



Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Specialization Competencies & Practice Behaviors

The specialization in mental health and substance use recovery enhances and expands on the foundation competencies by applying professional knowledge, values, ethics, and skills to advanced practice in the areas of mental illness and drug addiction. The concentration prepares students to work in mental health and addiction treatment centers in the community, within residential, inpatient, outpatient, and community mental health services from a recovery perspective that promotes client empowerment, collaboration, self-determination, and the client taking an active role in the recovery process.

Overall the mental health and substance use recovery concentration seeks to encourage applied practice competencies in micro, mezzo, and macro mental health and substance use disorder practice that will produce culturally-competent clinicians, advocates, and community educators in the effort to reduce stigma, improve education about mental illness and addictions, and that facilitate competent work towards a more compassionate, socially just, and supportive social environment for persons coping with these individual and combined conditions.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Practice

Social work practitioners in mental health and substance use recovery services specialization understand and apply social work values and ethical principles while serving individuals and their families in mental health and substance use treatment settings. They use their ethical decision-making skills in the areas of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation by critically analyzing and confronting ethical circumstances and dilemmas that may undermine the effective delivery of services to those affected by mental illness and substance use disorders. Within the framework of social work values and ethics, they acquire skills to remain self-aware and reflective in the ways that their practices strategies and skills not only respond to vulnerabilities but empower and support overall mental health and recovery. The related practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the ability to apply social work values and ethical decision-making skills to the prevention, assessment and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability to engage in interprofessional collaborations at all levels of practice with knowledge of multidimensional aspects of mental health and substance use recovery.
- Students demonstrate the ability to solicit, accept and integrate feedback from clients, instructors/supervisors, and consultants into skill, intervention, and competence improvements in the area of mental health and substance use recovery.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to maintain professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and language when working with individuals and families identifying with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization understand and apply knowledge about how diversity and difference impact the human experience and service delivery in mental health and substance use recovery settings. To ensure that the unique needs of those with mental illness and substance use disorders are met, they engage with, and learn from, diverse individuals across the life span to better ensure that the unique needs of those with mental illness and substance use disorders are adequately addressed. They recognize intersectionality and its display across multiple aspects and can identify how multiple forms of diversity and difference intersect in each setting. They apply their knowledge and awareness of diversity by demonstrating an ability to adjust their actions, skills, and strategies in response to the cultural needs of those receiving mental health and substance use recovery services. The related practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the capacity to select and tailor appropriate intervention strategies responsive to diversity and the variant needs of those with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability in mental health and substance use recovery practice to interact, engage and communicate effectively with diverse and marginalized individuals and their families.
- Students demonstrate the ability to recognize, identify and manage biases that may emerge in mental health and substance abuse recovery interactions with individuals, communities, professionals, and organizations.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice in Mental and Substance Use Disorder Services

Social work practitioners in mental health and substance use recovery specialization identify human rights violations and injustices that compromise the wellbeing of individuals and families dealing with mental health and substance use recovery issues. They use professional knowledge and critical thinking to expose justifications and rationalizations, while identifying the negative impact and inherent harm that emerges from systemic, organizational, environmental 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 suffering with mental illness and substance use disorders. The related practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the capacity to recognize and acknowledge the effects of oppression, discrimination, and trauma on the development and persistence of mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability to assess when cultural structures, values and actions enhance privilege and power and infringe on the rights of those with mental health and substance use disorders.
- 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 rights of those with mental health and substance use disorders
- Students demonstrate the ability to advocate at multiple levels for mental health and substance use recovery promotion and the reduction of mental health disparities and stigma for diverse populations affected by mental health and substance use disorders.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization understand and use empirical knowledge and evidence informed approaches in practice to anchor

professional interventions. They 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 mental health and substance use recovery service settings. They use theoretical frameworks developed and sustained through ongoing research, and apply techniques based on evidentiary support. They further demonstrate a capacity to develop clinical practice questions and empirical investigations to adjust and expand professional knowledge of effective practice with individuals affected by mental illness and substance use disorder. The related practice behaviors include

