

Gero-Ed Center Competency Goals

The following is a list of generalist practice knowledge, values, and skills applicable to both the MSW and BSW levels of social work education. The Gero-Ed Center competency goals are for all social workers to attain a beginning skill level for practice with older adults and their families. This list is intended to guide curriculum development at the generalist practice level as a preface to advanced gero knowledge and practice behaviors, consistent with the 2008 CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.

I. VALUES, ETHICS, AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES (Knowledge and value base, which is applied through skills/competencies.

1. Identify and assess one's own values and biases regarding aging and, as necessary, take steps to dispel myths about aging.
2. Respect and promote older adult clients' right to dignity and self-determination within the context of the law and safety concerns.
3. Apply ethical principles to *decisions* on behalf of all older clients with special attention to those with limited decisional capacity.

This competency includes professional boundary issues in work with older adults, client self-determination, end of life decisions, family conflicts, and guardianship.
4. Respect diversity among older adult clients, families, and professionals (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation).

This competency encompasses understanding how diversity relates to variations in the aging process.
5. Address respectfully the cultural, spiritual, and ethnic values and beliefs of older adults and families.

6. Relate concepts and theories of biological and social aging to social work practice.

This competency includes understanding the effects of cohort and generational experiences on older adults, the normal aging processes, and the 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 grief and loss, transitions, and adaptations to changes over the life cycle.

9. Support individuals and families dealing with end of life issues related to dying, death, other losses, and grief.

10. Understand the perspective and values of social work in relation to working effectively with other disciplines in geriatric interdisciplinary practice with older adults, their caregivers, and the community.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. Use empathy and sensitive interviewing skills (e.g., reminiscence or life review, support groups, counseling) to assess social functioning (e.g., social skills, social activity level) and social support of older adults.

This competency includes being able to conduct a social history that identifies family, agency, community, and societal factors that contribute to and support the older adult's independence and develop a service plan that builds on strengths and meet needs of older persons, their families, or significant others.

2. Adapt interviewing methods to potential sensory, language, and cognitive limitations of the older adult.

3. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of psychosocial factors that affect older persons' physical and mental well being.

This competency includes evaluating safety issues and degree of risk for older clients.

4.	Identify ways to ascertain the health status and physical functioning (e.g., ADLs and IADLs) of older adults.
5.	Assess cognitive functioning and mental health needs of older adults (e.g., depression, dementia). <i>This competency includes knowing how to gather information regarding mental status (particularly memory), history of any past or current mental health problems, life satisfaction, coping abilities, mood or affect, and spirituality of older adults.</i>
6.	Assess caregivers' needs and level of stress.
7.	Be aware of standardized assessment and diagnostic tools that are appropriate for use with older adults (e.g., depression scale, Mini-Mental Status Exam).
8.	Develop clear, timely, and appropriate service or care plans with measurable objectives for older adults. <i>Such plans are to be based on functional status, life goals, symptoms management, and financial and social supports of older persons and their families and are to address financial, legal, housing, medical, and social needs.</i>
9.	Reevaluate and adjust service or care 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. <i>This competency encompasses engaging and working with older adults and their families within the home, community-based settings, and institutions.</i>
2.	Adapt psycho-educational approaches to enhance older persons' coping capacities and mental health.

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. <i>This competency encompasses assisting families that are in crisis situations regarding their older family members, providing information to support family caregivers, and engaging family caregivers in maintaining their own mental and physical health.</i>
6. Provide social work case management to link elders and their families to resources and services and to conduct long-term planning.
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. Understand how to terminate work with older clients and their families.
9. Advocate on behalf of older adults with agencies and other professionals to help them obtain quality services.
10. Adhere to laws and public policies related to older adults (e.g., elder abuse reporting, legal guardianship, powers of attorney, wills, advance directives, and Do-Not-Resuscitate orders).

IV. AGING SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES

1. Identify how policies, regulations, and programs impact older adults and their caregivers, particularly among historically disadvantaged populations (e.g., women and elders of color).
2. Identify ways to outreach to older adults and their families to insure appropriate use of the service continuum (e.g., health promotion, long term care, mental health).

This competency includes understanding the diversity of elders' attitudes toward the acceptance of services.

3. Adapt organizational policies, procedures, and resources to facilitate the provision of services to diverse older adults and their family caregivers.

This competency can encompass health, mental health, and long-term care policies.

4. Identify and develop strategies, including intergenerational approaches, to address service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact older persons.

5. Include older adults in planning and designing programs.

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.

The competency encompasses strategies to address age discrimination in relation to health, housing, employment, and transportation.

9. Identify the availability of resources and resource systems for older adults and their families.

10. Identify the major sources of funding for meeting the needs of older adults.