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Professional Growth Plan

Introduction

In the social work field, personal growth goals are very important. Experiences with clients and client systems cause us to never stop learning and changing. Throughout my time at my internship and while in my Integrative Seminar class, I was given the task of self-reflection and thinking in depth about how I was able to complete all ten social work competencies. During this class, the students had to openly speak about the gaps and weaknesses we might have felt when completing our competencies. This was a huge way in which I was able to grow personally and professionally and made me think about how I was going to better myself in the future. We were all given the responsibility of introspection and self-improvement in the social work field. The discussions that we were able to have with one another about the gaps we felt and how we could fix them in the future was extremely helpful.

This Professional Growth Plan will focus on explaining all ten social work competencies and the gaps that I feel I have after my experiences. These gaps show ways in which I can improve as a social worker and how I will focus on growing in the future. The steps that I plan to take in becoming a better, more competent social worker.

Competencies

Competency 1

Competency 1 in the social work field focuses on demonstrating ethical and professional behavior as a social worker with my clients and all of the people that I interact with in the workplace. Also, a focus is understanding the standards that create an ethical, unbiased social worker and the act of critical thinking through ethical decision making so that personal obstacles, emotions or biases do not influence their work and behavior with client systems.

A gap that I can identify with in my learning experiences would be keeping my emotions separate from my work. When I would experience frustration, I would become stern and cold towards a client even though I knew that the client needed soft guidance and to be heard. I had to learn how to keep my emotions together and intact when it came to my clients but that I could process the negativity afterwards with my supervisor. This helped me understand what it is to be ethical and professional and what my true purpose is as a social worker. I know that frustration and negative emotions will be something that I have to face often. To become a better social worker, I need to constantly remind myself before I meet with clients that I need to remain level-headed and ethical. I will make sure to process my emotions by note-taking and talking to my supervisor. To be an ethical, competent social worker I will need to face my emotions in a healthy way. Talking through my emotions and practicing self-awareness and self-control will assist me in separating my emotions from my work.

Competency 2

Competency 2 in the social work field focuses on the engagement of diversity and difference in social work practice. As a social worker, it is extremely important to understand how diversity and difference affects the field in every way when it comes to interactions with clients and people that I work with, whether it be my supervisor or coworkers. Understanding

and embracing people's diversity strength's professional relationships and makes social worker's more competent.

A gap that I feel that I can identify within this competency that I continue to work through is not feeling confident in knowing everything about every difference and diversity. As a social worker, I would love to fully understand but I know that I will always be learning. This is something that I often have to work through. I know that I will become more confident and competent as time continues because I will work for it and continue observing, taking notes and doing research. I cannot let my preconceived notions about people let me create biases about people. For the future, with whoever my client is, I will do as much research as I can about this person's background and I will embrace the difference and diversity with the client. I will navigate my interest in them by asking unbiased, introspective questions. I plan on doing constant research and engaging in their personal experiences.

Competency 3

Competency 3 in the social work field focuses on advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. I have always been passionate about bringing the oppressed and at-risk population justice and opportunity regardless of their position in life. This is one of the biggest reasons that I desired to enter the social work field. Competency 3 is all about understanding a human's rights and advocating for people at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.

The gaps that I can identify in my learning would be my confidence in applying what I know to how I perform this competency with clients. I am so competent on the importance of enforcing human rights and justice for all people but I just find myself feeling discouraged on

how I will possibly be able to accomplish that when I am a professional. A way in which I can better myself in this area is always doing research for my clients and to continue practicing taking notes on what I learn and how I can become better. Learning through experience, to me, is the best way that I can improve in this gap. Another gap that I identify with is intentionally engaging myself in practices that support justice. I can look out for opportunities in which I can fully engage in this activity as a social worker. I plan on learning more about policy making and engaging in activism for human's rights.

Competency 4

Competency 4 in the social work field states that the social worker is consistently engaging themselves in practice-informed research and research-informed practice. This competency shows that social workers are always using professional, research-based information and tactics or strategies in their work with clients. I feel as though this competency was more difficult for me to complete in my field placement due to the fact that most of my work is hands-on but I always try to do the most research that I can, when I am given the opportunity or the right circumstance.

A gap that I feel I have within this competency is being in the right working atmosphere at this time in my life to conduct good research or a research project. I did not feel that there was much I could do individually and so that has made me a lot less competent on this issue. I just learned recently, all that goes into well-done research and all that goes into a research proposal so this competency has been a slower process for me. For the future, I plan on using all of the things that I learned in school and the individual research I have involved myself in. This will create more competence and confidence in my research skill set and overall knowledge.

Competency 5

Competency 5 in the social work field focuses on engaging in policy practice; understanding and standing up for the human rights of clients and basing everything I do on social justice. This competency requires a social worker to understand how social welfare and social services function in society. The social worker must be able to recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy.

