



Transforming the Field
Education Landscape

STUDENT TRANSITION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The TFEL project would like to acknowledge those who contributed to the development of this training resource to support students transitioning into professional practice. A team of undergraduate and graduate social work students, postdoctoral scholars, and research assistants collaborated in reviewing the relevant literature, scanning online resources, participating in consultative meetings, and drafting content. We wish to thank Career Services at the University of Calgary for their valuable input. We also wish to thank Gurjot Sohi for styling the document. The TFEL project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL). (2023). Student transition into professional practice. University of Calgary, AB: Authors.

INTRODUCTION



Social work education in Canada prepares students for practice in a variety of human services professions. Students participate in field placements to apply theory to practice and to prepare for successful careers as social workers. However, beyond hands-on practice experience gained during field placements, social work students also need concrete skills to navigate a dynamic job market and to support their transition to professional practice. As students approach the end of their educational journey, they face a plethora of challenges in finding gainful employment. A recurring challenge is a general need for more knowledge on landing productive roles and positioning for fulfilling careers. This training resource aims to increase students' self-efficacy and confidence in transitioning to professional practice by providing practical information for bridging knowledge gaps. Additionally, for students who have spent much of their time in academic settings, finding their place in the professional world can seem daunting. This resource offers a guide for aligning job searches to individual strengths and values. A social worker's first year of practice establishes a career framework and influences their long-term professional development and satisfaction (Glassburn, 2020). Equipping students with resources and skills that set them up for a successful transition to professional practice is crucial to entrance and longevity in the social service workforce.



JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES



Effective strategies are critical for job search. Employers are increasingly filling vacancies through the “hidden job market”. Students transitioning to professional practice may notice that employers do not list all the open positions publicly. Most employers promote vacancies internally or accept employee referrals before posting a job publicly. The “hidden job market” refers to how and where employers seek candidates and how and where candidates look for jobs. Professional connections and networking abilities can help tap into the hidden job market.

Job seekers must use different strategies to search for jobs:

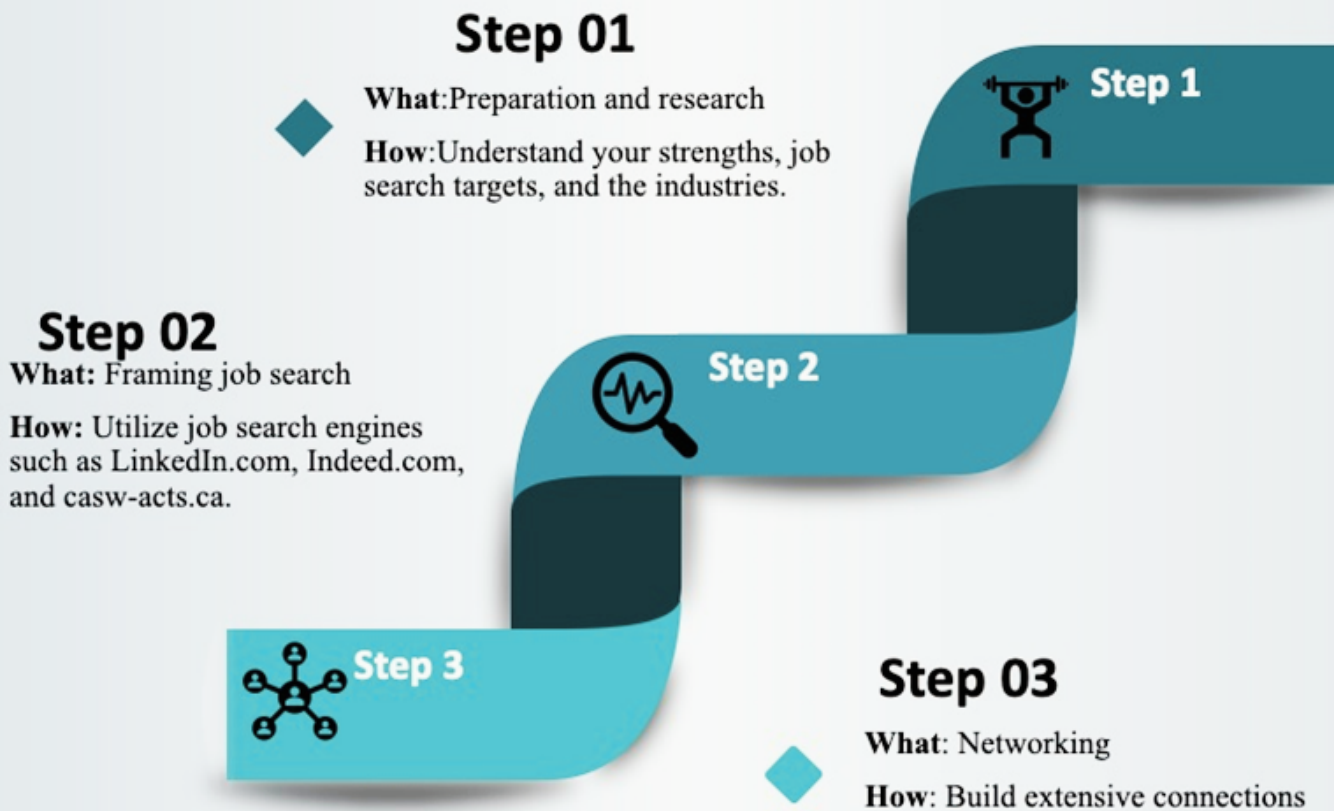


Figure 1. Steps in job search and networking

PREPARATION AND RESEARCH

Identify your strengths and skills and how these relate to your future career. Reflect on your field placements to identify possible career paths. Ask questions like: What is my job search target? What strengths do I have to offer? In which settings do I want to work? What populations would I like to work with? What is the scope of social work practice that I would like to learn more about?

