

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY PRACTICE
Social Work 655
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department Of Social Work

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to provide students with knowledge, values and skills to engage in macro level advanced policy practice in organizations and communities in order to promote social and economic justice. This course focuses on policy issues relevant to rural and small communities and diverse populations residing in rural and small communities. Global issues and policy advocacy is also examined. Students research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice. In order to develop competencies for becoming an effective policy advocate, students learn, analyze, design and implement strategies for promoting policy change within an organization, community, or public policy making body. Students learn how research, in particular collecting data to support effective, evidence-based practice, can be utilized to influence policy makers and enact policies that promote social and economic justice. Finally, students examine the values and ethical issues related to policy practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) Analyze the contemporary policy issues impacting rural and small communities and the degree to which social and economic justice is achieved (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).
- 2) Examine the contemporary policy issues impacting diverse groups, including diversity of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, age and national origin (MSW 1.4, 1.8C, 2.1, 3.1).
- 3) Research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).
- 4) Understand and demonstrate utilization of strategies and tactics to effectively influence agency and governmental social welfare policy and programs in order to promote social and economic justice (MSW 1.5, 1.6, 1.8C, 1.10C, 3.4C, 4.2).
- 5) Critically examine ethical issues in policy practice with an emphasis on issues pertaining to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 2.4C).
- 6) Critically examine political social work and opportunities for social workers to engage in and influence the political process (MSW 2.4C, 3.4C).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Social Welfare Policy Analysis Paper (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.3C)

Students will research and write a policy analysis paper on an issue of significant to advanced generalist rural and small community social work practice using the Karger and Stoesz policy analysis framework provided in class. The analysis may be of an agency policy, state policy, or federal policy. The analysis will include an examination of the degree to which the policy promotes the values of the social work profession, including social and economic justice and dignity and worth of the person.

Policy Proposal

Using the policy selected in the policy analysis paper, students will draft a policy proposal advocating changes for changes in the current policy or ways in which the current policy is implemented. Students must interview a minimum of 3 key informants (with at least one being a social worker implementing the policy or advocating for change) for information or feedback regarding this proposal.

Advocacy Project (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.4C)

Students will assume the role of a change agent and begin to put the policy proposal in action. Students will develop and implement a social action plan utilizing an array of advocacy strategies and tactics, including but not limited to lobbying a government official, attending a meeting or public hearing, writing a letter to the editor, working on a task force, participating in a public rally, etc.

On-Line Discussion of Critical Policy Issues Impacting Rural Social Work Practice

Students will respond to discussion questions posed by the instructor based upon the readings examining critical policy issues impacting rural and small community social work practice within a diverse society. Issues of diversity examined may include age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Topic: Introduction to the course: Social Worker as Policy Advocate

Week 2

Topic: Ethical Issues in Policy Practice; Theories of social justice

Week 3

Topic: Review of Policy Analysis Framework

Topic: The Policy Advocate Context

Week 4

Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Welfare Reform and Rural Poverty

Week 5

Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Food Policy

Week 6

Topic: Preparation for Creating a Policy Proposal

Week 7

Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part One

Week 8

Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Homelessness in Rural America

Week 9

Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part Two

Week 10

Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Aging in Rural America

Week 11

Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part One

Week 12

Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part Two

Week 13

Topic: Global Issues and Policy Advocacy

Week 14

Topic: Report on Student Outcome of Advocacy Project

Week 15 – Finals