

Standard of Professional Practice

Introduction

These standards are presented in a social work framework that values diversity of perspective and experience, understands there is diversity between and within cultures, and respects difference. Achieving professionalism in social work requires a commitment to and demonstration of the values of the social work profession.

The Simmons School of Social Work (SSW) is committed to preparing its graduates to be highly competent and ethical social work practitioners. Faculty make a commitment to provide students with a curriculum that supports their educational and professional development and that assists them in adherence to these standards. Additionally, the SSW is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to promote and evaluate professional development for students in Social Work programs (BSW, MSW). Likewise, the SSW is responsible to the community at large for graduating knowledgeable, ethical, and skilled social work professionals whose practice reflects the competencies, skills, and values of the social work profession.

This document outlines eight professional performance standards: Communication, Electronic Communication, Self-Awareness, Openness and Willingness to Learn, Physical and Cognitive Ability, Presentation of Self, Emotional Stability and Stress Management, and Professional Values and Ethics. Each professional standard is accompanied by descriptions of behavioral expectations. Students must satisfy the professional standards to enroll in, progress through, and graduate from the SSW. Specifically, students are expected to act in a manner that is consistent with the values, ethics, and conduct required for professional social work practice in the classroom, in field placements, and in the broader school community. Becoming a professional is a gradual process; as a result, the SSW faculty, field instructors and administrators will continually assess students in accordance with these standards, which constitute the criteria for professional performance. In addition to the standards outlined in this document, SSW students are expected to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017), the Simmons University Honor Code, and the policies outlined in the SSW Student Handbook and in the Simmons University Handbook. Procedures for addressing a violation of the Standards for Professional Practice or any of the ethics, codes, or policies identified above are outlined in the SSW Student Handbook. The ultimate goal of the SSW Standards for Professional Practice is to help you have a successful experience at the SSW and to be prepared for post-graduate practice. This document does not include the complete NASW Code of Ethics or the CSWE Educational Policies, however it highlights particular ethics and competencies to serve as a framework for professional and ethical behaviors to abide by while a student at the SSW. As an SSW student, you will be informed of the Standards for Professional Practice at the time of application to the SSW and at new student orientation. The standards are on the SSW web site and also in the SSW student handbook.

To participate in a degree program, you are expected to satisfy program requirements, including these professional standards, with or without accommodations. If you seek reasonable accommodations for disabilities, you must contact the Simmons Office of Disability Services. This office will determine your eligibility for accommodations and recommend accommodations and/or services.

Professional Standards

1. Self-Awareness

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Accurately assess your own strengths and limitations and display a willingness to examine and change behaviors that interfere with your work in field placement, in the classroom, on campus, and in the larger community
2. Actively examine your own biases
3. Seek supervision and use constructive feedback to inform practice
4. Take responsibility for your own actions and consider the impact of these actions on others
5. Demonstrate a willingness to examine and assess the relationship between your own personal values/socialization and their alignment with expected professional ethics
6. Reconcile conflicts between your personal values and those of the profession, as required by the NASW Code of Ethics

2. Communication

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Express ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly in the classroom and in field placement
2. In written work, communicate clearly and at a level that reflects the academic standards of SSW programs
3. Demonstrate a willingness and ability to actively listen to others with objectivity and openness
4. Communicate responsibly and respectfully, with speech that is free of bias, discriminatory language, or stereotyping in all interactions with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, staff, and clients
5. Advocate for yourself in an ethical, direct, respectful, and responsible manner using SSW and agency-specific channels for conflict management

3. Electronic Communication and use of Social Media

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Demonstrate respect for the privacy of your clients; refrain from gathering information about clients from online sources without the client's consent (i.e., googling client history, accessing client social media); photographing clients; or publishing client information on social media

2. Communicate about and with colleagues and peers with respect and accuracy, avoiding cyberbullying, harassment, or making derogatory or defamatory comments, or disclosing personal information without consent
3. Follow relevant laws, field education agency policy, NASW Code of Ethics (1.07) pertaining to social media and in use of technology in all aspects of service delivery
4. Maintain awareness of how personal communications using social media could affect professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and agencies

4. Openness and willingness to learn; flexibility and adaptability

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Demonstrate openness learning new ideas and perspectives
2. As required by the demands of professional practice, be flexible and adaptable in new situations and as circumstances change
3. Assume the stance of a learner with humility; avoid solely relying on current or past professional experiences to inform your judgment or decision-making in the field and in the classroom
4. Demonstrate a willingness to effectively communicate your learning needs and request clarification to understand requirements

5. Physical and Cognitive Ability, Critical Thinking

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Attend and participate in classes and field placement as scheduled, demonstrating punctuality, dependability, accountability, and the ability to prioritize responsibilities
2. Navigate transportation needed to attend field and classroom requirements
3. Use the technology required to engage in scholarship and effective practice including, but not limited to, use of computers, telephones, and agency electronic records and databases
4. Demonstrate the ability to acquire knowledge and reflect on experiences to inform practice
5. Demonstrate the capacity to think critically and to apply effective problem solving skills that are well reasoned, examine multiple perspectives and world views, integrate evidence and knowledge, and lead to well-supported decisions and conclusions

6. Emotional and Mental Stability, and stress management standard

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. In accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics (4.05), demonstrate the ability to honor the best interests of people for whom you have professional responsibility by keeping personal life circumstances or problems from interfering with judgment or performance
2. Recognize current life stressors that may interfere with scholastic or professional performance; seek and effectively use help for medical or emotional problems such as those problems stemming from psychosocial distress, substance misuse, and mental health difficulties
3. Demonstrate professional boundaries, including ethical use of self-disclosure
4. Maintain respectful relationships with all colleagues, faculty, field instructors, staff, and clients consistent with NASW Code of Ethics (2.01)

7. Professional Values and Ethics Standard:

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Exhibit judgment and conduct that is consistent with the values and ethics of the profession as stated in the NASW Code of Ethics, as well as with established laws, policies and professional standards
2. In accordance with NASW Code of Ethics section on: Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception (4.04), you should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception
3. Demonstrate professional and academic integrity, including exhibiting truthfulness in fulfilling program requirements. Students should remain aware of, and abide by, the Simmons Honor Code
4. Follow Federal and State laws and agency policies regarding confidentiality and mandatory reporting

8. Respect for Diversity and Social Justice

1. Exhibit a willingness to relate and work nonjudgmentally across difference with others
2. Demonstrate knowledge of, and sensitivity to: diversity, oppression, and privilege, including a willingness to examine personal beliefs, values and assumptions that perpetuate oppression

Meeting the academic degree requirements is not sufficient to successfully complete the program. If you meet the academic requirements, but fail to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and/or the Standards for Professional Practice, you are at risk for dismissal or other disciplinary action.