Research areas of social work practice to understand more about them, such as related social policies, agency backgrounds, and services offered. For example, the Alberta Careers, Learning, and Employment Information (ALIS) provides resources and tips for conducting effective job searches. Organizing yourself is always beneficial; track your searches and contacts, using Excel, Word, or another tool. Once you have identified your strengths and targets, prepare a cover letter and resume. Customize your cover letter and resume to the position you are applying for. You may also wish to create business cards, which are an excellent tool to represent yourself during networking.

Here are some recommended details to be put on the cards:

- Name, Telephone, E-mail, LinkedIn URL
- Title
- Optional: Key points, Strengths/Skills possibly on back

You may consider adding three key points to summarize your skills, for example:

- "5+ years' experience in practicing (therapy)"
- "Certified practitioner in (qualification)"
- "Program planning, coordination and leadership skills"
- "Inspiring leader able to quickly establish rapport and generate enthusiasm in others"



FRAMING YOUR JOB SEARCH

Use keywords, job titles, or company names when searching for sector specific jobs such as health services, child welfare, social policy, and others. There are a number of useful job-search engines that include social work. Some examples are listed below:

Government of Canada Job Bank: Job Bank is Canada's national employment service where you can find job postings from integrated recruiting sites. You can take a career quiz as a starting point to know yourself better and match your knowledge and skills with an occupation. The trend-analysis tab links to tools you can use to explore the job market, such as job outlook and salary comparison.

Glassdoor: Glassdoor is a job-search site, and it has a special function that allows current and former employees to review companies anonymously. You can specify the job type, salary range, job location, and company size, etc. Glassdoor's blog has information about resumes, cover letters, interviews, career growth, and news and trends.

Indeed: Indeed allows you to conduct job searches that specify estimated salary, job type, education level, industry, location, and job language. You can also read company reviews and salary guides when considering job postings.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn gives you access to and a way to network with professionals in a wide array of fields. This allows you to explore potential companies or employers in your field of interest or start a conversation with an individual of interest within the social work field. The LinkedIn job-search engine can help find connections that match your educational background, work experience, and areas of interest.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW): CASW has a job board for social work job postings, and it offers numerous resources, such as webinars and advocacy reports that can be helpful when looking at diverse fields of social work.

ZipRecruiter: When searching for jobs on ZipRecruiter, you can specify job location, salary, employment type, and titles. You can also access the real salary data for negotiating your pay and even instantly communicate with employers through the platform.





NETWORKING

Networking is the process of making connections in the field and building relationships in your profession. Networking can help new social workers find their first job even when they lack experience.

Making extensive connections with people you know (e.g., professors, peers), people who are in the fields that you are interested in, and people who make hiring decisions in the agencies can help expand your career pathways.

Networking helps people getting hired through referrals. You could use the following tips to expand your network:

RESPOND TO JOB POSTINGS

Respond to job postings for which your skills and knowledge match the job requirements. Allow time for the agencies to reply and do insist on the process. If you are interested in working for a specific company, monitor its website and subscribe to job postings offered, if available.

USE STAFFING FIRMS

You can contact staffing firms to expand your network. Companies hire recruiters to find candidates for available positions. If you are considering this approach, you can search for relevant positions on the recruiter's website, and then follow up with a phone call to introduce yourself and to ask them for the best way to use their services.





Here are some sample messages that you can consider when connecting or following up with the person through online recruiting platforms:

CONNECTION MESSAGES

- *Hi (name), I am a (bachelor/ master) social work student at the (university) and noticed that you graduated from my program and that you are currently working at (agency). I am looking to build my network and would like to connect with you.*
Best regards,
(your name)
- *Hi (name), I came across your profile on LinkedIn and noticed that we both completed the same degree program and that you are currently working as a social worker (or other positions) at (agency). I am currently seeking to understand more about working in the (social work field) and I am wondering if we can connect?*
Best regards,
(your name)
- *Hi (name), I am a (bachelor/master) social work graduate seeking to understand more about working in the (social work field) and I came across your LinkedIn profile. Can we connect so that I can obtain some advice?*
Best regards,
(your name)



FOLLOW-UP MESSAGES

Hi (name). Thank you for accepting my invitation to connect via LinkedIn.


As mentioned, I am completing a (bachelor/ master) social work degree at the (university), and I am interested in learning about your field in (setting).

Would you be willing to connect for a 15-minute chat to share your experience?

