

The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
BSSW Program
Spring 2008

SW 462 – Child Welfare II: Skills and Practice Methods

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Program Mission

The BSSW program at the University of Tennessee exists to fulfill a need for disciplined, highly educated and trained generalist social workers to help people improve their social functioning in a technologically complex, culturally diverse, and rapidly changing world without borders. There is a focus on the reciprocal relationships between persons and their environments. Social workers are doers; they are problem-solvers who are able to intervene in multiple-level systems and perform various professional roles. Their actions are guided and informed by a broad knowledge-base, code of ethics, and professional values. Social workers are educated and trained to do things right as well as to do the right thing.

The mission of the BSSW program is to develop generalist social workers who are strategic thinkers, life-long learners and opinion shapers. The knowledge-base, skills, and values necessary for generalist practice are taught in an environment that fosters professional development, critical thinking, and leadership and prepares students to take appropriate action guided by the best available scientific evidence. We are dedicated to preparing practitioners for the challenges of today's complex pluralistic world. Since the amount of knowledge doubles approximately every five years, what is taught today may soon be obsolete. Our challenge, therefore, lies in the on-going development and implementation of a curriculum that prepares and energizes students for generalist practice today and in the future.

Program Goals

Provision of education and training that enable students to become generalist social work practitioners who:

- are committed to advancing social and economic justice and the principles, values, and ethics that guide the social work profession;
- are committed to evidence-based practice
- are grounded in systems theory and operate within a person-in-the-environment framework;
- use the problem-solving process to intervene in multiple-level client systems;
- have an understanding of human diversity, special populations, and domestic and international challenges, that informs practice interventions;
- use critical thinking, evaluative skills, and leadership skills to address the needs of a complex, changing global world; and
- are committed to continuous development of professional self.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to provide students the opportunity to understand and analyze:

- the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Practice Model including joint decision making and levels of accountability

- the roles and responsibilities of social workers practicing in child welfare including child protection, foster care, adoption, juvenile justice, and education;
- the stages of the casework process including: intake, initial assessment, family assessment, service planning, service provision, monitoring of process, case transfers, and termination;
- federal and state statutory requirements related to case management including responsibilities such as mandatory reporting and expected competencies for child welfare and juvenile justice service providers
- the impact of the involuntary nature of the client's relationship with the child welfare service providers
- conceptual frameworks for assessment, planning, and intervention including systems theory, strengths perspective, solution-focused approach, crisis intervention, and family-centered planning

Behavioral Objectives:

Upon completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- recognize the impact of age, race, ethnicity, social and economic class, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and other differences on the relationship between client and service provider and formulate culturally responsive, ethical engagement strategies accordingly;
- demonstrate ability to conduct individual and family assessments, and to engage families in planning and establishing measurable treatment goals using a family team approach;
- demonstrate skills in assessment and intervention that incorporate strengths-based, culturally responsive and family-centered practice;
- demonstrate skills needed to evaluate case interventions and services for effectiveness and appropriateness;
- discuss current public child welfare and juvenile justice laws and trends and the impact these have on direct practice;
- demonstrate skills needed to effectively and ethically intervene and/or advocate for children and families at all system levels;
- recognize one's own values and biases and how these can affect practice with children and families;
- develop and utilize a network of community resources in case planning and management;
- demonstrate skills needed to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of community services for children and families on a case-by-case basis;
- demonstrate skills needed to facilitate the transition of a case to another service provider ensuring continuity and support for the client throughout the transition;
- demonstrate skills needed to facilitate the process of termination with clients when appropriate;
- provide clear, informative presentations individually and as a part of a team..

Course Description

This course is designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of students interested in child welfare and subsequently improve the quality of services delivered by child welfare programs. Topics covered will include building trusting relationships with families; conducting family-centered assessments and planning; conducting family-centered CPS investigations; permanence; and juvenile justice.

Course Rationale

This course is designed to continue the student's preparation for entry-level child welfare practice. A focus on the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Practice Model will increase

students' knowledge and skills for evidence-based, culturally competent, strengths-based, and family-centered child welfare practice.

Disability Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability please contact the Office of Disability Services at 2227 Dunford Hall at (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Honor Statement

An essential feature of the University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic dishonesty. By enrollment in this class, you pledge that you will neither knowingly give, nor receive, any inappropriate assistance in academic work in SW 462, thus affirming your own personal commitment to honor and integrity (*Hilltopics*).

Inclement Weather Policy

Class will be cancelled only if the University is closed due to inclement weather. Campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified so that appropriated announcements may be made. If class is cancelled, any assignments due that day will be due the next time class meets.

Instructor's Policy

Any assignments and/or exams that are not completed will be recorded as "0". Only in case of a verified emergency will make-up examinations or assignment extensions be permitted. If there are extenuating circumstances, the instructor must be informed **prior** to the date/time of the exam or the due date of the assignment.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive punctually. Attendance will be taken in each class session. Because emergencies and illnesses do occur, you will be allowed **one** absence during the semester. For each additional absence, five (5) points will be deducted from the student's final course grade. Being late to class two times will equal one absence.

