

Reflective Essay

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This course has profoundly expanded my appreciation for advocacy on behalf of others. Initially I was pretty indifferent to policy matters, I found them somewhat irritating and felt they were beyond my sphere of involvement. However, engaging in this class revealed the link between advocacy and some form of policy engagement, whether navigating existing policies, promoting new ones, or assisting in their creation. We, as Americans, have a right to discuss policy with our representatives as their constituents. This is our right and to not use it would be a disservice to those who do not have this right. Social Work is impossible without policy!

This class has not only cultivated a newfound love for policy considerations in me, but has also empowered me with diverse approaches to advocate effectively in my practicum. Beyond the conventional 101 client interactions, it has instilled in me the importance of thinking innovatively and embracing a broader understanding of the social worker role. Recognizing that policy intersects with macro and micro social work, as well as mezzo aspects, it serves as a crucial bridge connecting mainstream society with marginalized communities. It has helped me love my clients in a totally different way and be an agent of change in my community. Advocacy is so much more than words. It is implementing programs and systems that can be sustained long after we have moved on in life. Our work as Social Workers outlives us, and it is crucial we create sustainable programs and methods wherever we go. This class has helped me truly “feel” like a Social Worker because I know what I am doing and serving goes beyond myself.

The essence of being a social worker goes beyond routine client meetings. Policy engagement is integral to our profession, influencing both broader societal dynamics and the often-overlooked minority communities. The injustice these groups go through is a reflection of a greater issue, and through this course, I've learned to think beyond traditional boundaries and

develop a comprehensive outlook on what it truly means to be a social worker. Not only do we serve those who touch our lives, but Social Work calls us to be selfless, as programs we create might even benefit those we do not initially feel connected to. We are servants of society, which means absolutely all of society. Even if we have a specialization or focus, we have the ability to touch immeasurable amounts of people. This class cultivates this service-minded attitude.

While I may still struggle with recalling specific policy makers or senators, the course has demystified the entire policy-making process for me. It has illuminated the intricate steps involved in policy creation and has provided me with a profound understanding of the essence of genuine advocacy. Debating and discussing policies is what did this the most for me. Learning how to debate with research-based information and real stories is the key to advocating for helpful policies. This expanded perspective has translated into numerous impactful advocacy strategies I've implemented for my clients during my practicum. I am trying to get an accessible computer course off of the ground with the Computer Science Department. I am trying to source better funding for the on-campus food-pantry, and I am trying to create more accessible resources at my practicum. I would have never even thought of these things without this class.

In essence, the course has been a transformative journey, reshaping my attitudes toward policy from annoyance to appreciation. It has equipped me not only with knowledge but also with a skill set that has enriched my ability to advocate for those I serve. The realization that policy spans across various social work levels has broadened my professional horizons, reinforcing the impact social workers can have on both individual lives and societal structures.

Now, as I navigate the complexities of policy discussions and advocacy, I find myself at a crossroads, as there is lingering frustration and newfound understanding. Even as I still cast the occasional eye-roll at the bureaucracy of policy-making and grapple with the names of

influential figures slipping from memory, the impact of this course remains undeniable. Whether reluctantly or with a fresh sense of purpose, I am now equipped with the tools to navigate social work and policy engagement. Thank you Dr. Wilder!