I would be happy to meet with you at (a location) and (time) of your convenience or chat by phone.

Thank you so much. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best regards,
(your name)



Prepare to talk about yourself by creating a sample networking introduction or elevator pitch.

NETWORKING INTRODUCTION

As you begin networking and interacting with others, you will introduce yourself. It is important that you are able to make the most of the opportunities by being able to talk about your background clearly and succinctly. It usually lasts about 30 seconds and includes the following elements (also known as elevator pitch):

- Education
- What you are interested in or what you would like to do
- Relevant skills or qualifications from your education, work, and volunteer background
- Possibly a question or request for assistance for the other person

SAMPLES OF ELEVATOR PITCH

- I'm graduating in (month) with a (bachelor/ master) of social work. I would like to pursue a career in (position) and in order to prepare myself have taken courses in (top courses). I have strong (skills), work well with (___), and enjoy the challenges of (___).
- I am taking a (bachelor/ master) of social work. I really like it and am in my (___) year of study. I enjoy (___) and am exploring what I can do in my career. I am open to options and interested in learning more about (___).
- I am in my (___) year in (bachelor/ master) of social work. Last summer, I completed a placement at (agency) where I especially enjoyed (___). I have also been an active volunteer in (agency/setting) and have experience providing (___).





NETWORKING

Networking is not only about getting a job, but also about developing relationships, building connections, and sharing resources. Showing an interest in others is an essential element of successful networking. This involves taking the time to get to know someone and looking for ways to give to others. Networking is most effective when both you and the contact benefit from the relationship. Attend webinars, career fairs, and employer information sessions that universities, social work associations, and field agencies often host, reach out to leaders of organizations to ask questions even if no job opening is posted, leverage your existing relationships (professors, supervisors), and leave business cards everywhere. Because many events take place virtually, it is possible to network effectively online.

One networking strategy is to conduct an information interview to learn more about the organization or agency and to learn about job-search strategies while building your network. Information interviews also allow you to explore diverse careers to help clarify your goals.

The informational interview allows you to learn about social work agencies and organizations by developing meaningful professional relationships. Be courageous and reach out! Many people are more than willing to help others. Below are some strategies and sample scripts to guide you when you contact people.

1. POSITION YOURSELF

Optimize different platforms to create interest in potential contacts; highlight relevant interests, experience, and accomplishments (e.g., qualifications).

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PERSON TO CONTACT

There are various ways to identify people to meet with. Ideally, choose someone that you already know (peers, professors) or have something in common with. This can include the same university, interest, cultural background, or shared skills. Select someone in or slightly above the role you are seeking. Other possible ways to identify people to contact include:

- Conferences
- Company websites
- Professional organizations
- LinkedIn
- Professional events, charity events
- Periodicals and resource books
- Volunteer positions



3. REQUEST TO CONNECT

Once you have found the person you wish to contact, the next step is to contact the person by email or phone or even both. Always personalize your message to increase the chances that the person will accept your connection request:

- Introduce yourself (student or current role)
- Build common ground
- State your intention clearly
- Be courteous; you can even flatter, but do not overdo it
- If setting up a meeting, do it at their convenience and do not ask too much
- Ideally connect with the person before making a request

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

Here are some sample phone scripts if you decide to connect to the person via phone:

- Hello (name), my name is (your name). I'm a (bachelor/ master) social work student at the (university). I obtained your name from (channel). Ask if they are free to talk for a few minutes. If they're not, ask for the best time to call back, and be sure you actually call then.
- I understand you are the (position), and I'm interested in learning more about being a social worker in the (setting). I'm in the process of gathering information about the types of careers (or positions) that may be in line with my interests (and/or area of expertise). Would it be possible to meet with you for 15 to 20 minutes to learn about your career (or the agency) and the (job title) positions they have? Be prepared for a response such as: "I think our human resources people can probably answer your questions." You may want to respond with: "I'm sure that would be true if I were looking for a job, but I'd like to talk with you because _____ told me you could give me the best advice and suggested that I would benefit from your experience and insight."



SAMPLE EMAIL

Here are two sample emails if you consider connecting to the person via email:

Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name),

My name is (name) and I am a (bachelor/master) social work student at the (university). I came across your name (explain where and how), and I was intrigued to learn more about you and your career (or agency). I am currently (your career, e.g., front-line social worker, researcher) in (agency) and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your career path.

Would you be open to meeting with me for 15 to 20 minutes to discuss this? I would be happy to buy you a coffee or tea if you would be willing to share some of your valuable insights with me.

Regards,

(your full name)

(Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name),

My name is (name), and I am a recent (bachelor/master) social work graduate from the (university). We met (where and when) and I was impressed by your (highlight something specific here). I am currently working as a (your career, e.g., front-line social worker, researcher) in (agency) and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your career path. Would you be open to meeting with me for 15 to 20 minutes to discuss this?

Regards,

(your full name)



4. ORGANIZE TO HAVE A PRODUCTIVE MEETING

Learn about the agency and organization. Also, prepare questions to ask the person about her or his career path, role, technical skills, and the agency structure.

