

EIGHTH EDITION



EMPOWERMENT SERIES

Understanding Generalist Practice

Karen K. Kirst-Ashman and Grafton H. Hull, Jr.

Understanding Generalist Practice

Eighth Edition

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To Linda Kirst and Jim Spielman, the best relatives anyone could ask for

To my grandchildren, Patrick, Tatiana, Gregory, Ilsa, Marcus, Michael, Savannah, and Jonah

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Preface

Understanding Generalist Practice is a guide to generalist social work practice. It provides a conceptual framework useful for viewing the world from a generalist perspective. Within this framework, the text has two primary goals. First, it aims to teach students the relationship-building, interviewing, and problem-solving skills necessary for them to work with individual clients. These skills form the basis for social work practice with systems of other sizes, such as families and groups (mezzo) and organizations and communities (macro).

The text's second major goal is to introduce students to the breadth of generalist practice. It helps them maintain a focus not only on the needs of individual clients but on those of families, groups, organizations, and communities. The book's intent is to structure how students think about clients and their problems so that they automatically explore alternatives beyond the individual level. Links are clearly made among multiple levels of practice. A systems approach aids students' understanding of how perspectives shift when changing from one practice level to another.

This book is designed for either an introduction to generalist social work practice course or one stressing skill development for working with individuals and families. It grounds students from the very beginning of the practice sequence with a strong generalist perspective.

Content is practical and highlights the usefulness of the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM) in the planned change (or problem-solving) approach used in much of social work practice. GIM provides clear guidelines for how students might proceed through the helping process, while allowing a wide range of flexibility for the application of theories and specific skills. Students will gain a foundation upon which they can continue to add and build skills. GIM, as a unifying framework, is intended to help students make sense of the breadth and depth of the social work profession.

Understanding Generalist Practice avoids focusing on any particular theoretical model but rather addresses a core of carefully chosen skills for working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They are those deemed to be most useful to generalist practitioners in a wide variety of settings.

Such core skills include, for example, those involved in working with families and recording information.

Social work ethics and values are another major dimension of the text, and an entire chapter addresses professional values. Content goes on to examine ethical dilemmas commonly encountered in practice and to suggest solutions. Sensitivity to human diversity and populations-at-risk is paramount, with individual chapters devoted to cultural competence and to gender sensitivity. Additionally, content on human diversity is incorporated throughout the text. Moreover, another full chapter discusses advocacy in response to oppression.

In order to be usable and practical, content is clearly presented. Numerous case examples demonstrate how skills are applied in real social work settings. The problem-solving model itself is graphically illustrated to provide the clearest picture possible of its implementation. Research applications in terms of evaluating one's own practice are emphasized. An entire chapter is devoted to developing relevant evaluation skills.

Additionally, content and specific skills are elaborated upon in a number of practice areas (for example, child abuse and neglect, crisis intervention, alcohol and other substance abuse, and working with older adults). Such content areas are targeted for a number of reasons: they are among those often encountered in practice, they present excessively difficult situations for untrained workers to address, and/or they are not consistently covered in another area of the required social work curriculum.

In summary, we believe *Understanding Generalist Practice* will be a practical and flexible tool for students. We aim to emphasize the unique nature of social work as a valuable helping profession and believe students will find this book's content interesting and enjoyable.

Relationship Between Content and the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) and Professional Competencies

This book addresses accreditation standards and competencies established by the Council on Social Work

Education (CSWE).¹ Our intent is to facilitate programs' ability to link content provided in this textbook with expectations for student learning and accomplishment. As is true in almost all learning, students must acquire knowledge before they are expected to apply it to practice situations.

CSWE has identified 31 component behaviors that operationalize nine core competencies that are critical for professional practice (CSWE, 2015). For clarity, we have alphabetized the component behaviors listed under each competency. **Multicolor helping hands icons** located within paragraphs clearly show the linkage between content in the textbook and competencies with their component behaviors. Each icon is labeled with the specific behavior or competency that relates directly to the content conveyed in the paragraph. For example, an icon might be labeled EP [Educational Policy] 3b, which is the behavior to “engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice” (CSWE, 2015, EP, p. 7). Accredited social work programs are required to prove that students have mastered all component behaviors for competence as specified in the EPAS. (Please refer to <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=81660> for the EPAS document.)



