

Social Work Competencies Application- Competency 1

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To become a social worker an individual has to become competent in nine areas of social work practice. The first competency is demonstrating ethical and professional behavior. This means to be knowledgeable in what is right or wrong and being able to apply it to the practice. It also includes working with integrity and respect. Expressing professional behavior goes along side demonstrating ethics. This means to be able to address other professionals appropriately and have a courteous demeanor. This competency can be explained with a meeting with my advisor, Dr. Heck. I came to her regarding my path towards graduation and she was able to address me in a respectful way. She kept it professional by speaking to me as a professor rather than a friend. I had trouble making an important decision that would impact my stay at the university. Dr. Heck was able to give me clarity without pressing her own views upon me. Although she may have her own personal beliefs on my situation, she did not let that intervene with my choice.

Demonstrating ethical and professional behavior is crucial when working in the social work field. There is a standard an individual has to set before they involve themselves in the workplace and for that reason, it is the first competency. Without sound judgement a social worker would not be able to lead themselves or clients towards the right direction. Etiquette is also a key factor in demonstrating professional behavior. Social workers come across many other professionals and they should be able to address them accordingly. From my experience, taking the course Networking & Development with Dr. Racovita, allowed me to develop my professionalism further. I was able to display ethical and professional behavior in the virtual Meet the Firms event. I met with many professionals from various fields. I presented myself with my name and my class standing. I addressed each practitioner with the proper prefix and spoke to them with respect. All attendees were able to value each other's time as it was limited. Overall, that event was a great experience that let me express ethical and professional behavior in an online setting.

In my life I have worked at many jobs in various positions. I have found that setting healthy boundaries in the workplace has helped me to become more efficient and provide mutual respect for my coworkers and clients. I have learned that mixing personal beliefs and mistaking coworkers as friends can decrease your chances of future successes. About three years ago, I was a manager at a small retail store. It was my first time co-managing a team of 6 and I made the mistake of not setting proper boundaries between me and my associates. As time went on, my associates were no longer showing the respect I needed as a manager. This later caused conflict between the team and action was taken. There was a sit-down meeting to talk about professionalism in the workplace, this then created tension and awkwardness during shifts. This experience helped me grow as an individual and made my weakness a strength. Due to my previous job experiences, I have gained the knowledge on how to appropriate oneself in the workplace. I am now able to create healthy boundaries and learn about my work environment before getting too comfortable.

Being a social worker means that I will allow myself to continue being a student. As times change, there are many factors that will contribute to my learning. Updating my knowledge and skills can help me provide the best service to my clients. Social work is a field that adapts to society's needs. According to the NASW, social workers have ethical responsibilities to uphold. In order to improve our ethical standard and professional behavior "social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques" (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). By staying within our scope of practice, social workers can properly demonstrate ethical and professional behavior between our clients and coworkers. Promoting ethical and professional conduct in the workplace can be beneficial towards increasing successful performance

among workers. Prilleltensky et al. (1996) explains how personal issues and the level of power within the workplace can disrupt the level of ethical standard between clients and clinicians. Simply discussing ethical behavior with everyone in the workplace can spark up new perceptions or question agency rules and norms. Another method an agency can practice promoting ethical behavior is to distribute work appropriately. Prilleltensky et al. (1996) has found that the unfair distribution of workload can create resentment among workers and then affect the individuals work ethic between clients. This goes to show the importance of being familiar with ethical and professional conduct in the workplace.

I realize that demonstrating ethical and professional behavior is one of the first steps into becoming a great social worker. There are many professionals like my past and current professors that model this type of behavior. Entering the social work field means to become self-aware of one's actions and expressing themselves in a positive way. Mastering this first competency means that I am able to engage in social work practice with good intention. I hope to continue my journey towards becoming a social worker and transforming my perceptions for the greater good.

Reference

- National Association of Social Workers. (2017). NASW code of ethics. Retrieved February 09, 2021 from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- Prilleltensky, I., Rossiter, A., & Walsh-Bowers, R. (1996). Preventing Harm and promoting Ethical Discourse in the Helping Professions: Conceptual, Research, Analytical, and Action Frameworks. *Ethics & Behavior*, 6(4), 287. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327019eb0604_1