5. FACILITATE THE MEETING

Ensure that you obtain the information you need by leading the meeting.

- Introduce yourself (briefly talk about your interests and career path).
- Learn about the person, position, and the agency (try and get detailed information so that you have a good understanding of their role, company, and skills needed).
- Determine how well the career of interest matches your education and experience, skill set, and what you would need to do to obtain a similar career. Also, learn about other possible career options. Be sure to follow-up with further questions to obtain detailed information.

You may want to ask dozens of questions, so think about them carefully before arriving at your interview. Write them down in case you get nervous, but do not just read them off. Be mindful about the time, as you asked for 15 to 20 minutes. Enthusiasm is the key to the whole process. Here are some sample questions when you approach someone in the role that you are interested in:

- Can you tell me a little about your career path?
- What jobs and experiences have prepared you for this position?
- What does a typical day/week look like?
- What do you enjoy most about your position? What is the least favourite part of your role?
- What could I do to make myself a strong candidate for this position? What kind of skills should I be building?
- What challenges would I face transiting from fresh graduate to a professional social worker?
- With my background in social work and interest in (field), what are some other job titles that would be a good fit for me?
- Do you know anyone else I can speak to for advice?
- Is there anything I can do to help you?





6. CLOSE WELL

Always ask if there is someone they think you would benefit from meeting with. As well, ask them if there is any way that you can help them.

7. FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up with a thank you email or hand-written card thanking them for taking the time to speak with you. Follow-up periodically to maintain your connection. This can include updating them with regards to your status, sharing relevant articles, and offering holiday greetings.



MAKING YOUR JOB APPLICATION STAND OUT



Agencies receive hundreds of applications for any one position. To help your application stand out, bear in mind some important reminders:

- Use key words and job alerts to find job postings (via LinkedIn, Indeed, Glassdoor, etc.).
- Follow employers on social media to demonstrate your interest and to prepare for interviews. Follow agencies via LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Facebook, etc. Like and share agency articles to build capital with agencies.
- Target your resume and cover letter to the job posting to increase the chance of passing the Applicant Tracking System, software some employers use to screen applications and select top candidates. Identify key words in the job posting and include them in your application. Organize experiences on your resume according to relevance. Personalize your cover letter to target the employer's needs. Apply early via the agency website. Complete every field on the web form to ensure your application is accepted.
- Introduce yourself to the company recruiter via online recruiting platforms (LinkedIn, etc.) and ask how to stand out in the job-application process in advance. Bringing your name to their attention can increase your chances of being selected for interviews. Personalize your message to capture the recruiter's attention:

Hi (name),

I noticed from your profile that you work at (agency) as a Human Resources Advisor. I recently applied for (position) at your agency and am interested in it. I would appreciate it if you considered my resume. Thank you for your time.

Best,

(your name)





- Connect with an employee or a hiring manager in the relevant department at the agency to learn more about the position, introduce yourself to the company, and leave a good impression.
- When contacting an employee, ask for a brief conversation either by phone or in person. If the person agrees, prepare to ask questions about the role, department culture, and agency. As well, be prepared to speak briefly about your background, including your experience and relevant skills.

Hi (name), I noticed from your (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) profile that you work at (agency). I recently applied to a (position) at your company that looks like an exciting opportunity! I want to reach out to you to ask if you would be open to sharing any insights about this role and the agency. As well, any advice on how I can stand out in the application process would be appreciated. If you are not the most appropriate person to ask, would you mind pointing me in the right direction? Thank you in advance for your time! Thanks, (your name)

- When introducing yourself to the manager of a job you applied to, tell them why you are a good fit.

Hi (name), I recently applied for the (position) with (agency) and wanted to introduce myself to you. This role interests me because the job posting mentions a need for someone with (personality trait, skill, or experience) and (personality trait, skill, or experience). I have an extensive background in (expertise) and am currently completing a (social work master or bachelor's degree). I would love to learn more about how my experience and skills could be a match with your department's needs and hopefully will have the opportunity to meet with you in person. If you are not the most appropriate person to ask, would you mind directing me in the right direction? Thank you in advance for your consideration. Sincerely, (your name)



CREATING A CAREER AND LIFE VISION: DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FRAMEWORK



CAREER VISION

Being able to articulate your professional practice framework is critical as you transition into professional practice. You have to be accountable in your work as a professional social worker; this means being able to articulate your worldview, how you understand, how you analyze information, and make decisions. The process of developing a professional practice framework begins with the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills, then moving to understanding the profession in terms of one's own values and beliefs, before finally incorporating these with the values of the profession. Your professional practice framework is a work in progress, so it changes as you grow and develop as a practitioner. Creating a career and life vision can help you develop your professional practice framework.

A career vision statement aims to provide an inspiring direction for your future (Burnett & Evans, 2017). It helps you clarify what work means to you and what you want out of a job. Keep your career vision statement to about 250 words.

Consider answering the following questions:

- Why do I work?
- What is the purpose of my work?
- What does having a social work career mean to me?
- How does it relate to others and society?
- What defines a good or worthwhile social work career?
- What does money have to do with it?
- What do experience, growth, and fulfillment have to do with it?

