

## ADVANCED SPECIALIZATION COPA FIELD EDUCATION COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

The Advanced COPA: Communities, Organizations, Policy, & Advocacy year field education is designed to help students develop competence in community practice, planning, and program development, including knowledge, skill, and values in mobilizing people and resources to solve social problems and improve the quality of life at the community level. Students build on Generalist practice skills in working with individuals and groups toward developing the capacity of communities to address individual, family, and community issues, as well as broader social needs. Student work focuses on role development and conscious use of self, along with skill in methods of achieving social change goals at the grassroots, coalition, or advocacy/policy levels, depending on the field setting.

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

Macro social workers demonstrate the capacity, integrity, and commitment to act in an ethical manner that promotes inclusive participation in decision making, public policy, and community building. They ensure that practice in complex systems respects every individual's and community's right to human dignity and worth by opposing sources and structures of racism and other forms of oppression. Macro practitioners are facilitative leaders and organizers across all realms of practice and maintain a commitment to a vision and mission that supports the collective process of social change. To ensure ethical practice with communities, with organizations, and in the policy arena, these social workers use self-reflection, self-regulation, supervision, consultation, and lifelong learning to address how their attitudes and biases influence their personal and professional identity, values, and behaviors. Social workers in macro practice represent the profession's values in interactions with clients, interprofessional colleagues, policymakers, and community stakeholders. They understand and promote organizational, community, and individual rights regarding policy, political activity, and other forms of social action. Macro practitioners recognize ethical issues in practice and distinguish between decision-making frameworks to navigate ethical dilemmas between their personal values, their identity, values of the profession, and the values, interests, and rights of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 1.1** Apply an anti-oppression framework integrating the principles included in the NASW and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) ethical codes, evidence-based knowledge, and relevant legal and policy-related information.
- 1.2** Critically apply ethical decision-making frameworks that reflect social work values and the basic needs and rights of vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged communities.
- 1.3** Use self-evaluation and reflection to critically navigate competing personal and professional values, as well as trade-offs involved in making strategic decisions.
- 1.4** Demonstrate an understanding of the significance of social work supervision as an accountability mechanism in supporting ethical and professional social work practice.

- 1.5 Recognize the complexities and dilemmas that may arise in working with multiple client groups and constituencies.

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

Macro practitioners engage with a variety of individuals, families, organizations, communities, and other stakeholder groups to dismantle systems of oppression and advance social, economic, and environmental justice. Macro practitioners build on the strength of diversity and the history of people, organizations, and communities to inform collaborative engagement processes. They use an intersectional lens and anti-oppressive approach to develop strategies for engaging and collaborating with people and communities who are marginalized on the basis of characteristics such as race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, ability, ethnicity, and documentation status. Social workers in macro practice are highly skilled at communicating with those holding different perspectives and worldviews, recognizing the complexities and contradictions at times in addressing multiple oppressions and disparities. They educate diverse stakeholders about how organizational, community, and policy decisions affect vulnerable communities to craft interventions that advance social, economic, and environmental justice. Macro social workers apply research-informed knowledge and the lived experience of affected groups when working with diverse populations to address organizational, community, and societal issues. Macro practitioners are committed to examining how power, implicit and explicit bias, privilege, and oppression are manifested in the social work profession and their own practice.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 2.1 Demonstrate fluency in a variety of communication styles to effectively engage and work with people of different political ideologies, interests, religious and cultural backgrounds, and points of view.
- 2.2 Engage with diverse stakeholders in promoting a deep self-awareness and cultural humility with an understanding of how one's own personal biases, power, and privilege affect the engagement process and all aspects of macro practice.
- 2.3 Provide opportunities for open discussion about issues to promote sensitivity and use conflicts that arise in practice to forge new understanding and appreciation of one another.
- 2.4 Mediate tensions and conflicts that arise from managing cultural, political, and social differences between and within diverse groups.

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

Macro practice social workers advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice with, and on behalf of, individuals, families, organizations, communities, and larger social structures. Human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work and necessary for every human being to live in freedom and with dignity, security, and equality. Informed by theories of justice, human rights, power dynamics, and other frameworks, macro practice social workers advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice locally and

globally. Macro social workers recognize historical legacies of oppression and discrimination and challenge social policies and practices that tolerate or promote racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other discriminatory treatments of people based on identities including age, disability, religion, and national origin. They understand that the realization of human rights is mediated and influenced by local, state, federal, and international policies. Macro social workers design and advance public policies using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees all people the right to work, housing, healthcare, education, leisure, privacy, economic security, and a clean, safe, and sustainable environment. They promote the right to vote, the right to protest, and other forms of civic participation to engage in democratic processes fully and freely.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 3.1 Identify issues, develop strategies, evaluate outcomes, and promote human rights and social justice with affected clients and constituencies.
- 3.2 Analyze and participate in the political process and political climate when engaging in organizational, community, and policy change on behalf of human rights and social justice.
- 3.3 Identify and engage key stakeholders to advocate for access to resources, services, benefits, and opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized clients, constituencies, and communities.

