

**School of Social Work
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia**

**Competencies and Behaviors
2nd-year MSW Specialization: Community Partnerships¹**

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. To ensure ethical and professional practice, social workers use self-reflection, supervision, and consultation to address how their personal values, biases, etc. may impact their work with groups, organizations, and communities.

- Integrate personal reflection, self-correction, and feedback in your professional leadership role in working with groups, organizations, and communities
- Identify professional strengths, limitations, and challenges as a community partnerships practitioner
- Engage in ethical decision-making that reflects social work values in working with groups, organizations, and communities
- Manage conflicting priorities that may emerge from the complexities and dilemmas in working with multiple and diverse constituencies/communities

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers embrace diversity and difference as pillars in working with groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers recognize that the success of community partnerships practice rests with diverse perspectives and stakeholders at the table at all times working within a framework of cultural humility and respect for differences. Social workers work to ensure a climate of inclusion with full engagement of constituencies/communities.

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

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. They recognize that 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. Social workers in community partnerships analyze and assess ways in which differential power and privilege shape communities and apply such knowledge to their work.

- Engage stakeholders in identifying resources, services, benefits, and/or opportunities in order to promote human rights and social, economic, and environmental equity
- 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 includes and respects diverse perspectives. Social workers in community partnerships practice are expected to share and apply research findings in their work with groups, organizations, and

communities. With the constituents/community, social workers critically analyze and review how policies, programs, services, and/or interventions impact those being served.

- 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 an understanding of organizational policies and how such policies impact the design and delivery of community programs and services
- Engage in community partnerships practice that reflects an understanding of social policies and how such policies impact service delivery

Competencies 6-9²

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. Social workers think critically about their role and responsibilities in engaging others with the understanding that each engagement is unique to the dynamics and needs of constituencies/communities.

- Apply a range of professional written, oral, and electronic modes of communication to actively engage in establishing and building relationships; interacting with groups, organizations, and communities; and supporting 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 constituencies, 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 understand the importance of engaging with stakeholders in assessing needs and assets of groups, organizations, and communities as this process leads 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. Assessment informs intervention strategies that 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
- Prepare a community analysis report/presentation
- Use mapping software (e.g., Social Explorer) to prepare a community map
- Contribute to the development of shared goals/outcomes for practice with groups, organizations, and/or communities and help frame options for intervention

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. In creating intervention strategies, social workers focus on how best to identify, use, and access current and new resources, including partnerships, to accomplish outcomes. These interventions focus on capacity building of groups, organizations, and communities through collaborative efforts.

- Assess the interconnection between individuals/groups and their environment in developing community partnerships intervention strategies
- 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 understand and 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. Social workers critically analyze and assess data and action plans/recommendations for moving forward.

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

¹Some of the 2nd-year behaviors have been adapted from CSWE (2018), *Specialized Curricular Guide for Macro Social Work Practice*.

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.