LIFE VISION

A life vision statement is about what matters most to you and what you want your life to stand for (Burnett & Evans, 2017). Keep your life vision statement to about 250 words.

Consider answering the following questions:

- Why are we here?
- What is the meaning or purpose of my life?
- What do my family, nation, the world, and others have to do with it?
- How can I contribute to the well-being of others and towards an equitable and a just society?
- What is the role of joy?



CAREER AND LIFE VISION REFLECTION

Review your career and life vision statements to identify keywords that reveal your career and life values. Your values describe your beliefs, principles, and needs. Understanding your values allows you to know more about yourself and recognize how your values and principles align with the social work field. This is beneficial, especially when you are searching for jobs and conducting interviews.

Examples of values include the following:

- Career Values: independence, money, challenge, leadership, impact on others
- Life Values: family, loyalty, honesty, relationships
- Social Work Values: Respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons, pursuit of social justice, service to humanity, integrity in professional practice, confidentiality in professional practice, competence in professional practice

Determine if your career and life vision statements conflict with or complement each other. Does one drive the other and how? Such reflection helps you to understand your inner self and allows you to live coherently. After reflecting on your career and life vision, develop your own professional practice framework using the template adapted from Harris (2010).

Professional Practice Skills	My professional practice skills developed thus far include....	Discuss why are these important to ethical and quality social work? what skills do you want to develop further?
Professional Knowledge	My professional knowledge at this stage of my career consists of..... e.g. legislation in particular areas, knowledge of particular areas, policies , academic studies, etc.	Discuss how you have developed your professional knowledge, what role this plays in your overall framework, how you will continue to develop this?

Professional Practice Framework (Harris, 2010)



Professional Practice Framework (Harris, 2010)

Theory and Research

What are the key theories and research that underpin your framework
What role does research play in your framework, what type of evidence do you draw on and why?

Discuss how this informs your framework and your practice, how does this speak to what kind of emerging practitioner you are, why have you selected the theories you have selected, what does evidence based practice mean to you, how do you plan to use this? Focus on three key theories.

Organizational Context

What is the framework of the organization you have undertaken your placement in?
What are the values, mission and theories of that underpin their work and purpose?

Discuss how this aligns with your framework, where are there synergies, where are there tensions, what strategies did you develop to deal with this? What have you learnt about how you deal with these in the future?

BUILDING A CURRICULUM VITAE OR RESUME



Create your supporting documents for job applications, at a minimum a curriculum vitae (CV) or resume. CVs and resumes differ in terms of the length and information included. Lengthier than a resume, a CV is comprehensive and includes your detailed academic, career, and research background; and details about your achievements, awards, publications, and presentations (Doyle, 2022).

A CV can be more than two pages and is mainly used for academic purposes, such as applying for graduate research programs. Refer to the **Sample Resume** and **Sample CV** starting on the next page.

For help writing your CV, you may wish to visit your university student centre, Indeed.com, the Government of Canada Job Bank, or a local professional that specializes in such services. One to three pages long, a resume is a concise summary of your previous academic education, career background, and achievements that are relevant to the position for which you are applying. Thus, a resume highlights how you can contribute to the agency.

When applying for jobs in social work, a resume is mainly required. Indeed's career guide offers step-by-step instructions and templates to help you write a resume for social work jobs. You can also view social work resume examples on BeamJobs, a resume builder site. To better capture what you really want and avoid over-censoring or over-analyzing, spend no more than 45 minutes writing your resume.





SAMPLE RESUME

Jamie Community

Calgary, Alberta
(403) 989-9900
jamiecommunity@ucalgary.ca

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Social Work student with two years of community development and front-line Social Work experience. Recognized for building empowering, positive relationships with clients and colleagues. Understanding of mental health illness, crisis intervention, case notes and case management.

- Fluent in English and Spanish
- Experienced in crisis intervention, conflict resolution and community referrals
- Assessment and interviewing with clients in crisis and experiencing mental illness
- Critical thinking and decision making utilized interventions, referrals and program
- Documentation and report writing in a timely, accurate manner

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Social Work, June 2017

University of Calgary

Bachelor of Arts, Sociology, June 2015

University of Calgary

RELEVANT COURSES

Children's Mental Health: Applied critical thinking skills to the complexity of children's mental health, practiced conducting thorough assessments and implementing the appropriate intervention.

Practice and Evaluation with Groups: Studied theories of group dynamics, utilized best practices to facilitate community and therapeutic groups.