For all icons, **Competency Notes** are provided at the end of each chapter. These Competency Notes explain the relationship between chapter content and CSWE's competencies and their component behaviors. They also list page numbers where icons are located and this content is discussed. A summary chart of the icons' locations in all chapters and their respective competency or practice behavior is placed in the inside front cover of the book.

MindTap

MindTap for *Understanding Generalist Practice* engages and empowers students to produce their best work—consistently. By seamlessly integrating course material with videos, activities, apps, and much more, MindTap creates a unique learning path that fosters increased comprehension and efficiency.

1. Please note that this content addresses standards posed in the EPAS. In no way does it claim to verify compliance with standards. Only the CSWE Commission on Accreditation can make those determinations.

For students:

- MindTap delivers real-world relevance with activities and assignments that help students build critical thinking and analytic skills that will transfer to other courses and their professional lives.
- MindTap helps students stay organized and efficient with a single destination that reflects what's important to the instructor, along with the tools students need to master the content.
- MindTap empowers and motivates students with information that shows where they stand at all times—both individually and compared to the highest performers in class.

Additionally, for instructors, MindTap allows you to:

- Control what content students see and when they see it with a learning path that can be used as-is or matched to your syllabus exactly.
- Create a unique learning path of relevant readings, multimedia, and activities that move students up the learning taxonomy from basic knowledge and comprehension to analysis, application, and critical thinking.
- Integrate your own content into the MindTap Reader using your own documents or pulling from sources like RSS feeds, YouTube videos, websites, Google Docs, and more.
- Use powerful analytics and reports that provide a snapshot of class progress, time in course, engagement, and completion.

In addition to the benefits of the platform, MindTap for *Understanding Generalist Practice* contains the following components, broken into a logical folder structure:

- **Start:** A polling activity and reflection activity get students thinking about relevant topics they are about to explore in-depth in the chapter.
- **Read:** Students read the chapter content
- **Discuss:** Using YouSeeU, students will engage with classmates to discuss chapter topics
- **Practice:** Students analyze cases and respond to quiz questions, as well as watch videos highlighting social work scenarios and respond to quiz questions.
- **Review and Reflect:** Students can prepare for exams by taking a practice quiz and by completing a reflection exercise that ties to the one he or she completed in the Start folder.

Additional Supplements

Online Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual (IM) contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero

Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows instructors to author, edit, and manage test bank content as well as create multiple test versions in an instant. Instructors can deliver tests from their school's learning management system, their classroom, or wherever they want.

Online PowerPoint®

These vibrant Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides for each chapter assist instructors with lectures by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

New Content

Each chapter cites chapter learning objectives at the beginning and summarizes relevant content at the end. Definitions have also been updated throughout. Other new additions include the following:

Chapter 1

- The 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards
- Identification of additional aspects of human diversity including disability and ability (formerly referred to with the term *ability*), marital status, religion/spirituality (formerly simply *religion*), and tribal sovereign status

Chapter 2

- Failures in using empathy

Chapter 3

- Additional material on online support groups and participatory action research

Chapter 4

- More content on interdisciplinary collaboration
- Additional information on negotiation
- More discussion on preparing news releases

- Increased discussion on writing skills for electronic communication
- Updated content on needs assessment

Chapter 5

- Additional information on assessment
- Additional example about assessment of older adults
- Identification of a rating scale for assessing strengths of adolescents

Chapter 7

- A new case example involving emotional/psychological child maltreatment
- Updated statistics on legal and illegal immigration

Chapter 8

- More on locating valid and reliable instruments for assessments
- Updated information about online resources
- More on sustainability of change efforts

Chapter 9

- A new format for family resource assessment
- Updated statistics on single-parent families
- New content on cultural competence with families

Chapter 10

- Terms used to describe various sexual orientations

Chapter 11

- Updated references to the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards that specifically relate to ethical issues and dilemmas.