Course Requirements

The course format will be a combination of lecture, speakers, video, class discussion and activities. Students are expected to read, critically analyze, and discuss readings. Participation in class is a requirement and **students should come to each class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that class session.**

Blackboard

This course uses many features of Blackboard available through Online@UT. Please be sure that the email address listed is your current one. If additional help is needed accessing Blackboard, contact helpdesk@utk.edu

Required Readings

Turnell, Andrew and Edwards, Steve.(1999). *Signs of safety: A solution and safety oriented approach to child protection casework*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Other required readings will come from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services training materials. These materials include DCS documents, policies, and the DCS training manuals for new case managers. Readings from these manuals will be marked with asterisks (*) throughout the syllabus. All reading materials will be posted on Blackboard or the URL will be provided for readings to be accessed via the Internet.

Grading

Students will be evaluated by total points earned in this course as outlined above. No extra credit is permitted in this course. The grading scale by total points is as follows:

180-200	A	140-149	C
170-179	B+	130-139	D
160-169	B	129-below	F
150-159	C+		

Quizzes (4@ 20 points each)

There will be 4 quizzes in this class. The quizzes will cover required readings, class discussions, lectures, videos, and guest speakers. Each quiz will be worth 20 points. The quizzes are currently scheduled on February 4th, February 25th, March 31st, and April 14th.

Burnout: Plan for Self-Care (20 points)

Burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue are potential risks faced by social workers and child welfare practitioners. This assignment will involve a series of discussion board/online activities that will assist you in taking a proactive approach to these risks. There will be 4 assignments that will assist you in devising a plan for the prevention and/or early intervention of burnout in your practice.

“Difficult Aspect of Child Welfare Practice” Paper (50 points)

It is understood that social work in the child welfare arena is emotionally challenging. This assignment provides an opportunity to identify and explore a specific aspect of child welfare practice that you anticipate will be particularly difficult for you. Your paper should include the following four parts (each part should be a separate section in your paper):

- I. Thoroughly define and describe the aspect of child welfare practice you have selected. (5 points)
- II. Examine the roots of your perceived difficulty, including an open discussion regarding your own perceptions, attitudes, biases, values, experiences, emotions, and beliefs that influence you regarding this aspect of practice. (10 points)
- III. A review of relevant professional literature on the subject and related NASW Code of Ethics considerations. (15 points)
- IV. A thoughtful description of the personal plan you have devised to address your perceived difficulty/deficit. (10 points)
- V. Your paper should be in APA format, 7 to 10 pages in length (12-point Times New Roman font), with a minimum of 5 citations from current peer-reviewed professional literature. (10 points)

Class Attendance & Participation (13 points) and Competency Practice (32 points)

Class attendance and participation are mandatory. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions as well as engage in competency practice opportunities (case simulations). **Attendance on days that Competency Practice activities are scheduled is required.** These activities are currently scheduled on January 28th, February 18th, March 24th, and April 21st.

Tentative Course Outline

Unit I: *Building Trusting Relationships with Families*

Session 1: January 14 **Orientation to course**
TN DCS Practice Model
Core conditions for helping

Readings: *Tennessee Department of Children’s Services: Standards of Professional Practice for Serving Children and Families: A Model of Practice*
This reading is posted on Blackboard under “Course Documents”

* “Core conditions for helping”

January 21 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Session 2: January 28 ***COMPETENCY PRACTICE***
Preparing to meet the family
Interpersonal helping skills
Dynamics of cultural diversity

Readings: *Signs of Safety* Introduction and chapters 1 & 2
* “Family-Centered practice and child welfare”
* “Thinking of families as social systems”
* “The helping relationship”
* “Essentials of cultural competence in child welfare practice”

Unit II: *Conducting Family-Centered Assessments*

Session 3: February 4 **QUIZ 1**

Overview of Assessment Process
Assessment tools

Readings: *Signs of Safety* chapter 3 & 4

* “The Eco Map and Genogram: Techniques for assessing and working with families”

Session 4: February 11 **Assessing safety**
Assessing well-being
Assessing permanence

Readings: *Signs of Safety* chapter 5 & 6

Developing an investigative strategy
Collecting and assessing information with family & team
Making decisions with family and team
Remaining positive and focused

Readings: * “How do I assess the likelihood of an intervention succeeding?”
 * “How do I assess a child’s behavior related to separation and visitation?”

Unit V: *Permanence and Juvenile Justice*

Session 10: March 31 **Quiz 3**

The foundation of permanence
Facilitating the transition into custody

Readings: * “When is termination of parental rights and adoption the best permanency option?”
 * “How do I facilitate visits between foster children and their biological families that support the goals and objectives of intervention?”

Session 11: April 7 **Engaging the family team in placement decisions**
Concurrent permanency planning
Developing, implementing, and revising the plan

Readings: * “Concurrent planning benefits and pitfalls”
 * “When can a child be safely reunited with her/his family?”

Session 12: April 14 **QUIZ 4**

Monitoring and updating the permanency plan
Stabilizing placements
Making and implementing permanency decisions

Readings: * “How do I prepare families for case closure?”

Session 13: April 21 ***COMPETENCY PRACTICE***
Course closing/ evaluations