Project Protégé Mentorship Program

City of Calgary Youth Employment Centre and the University of Calgary, 2013

- Interviewed and selected as one of nine students to receive a mentorship pairing
- Collaborated with a registered social work mentor on a monthly basis
- Participated in guided agency tours, professional development workshops and training

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Crisis Line Volunteer, Distress Centre Calgary, Practicum Winter 2017

- Provided crisis intervention, resource referrals and conducted risk assessments for clients
- Collaborated with the caller to develop a safety plan to transition out of active crisis
- Completed documentation on calls accurately for reporting and statistical purposes
- Assisted with volunteer recruitment by conducting interviews and performing reference checks
- Collaborated with a project to end family homeless utilizing case management skills and applying the wrap around service delivery model

Mental Health Worker, Calgary Association of Self Help, 2013 - 2015

- Assessed, planned and implemented activities to assess adults living with mental illness
- Monitored the Resource Activity Centre to address clients' needs and concerns
- Facilitated a weekly conversation group to promote socialization and increase knowledge of current events
- Provided counseling support and problem solving skills to manage minor conflict between groups
- Co-facilitated a long-term, ongoing occupational leisure group demonstrating strong leadership skills by coordinating a planned activity to implement with group members

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

International Conference on Spiritually and Social Work, University of Calgary, 2017

- Greeted clients, distributed conference literature, information, provided in-room support to presenters, performed routine check-ins, supported other volunteers
- Attended various presentations on spirituality and health to inform practice

"Take Back the Night", Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse, Women's Resource Centre, University of Calgary, Calgary Sexual Health Centre and United Way of Calgary, 2015

- Participated in an annual social action movement by marching downtown at night to take a stand against violence towards women and children
- Designed posters to employer women and children claiming the right to feel safe walking the streets

Edgemont Retirement Living, 2010

- Co-facilitated an exercise group for residents who had Alzheimer's disease and dementia
- Accompanied residents on offsite bus trips and walks around the neighborhood
- Promoted social integration among members through bingo nights, horse racing, tea and chat sessions

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Customer Service Assistant, The Gap, 2012 - Present

- Ensured that the customers were satisfied with their purchase while paying
- Received the "Sales Associate of the Year" award by peers

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Crisis Intervention Training, Calgary Distress Centre, 2016
- Ethics of Tough, Development Disabilities Resources Centre (DDRC), 2015
- Self-Care and Strategies for the Caregiver, Calgary Distress Centre, 2012

INTERESTS

Running: On the pathways along the Elbow River for relaxation three times a week

Cooking: Experimenting with new vegetarian recipes with exotic ingredients

Arts and Crafts: Knitting, painting, making jewelry with wire and beads, and pottery for gifts

SAMPLE CV

Drew Clinical, BSW, RSW

341 Lifelong Circle NE • Calgary, AB T3B 1N4
(403) 222-2222
dclinical@ucalgary.ca
dclinicallinkedinprofile.com

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

Facilitation: Create safe and inviting group dynamics for exploration of topics including mental illness, disability, loneliness and isolation, disease, grief and loss.

Crisis Intervention: Support clients experiencing crisis, conduct risk assessments, create safety plans and ensure follow up and appropriate intervention.

Clinical Counselling: Interview, engage and actively listen to clients, create individual action plans and empower individuals set and reach personal goals, encourage self-determination and coping strategies.

Decision Making: Collaborate and consult with other professionals to determine course treatment plans, document pertinent details of decisions for clients appropriately, think critically and solve problems.

Relevant EXPERIENCE

Community Resource Worker

January 2008 - Present

Social Work Resource Centre of Calgary

- Assisted clients with mental or physical disabilities to explore and utilize community resources like the library, and recreation facilities
- Addressed the physical, emotional, relational and intellectual needs of clients by understanding and collaborating their long term life plans
- Worked with a self-employed client: maintained the books of accounts, won him two clients and continuously provided business tips
- Set up and achieved about 80% of my clients' short term goals like basic hygiene and table etiquette among others

Counsellor

The Aids Outreach Organization

2003 - 2006

- Provided post test-counselling for people who had just tested "positive" for the HIV
- Counseled those living with AIDS to live "positively"
- Provided bereavement counselling to spouses, children, and family members in the event of death of a relative
- Performed crisis counselling sparked off by sudden fear or indicator of death or an onset of illness

Education

Master of Social Work, Clinical Specialization
University of Calgary

2013-2015

Bachelor of Social Work
University of Victoria

2012

Community Involvement

Living Wage Initiative

Vital Neighbourhoods of Calgary

2006 – Present

- Participate in the campaign to secure a living wage for the “working poor” using both the regulatory and voluntary approach

Canadian Social Outreach

2004 - Present

- Co-facilitate at workshops to educate the community about the role of Canadian Social Outreach, war and humanitarian law

Community Resource Person

2003 - 2006

Recent Immigrant Community in Ontario

- Assisted new immigrants and their families access basic services like subsidized housing, food banks, annual tax returns and health care
- Provided interpretation services when needed for those accessing government and other services

Professional Development & Skills

- Facilitation training, Canadian Coaching Association, 2013
- Positive Behaviour Supports, Social Work Resource Centre, 2013
- Abuse Prevention & Response Protocols, AADAC, Edmonton, 2011
- DDRC Medication Procedures, Social Work Resource Centre, 2013
- Ethics of Touch, Professional Association of Alberta, 2011
- Back Care – Lifting and Transferring, Social Work Resource Centre, 2012
- Market Driven Employment Development, Alberta Labour Market, 2010
- Counselling, The Aids Outreach Organization, 2009
- Multi-lingual, Speak and write English, Japanese, and German

Professional Associations

- Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW), Member since 2010
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Member since 2012

Additional Work Experience

- Customer Service Representative, Spaceman Satellite Communications Ltd., 2007-Present
- Security Guard, Securibond Security Services, 2006
- Book-keeper, Self-Employed, 2004-2006
- Proprietor/ Manager, Moneybags Clearing & Forwarding Co., 1998-2000
- Banking Officer, Cashcow Bank Ltd, 1996 - 1998

PREPARING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS



Once you submit your job application, monitor your email and phone for responses or interview invites from the agency.

