

FITNESS FOR THE HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSION

A Policy Statement from the Faculty and Staff of the Department of Human Services, College of Health and Human Development, California State University, Fullerton

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Entry into the Human Services professions is more than initiating a new career path or beginning a new job. It is similar to starting a lifelong journey. As in many other professions, there is an intensive and rigorous training program to complete, which has academic and clinical requirements. However, because human services undergraduate majors will be entering a profession that deals with vulnerable populations there are professional and personal standards that students need to meet.

Meeting these challenges and learning to grow from them is an integral part of succeeding in the human services profession. As human service educators, the faculty and staff of the Department of Human Services are committed to facilitating the professional development and personal growth of our undergraduate students, and the education, supervision and mentoring of students in all aspects of their journey in the field of human services.

The education of professional human services professionals demands evaluation of one's personal values, beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns. In many ways, the deepest challenge students will encounter is the combined tasks of self-assessment, self-correction and self-direction in collaboration with others and across many areas of life: academic, clinical, professional and personal. It is our hope and expectation that each undergraduate student who joins the department will succeed in these tasks.

Students in our undergraduate program will be evaluated on a continuing basis with reference to these professional and personal attributes as well as to their academic performance and growing clinical skills. To that end, listed below are a number of the attributes, characteristics and behaviors that are important for success in careers in the Human Services field. These characteristics are outlined in the Ethical Standards for Human Services Professionals (2015) and the CSHSE accreditation standards and as such are the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that the standards are reasonably met.

This list is not exhaustive but is meant to provide a firm basis for discussion between students and faculty. Descriptions are given to help students in evaluating both their own strengths and the areas where a student will need more development.

PROFESSIONAL/PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

1. **Commitment to Wellness:** Wellness is a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully. Commitment includes an understanding of, and decision to pursue wellness as a lifestyle over the life span. Willingness to assess issues of wellness in one's lifestyle and life environment; an ongoing choice to become the best one can be spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, and vocationally.
2. **Commitment to Learning:** Demonstrated ability to self-assess, self-correct, and self-direct; to identify needs and sources of learning; to continually seek new knowledge and understanding. Demonstrated academic and life management skills and commitment to excellence as a human service professional
3. **Core Academic and Clinical Competencies:** Various accrediting and certifying agencies have identified the knowledge-base that is essential for success in professional human services. These core areas include: Introduction to Human Adjustment, Human Services systems, Case Management and Interviewing, Counseling Theories, Research Methods in Human Services, Multiculturalism in Human Services, Group Dynamics, Crisis Intervention, Career Seminar and other elective courses. Acceptable performance in these academic areas is essential. In addition, clinical competency and an acceptable level of functioning in internships are required and expected. The ability to form effective collegial working relationships with peers and supervisors is essential. It should be noted that in a number of academic courses involving these core academic and clinical areas, students will be challenged to review their own values, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, behaviors and biases. Willingness to engage in this self-review, its challenges and potential growth, is a critical element in growing as a human service professional.
4. **Professional Identity:** Commitment to ongoing development as an entry level human services professional and member of the helping professions and to high standards of practice as a human service professional. An understanding of one's motivation for choosing the human services profession. The ability to critically assess one's own values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors as they related to the standards of excellence and ethics, and the best practices of the human services professions. The ability to exhibit appropriate professional attitudes and conduct; ability to represent the profession ethically and effectively. Willingness to assume roles of service and advocacy. Ability to demonstrate theory-into-practice, which is to translate learned values and content knowledge into professional/personal attitudes and action. Developing participation in the varied roles of the human services professions and participation in professional organizations through membership, service and scholarship. Ability to see oneself as connected to a wider whole of regional/global needs, helping systems, and resources. A commitment to advocacy on behalf of clients and larger society, as well as to pursuit of social justice, as consistent with one' professional identity.

