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Understanding Professional Development to Become a Generalist Social Worker

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The values that pertain to me are congruent with those of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. There are so many people that are in need of assistance and by becoming a social worker I will be able to fulfill my goal in life, which is to help those individuals that are in need by providing them with resources that are available to meet their needs. Throughout my time spent receiving an education many accomplished and skillful professors have shown me how to communicate with clients in a way that will be both productive and beneficial to them and their needs/concerns. The classroom setting has taught me skills to use when working with clients, while working with clients at my intern placement I am able to put those skills into effect. I am learning valuable lessons at my intern placement at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institution that are enabling me to become a more competent social worker and will help me to transition from student to professional generalist social worker.

The ethical principles that belong to the NASW Code of Ethics are all important to my career as a social worker and to those that I will serve. There are three that stand out to me above the rest that I am actively and constantly putting to use while also becoming more aware of their importance to the clients I am working with at Moccasin Bend. One ethical principle that I feel is important to my field setting is social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. As stated in the NASW Code of Ethics social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. The importance of addressing social problems will bring the issues individuals deal with to public awareness and provide solutions to them. By involving other organizations, communities and public officials in the process these issues are being looked at collectively by many people that are able to act on them and come up with results that are beneficial to the individuals that face them.

While interning at Moccasin Bend I have been able to attend several meeting that are held by staff with staff only present and others with staff and clients present. During the meetings held with staff only the main reason for their occurrence is to discuss what has taken place at the agency during the prior twenty-four hours among clients and staff members. While observing these meetings I have noticed that the social workers present advocate for their clients and their rights. They are able to discuss the importance of their clients needs by utilizing their knowledge and skills and make sure that the client's needs are being met. When the client's needs are not being met the social workers address this through the appropriate sources to make sure that they are resolved. I also observe treatment team meetings held with staff and clients. During these meetings the social worker in attendance is able to discuss with the client and other professionals present a way to handle the client's needs. After attending these meetings I am able to discuss issues pertaining to the clients needs with social workers, nurses and doctors to bring about ways to help the client to overcome their problems. I feel a responsibility to advocate for the clients and to make sure that they are receiving the care that they are entitled to. Through my observation and discussion of these meeting I am able to develop professional relationships with staff members. I have also found it helpful to clients that the staff uses the recovery model when advocating and working for their clients. This model focuses on the individual not just their illness and believes that they can recover from a mental illness.

The second ethical principle that I feel is important in my field setting is that social workers challenge social injustice. Social justice is an important concept, especially when it pertains to individuals that are oppressed and facing discrimination. According to the NASW Code of Ethics access to needed information, services, and

resources are entitlements of all people. All people are entitled to basic human rights and when those rights are withheld or violated it is my responsibility and the responsibility of the staff at Moccasin Bend to make sure that these rights are addressed and met for every individual at the agency. The social workers at Moccasin Bend are responsible for making sure that the individuals they serve are receiving the proper resources that they need. I have taken part in this process by inquiring what resources are available to the clients at the agency. This has become helpful to me while doing psychosocial assessments with the clients. I am able to find resources for them at Moccasin Bend such as alcohol and drug counseling and am able to provide them with resources such as group homes and outpatient treatment programs for them to access after their discharge. While completing assessments I have found it to be useful to refer to the strengths perspective when documenting the clients file. This not only helps to fill out the assessment but also helps when interviewing the clients.

While attending classes to receive my BSW I have been introduced to many social injustices that individuals are facing on a daily basis. Through my studies and involvement in several activities such as the U.S. Social Forum, I have realized that many individuals are not even aware when their human rights are being violated and they do not know what to do about it when they are. I have learned that you must stand up for what you are entitled to and though it may not be the easiest thing to do you must seek justice for what is yours. We have many rights that are taken away quite frequently on a regular basis because we are not always aware of the fact that we are entitled to them. Until you are knowledgeable about them and where to go to seek justice you are likely to suffer from many injustices in our society.

The third ethical principle that I feel is important to my field setting is that social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. It is so important that social workers are competent and only practice what they know for certain. Continuing education is fundamental to the profession and will only help to strengthen the knowledge base of those social workers that are working with clients. The NASW Code of Ethics explains that social workers must continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in their practice. They should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of their profession.

The social workers at Moccasin Bend are competent in their practice with the individuals that they serve. When an issue arises that they are not competent in dealing with they seek the help of other professionals at the agency that are competent in the area. This has proven to me that if I am not able to help a client due to myself not being competent in that area then I must refer them to a professional that can. It is neither in my best interest or the clients to practice an area that I do not know how, doing so is not only unprofessional but violates my values and can be detrimental to the client. I have learned from other professionals at the agency and through my own education that there are classes available to become more competent in areas that I may lack knowledge in.

Throughout my education I have been taught to only help individuals in areas that I am competent in. If I do not have the knowledge to help others then it is up to me to seek this knowledge. Through the research I have conducted I have been able to gain knowledge in areas where I once lacked it. I have also learned that by continuing my education I will gain more knowledge in areas that will be beneficial to those that I will serve in my professional career as a social worker.

I have many responsibilities to those individuals that I will serve during my career as a professional generalist social worker. I view my ethical responsibilities as a serious priority; they will benefit not only the clients that I will be serving in the future, but me as well. These responsibilities will set the tone for my practice and the skills I will use to competently serve the individuals that are seeking services from me.

Throughout my placement this semester I hope to be able to strengthen areas where I lack knowledge and those that I am not confident about. Throughout my time at Moccasin Bend so far, I have been able to actively practice having a professional relationship with my colleagues. This has been an adjustment at times for me since prior to this I have only been in classes with my peers for the past year. While it has been an adjustment it has been one that has went smoothly. I have been able to conduct myself as a professional and been able to seek advice and knowledge from the professionals I am working with. It is a strength of mine to adjust to new situations and has helped me in the transition of going from student to professional. My time spent continuing to build on my relationships with other professionals at my agency will only help me further in this transition.

I still need to strengthen some areas of practice. Interviewing clients is one of the areas I would like to strengthen. To accomplish this task I will conduct as many psychosocial assessments as possible during my time at Moccasin Bend. I will also be seeking advice from my field instructor and other professional social workers at my field placement agency. By seeking feedback from other professionals during my internship I will be able to better serve clients in the future and will be less likely to doubt the skills that I possess.

