



## **Health and Aging Specialization Competencies & Practice Behaviors**

The specialization in health and aging practice enhances and expands on the foundation competencies by applying professional knowledge, values, ethics, and skills to advanced practice in health care delivery systems and with older adults. This specialization sequence is grounded in the core professional values including service, social justice, the dignity and worth of individuals and family members, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, human rights, and applying scientific knowledge. The health and aging curriculum integrates these values into every course through applied assignments. Students develop applied practice competencies in micro, mezzo, and macro health and/or aging practice with a specific focus on advanced practice in health care delivery systems and with older adults.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior in Health & Aging Practice**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services apply social work values and ethics in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with the older adult population. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence build upon their foundation competencies through applying professional knowledge, values, and ethical principles in the context of specific roles common in health and aging services. Students use critical thinking to strengthen their use of ethical principles ensuring that their practice strategies and skills respond to the vulnerabilities that emerge in the interplay of priorities between society, social systems, older adults, adult family members, and health care delivery systems. Within the framework of social work values and ethics, students acquire skills for analyzing and challenging the unique ethical challenges that undermine wellbeing in health and aging settings when conflicting priorities emerge in practice. Values and ethics-related practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the ability to identify and articulate, and when applicable, resolve interpersonal, interprofessional, structural, and technology-focused ethical challenges that emerge in health & aging practice.
- Students demonstrate the ability to solicit, accept and integrate feedback from clients, instructors/supervisors, and consultants into skill, intervention, and competence improvements.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to maintain professionalism and self-awareness when working practice in health care delivery systems and with older adults, and when working interprofessionally, or in host- settings.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services understand and apply knowledge about how diversity and difference influences in health care delivery systems and with older adults. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence are aware that there is intersectionality among multiple factors including, but not limited to, age, class, color, culture, disability/ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, geographic regions, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. This knowledge is applied as students learn how to adjust their approach to practice in response to the diversity that is present when working in health care delivery systems

and with older adults, ensuring the unique needs are met. Students engage with, and learn from, family members to identify how multiple forms of diversity and difference intersect in each family. Students demonstrate an ability to adjust their actions, skills, and strategies in response to diverse health and aging needs. Specific practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the ability to select appropriate intervention strategies based on current evidence-supported practices that are responsive to the needs of diverse clients and constituencies.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to tailor intervention strategies to meet needs of diverse populations in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.
- Students demonstrate self-awareness, curiosity, and humility in their interpersonal exchanges with diverse populations in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.
- Students demonstrate the ability to identify and manage biases that emerge in their interactions with health care delivery systems, older adults, other professionals, organizations, and communities.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services identify human rights violations and injustices that compromise the wellbeing of older adults and health care delivery systems. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence use professional knowledge and critical thinking to expose justifications and rationalizations while identifying the negative impact and inherent harm that emerges from systemic, organizational, and procedural injustices. They further demonstrate an ability to partner with others in targeting specific procedures, structures, and individuals bringing awareness, scrutiny, and motivation to change situations that infringe on the rights of those interacting with health care delivery systems and of older adults. The health and aging social-justice-related professional behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the capacity to identify and analyze organizational, systemic, and procedural structures, policies, and actions that infringe on the rights of those interacting with health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.
- Students demonstrate the ability to identify and engage constituency groups and representatives within the community and/or service system who are willing, able, and/or mandated to take action to protect the human rights of those interacting with health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.
- Students demonstrate the ability to develop and implement an advocacy plan in response human rights violations/infringements that compromise the wellbeing of those interacting with health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services understand and use empirical knowledge and evidence informed approaches in practice to anchor professional interventions. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence apply critical thinking to understand and evaluate empirical findings and evidence supported practices. This knowledge is applied to practice-based decisions and adjustments to professional skill sets used in their work in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults. Students demonstrate the use of evidence supported interpersonal skills in health and/or aging and family interventions, use theoretical frameworks developed and sustained through ongoing research, and apply techniques based on evidentiary support. Students in the health and aging sequence further demonstrate a capacity to develop practice informed research questions and empirical investigations to adjust and expand professional knowledge of effective practice in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults. Specific research related practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the ability to critically think and apply evidence-supported health and aging practices to ensure that practice is appropriate given the life stage specific needs and the family background, diversity, and needs.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to use practice experience with diverse health and aging systems to conceptualize, develop, and implement research and/or evaluation practices that can improve services for people across the lifespan.
- Students demonstrate the ability to implement research, practice, and/or evaluation protocols that are appropriate for any given life stage.
- Students demonstrate the ability to identify ethical problems and resolutions in research questions, protocols, and reporting in health and aging research.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services possess a knowledge and understanding of government, local, and agency policies that mandate and structure health and aging services. They use this understanding to evaluate, critique, and propose changes to service systems. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence learn the development and operational principles of federal, state, and local policy structures that influence the delivery of health and aging services. Students use critical thinking to evaluate policies and identify policy-elements and procedures that interfere with the achievement of the intended purposes. Students are able to identify shortcomings within current health and aging services policy and propose solutions to improve service delivery.