#### **Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice.**

Macro practitioners recognize environmental, sociocultural, and historical factors that affect the inclusion of underrepresented populations in research and understand how this research enhances service delivery and contributes to broader knowledge building within social work practice. In collaboration with key program stakeholders and those directly affected by social problems, macro practitioners build culturally informed knowledge to promote human rights and social justice for vulnerable and oppressed populations. Macro social workers understand that many types of evidence, from personal narrative to analysis of large data sets, inform the development, analysis, and critique of social policies and interventions. They use a wide range of research methods, including logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches, to develop effective responses to social, economic, political, and environmental challenges and to shape policies and programs. They recognize that research is not value free and that biases can skew programs and policies. They communicate research-based arguments to inform policies and programs and translate research findings into actionable planned change efforts and policies. Macro social workers understand that defining, conducting, and presenting research findings and their implications includes political and resource considerations.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 4.1 Develop and select research questions that strategically inform the research process and its impact on communities, programs, organizations, and policies.
- 4.2 Collaborate, mobilize, and organize constituents, stakeholders, and colleagues to engage in research for advocacy, policy making, program design, and evaluation, and

the dissemination of research findings to improve policies, programs, services, and interventions.

- 4.3 Identify anticipated obstacles and opposition to the conduct and dissemination of research, including ethical, political, and economic dilemmas.

### **Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice.**

Social workers in macro practice examine how historical, political, social, economic, and cultural factors shape the policy environment and use this knowledge to recognize and capitalize on opportunities for reform that advance human rights; racial and gender equity; access to high-quality, comprehensive social welfare services; and social, economic, and environmental justice. Macro practitioners appreciate the complexity of policy issues; understand legislative, executive, and judicial policy-making processes; and critically analyze the varied dimensions of power as they affect individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Macro practitioners engage in policy research, development, advocacy, analysis, implementation, evaluation, and electoral politics. They devise and implement strategies at the local, state, and national levels to achieve policy goals reflecting social work values. They engage and build the capacity of affected constituencies to participate in advocacy and direct and indirect lobbying, including working through coalitions, to advance evidence-informed policies that support well-being.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 5.1 Educate stakeholders about how policies affect individual well-being and the communities and organizations that support them.
- 5.2 Engage, motivate, and mobilize constituents to participate and even lead in the policy process.
- 5.3 Analyze issues, develop cogent arguments, and communicate persuasively with multiple audiences using effective written and oral formats and media platforms.
- 5.4 Encourage broad-based participation in the political process through voter mobilization and educating the public about positions of candidates for office, political party platforms, the benefits of political engagement, and electoral processes and procedures.
- 5.5 Participate in professional organizations, coalitions, industry, and other groups that advocate for client social justice, equity, and fairness.

### **Competency 6: Engagement with Individuals, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.**

Effective macro practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities begins with engaging key stakeholders to better understand social problems, identify resources and assets, and develop strategies to address stakeholder concerns. It is an ongoing, iterative, and dynamic process that starts with initial engagement and continues through assessment, intervention, and evaluation. Macro social workers must recognize interconnections and interdependencies between micro, mezzo, and macro systems. Macro social workers must be adept at moving across these systems to engage community members, organizations, policymakers, and other community leaders. They create, nurture, and deepen authentic and strategic relationships and consider power dynamics in selecting, implementing, and modifying engagement strategies. They manage conflict and disagreement with respect, seek common