Chapter 12

- Updated information about people with disabilities

Chapter 13

- Updated statistics on women's income
- Updated definitions concerning sexual assault
- New content concerning the consequences of sexual assault
- New content involving advocacy on the behalf of battered women
- Additional content on counseling battered women and developing a safety plan
- New content on the international picture of domestic violence
- Updated statistics on women in leadership positions and the glass ceiling

Chapter 14

- Updated information on legislative advocacy

Chapter 15

- More on working with adults having disabilities
- Discussion of the role of empathy in case management
- Increased research on the effectiveness of case management with different client groups

Chapter 16

- Updated content on the use of e-mails and memos
- New information on the use of texting in agency settings
- Updated examples of electronic security breaches

Related Texts

Understanding Generalist Practice introduces generalist practice and targets skills for working with individuals and families while introducing work with larger systems. Another book in the Empowerment Series, *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities* (2018), uses the Generalist Intervention Model introduced in this book and covers the additional knowledge and skills for work with organizations and communities. Both can be used to integrate a generalist perspective at any point in the practice sequence.

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1 Introducing Generalist Practice: The Generalist Intervention Model



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Learning Objectives (LOs)

This chapter will help prepare students to:

- LO 1-1** Employ a unique approach to helping in the field of social work.
- LO 1-2** Define the process of generalist practice by describing its inherent concepts.
- LO 1-3** Acquire and apply an eclectic knowledge base to practice.
- LO 1-4** Apply the systems theory theoretical framework to practice.
- LO 1-5** Apply the ecological theoretical framework to practice.
- LO 1-6** Acquire professional values and apply professional ethics to practice.
- LO 1-7** Recognize a wide range of practice skills to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- LO 1-8** Emphasize principles involving values that underlie generalist practice.
- LO 1-9** Appreciate and stress the importance of human diversity.
- LO 1-10** Advocate for human rights, and pursue social, economic, and environmental justice.
- LO 1-11** Demonstrate a wide range of professional roles.
- LO 1-12** Define critical thinking skills and apply them to practice.

LO 1-13 Incorporate research-informed practice.

LO 1-14 Follow a planned change process.

LO 1-15 Employ the Generalist Intervention Model (GIM), which uses a seven-step planned change focus.

DACEY, AGE 26, IS THE MOTHER OF THREE CHILDREN. She hasn't seen or heard from the children's father for over a year. To make ends meet, she works as a waitress and bartender for as many shifts as she can get. She only has a 10th-grade education and is struggling to keep her family fed, clothed, and housed. Often she's forced to leave Danny, her eldest at age 8, in charge when she can't find or afford a babysitter. When she gets home, she's beat and finds it's easy to get cranky and impatient with the kids. Although she hasn't given them specific rules for behavior, she expects them to "be good" and not add to her already heavy burden of problems. She fluctuates from being really strict to being overly indulgent, allowing the kids to do almost whatever they want. Sometimes, she "loses it" and takes a belt to them to get them to behave. For example, Rudy, her 6-year-old, got caught shoplifting a bag of his favorite candy, Mega Warheads. Dacey subsequently beat him severely enough that he couldn't go to school the next day. School personnel had noted bruises on the two oldest children several times. As a result, Dacey had become involved with Child Protective Services. She loves her kids and doesn't want to lose them. However, she clearly understands it can be done, as she herself was removed from her parents' home and placed in foster care.¹

FREDERIKA, AGE 86, LIVES BY HERSELF in a small urban apartment with 17 cats. She has been living there for the past 13 years since her husband died. She has no living relatives except an older sister living across the country and a niece a state away. Frederika has always considered herself a strong, independent woman and had worked outside of the home much of her younger life. However, now she is forced to admit to herself that she's getting weaker. Everything seems harder to do than it used to. She is also starting to forget things. For example, she sometimes forgets to cook and eat. To compensate for this forgetfulness, Frederika keeps writing herself little notes on Post-its and leaving them everywhere to remind her to do things. The apartment is getting messier. She deeply loves her cats, but it is getting more and more difficult to keep their litter boxes clean. The landlord has been up three times to complain about the mess and tell her she must clean it up. She does not want to leave her home. She is terrified of losing her dignity and independence.