- Students demonstrate the ability to use critical thinking skills to analyze and understand the impact of policy in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults on child/family/individual wellbeing.
- Students identify how procedures within service delivery systems impact policy intent and impact health and aging outcomes.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to collaborate with community, interprofessional, and/or organizational colleagues to formulate and propose policy changes that can improve the effectiveness of policies and systems that govern the delivery of health and aging interventions.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services select relevant and evidence supported health and aging theory/knowledge frameworks to guide their engagement activities with adult children, families, older adults, health care delivery systems, groups, organizations, and communities. These frameworks are understood within the context of social and economic justice and health and aging diversity and difference. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence use these theory/knowledge frameworks to guide their actions and interactions with family members through developing a collaborative and focused working alliance in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults. Students develop their interpersonal skills to effectively manage the challenges of engaging health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, family members, interprofessional partners, organizational representatives, and community members into a collaborative working alliance. The engagement-related advanced practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the capacity to apply evidence-informed and supported actions within the engagement process with health care delivery systems, adult children, family members, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Students demonstrate the effective use of interpersonal skills to have positive interactions with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and family members identify their assets, strengths, resilience, current needs, and challenges including organizational/systemic barriers.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, ethically engage, and maintain a collaborative working alliance with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and family members, group, informal/formal community members, and interprofessional/ organizational supports as necessary to enhance the capacity for successfully achieving their goals.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services apply relevant and evidence supported theory/knowledge frameworks to inform assessment decisions. The application of these frameworks is used to identify and frame health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, family, group, organization, and community problems, goals, and objectives. These knowledge frameworks concurrently guide intervention decisions with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and other family members through understanding the underlying needs as they emerge during the assessment phase of service. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence use evidence-supported knowledge to identify linkages among the needs and experiences of each family member to create a dynamic understanding of family problems. They concurrently use evidence-supported health and aging theories/knowledge to shape goals and select intervention strategies. The assessment-related health and aging practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the ability to integrate individual and family theories, child, family, group, organizational, and/or community dynamics and needs to collaboratively work with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and the family to develop a flexible, evolving, and mutually endorsed assessment.
- Students demonstrate the ability to assess health care delivery systems, older adults, organizations, and communities to identify dynamics and/or structures that influence the capacity to thrive and also identify assets and supports to enhance intervention outcomes.
- Students demonstrate the ability to use a mutually developed, comprehensive understanding of the health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and family, group, organization and/or community situation to develop measurable and inclusive treatment/service goals.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services use their evidence-supported health and aging knowledge frameworks to guide their practice with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, family, groups, organizations, and/or communities. These frameworks inform student understanding and targeting of intervention activities. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence use cognitive-affective and interpersonal skillsets/strategies that emerge from the knowledge frameworks. Students are able to articulate rationales for their interventions based on clearly identified rationales that emerge from their understanding of the theory/knowledge frameworks.

- Students demonstrate the ability to apply evidenced-supported theory and interpersonal practices to guide goal-focused approaches with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and family, group, organizational, and community interventions with, and/or on behalf of older adults, health care delivery systems, adult children, and families.
- Students demonstrate the ability to use evidence-supported theories and interpersonal practice skills that can influence cognitive, affective, interpersonal, relational, and behavioral health and aging dynamics.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to engage in reflective practice that includes thoughtful examination of their responses to practice with health care delivery systems, older adults, adult children, and families and how such responses influence relationships and interventions with in health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.

### **Advanced Health & Aging Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Health & Aging Services**

Social work practitioners in health and aging services use goal operationalization, measurement, and evaluation skills to assess practice outcomes at the individual, family, group, organization, and/or community level. Students in the Health and Aging specialization sequence use research-based knowledge and skills to inform the intervention contract. They use measurable goals to monitor and evaluate individual, family, group, organization, and community progress achieved through intervention. Outcomes are used to inform future professional practices, shape programs, and promote practice-focused research. As intervention ends, students assess outcomes and plan to sustain the outcomes as in interactions with health care delivery systems and those systems that specifically work with older adults.

- Students demonstrate the ability to use the measurable intervention goals and methods identified during assessment to monitor and evaluate intervention progress and outcomes.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of how evaluation data can serve as an advocacy tool for additional services, program development, and/or funding within an organization and/or community.