practice with individuals and families (omitted here) is emphasized in the first-year curriculum.