- Students demonstrate the ability to critically think and apply evidence-supported mental health and substance use recovery practices that acknowledge the biological, developmental and social conditions associated with specific mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to use practice experience to conceptualize, develop, and implement research and/or evaluation practices that can improve services for those with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability to identify ethical problems and resolutions in research questions, protocols, and diagnostic measures indicated in mental health and substance use recovery research.
- Students demonstrate the ability to implement research, practice, and/or evaluation protocols that are appropriate for assessing the varying diagnostic categories of mental health and substance use disorders.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization possess a knowledge and understanding of government, local, and agency policies that mandate and structure mental health and substance use treatment services. They use this understanding to evaluate, critique, and propose changes to service systems. They learn the development and operational principles of federal, state, and local policy structures that influence the delivery of mental health and substance use recovery services. They use critical thinking to evaluate policies, identify policy-elements and procedures that interfere with the achievement of the intended purposes and propose solutions to improve service delivery. They are able to identify shortcomings within current mental health and substance use recovery services policies and advocate with and on behalf of those receiving propose solutions to improve service delivery. The related advanced practice behaviors include

- Students demonstrate the ability to articulate and critically analyze the history and service delivery systems related to mental health and substance use problems and interventions
- Students demonstrate the ability to articulate and explicate how procedures within mental health and substance use recovery service delivery systems impact policies addressing those with mental health and substance use disorders
- Students demonstrate the capacity and ability to engage in policy advocacy with community, interprofessional, and/or organizational colleagues to formulate and propose policy changes that can improve the effectiveness of policies and systems geared towards those with mental health and substance use disorders.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 6: Engage Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization know and value the influential role of engagement within the process of mental health and substance use recovery practice. They select and employ relevant and evidence based theoretical frameworks to guide their engagement activities with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Through

developing a collaborative and focused working alliance, they utilize their knowledge and interpersonal skills to effectively manage the challenges of engaging diverse individuals, family members, interprofessional partners, organizational representatives, and community members affected by mental illness and substance use disorder. The advanced practice behaviors include:

- Students demonstrate the capacity to select and implement effective evidence-based strategies of engagement supportive of mental health and substance use recovery
- Students demonstrate the effective use of interpersonal skills to help those with mental health and substance use disorders identify their assets, strengths, resilience, current needs, and challenges including organizational/systemic barriers.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively establish and maintain an engaged and collaborative working alliance with persons with mental health and substance use disorders, their families, community members, and interprofessional/organizational supports needed to maximize the potential of successful treatment goal attainment.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization apply relevant and evidence supported theory/knowledge frameworks to inform assessment and diagnostic decisions. They use assessment and the assessment process to identify and frame problems, goals, and objectives for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities affected by mental illness and substance use disorder with particular attention to strengths and diversity. They appreciate the continuous nature of assessments, using them to guide intervention decisions and strategies regarding needs that may emerge during throughout the assessment phase. The related practice behaviors include

- Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and integrate biological, developmental, social and other theories of etiology associated with specific mental health and substance use recovery.
- Students demonstrate the ability to select and use appropriate diagnostic tools, assessment instruments and measures to develop measurable and inclusive treatment/service goals for those with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability to assess practice settings, service providers, and community resources in order to consider predictive and multidisciplinary treatment strategies that support intervention outcomes.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in mental health and substance use recovery services specialization use their evidence-supported knowledge frameworks to guide their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or communities. They use these frameworks to inform to target intervention activities, encourage collaboration and integrate client feedback. They are able to articulate rationales for their interventions based on clearly identified rationales that emerge from their understanding of the theory/knowledge frameworks. The related practice behaviors include

- Students demonstrate the ability to differentially implement, based on previously assessed signs and symptoms, evidence based, goal-oriented intervention practice models with, and/or on behalf of individuals and families with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Students demonstrate the ability to apply interventions, through the utilization and organization of community and organizational resources to meet the needs of those with mental health and substance use disorders.

- Students demonstrate the capacity to engage in reflective practice that includes thoughtful examination of their responses to practice with individuals with mental health and substance use disorders and/or their families and how such responses influence relationships and interventions with individuals and/or families with mental health and substance use disorders.

Advanced Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities in Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery Services

Social work practitioners in the mental health and substance use recovery services specialization understand the ongoing nature of evaluation. They use goal operationalization, measurement, and evaluation skills to assess practice outcomes at the individual, family, group, organization, and/or community level. They 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 mental health and recovery-focused professional practices, shape programs, and promote practice-focused research. As intervention ends, students assess outcomes and plans to sustain the outcomes as individuals interact with mental health and recovery systems. The related practice behaviors include:

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