I would say that my gaps within Competency V all have to do with me needing more practice with policy making. I need to take it upon myself to keep up with policies within my area that will affect the clients I am given. I also need to advocate for change independently as a part of my social work duties and practice. Overall, I need to become more confident in voicing myself for my client system and for my profession. For the future, I plan on getting more involved with policy making and researching petitions and laws and regulations that are under review in the government. I understand all that goes engaging in policy practice; I just need to apply myself to this practice more.

Competency 6

Competency 6 in the social work field focuses on in the social work field focuses on engaging with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities and understanding that this is a dynamic and interactive process that never ends. It is about being competent in the ways that we treat and interact with client systems based on their needs and places in life. Social workers are to understand human relationships and make sure that people feel worthy and

empowered. Social workers are also to engage with diverse clients and groups and understand the importance of their culture and background in all settings.

A gap that I see in my learning experience is my confidence and knowledge. I need to believe in my abilities more when I am with clients; I let my clients take over my emotions a lot of times if they do not respond well to my tactics. I just have to remember that all people are different and I will never fully understand what is in their minds. This leads me to say that I want to learn more when it comes to this competency. I would like to do more research about approaches I can use to help empower people and their abilities. I want to help them make more connections to outside resources that can help them further. When I have my own clients, I will ensure that I do everything to make them feel empowered and comfortable and will constantly get their feedback.

Competency 7

Competency 7 in the social work field focuses on assessing diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment is a skill that social workers have to use at every corner in the professional world. It is vital to take notice of and study diversity and differences and the effects of it on individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers are to keep in mind the theories of human behavior and how environments shape people into who they are, both positively and negatively. Organizing and collecting data are skills that social workers must be competent in when assessing client systems.

I feel as though a gap that I can identify with in my field experience is not having enough time to truly get to know my clients on a personal level. Being in a school setting made it very difficult. I feel as though I would have been able to apply my knowledge on assessment so much

better if I had a closer relationship with my clients. In the future, I will pursue a profession in which I get to know my clients on a personal level. I feel as though one of my gaps is collecting and organizing data. This activity has always been something I have dreaded in the research process but it is essential to assessment. I want to become more comfortable and content with doing research about data and comprehending it all.

Competency 8

Competency 8 in the social work field focuses solely on intervention with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and understanding that it is an in-depth, dynamic process and can be different for every client. Each client should be treated based on how their social environment shaped them as a person. This competency also states that social workers have to understand the process of collaborating with coworkers during the intervention process.

A gap that I can identify with when it comes to Competency 8 is working with adults. I have yet to have experience in using my intervention skills and knowledge with adults. This, for me, is something that I need more experience in and an area I could have already gotten experience in but my placement did not offer this. I plan, in the future, to gain knowledge and experience in the field. I hope that the job that I have will give me this experience, whether it be with single adults, families or groups.

Competency 9

Competency 9 in the social work field focuses on all that goes into evaluation of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and understanding that it is a

dynamic and interactive process. It is the social worker's job to choose and provide that proper methods of evaluation for the client system.

A gap within Competency 9 that I can identify with is not getting the full experience of evaluation in my field placement. Evaluation was a factor that my supervisor often took care of with the students in my placement. I did not know all that went into evaluation, therefore I did not know what to ask for. This was a learning experience for me and I do think I completed it to the best of my understanding. If I had more time at my internship and comprehended this Competency fully, I could have been more competent in this area. In order to change this and to complete this gap, I can take cases that I had in the past and create practice evaluations for clients based on my knowledge now!

Competency 10

Competency 10 in the social work field focuses on integrating my social work practice with my faith and looking at the world with the lenses of a Christian. The practice behaviors within Competency 10 consist of understanding my purpose and meaning of life as professional social workers developed through my comprehension of a Christian worldview, understanding the concept of compassion demonstrated by Christ, and consistently respond to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable populations with the motivation to increase the well-being of others and increase skills that demonstrate empathy and, lastly, practicing with humility as a critical and influential component in engaging disadvantaged persons and communities toward empowerment.

Gaps that I can identify with within Competency 10 would be working with clients of any faith that are openly passionate about it. In both of the schools I interned at, people were allowed to express their beliefs and religions but no one openly talked about it with me. I would have loved to have this experience and been able to talk about other religions and learn from my clients. This is an experience that I hope I get to experience someday. To be a better social worker, I could do research on religions and learn more about them to be more prepared for the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I learned a lot about myself when finding and understanding the gaps that I felt I had in the social work world. I believe that in order to tackle these gaps, it just takes experience and willingness to learn and take criticism. I will always be self-aware and mindful of my tactics and ethics because of this exercise. Gaps are something that all people face but it takes humbleness and readiness to grow in order to see them and work towards fixing them. Creating a professional growth plan is a great way in which we, social workers, can improve our practice and become more competent.