A FAMILY OF FOUR—THE FIFTH GENERATION TO LIVE ON THE FAMILY FARM—is dispossessed. They had several years of crop failures and were unable to pay back the loans they so desperately needed to survive at the time. They're living in their '02 Chevy van now. They can't find any housing they can possibly afford even though both parents, Leah and Robert, work full-time, minimum-wage jobs. Fall is almost here. They dread the winter when it gets much colder. Leah is striving to keep the kids, ages 9 and 11, fed. They're supposed to go to school soon. She also worries about Robert, who is getting seriously depressed about losing the farm and not providing adequately for his family. They just don't know where to turn.

1. This vignette is loosely based on one presented by R. M. DeMaria (1999) entitled Family Therapy and Child Welfare, in C. W. LeCroy (Ed.), *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* (2nd ed., pp. 59–63). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Introducing Generalist Practice

The previous situations confront generalist social work practitioners daily. Social workers do not pick and choose which problems and issues they would like to address. They see a problem, even a difficult problem, and try to help people solve it.

Social workers are generalists (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015). That is, they need a wide array of skills at their disposal. They are prepared to help people with individualized personal issues and with very broad problems that affect whole communities.

This book is about generalist practice and what social workers do to help people with problems in virtually any setting. There are many ways to describe what social workers do. They work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Their work is based on a body of knowledge, practice skills, and professional values. They work in settings that focus on children and families, health, justice, education, and economic status.

Social workers and social work educators have seriously debated the definition of generalist practice for decades (Hernandez, 2008; Landon, 1995). Currently, at least five concepts are generally accepted as underpinnings for generalist practice (CSWE, 2015; Hernandez, 2008). First, a theoretical approach is assumed in which individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities are viewed as systems within their environments. (Systems terms and concepts are explained and discussed later in the chapter.) Second, generalist practitioners use a problem-solving, planned change approach to resolve issues encountered by any of these systems. In other words, generalist social workers follow a designated plan or procedure for getting things done. Third, ethical principles and social work values are exceptionally significant in all aspects of generalist practice. These include a focus on human well-being, human rights, and social and economic justice, as well as an appreciation of human diversity. Fourth, practitioners assume a wide range of roles to achieve their goals. A professional **social work role** is behavior and activity involved in performing some designated function that is part of professional social work practice. Fifth, it is essential that generalist social workers select the most effective

intervention strategies possible, carefully evaluate the results of their work, and be competent. In effect, generalist social workers must have infinite flexibility, a solid knowledge base about many things, and a wide range of skills at their disposal.

Proposed here is a model of planned change based on a specific definition of generalist practice. It views practice from a systems perspective. The intent is to clarify in a practical manner what occurs in generalist social work practice. The model addresses the qualities that make social work unique and special. It demonstrates how a social work planned change approach can be applied virtually to any situation, no matter how difficult or complex. Finally, the model integrates an orientation to advocacy and a focus on more than just an individual as the target of the change efforts. Social work intervention may involve work with families, groups, organizations, or communities.