ground, and interact effectively with both allies and opponents while maintaining a commitment to social justice and the needs of vulnerable populations. Macro social workers build collaborative relationships that bring together stakeholders at the grassroots and interorganizational levels for a common purpose to improve social, economic, and environmental well-being. Using an ecological system perspective, macro social workers understand and apply a range of theories (e.g., critical race theory, feminist theory) that examine the structural and institutional forces and power dynamics that shape the context of the social problem. Macro practitioners understand that their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect how they engage with diverse stakeholders and audiences and how clients, constituencies, and stakeholders may engage with them based on their identities and background.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 6.1 Acknowledge and address how aspects of their own identities (e.g., background, status, privilege) affect the engagement process.
- 6.2 Actively engage with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations affected by the issue or problem in ways that value, respect, and include their expertise, knowledge, and culture.
- 6.3 Use interpersonal skills and relationship building to gain credibility with allies, clients, and constituents at the grassroots level in defining and communicating community and organizational needs and advancing potential solutions with decision makers.
- 6.4 Develop their own leadership skills and those of constituent groups to initiate and facilitate dialogue that mobilizes and sustains action.
- 6.5 Identify relevant constituencies, partners, and targets with whom relationships are necessary for policy change.
- 6.6 Use multiple digital, written, and verbal communication skills to engage different constituencies, partners, and target audiences.

### **Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Groups, Organizations and Communities.**

Macro social work practitioners use appropriate theories, frameworks, models, and strategies to examine and assess communities, organizations, and policies using a strength-based, anti-oppressive, and antiracist lens. In doing so, they critically analyze the historical, social, economic, and cultural context in which macro practice takes place; the current political landscape, including political viability, potential levers for change, and relevant power dynamics; the strengths and needs of affected individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities; and the social policies and other structural, social, and community forces that create and perpetuate discrimination and oppression. Macro social work practitioners also examine and account for their own biases and interests in conducting assessments. Macro social workers have strong collaboration skills in working with diverse stakeholders and constituencies. The macro social worker synthesizes data-driven approaches with multiple ways of knowing, acknowledging, and respecting that indigenous knowledge is essential for effective assessment and lays the groundwork for capacity building.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the

following:

- 7.1 Assess and analyze assets, needs, benefits, gaps in services, rights, and the inequitable distribution of resources and power to identify appropriate macro interventions.
- 7.2 Collaborate with community members, professional colleagues, and political stakeholders throughout the assessment process.
- 7.3 Prepare reports that summarize and analyze collected data and frame options for intervention.

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

Macro practitioners use research-informed evidence to address the root causes of social problems and incorporate indigenous knowledge of affected populations, communities, and organizations with their participation. Effective interventions with organizations, with communities, and in the policy arena build on successful engagement with stakeholders and constituencies, as well as the assessment of social, economic, and political contexts. Using collaborative and interdisciplinary processes, macro practitioners design and implement positive change interventions that are strategic and reflect the profession's values of social, economic, and environmental justice. Macro practitioners work to ensure that interventions combat systemic oppression and injustice that permeate our organizations and society and that often become institutionalized through social policies. Macro social workers use cutting-edge professional knowledge to apply evidence-informed interventions at local, state, and national levels. They build power and capacity for positive social change by effectively managing human service organizations and delivery systems; educating, mobilizing, and organizing for community planning and development; and shaping social policies.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 8.1 Identify the strengths, expertise, and potential contributions of relevant stakeholder groups (e.g., coalitions, think tanks, organizations, associations, voters, and affected constituencies) to collectively exert power for social change.
- 8.2 Initiate and facilitate interprofessional collaborations within and between organizational, community, and policy partners to achieve positive system change.
- 8.3 Apply intervention skills to develop and revitalize social, economic, and environmental assets and build community capacity.
- 8.4 Formulate educational materials and deliver persuasive arguments through written and oral communications, such as fact sheets, case vignettes, and testimony.

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

Macro social workers use research methods to evaluate programs, interventions, organizations, communities, and policies by using multiple sources of knowledge including professional experience, practice knowledge, and stakeholder input. They consider research and theories on organizational, community, and political processes in addressing the causes and consequences of social problems, inequality, and systematic oppression. Macro social workers evaluate the processes and outcomes of change efforts to ensure that evaluation findings are used to promote

social, political, and economic justice, sustainable and accessible services and programs, and evidence-based practice. Macro social workers ensure that evaluation design, measurement, implementation, and use of findings are customized to the target population and diverse settings and that they are culturally responsive, accurate, and timely. They recognize that evaluation is a complex activity that does not occur in a vacuum and that factors such as measurement issues, multiple goals, and changing systemic contexts contribute to success or failure. They strive to include the perspectives, input, and participation of stakeholders and community members throughout the evaluation process.

At the completion of the advanced specialization year, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- 9.1** Select appropriate evaluative questions to facilitate documenting, improving, or changing organizational programs, policies, and community performance processes and outcomes.
- 9.2** Develop collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders to engage them in the evaluation process.