

Introduction

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Does social work practice differ when the client has a developmental disability? No. Social work practice involves starting where the client is and seeing each person as unique; respecting and appreciating diversity. Disability is an element of diversity. Social work practice recognizes and builds on client strengths. Social work practice involves evaluation of the person-in-environment perspective and when appropriate, identifies the environment as the target of change. Social work practice promotes social justice and involves advocacy and elimination of discrimination. Social work practice values self-determination and goals and objectives are developed by the client based on client needs and wants. These social work values apply to all clients.

So why do we need curriculum materials that are specific to developmental disabilities? Because social work students do not always know that people with developmental disabilities are like everybody else – and as diverse as everybody else. There is still a tendency to view a person with a disability as having something “wrong” with that person. A person with a disability simply has something about them that is different, as does everyone. Many people have a sense of pride related to their disability and do not seek to be “cured” or “rehabilitated”. Stereotypes and lack of understanding of disability can inhibit providing appropriate services to clients with developmental disabilities as well as other disabilities. There is a long history of inhumane treatment of people with disabilities. In fact, people with developmental disabilities have historically been treated as nonhuman. Although we have come a long way, there are still remnants of paternalism, judgmental behavior, misunderstanding of disability, and resistance to social acceptance. “Society” including media images, still often portrays people with disabilities in negative, demeaning, and/or “pitiful” ways.

There are a number of paradigms used to understand disabilities in society. While the traditional focus has been the medical model paradigm, models that focus on strengths, not deficits, are more consistent with social work values. Often what is needed, is environmental accommodations and/or change to help an individual achieve their goals or simply have access to all the same activities and opportunities people without disabilities have. All of us, whether or not we have a disability, use accommodations.

This resource manual includes curriculum materials specific to disabilities to help students recognize opportunities and not limitations for people – to help alleviate barriers that prevent people with disabilities from full participation in society. Being familiar with legal mandates, community services, and resources can help students become effective advocates to identify and eliminate discrimination. Dispelling stereotypes and reshaping ways of thinking about disability is the avenue to realization that social work practice with people with disabilities is just good social work practice.

The social work values of strengths perspective, social justice, respect for diversity, and self-determination guide decisions about what to include in course content. It is important for student to understand that as instructors infuse disability into discussions of poverty and unemployment; domestic violence; substance abuse; child abuse; and other social issues, there must be recognition that disability does not cause these problems. It is discrimination against and de-valuing of individuals with disability that increase vulnerability. The materials in the resource manual emphasize an understanding of the barriers that exist for people with disabilities – including the attitudinal and social barriers. The manual begins with paradigms and definitions of disability and a generalist perspective that highlights some of the content throughout this manual. This is followed by materials organized around CSWE curriculum themes: Values and Ethics; Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE); Policy, Social Justice, and Diversity; Practice and Practice Research. Each of these sections contain student activities, handouts, content information, and/or other resources. The materials included represent a range of resources from academic research, first person accounts, community advocates, government documents, and other websites.

Reference

DePoy, E., and Miller, M. (1996). Preparation of social workers for serving individuals with developmental disabilities: A brief report. Mental Retardation, 34 (1),54-57. As cited in: Liese, H., Clevenger, R., and Hanley, B. (1999). Joining University Affiliated Programs and Schools of Social Work: A Collaborative Model for Disabilities Curriculum Development and Training. Journal of Social Work Education, 35 (1) Retrieved from Academic Search Premier Database on 3/7/60 from http://web32.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid=BAA10564%2DDCF7%2D4A.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The focus of this project is development of a values based curriculum in developmental disabilities for Baccalaureate Social Work (BSW) students. The overall goal is to develop and compile curriculum materials related to developmental disabilities and to disseminate these materials to BSW faculty across the state to integrate into courses. These materials will also be available to faculty in other disciplines and outside the State as appropriate and within budgetary constraints. A secondary goal is to foster and reinforce a

commitment to developmental disabilities within the schools of social work.

The outcome of curriculum infusion will be better preparation of professionals to work with people with developmental disabilities.

Objectives of this project are:

1. Identify and develop curriculum resources related to disability and provide these resources to social work programs.
 2. Infuse and/or integrate curriculum materials into BSW courses.
- Develop and maintain web-based information for social work educator