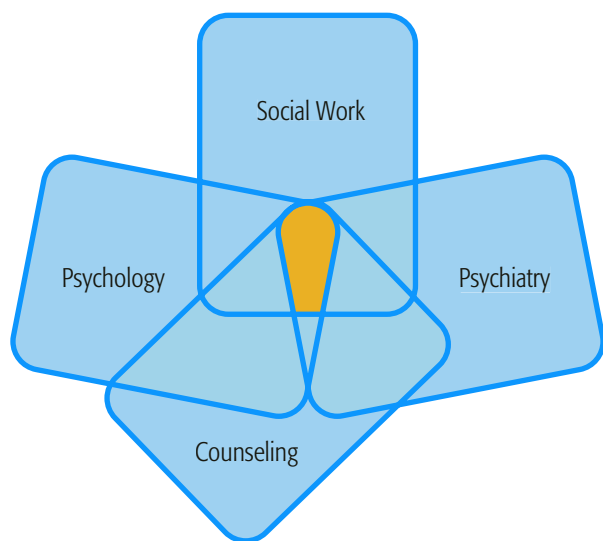
The terms *micro*, *mezzo*, and *macro* will periodically be used throughout the book to refer to their respective systems. Practice with individuals is considered as **micro practice**, practice with families as *micro/mezzo practice*, practice with groups as **mezzo practice**, and practice with larger systems, including organizations and communities, as **macro practice**. Note that families are designated with the term *micro/mezzo*. Families are groups, yet have distinctive status because of their intimate nature. Therefore, we will treat them as a special system on a continuum between micro and mezzo practice.

Generalist practice skills are integrally linked. They are built upon each other in a progression from micro to mezzo to macro levels. Relating to individuals in groups (mezzo practice) requires basic micro skills for working with individuals. Likewise, macro practice requires mastery of both micro and mezzo skills for relating to and working with individuals and groups of individuals in organizational and community (macro) settings. As an introduction to generalist practice, this book establishes a framework for analyzing issues and problems from a generalist perspective. It then describes and discusses the micro skills necessary to formulate the foundation for the ongoing development of mezzo and macro skills. Linkages with mezzo and macro practice are emphasized throughout.

Social Work Is Unique LO 1-1*

The purpose of social work is “to (1) enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people, (2) link people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities, (3) promote the effective and humane operation of these systems, and (4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy” (Pincus & Minahan, 1973, p. 8). In other words, the purpose of social work is to help people in need by using any ethical means possible. However, specifying a cookbook recipe for social work practice is impossible due to the variety of problems encountered and the methods employed. Flexibility and creativity are key qualities for generalist social work practitioners.

Other fields also perform some of the same functions as social work. For instance, mental health clinicians in psychology, psychiatry, and counseling use interviewing skills. Some use a planned change approach. Figure 1.1 illustrates how social work overlaps to some extent with other helping professions. All,



The yellow area reflects a common core of interviewing and counseling skills used by the helping professions.

Figure 1.1 Social Work and Other Helping Professions

* Note that content headings in chapters throughout the book are tagged with learning objectives (e.g., LO 1-1, LO 1-4). These indicate what content relates to which learning objective.

for example, have a common core of interviewing and counseling skills.

However, social work is much more than having a clinician sit down in his or her office with an individual, group, or family and focus on solving mental health problems. (We don't want to imply that this is all that other helping professions do. Their own unique thrusts and emphases are beyond the scope of what can be included here.) Social work has at least six major aspects that make it unique.

Focus on Any Problem

The first unique aspect of social work involves how practitioners may focus attention on *any problem* or cluster of problems, even those that are very complex and difficult. Social workers do not refuse to work with clients or refer them elsewhere because those clients have unappealing characteristics. There may be a family where sexual abuse is occurring. That abuse must stop. Likewise, there may be a community where the juvenile crime rate is skyrocketing. Something needs to be done.

Generalist practice does not imply that every problem can be solved, although it does mean that some of them can be solved or at least alleviated. Generalist practitioners are equipped with a repertoire of skills to help them identify and examine problems. They then make choices about where their efforts can be best directed.

Targeting the External Environment for Change

The second aspect that makes social work unique involves *targeting the environment* for change. The system that social workers need “to change or influence in order to accomplish (their) goals” is called the **target system** or **target of change** (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2013; Pincus & Minahan, 1973, p. 58). Targets of change are not limited to individuals or families. Sometimes, services are unavailable or excessively difficult to obtain, social policies are unfair, or people are oppressed by other people. Administrators and people in power do not always have the motivation or insight to initiate needed change. Social workers must look at where change is essential outside the individual and work with the environment to effect that change.

