University of Central Florida
School of Social Work

SOW 5937.01 - Social Work Practice in Schools

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Term: Spring, 2004
Class Days: Thursday
Class Hours: 6:00 p.m – 8:50 p.m.
Location: TBA

Course Description: This course uses an ecological perspective in teaching the practice of social work in schools. Topics will include: the historical, theoretical, legal, research, policy, and practice issues relevant to the delivery of school social work services; the roles and tasks performed by social workers in public schools; school social work practice models; and the professional code of ethics as outlined by the NASW standards for school social work services. The purpose of the course is to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for successful and competent practice with students, their teachers, families, schools, and communities.

Course Learning Objectives: By the end of the semester students are expected to achieve the following objectives:
1. Understand the school as a social system and its relationship to the home and community.
2. Identify groups of school children for which social work services are appropriate, and target appropriate interventions for these groups.
3. Demonstrate sensitivity and competence regarding diverse populations within the school system.
4. Understand the influence of current legal, educational, and social policy issues.
5. Identify school social worker roles and responsibilities.
6. Understand how to use various interventions and techniques to maximize opportunities for change.
7. Recognize how developmental level, socioeconomic status, culture, race and ethnicity, disability, gender, and sexual orientation affect the educational functioning of children.
8. Develop an understanding of theoretical foundations for assessment and intervention strategies in school settings and the use of critical thinking in school social work practice.
9. Develop knowledge of teacher consultation and interventions with larger systems impacting the educational development of children.
10. Understand prominent models of school social work practice.
11. Understand the local, state, and federal laws which govern public school policy and procedures, including the delivery of educational and social work services to children with special needs and their families.

Teaching Methods
These may include lecture, discussion, audiovisual materials, small group exercises, class presentations, and guest speakers. A variety of case examples will be used to exemplify material discussed. Students are expected to be active in the learning process, which means substantive class participation. Quality of participation will be judged over quantity. Students are expected to demonstrate their mastery of course content, including reading material, through class discussion, presentations, and written assignments. Students are expected to be present and on time each week. Those students who are excessively late, or who leave before class has been dismissed, should not expect to receive the same attendance and participation points as those students who have been in regular attendance for the entire class.
Policies
See Social Work Student Handbook and The Golden Rule Book for UCF Students. A student who has a disability and may require reasonable accommodations should speak with the instructor. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. In both written assignments and oral discussions and presentations, the rules of confidentiality, as expressed in the NASW Code of Ethics, are to be observed. Cell phones and pages should be turned off before entering class.

Assignments
Students are expected to read assigned course material prior to class and to come to class prepared to discuss the content. All written work should follow APA guidelines and be typed and double-spaced, corrected for spelling and grammar. All assignments are to be completed and turned in by the assigned date.

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Text

Reading packet of supplementary articles.

Suggested Text

Topic Outcome:
Session 1 – January 8, 2004
- Overview and introduction to the course
- NASW standards for school social work services
- Professional organizations and events for school social workers
- Introduction to issues in American public education

Readings:

Session 2 – January 15, 2004
- Roles and tasks of school social workers — delivery of social work services in schools.
- Navigating in the school system (functioning in a host setting)
- Training for school social work practice – Florida school social work certification
- Historical background of social work practice in educational settings

Readings:
- Allen-Meares. Chapter 2. School social work: Historical development, influences, and practices; Chapter 11. The design of social work services; Chapter 12. The delivery of social work services.
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Sessions 3-4 – January 22 and January 29, 2004
- Systems theory and the ecological perspective, the theoretical base of school social work
- Overview of practice models in school settings: the role of the social worker in the school, home, and community
- Designing social work services in schools – the work plan
- Significant educational legislation and court cases. Socio-legal issues affecting social work practice in public schools.
Readings:
  Chapter 4. An ecological perspective of social work services in schools
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Session 5 – February 5, 2004
- Equal educational opportunity: language, race, culture, gender
- Characteristics of students “at risk” or with “special needs.” Implications for school social workers, school interdisciplinary teams, and community intervention.
- Children at risk: poverty, homelessness, child abuse, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, truancy, school phobia, suicide, migrant children

Readings:
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Sessions 6-7 – February 12 and February 19, 2004
- Equal educational opportunities: children with disabilities
- Working with families of children with disabilities – school social work roles and tasks
- Evaluation and assessment instruments commonly used in schools
- Organization of services for children with disabilities

Readings:
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Session 8 – February 26, 2004 (school social work interview paper due)
- Student rights, issues of control, and practice considerations
- Violence in the schools
- Responding to crisis situations and violence in schools

Readings:
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Sessions 9 and 11 – March 4 and March 18, 2004 (Observation of SSW paper due 3-18-04)
- Social work processes and interventions: practice with individuals, families, and groups
- Teams, consultation, collaboration, and case management
- The problem solving process in the schools
- Assessment of school and community resources
- Parent involvement and collaboration
- School and community collaboration
- Group approaches in school social work

Readings:
- Supplementary articles, as assigned

Session 10 – March 11, 2004
- Spring Break

Session 12 – March 25, 2004
- School-wide interventions

Readings:
- Supplementary articles, as assigned
Session 13 – April 1, 2004 (Professional SSW interest paper due)
- Accountability and evaluation of school social work services

Readings:
- Allen-Meares. Chapter 13. Evaluating practice and programs. Supplementary articles, as assigned

Sessions 14-15 – April 8 and April 15, 2004
- Round table discussion of professional school social work discussion papers

Assignments:

I. Professional school social work interest paper (due April 1, 2004)
   a. Instructor will provide detailed written description of assignment
   b. Students will engage in a round table discussion of their interest papers during sessions 14 and 15

II. Practicing school social worker interview (due February 26, 2004)
   a. Contact and interview a practicing school social worker
   b. Accurately complete the interview questions provided by the instructor and prepare a typewritten summary of responses and information collected
   c. Reflect on and integrate their responses with assigned readings.

III. Observation of school social worker in practice setting (due March 18, 2004)
   a. Contact a district supervisor of school social workers to make arrangements for a shadowing activity
   b. Obtain necessary consents.
   c. Shadow a school social worker and ensure confidentiality.
   d. Prepare a brief summary of your observation. Integrate conceptual framework for social work services in schools by reflecting on ecological perspective, social organization of schools, and major issues/social problems.

IV. Class participation
   a. Active discussion of assigned readings
   b. Become familiar with current newspaper and magazine articles on national, state, and local educational/social/legal issues and participate actively in class
   c. Attend class – more than 3 absences will lower your grade one letter grade

Grading:
- Professional school social work interest paper – 50 points
- Interview practicing school social worker – 20 points
- Observe school social worker in practice setting – 20 points
- Actively participate in class – 10 points