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Swk499: Integrative Seminar

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Reflective Assessment on Competency # 5

Engage in Policy Practice

In what ways have I accomplished this competency/practice behaviors? Throughout my practicum, I have learned the importance of understanding what policies are affecting my clients. In my practicum, I was informed about the need of joining marches and signing petitions to stop the injustice in the community. For example, I participated in a group meeting that advocated for underage kids to have legal representation while being interrogated by law enforcement. I helped to shed light on how this issue can have serious consequences on a person's life. I explained during the meeting that during my youth, I have been taken to a local precinct in my neighborhood and was held in an interrogation room for hours without anyone to explain to me what my rights were. I did not know what to do or even what to say to be able to go home. To my surprise, I did not have to say or do anything because I was not under arrest. However, I did not know that and got myself into a difficult situation just because I did not have the proper understanding or anyone to help me at the time.

How has my thinking changed over time? My thinking has changed by being able to connect policies issues that originate throughout all three levels of practice “*micro, mezzo, and macro*” and how they are affecting my clients. I am more aware of how politicians and lawmakers impact the community that I serve. I understand the consequences and the benefits of policy and how approving and implementing policies can worsen the life of my clients and their family.

What are the practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area? The practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area are when I advocate and engage in policy practice in order to advance my client's human rights, social, economic, and environmental justice. Another behavior that indicates my competency is when I participate in important aspects of enacting change for the youth in my community, whether it is campaigning for Teen after-school programs, decent-paying jobs for youth, policy reform, bail reform, or any other benefits that can better the lives of the young people in the communities.

What curriculum content areas (social policy, practice, etc.) relate to successfully completing this competency? The curriculum that helps me understand competency 5 has to be SWK555/SWK355: Social Welfare Policy and Services. During this course, I wrote a paper on the vaccine mandates that occur during the pandemic. I took the position that unvaccinated people should not be treated differently than those that were already vaccinated. Like many policies, this argument had people in the classroom agreeing and disagreeing. This presentation showed me that making policies is not that easy, since no matter what stand you take there is always going to be opposition.

What learning experiences helped me to accomplish this competency? I have learned competency 5 by observing my field instructor conducting interviews and explaining to our participants the agency policies. I myself have also reviewed the agency's policies and procedures handbook and developed a short report on any policies related to handling clients. I also participated in a policies course "*SWK555/SWK355: Social Welfare Policy and Services*" during my junior semester which allowed me to have a better understanding of the importance of policies to our communities and how to engage in policies making decisions.

What "gaps" can I identify in my learning experience? What will I do about these "gaps"? The "gaps" I can identify have to do with getting involved in politics. I have a passion for helping people and connecting them with the services they need. However, when it comes to politics, I dislike the games of people in positions of power play. I feel like in order to get funding and resources we need in the community there needs to be a lot of picture taking and political talk that goes along. I understand I must get involved at the macro and mezzo level to protect the people I serve, so this is an area where I must grow and prepare myself to get involved.

Professional Growth Plan, identify goals for continued personal and professional growth and discuss how you plan to reach these goals). My professional growth plan is to make sure that the people in public office are putting policies in place that the people in marginalized communities like the ones I serve can benefit from. I plan to find the correct allies so we can create a coalition that can help bring a change in Washington DC. The way I would reach these goals is by researching and advocating for those politicians and local agencies that are making sure that non-profit organizations like the one I am advocating for get the funding they need.

Integration

- **What national, state, and local social welfare policies influence decisions and quality of life for your client population? Also consider agency policies and informal agency norms. Pick two of these to analyze in detail.** New York City had a strict bail law. Blacks and Hispanic men have spent numerous nights in jail for not being able to make bail in New York. Making cash bail is a policy that has affected many in the population I serve. A new bail reform would allow families to be able to get out of jail and wait for their cases to be solved, instead of having a massive inmate on Riker Island. Recently there was an agreement that beginning January 1, 2023 offenders will be released on personal recognizance instead of having to come up with thousands in cash. Other policies that had an enormous impact on the community that I serve were the “stop and frisk” & “broken windows’ policies. These policies gave law enforcement to randomly stop and harass people in low-income communities. This led to the massive arrest of Blacks and Hispanics. There were many testimonies of retired officers that mentioned that they used to arrest young kids in the streets to meet their quotas every month.
- **How do these policies constrain or limit choices? (Of the client? Of service providers?)** These policies constrain and limit choices by making it hard for young people to live freely in their neighborhoods. These policies make them walk around their own neighborhood like they have a target on their back. Making policies that reward law enforcement and punish youth kids is damaging to our society. We need to motivate young people to strive to become great and serve their communities, not teach them what it means to be incarcerated. Allowing funding to non-profit organizations and after-school programs should become the primary focus on dealing with the young population in New York, instead of throwing more cops to the streets.
- **What are the consequences of these policies for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro level? (List all three levels and use examples when appropriate).** One of the ways that these policies can be implemented is by having your local officials at the macro level supporting the policies unions and put policies and laws that strengthen the citizens. At the mezzo, these policies can help create and empower more jails and facilities that detain more people. Lastly, the consequences of the stop and frisk policies at the micro level is that young kids are becoming the target of unfair policies.

- **Are there aspects of these laws and policies or informal agency norms which discriminate against groups or reinforce inequalities or unjust treatment of certain individuals?** Stop and frisk was a policy that was implemented in 1968, the U.S. The Supreme Court ruled that police could stop and frisk a citizen based on 'reasonable suspicion' that a crime had been committed. According to some statistics, Blacks and Latinos made up 84% of NYC stops and between 2004 and 2012, the New York Police Department made 4.4 million stops under the citywide policy. There has been overwhelming evidence that suggests that the stop and frisk policy has been a method for NYPD to racially profiling and harassing Black and Latino citizens. Broken windows was a policy based on a theory proposed by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling in 1982. This policy was supposed to allow law enforcement to attack any visual disorder and enforce fear in order so that the citizens can follow rules and not misbehave. However, this was just another form of allowing the police to go into marginalized neighborhoods and arrest and incarcerate individuals.
- **What legal or policy changes are needed to more effectively serve clients from your agency? Provide a biblical basis for the policy changes that you propose.** We need a policy that supports families and helps provide resources like food and shelters at a lower cost for working families with kids. Many families are forced to neglect their children in order to provide a living. Many of the clients I serve are not receiving raises with their parents. They are forced to deal with life issues on their own because their parents are usually working during the day. The bible teaches that parents should 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' (Prov. 22:6. How can a parent train out in the field and not spend time with their kids?