For example, consider a large northern city where homelessness has become a major problem. Loss of industry to other locations where production is

cheaper, unemployment, and lack of low-income housing have caused the homelessness problem to escalate. Many people have run out of resources and have few options. They have been forced into homelessness. A social worker concerned about this issue might strive to identify other individuals in the community, such as professionals, politicians, and other community leaders, who are also concerned about this problem. Such people might include public social services administrators, social workers in other agencies, leaders of charitable organizations and churches, and faculty and students in the social work departments of area universities. The social worker initiating change could identify these individuals, contact them, and call a meeting to discuss plans. Established goals might then include improving “community awareness and acceptance of the problem of homelessness,” establishment of “emergency shelter space for homeless people,” exploration of the possibility of developing “long-term . . . transitional and low-priced housing arrangements for homeless families,” and enhanced “coordination of existing services for homeless people” (Alexander, 2004, p. 135). Here the community would be the target of change on the behalf of people in need, namely the homeless population.

Advocacy

The third aspect that makes social work unique is related to targeting the environment. Namely, social workers often find the need to *advocate* for their clients. **Advocacy** is the act of “representing, championing, or defending the rights of others” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015, p. 372). It involves actively intervening in order to help clients get what they need. Most frequently, this intervention focuses on “the relationship between the client and an unresponsive ‘system’” (Epstein, 1981, p. 8). Clients have specified needs. Social agencies, organizations, or communities may not be meeting these needs. These unresponsive systems must be pressured to make changes so needs can be met. Specific techniques of advocacy will be addressed in much greater detail later in Chapter 14.

Professional Values and Ethics

The fourth aspect that makes social work unique is its emphasis on and adherence to a *core of professional values*. The *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is available on the Web at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>. This

code focuses on the right of the individual to make free choices and to have a good quality of life.

Partnerships with Clients

The fifth aspect making social work unique is related to the core of social work values and how important it is for clients to make their own decisions. Social workers do not lead people into specific ways of thinking or acting. Rather, they practice in a *partnership* with clients, making and implementing plans together. Most other professions emphasize the authority and expertise of the professional, on the one hand, and the subordinate status of the client as recipient of services, on the other.

Adherence to Professional Standards

The sixth aspect that makes social work unique involves how social work education is held accountable regarding specifically what makes social workers competent in their practice. Highlight 1.1 discusses the relationships among social work, social work education, and the *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* that govern what is taught in social work programs. Highlight 1.1 also explains how content in this book relates to educational standards and how the multicolor helping hands icons placed throughout this book identify such content.

What Is Generalist Practice? [IO 1-2](#)

Generalist social work practice may involve almost any helping situation. A generalist practitioner may be called upon to help a homeless family, a physically abused child, a pregnant teenager, a sick older adult unable to care for him- or herself any longer, an alcoholic parent, a community that is trying to address its drug abuse problem, or a public assistance agency struggling to amend its policies to conform to new federal regulations. Therefore, generalist practitioners must be well prepared to address many kinds of difficult situations.

The social work profession has struggled with the idea of generalist practice for many years. In the past, new practitioners were educated in one main skill area (e.g., work with individuals, groups, or communities) or one area of practice (e.g., children and families, or policy and administration). A generalist practitioner needs competency in a wide variety of areas instead of being limited to a single track (CSWE, 2015, p. 3).

HIGHLIGHT 1.1

Social Work, Social Work Education,
and Educational Policy

Students require knowledge in order to develop skills and become competent. In social work, the terms *competence* and *component behaviors* have unique meanings beyond the typical dictionary definitions. “Competence” in the usual sense means that a person possesses suitable skills and abilities to do a specific task. Competent baseball players must move quickly, catch, throw, and play as part of a team. They also have to think quickly, understand the rules of the game, and be knowledgeable of their environment. In the same way, competent social workers should be able to do a number of job-related duties, think critically, and understand the context of their work. For example, social workers must develop and use interviewing, engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation skills with their clients. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), social work’s formal accrediting organization, has defined specific Competency areas for all social work students, along with their corresponding component behaviors. (**Accreditation** is the official authorization that a social work program has fulfilled and maintains the required standards to achieve this credential.) Professional social work education programs teach content, skills, and values that comply with these *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS).

