

Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale II with Life-long Leadership Skills: Social Work Practice Behaviors in the Field of Aging

The following is a listing of skills recognized by gerontological social workers as important to social workers to effectively work with and on behalf of older adults and their families. These competences are to be developed at different levels across the social work learning continuum, from BSW to MSW, at the generalist and advanced levels, and in post-MSW life-long learning. The GSW Scale II was designed for pre-post evaluations of education and field training.

Use the following scale to thoughtfully rate your current skill in each of the five sections listed below:

- 0 = Not Skilled At All (*I have no experience with this skill*)
- 1 = Beginning Skill (*I have to consciously work at this skill*)
- 2 = Moderate Skill (*This skill is becoming more integrated in my practice*)
- 3 = Advanced Skill (*This skill is done with confidence and is an integral part of my practice*)
- 4 = Expert Skill (*I complete this skill with sufficient mastery to teach others*)

0	1	2	3	4
Not Skilled At All	Beginning Skill	Moderate Skill	Advanced Skill	Expert Skill

I. VALUES, ETHICS, AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES (Knowledge and value base, which is applied through skills/competencies.)	Skill Level (0-4)
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 who have limited decisional capacity.	
4. Respect diversity among older adult clients, families, and professionals (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, gender, 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 losses, changes, and transitions over the older adult 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 relation to working effectively with other disciplines in geriatric interdisciplinary practice.	

Section I Comments: _____

II. ASSESSMENT	Skill Level (0-4)
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 (biopsychosocial evaluation).	
4. Ascertain health status and assess physical functioning (e.g., ADLs, 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. Reevaluate and adjust service plans for older adults on a continuing basis.	

Section II Comments: _____

III. INTERVENTION	Skill Level (0-4)
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).	
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.	

6. 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).	
8. Apply termination skills in work with older adults and their families.	
9. Advocate on behalf of clients with agencies and other professionals to help elders obtain quality services.	
10. Adhere to laws and public policies related to older adults (e.g., elder abuse reporting, legal guardianship, advance directives).	

Section III Comments: _____

IV. AGING SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES	Skill Level (0-4)
1. Provide outreach to older adults and their families to ensure appropriate use of the service continuum.	
2. Adapt organizational policies, 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 service providers, community organizations, policy makers, and the public to meet 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.	

Section IV Comments: _____

V. LEADERSHIP IN THE PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT OF AGING <i>Leadership skills are lifelong learning objectives for which a foundation is laid in social work education. Competence is built over years of practice and continuing education</i>	Skill Level (0-4)
1. Assess “self-in-relation” in order to motivate yourself and others—including trainees, students, and staff—toward mutual, meaningful achievement of a focused goal or committed standard of practice.	
2. Create a shared organizational mission, vision, values, and policies responding to ever changing service systems in order to promote coordinated, optimal services for older persons.	
3. Analyze historical and current local, state, and national policies from a global human rights perspective in order to inform action related to an identified social problem and/or program for older adults for the purpose of creating change.	
4. Plan strategically to reach measurable objectives in program, organizational, or community development for older adults.	
5. Administer programs and organizations from a strengths perspective to maximize and sustain human (staff and volunteers) and fiscal resources for effectively serving older adults.	
6. Build collaborations across disciplines and the service spectrum to assess access and continuity and reduce gaps in services to older adults.	
7. Manage individual (personal) and multi-stakeholder (interpersonal) processes at the community, interagency, and intra-agency levels in order to inspire and leverage power and resources to optimize services for older adults.	
8. Communicate to public audiences and policy makers through multiple media (e.g., synthesis reports, legislative statements) and orally presenting the mission and outcomes of the services of an organization or for a diverse client group(s).	
9. Advocate with and for older adults and their families for building age-friendly community capacity (including the use of technology) and enhancing the contribution of older persons.	
10. Promote use of research (including evidence based practice) to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of social work practice and aging related services.	

Section V Comments: _____
