The Social Work Practicum

Preparation for Practice

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Foreword

The social work practicum lies at the heart of social work education. In practicum, social work students apply the concepts learned in the classroom; challenge the realities of injustice; bear witness to resiliency in action; struggle to resolve ethical dilemmas; collaborate with others to create change; and support wellness in individuals, families, and communities. It is here that students transition from being a theoretical social worker to assuming the mantle of a practicing social worker. In this transition, social work students uncover and identify their place in the profession. This learning process is an adventure, and this textbook provides a guide for that adventure.

Practicum is a unique time in the careers of social work students. They are positioned in both academia and practice, fully planted in neither of these worlds. Straddling the two worlds allows students the opportunity to be intentional and reflective; however, without support the distance between these two realms can seem vast. In my experience as director of field education with the responsibility of managing BSW and MSW practica, students who lack support struggle to make the connection between theory and practice. Translating the didactic experience to a practice environment takes supportive supervision and a structured approach from their field directors, faculty supervisors, and agency field instructors.

The Social Work Practicum: Preparation for Practice is an essential tool to help navigate and enhance learning in practicum. If the learning agreement is the roadmap for a student’s practicum, Cynthia L. Garthwait’s book serves as the guidebook helping students make connections and integrate learning in a practical and user-friendly way. It is the academic companion to the social work practicum experience. Much like a traveler’s guidebook translates and highlights key features in a foreign country, this text helps students make meaning of their practicum experience by focusing in on key elements of social work practice. Garthwait highlights social work practice themes and Council on Social Work Education competencies and behaviors in a concise and usable way, viewing all of these topics through the lens of practicum. The book is structured in a way that challenges students to think critically and reflexively about their current social work practice—a process that is integral to learning. Garthwait brings the worlds of academia and social work practice together, and her text serves as a guide for students’ practicum learning adventures.

This eighth edition builds on the strong foundation and approachable format that characterized previous editions. In this new edition, readers will find significant updates on the use of technology including social media, computer management, and the provision of computer-based services, informed by the best practices and standards of National Association of Social Worker, the Council on Social Work Education, and the Association
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of Social Work Boards. In addition, the author has expanded and updated information on diversity and working across differences, including a critical analysis of power and privilege. Also included is expanded material on working with involuntary clients, new information on social work theories and models, and additional content on communication skills. Readers will also appreciate the expanded focus on the planned change process. The online version of the text includes links to videos and end-of-chapter questions and quizzes helpful for all students, and particularly relevant to those engaged in online seminars. Through all of these many assets, this eighth edition prepares social work students to practice in the complex and dynamic social, political, and cultural environment.

Thank you to Cynthia L. Garthwait for writing the perfect adventure companion and textbook for field education. This book enhances the social work practicum experience so that students can more easily bridge the worlds of academia and practice, actively learn, critically reflect, and ready themselves to become social work leaders and change makers.

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Social work education is a unique combination of classroom learning and applied experiences, making for an exciting professional journey for both faculty and students. Blending theory and practice is not automatic, however, and a guided structure for this process is needed. Each chapter of this textbook provides students with a method for doing just that. Divided into three major sections, each chapter intentionally moves students from the classroom to the practicum and then gives them tools to move them into professional practice. This structure can provide a rich teaching and learning resource with valuable opportunities for learning and growth.

To provide a developmental and sequential path of professional growth, each chapter focuses on an important area of social work and then leads students through the following three processes:

- **Integrate Your Knowledge: Classroom and Practicum.** This section provides a concise review of classroom content and builds upon that knowledge by offering higher-level content relevant to the practicum. This helps students link classroom and practicum in meaningful ways in vital arenas of practice.
- **Apply Your Knowledge: Building Competence.** This section requires students to put their knowledge into practice by using it in actual practicum experiences and seeing how actual practice is guided by knowledge and skill both.
- **Prepare for Practice: Professional Growth.** This section moves students beyond practicum and into professional practice by having them identify and analyze practice issues. It shows the need for autonomous professional growth in actual practice using career planning, continuing education, self-reflection, and use of supervision.

**New to This Edition**

This edition includes new content on the following topics:

- Legal and ethical guidelines for use of electronic communication (Chapters 7, 9, 10)
- The Grand Challenges of Social Work identified by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (Chapter 8)
- Critical analysis model of social policy (Chapter 7)
- Social problem analysis model (Chapter 6)
- Community dynamics impacting clients and interventions (Chapter 5)
- Cultural humility and diversity in practice (Chapter 13)
- Orienting theories for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (Chapters 5, 12, Appendix A, Appendix B)
- Practice theories for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (Chapters 5, 12, Appendix A, Appendix B)
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- Guidelines for practice with involuntary clients (Chapters 9, 12, 14, 15)
- Leadership development related to each chapter’s content (Chapter 17)

Significantly revised content on the following topics is included:

- Blocking and building goals of community practice (Chapter 5)
- Professional development beyond the practicum (Chapters 8, 15)
- Strategies to address social problems (Chapter 6)
- Social justice in policy practice (Chapter 7)
- Personal safety (Chapter 14)
- Use of supervision (Chapter 3)
- Principles and guidelines for the planned change process (Chapter 12)

Pearson eText

The Pearson eText provides an extended, interactive learning environment using multimedia features that promote the building of social work competencies.

- Self-Check multiple-choice quizzes in each chapter give students the opportunity to check their understanding of the chapter.
- Video Application Exercises present topical videos accompanied by short-answer questions to encourage reflection and critical thinking.
- Chapter Review essay quizzes allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the major concepts in the chapter. Feedback for the correct answer is provided to help developmental and scaffolded learning.

Acknowledgments

The creation of this textbook is a result of many years of social work experience in varied settings as well as social work education with BSW and MSW students. The lives, struggles, accounts, and triumphs of my clients over time, combined with my teaching experience with students who want to address the needs of people seeking better lives, has resulted in what I consider to be a valuable resource. My hope is that you will use this book in a way that balances realism and hope, theory and practice, and the professional and personal lives of social workers. Your professional calling requires a commitment to enhancing social functioning with enthusiasm, commitment, knowledge, and skill. This book can accompany you on that career-long trajectory of competent service to which you have dedicated yourself.

Thanks to Gary, who appreciates and supports my calling to the education of students and the clients they will serve.

I would also like to thank the following reviewers for their input on revising this eighth edition: Carlene A. Quinn, Indiana University; Renee Michelsen, University of Southern California; Thomas A. Artelt, University of Georgia; and Erika Galyean, Indiana University.
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