Module 5-
Integrating Theory and Practice

Department of Social Work
Field Instructor Training
Learning Objectives

- To understand the importance of integrating theory and practice in field education.
- To review essential knowledge, values and skills in social work practice.
- To create learning opportunities that will assist students in integrating social work knowledge, values and skills.
- To discuss and explore methods within the agency designed to assist students with the process of integration.
Review

- Field education focuses on the application of knowledge.
- Field education is the signature pedagogy of social work education as it provides the canvas upon which the student may apply the knowledge gained in the classroom.
- By the time the student has completed their field placement experience, the ability to use social work skills with clients and to identify theory as the basis for their interventions should be apparent.
- Field education is not for students to learn how to work in a particular agency.
- The Field Instructor helps the student understand how social work skills and theories are used within the agency.
- By the time the student has completed their field placement experience, they should understand how to apply these elements to any agency setting and any client population.
What is Integrating Theory and Practice?

“Integrating theory and practice refers to the process of making connections between the social work knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom and the current practice experiences students are having in the field. For every client interaction, students should be given opportunities to understand the social work skills that were necessary during the interaction, the social work knowledge that informed these actions, and the social work values that influenced the interaction. Students need to understand how their field experiences are connected to social work practice by answering the following questions:

Where do these actions fit in the overall helping process?
Why was this interaction necessary for effective social work practice with this client?”

Detlaff, A.J. (2003). From mission to evaluation, p. 21
How Field Instructors are Instrumental in the Process

- Left to their own devices, students tend to be task-oriented. That is they imitate the actions of the Field Instructor or others they have observed/shadowed and complete the task assigned, not stopping to analyze the social work theories, skills or values behind the action(s).
- Field Instructors assist the student to make these connections by prompting the student to identify these processes.
- Field Instructors, additionally, can help students to make the connections between theory and actions by explaining these concepts when modeling skills.
Strategies for Assisting Students to Connect Theory and Practice

- Use the following diagram to prompt students to make these connections in supervision:

- What was the purpose of the client interaction?
- What were the knowledge and skills used in the interaction?
- How were these elements used and why were they necessary for effective practice?
- How can your use of knowledge and skills be improved in future interactions?
Creating Learning Opportunities

- In order to create learning opportunities that allow students to integrate their classroom learning (knowledge, skills and values) into practice, Field Instructors must first identify the social work knowledge, values and skills necessary for effective practice within their agencies.
- For Field Instructors with significant experience, this analysis may be challenging as the theory behind your practice has likely become intertwined.
- The next activity will provide each Field Instructor with the opportunity to examine their agency practice.
Identifying Social Work Knowledge, Values and Skills

- The goal of field education is for your student(s) to learn to use social work knowledge, values and skills with clients in an agency setting.
- On a separate document, please enter your name, your agency and the date.
- Using the table below, identify the knowledge, values and skills you feel are necessary for effective social work practice in your agency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Work Knowledge</th>
<th>Necessary in Agency</th>
<th>Agency-specific Tasks for student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Work values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Work skills</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Social Work Knowledge, Values and Skills

• Now, using the same table, list the agency-specific tasks that you can assign the student in order to demonstrate and identify social work knowledge, values and skills.
• Email the completed table to: cford@fullerton.edu as an attachment.

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You may now move on to Module 6!