

Competence 2.1 Recognize and discuss understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Diversity Found in Rural Social Work

Starr Regional Medical Center Senior Care is located in a rural community; thus it is beneficial to consider the diverse characteristics rural communities possess. Research and first hand experiences have demonstrated that education levels, potential for dual relationships, and traditional beliefs should be taken into account. By understanding the potential for diversity in rural communities, social workers can better shape their practices.

As an intern at Senior Care, I have observed that many from the rural community use slang that I have needed to become familiar with in order to effectively communicate. I have also noticed that many of the patients have had limited education. When asked about this, many who did not complete high school described how they had to stay home to help with raising their siblings or working the land. The United States Department of Agriculture confirmed that 60% of the rural population over the age of 25 did not graduate from high school in 1960 (Rural Education, n.d.).

Recognizing how some may have limited education, interventions at Senior Care should be modified accordingly. For example, when CQI Depression Assessments are done with each patient, the wording may need to be explained in order for complete understanding. During group therapy, activities and vocabulary used should cater to education level of the participants. Understanding the level of education of the patients at Senior Care enables social worker to provide the more effective interventions.

In rural social work, there is an increase chance for dual relationships. Because rural communities are more tightly knit, social workers may encounter clients that they know from other contexts (“Five Major Challenges,” 2018). As an intern, I have observed multiple situations where the social workers at Senior Care recognized patients from other aspects of their lives. In handling these situations, they must be wise, objective, and especially confidential. Understanding the increased likelihood of recognizing clients in rural communities enables social workers to prepare for how they will respond to these situations.

The beliefs and perspectives in communities should also be taken into account. The National Association of Social Work pointed out that often rural communities uphold more traditional and faith-based paradigms (“Rural Social Work,” 2009). I have noticed that many patients at Senior Care align themselves with Christian beliefs and values. Understanding the perspectives of the majority of the patients allows the social workers to create activities for group therapy that are more beneficial and relevant.

By recognizing the diversity in rural communities, social workers are better enabled to shape their practice to provide effective services.

References

- Five Major Challenges that come with Social Work in Rural Communities. (2018, February 06). *Rutgers*. Retrieved November 21, 2018, from <https://online.rutgers.edu/blog/five-major-challenges-that-come-with-social-work-in-rural-communities/>
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