Follow the 10 steps below to prepare for the interview.

STEP 1: PREPARE TO BE YOUR BEST

Preparation is very important. Well-prepared candidates are more confident and provide more thorough answers. If you know how to give complete answers, you worry less and are able to ask better questions.

STEP 2: LEARN ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF IN THE JOB

Research the organization, including its values, mission statement, services offered, and board of directors. Review the job posting and requirements, and learn as much as possible about current trends and challenges in the field for which you are applying.

Most importantly, understand your strengths, skills, attitudes, and how your values, interests and passions align with the organization.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A PEAK-PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

Be prepared to present your best self during the interview. Visualize the interview to help you develop positive stories and affirmations. Dress appropriately for the interview, allow yourself sufficient time to arrive early at the interview venue (if interviewing in person), and get sufficient sleep the night before the interview.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY, AND PROJECT CONFIDENCE AND ENTHUSIASM

How you communicate often overshadows what you communicate. Good communication skills include:

- Using a clear, strong voice
- Maintaining a good level of eye contact
- Answering questions thoughtfully and concisely (see Step 6)
- Demonstrating good listening skills

Your confidence is the first thing interviewers will notice. A lack of confidence, or too much confidence, can immediately eliminate you from the running. Confidence can be shown through smiling. You should also ensure that you are comfortable and as relaxed as possible.

STEP 5: KNOW YOUR OWN STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND KEY SKILLS

Be prepared to discuss four to five strengths and one to two weaknesses.

Give practical examples that illustrate how the strengths are improving the weaknesses.



STEP 6: LEARN HOW TO ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

During the interview, keep your responses to no more than two minutes long. Practice using the “STAR” response format when preparing for your interview.

- Situation: Describe the situation in one sentence.
- Task: In one sentence, describe the task or challenge you were trying to accomplish or overcome.
- Action: In one to two sentences, describe the actions you took.
- Result: In one to two sentences, describe the result of your actions.

Use specific examples from your experience that are relevant to the job for which you will interview.

STEP 7: DISCUSS SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Prepare to discuss two or three of your most significant accomplishments in detail, especially those related to your job application. Include individual and team accomplishments, and examples of your strengths in both.

STEP 8: DISCUSS A MISTAKE AND HOW YOU DEALT WITH OR RESOLVED THE SITUATION

Questions about mistakes are designed to evaluate your honesty and sincerity, your openness to learning, and your ability to solve problems that may arise in the job. The worst way to answer this question is to say that you have never made a mistake.

STEP 9: PREPARE MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS

Make a list of insightful questions to ask the interviewers. Some questions are suggested below:
What does the person in this job need to do to be considered successful?
What’s the biggest problem that needs to be addressed right away?
How have you developed your team members?

STEP 10: ASK FOR THE JOB

If appropriate, at the end of the interview, you should tell the interviewer that you are interested in the job and summarize why you are a strong candidate.





SAMPLE LIST OF COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

This is a must-prepare question before any type of interview. Keep your response short (one minute or less) and relevant. You can give an overview of your experience and education, highlighting in each instance special accomplishments, acquisition of new skills, or meeting challenges. Take the opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to the field and to describe your professional and extra-work contributions (volunteering) and your field-placements. Your response should be relevant to your career path and include personal, extracurricular, or professional contributions; tell the interviewers what makes you the best candidate for the job.

WHY SHOULD I HIRE YOU?

The easy answer is that you are the best person for the job. Do not be afraid to say so, but then back it up with what specifically differentiates you from other candidates. For example, "I realize that there are likely other candidates who also have the ability to do this job. Yet I bring an additional quality that makes me the best person for the job, which is my passion for excellence. I am passionately committed to...". Give examples from your previous work experiences.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF? HOW WOULD A COLLEAGUE DESCRIBE YOU?

Give examples of your behaviour, or describe events that demonstrate that you are a strong team player. Describe extra duties that you have performed. Perhaps you can include examples of how you stretched yourself to meet organizational goals or provide extraordinary service. For example, you may have special strengths in showing compassion and understanding differences or in adjusting treatment plans to account for personal differences. Describe how you have used these strengths.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO SPECIALIZE IN (A SOCIAL WORK FIELD)?

Being able to articulate your professional practice framework is important. For example, you could select a course, job, specific experience, or personal example that connects your interest in the specialty. It may be important to discuss social work theories that relate to your area of interests. A field placement experience could be shared to highlight your learning and growth.

