Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors

Competency 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession's history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession's enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth. Social workers:
1: Advocate for client access to the services of social work;
2: Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development;
3: Attend to professional roles and boundaries;
4: Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;
5: Engage in career-long learning; and
6: Use supervision and consultation.
APB1: Demonstrate the ability to maintain appropriate professional client centered relationship.

Competency 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:
7: Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice;
8: Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work 'Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles';
9: Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts; and
10: Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.
APB2: Identify and use knowledge of relationship dynamics, including power differentials, in clinical-community practice from a relational perspective applying social work ethics.

Competency 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers:
11: Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom;
12: Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation; and
13: Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.
APB3: Apply critical thinking to inform professional judgment in creating, maintaining, and repairing the working alliance with clients and/or representatives of client systems.

Competency 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice.
Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, geographic location, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include
oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers:

14: Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;

15: Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups;

16: Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and

17: View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

APB4: Demonstrate an understanding of how diverse community contexts shape individuals, and how individuals shape their communities.

Competency 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Social workers:

18: Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination;

19: Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice; and

20: Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.

APB5: Apply a Clinical-Community/Relational Perspective formulations of human rights and social justice to a community development model.

Competency 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers:

21: Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and

22: Use research evidence to inform practice.

APB6: Use multiple forms of research to inform clinical-community practice decisions.

Competency 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live with an emphasis on rural and small communities; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers:

23: Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and

24: Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

APB7: Integrate and critically apply theories of human behavior and the social environment to guide clinical-community practice.
Competency 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers:

25: Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being; and
26: Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

APB8: Identify a policy and formulate a policy alternative that would improve service delivery and advance social and economic well-being.

Competency 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice.

Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively. Social workers:

27: Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services with an emphasis on rural and small communities; and
28: Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

APB9: Anticipate, evaluate and respond to dynamic social contexts to propose sustainable system change.

Competency 2.1.10(a)–(d)—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

**Competency 2.1.10(a)–Engagement**

Social workers:

29: Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
30: Use empathy and other interpersonal skills; and
31: Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes.

APB10: Attend to the interpersonal dynamics and contextual factors that both strengthen and potentially threaten the therapeutic relationship.

**Competency 2.1.10(b)–Assessment**

Social workers:

32: Collect, organize, and interpret client data;
33: Assess client strengths and limitations;
34: Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives; and
35: Select appropriate intervention strategies.

APB11: Use the professional relationship to assess the fit of interventions strategies to client needs.
Competency 2.1.10(c)—Intervention
Social workers:
36: Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals;
37: Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities;
38: Help clients resolve problems;
39: Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients; and
40: Facilitate transitions and endings.
APB12: Demonstrate the ability to develop and apply integrative interventions from various theoretical perspectives.

Competency 2.1.10(d)—Evaluation
Social workers:
41: Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.
APB13: Use objective and intersubjective information to evaluate intervention effectiveness.

Note: APB designates Advanced Practice Behaviors for the advanced year of the MSW program.