5. **Personal Maturity:** Ability to live and function at an appropriate level of emotional, psychological, and relational well-being; freedom from significant impairments that would affect one's ability to perform as a human service professional. The ability to tolerate ambiguity and to patiently address areas of growth. Ability to balance personal and professional self-awareness.
6. **Responsibility:** Demonstrated ability to fulfill professional commitments and to be accountable for actions and outcome. Demonstration of effective work habits and attitudes evident in classes, assistantship assignments, and other areas of student performance. Demonstrated ability to act and respond in a variety of situations with honesty and integrity. Knowledgeable about professional ethical standards and competent in applying those standards to concrete situations.
7. **Interpersonal Skills:** Demonstrated ability to interact effectively with clients, families, colleagues, other helping professionals and the community and to deal effectively with multiple diversities in a pluralistic society. Effectiveness in establishing positive interpersonal relationships on an individual and group basis; openness to constructive criticism; tolerance and openness toward differences; ability to develop appropriate support systems. The ability to identify sources of and seek out appropriate feedback from faculty and peers, and to utilize and provide feedback for improving personal and professional interactions; and to accept supervision. Ability to be appropriately assertive and self-advocating.
8. **Communication Skills:** Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively for varied audiences and purposes. Sensitive to diversity in one's communication.
9. **Problem-solving:** In both professional performance and personal development, the ability to recognize and define problems, analyze data from varied sources, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcome. The ability to seek out resources for help, support, and insight.
10. **Stress Management:** The ability to identify sources of stress that affect personal and professional functioning and to develop effective coping behaviors. Existence of appropriate boundaries between personal stressors and professional performance. Obtaining appropriate supports, resources, and help when needed.

In addition, students are expected to meet the following standards although this list is not exhaustive.

- Standard 7: Human service professionals ensure that their values or biases are not imposed upon their clients.
- Standard 10: Human service professionals provide services without discrimination or preference in regards to age, ethnicity, culture, race, ability, gender, language preference, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, nationality, or other historically oppressed groups.

- Standard 11: Human service professionals are knowledgeable about their cultures and communities within which they practice. They are aware of multiculturalism in society and its impact on the community as well as individuals within the community. They respect the cultures and beliefs of individuals and groups.
- Standard 13: Human service professionals stay informed about current social issues as they affect clients and communities. If appropriate to the helping relationship, they share this information with clients, groups and communities as part of their work.
- Standard 14: Human service professionals are aware of social and political issues that differentially affect clients from diverse backgrounds.
- Standard 34: Human service professionals are aware of their own cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values, and biases. They recognize the potential impact of their backgrounds on their relationships with others and work diligently to provide culturally competent service to all of their clients.
- Standard 35: Human service professionals strive to develop and maintain healthy personal growth to ensure that they are capable of giving optimal services to clients. When they find that they are physically, emotionally, psychologically, or otherwise not able to offer such services, they identify alternative services for clients.

Finally, the following standards address curriculum issues:

Standard 19: The curriculum shall incorporate human services values and attitudes and promote understanding of human services ethics and their application in practice.

Key specifications for Standard 19: Client self-determination, confidentiality of information, and appropriate professional boundaries. In addition, the worth and uniqueness of individuals including culture, ethnicity, race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and other expressions of diversity is a key specification for this standard.

Context: There are values and ethics intrinsic to the human services profession that have been agreed to as governing principles of professional practice.

Standard 20: The program shall provide experiences and support to enable students to develop awareness of their own values, personalities, reaction patterns, interpersonal styles, and limitations.

Specifications for Standard 20: a. Conscious use of self. b. Clarification of personal and professional values. c. Awareness of diversity. d. Strategies for self-care. e. Reflection on

professional self (e.g., journaling, development of a portfolio, or project demonstrating competency).

Self-Development Context: Human services professionals use their experience and knowledge for understanding and helping clients. This requires awareness of one's own values, cultural bias, philosophies, personality, and style in the effective use of the professional self. It also requires an understanding of how these personal characteristics affect clients. This document outlines the policies and standards that the Human Services Department follows in the determination of student fitness for profession. As noted, these are the non-academic standards which are nevertheless considered essential criteria a student must meet in order to be granted a degree in the Human Services Department.