The EPAS articulates what a professional social worker should be competent to do. This answers the question, “What should a social worker be capable of and proficient at accomplishing?” Note that the EPAS also contains standards governing other aspects of social work programs, such as “Program Mission and Goals” and “Curriculum” (CSWE, 2015, pp. 10, 11, 14).

What Is Competent Social Work Practice?

The EPAS specifies nine competencies that are operationalized by 31 component behaviors. **Competencies** are basic capabilities involving social work knowledge, skills, and values that can be demonstrated and measured by component behaviors. Competencies reflect more general expectations for proficient social workers. **Component behaviors**, on the other hand, are measurable actions that demonstrate the application of social work knowledge, skills, and values for effective social work practice. Component behaviors are more specific and are used to measure competency. Here component behaviors are alphabetized under each competency. Note that multicolor helping hands icons such as those depicted beside each competency given in this Highlight

are incorporated throughout the book. The icons indicate which of the nine EPAS competencies and 31 component behaviors the corresponding text is about. To establish a clear relationship with icons throughout the chapter, Competency 1 will be referred to as EP 1, with its component behaviors as EP 1a, EP 1b, and so on. Similarly, Competency 2 will be referred to as EP 2, with its component behaviors as EP 2a, EP 2b, and so on. EPAS competencies and component behaviors are described next.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession’s history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in interprofessional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:



- 1a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW *Code of Ethics*, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
- 1b. use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- 1c. demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;

HIGHLIGHT 1.1 (continued)

- 1d. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- 1e. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand 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 also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:



EP 2, 2a–c

- 2a. apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- 2b. present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- 2c. apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Social workers understand that every person, regardless of position in society, has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the



EP 3, 3a–b

global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- 3a. apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
- 3b. engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multidisciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:



EP 4, 4a–c

- 4a. use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
- 4b. apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
- 4c. use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand 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 understand their role



EP 5, 5a–c

(continued)

HIGHLIGHT 1.1 (continued)

in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

- 5a. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
- 5b. assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services; and
- 5c. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship building and interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- 6a. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- 6b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.



EP 6, 6a–b

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision making. Social workers:

- 7a. collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
- 7b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- 7c. develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
- 7d. select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.



EP 7, 7a–d

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals



EP 8, 8a–e

HIGHLIGHT 1.1 (continued)

of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and interorganizational collaboration. Social workers:

- 8a. critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
- 8b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
- 8c. use interprofessional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
- 8d. negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
- 8e. facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:



- 9a. select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- 9b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
- 9c. critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- 9d. apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

The Definition of Generalist Practice

For our purposes, the definition of generalist practice involves 12 key concepts. We will define generalist practice as the application of an *eclectic knowledge base*,² professional values and ethics, and a *wide range of skills to target systems of any size for change*. Generalist practice is then guided by *three primary principles involving values*. It occurs within the *context* of an organizational structure. Finally, it employs *four major processes* (CSWE, 2015).³

2. The term *eclectic* refers to selecting concepts, theories, and ideas from a wide range of perspectives and practice approaches.

3. Most of these concepts are taken directly from the EPAS.

Acquiring knowledge begins to prepare students for competent practice. Linking content to the EPAS ultimately is intended to assist in a social work program's accreditation process.

(Highlight 1.2 identifies each of these 12 major concepts characterizing generalist practice and outlines major notions related to them. Each concept is described more thoroughly later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.)

In summary, the core of generalist practice, then, rests on a solid *foundation of knowledge, values, and skills*. Knowledge includes a range of conceptual frameworks and information about understanding and practicing social work (*concept 1* in the definition of generalist practice). Values are based on professional ethics and the ability to distinguish between personal and professional values (*concept 2*). Skills include those for working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (*concept 3*). Necessary skills include those directed at initiating and implementing changes in any of these systems (*concept 4*).