



SOCIAL WORK
Leadership Institute



GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE

GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCIES

I. Values, Ethics and Theoretical Perspectives

1. Assess and address values and biases regarding aging.
2. Respect and promote older adult clients' right to dignity and self-determination.
3. Apply ethical principles to decisions on behalf of all older clients with special attention to those with limited decisional capacity.
4. Respect diversity among older adult clients, families, and professionals (e.g., class, gender, and sexual orientation).
5. Address the cultural, spiritual, and ethnic values and beliefs of older adults and families.
6. Relate concepts and theories of aging to social work practice (e.g., cohorts, normal aging, life course perspective).
7. Relate social work perspectives and related theories to practice with older adults (e.g., person-in environment, social justice).
8. Identify issues related to changes, transitions, and losses over the life cycle in designing interventions.
9. Support persons and families dealing with end of life issues related to dying, death, and bereavement.
10. Understand the perspective and values of social work in geriatric interdisciplinary practice while respecting the roles of other disciplines.

II. Assessment

1. Use empathy and sensitive interviewing skills to engage older clients in identifying their strengths and problems.
2. Adapt interviewing methods to potential sensory, language, and cognitive limitations of the older adult.
3. Conduct a comprehensive geriatric assessment (bio-psychosocial evaluation).
4. Ascertain health status and assess physical functioning (e.g., ADLs and IADLs) of older clients.
5. Assess cognitive functioning and mental health status of older clients (e.g., depression, dementia).
6. Assess social functioning (e.g., social skills, social activity level) and social support of older clients.
7. Assess caregivers' needs and level of stress.
8. Administer and interpret standardized assessment and diagnostic tools that are appropriate for use with older adults (e.g., depression scale, Mini-Mental Status Exam).
9. Develop clear, timely, and appropriate service plans with measurable objectives for older adults.
10. Re-evaluate and adjust service plans for older adults on a continuing basis.

III. Intervention

1. Establish rapport and maintain an effective working relationship with older adults and family members.
2. Enhance the coping capacities and mental health of older persons through a variety of therapy modalities (e.g., supportive, psychodynamic, etc).
3. Utilize group interventions with older adults and their families (e.g., bereavement groups, reminiscence groups).
4. Mediate situations with angry or hostile older adults and/or family members.
5. Assist caregivers to reduce their stress levels and maintain their own mental and physical health. Provide social work case management to link elders and their families to resources and services.
7. Use educational strategies to provide older persons and their families with information related to wellness, and disease management (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, end of life care).
7. Apply skills in termination in work with older clients and their families.
8. Advocate on behalf of clients with agencies and other professionals to help elderly clients obtain quality services.
9. Adhere to laws and public policies related to older adults (e.g., elder abuse reporting, legal guardianship, advance directives).

IV. Aging Services, Programs and Policies

1. Outreach to older adults and their families to ensure appropriate use of the service continuum (e.g., health promotion, long term care, mental health).
2. Adapt organizational policy, procedures and resources to facilitate the provision of services to diverse older adults and their family caregivers.
3. Identify and develop strategies to address service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact older persons.
4. Include older adults in planning and designing programs.
5. Develop program budgets that take into account diverse sources of financial support for the older population.
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of practice and programs in achieving intended outcomes for older adults.
7. Apply evaluation and research findings to improve practice and program outcomes.
8. Advocate and organize with the service providers, community organizations, policy makers, and the public to promote the needs and issues of a growing aging population.
9. Identify the availability of resources and resource systems for older adults and their families.
10. Assess and address any negative impacts of social and health care policies on practice with historically disadvantaged populations.