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

Be specific about contributions you have made to your work or school environments. Identify your specific role by using examples. Addressing weaknesses is challenging for many interviewees. Avoid the tactic of disguising a strength as a weakness (for example, being too hardworking). Think about school experiences or times at work when you may have learned a hard lesson. Describe what you learned from the experience and how you would handle a similar situation on the job.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

You may wish to answer this in terms of experiences you hope to have or skills or qualifications you hope to acquire.



- **WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING?**

This question allows a potential employer to get to know you a little better. Be prepared to answer follow-up questions about your interests. If you mention sailing, for example, be prepared for questions about how you learned to sail, what type of boat you have, and where you sail it.

- **HOW DO YOU RELIEVE STRESS?**

Many social workers experience burnout; be prepared to describe how you maintain your wellness. You may want to emphasize your personal health-related activities, like exercise and relaxation techniques. It is certainly appropriate to discuss your interest in books, music, or other leisure activities, but be prepared to say specifically what books you read and what musicians you enjoy. Say something that you really do in real life.

- **WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF ... (CITE A POTENTIAL WORK SITUATION)?**

The interviewer is looking for your judgment and maturity in handling complex situations. You may have dealt with a similar circumstance, and you can describe what you did in that situation. You are expected to think carefully through the issues involved. The interviewer is not necessarily looking for one “right” answer; different individuals with good judgment do not necessarily reach the same conclusion. Share your thought process confidently and thoughtfully as you determine your answer; that way, a potential employer gets a feel for your critical decision-making style.

- **WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU?**

Be prepared for this question. Even if it’s not asked directly, the answer to this should be woven throughout your response. You may refer to the question about strengths and weaknesses.

- **WHAT SALARY RANGE ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?**

This is a tricky question. If you respond with a range that is too high, you could be eliminated from the list of candidates; if you respond a range that is too low, you could be seen as not qualified for the position. Clarify that you are not simply interested in monetary compensation. Demonstrating that you are flexible, given the right situation, you could consider giving the following response:

“I am willing to be flexible for a position that I feel is a good fit for me and enables me to work with a company where I feel I can make an important contribution. I would also like to consider other benefits, professional development opportunities, etc. that will enable me to grow and develop with your organization. For this reason, I would greatly appreciate hearing from you the range that you are willing to offer and details on possible other benefits so that I may consider all of these variables”.

- **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL A SUCCESSFUL MANAGER/CENTRE IN-CHARGE SHOULD HAVE?**

Focus on leadership and vision. Give examples of someone who has touched your life and how their impact has helped you develop personally.



DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR ME?

It's good to have a few questions to ask the interviewer:

- What are the major responsibilities of this position? (only if this hasn't been covered during the interview or in the job announcement)
- What do you see as the key issues or challenges facing the person in this job?
- How would you describe a typical client in this practice?
- What do you like most about your job and this organization?
- Will there be additional interviews?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

PERSONALITY, HABITS, AND ATTITUDES

- Tell me about yourself.
- How did you prepare for this interview?
- How are you conducting your job search?
- What are your social work values?
- How do you incorporate trauma-informed care in your practice?
- Do you manage your time well? Why do you think so? How do you do it?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your areas for growth?
- What are your wellness and self-care practices?
- How do you make important decisions?
- Under what circumstances do you typically make mistakes?
- How do you determine if you are successful in a task?

EDUCATION

- Describe how you applied something you learned from the social work program to a real-life or work-related situation.
- Besides your education, is there anything you have been involved in collage/university or while you have been at collage/university that you are really proud of?
- How has your education (your classes/degree/diploma/certificate) prepared you for this position?
- What courses have you taken in collage/university that qualify you for this position? What do you think your academic studies will add to this position that experience alone will not?
- Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your ability in (a subject taken that reflects a skill area needed in the work)?



PAST WORK EXPERIENCE

- Tell me about your work experience.
- What are your working methods?
- Have you ever been put on the spot by an instructor when you felt unsure of yourself? How did you respond?
- How would you clarify an unclear assignment?
- Are you experienced in (major job task area of the work you are applying to do)?
- Describe your experience working with (the target group).
- Where did you receive your most practical experience for this job?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction/greatest disappointment?
- Describe a time when you had to take on something new and had little or no guidance or support. How did you handle it?
- Describe an important goal you have set and tell me how you reached it.
- Give me an example of your ability to calm down a difficult client.
- What role do you take in group situations? Give examples.
- What experiences did you gain from your previous placement/job experience?
- What was the most successful team project you worked on? What was your contribution?
- What would your past supervisors tell me about you?
- Describe a situation in which you had to handle a variety of projects simultaneously.
- What did you do particularly well in your last placement/job?
- What did you do during the gap in your employment history?
- What did you dislike most about your previous job/supervisor/agency?
- I see from your resume you have only the minimum experience for this position. Why should I hire you?

AGENCY AND THE POSITION

- What do you know about our agency/service?
- How much do you know about this job?
- If I hired you for this position, what components of the job do you most look forward to doing; what components do you least look forward to doing?
- What are three things you want to get out of this job?
- Describe your ideal post-graduation job based on the industry right now.
- How does your ideal job measure up against this job?
- What are the most important characteristics you are looking for in a job and why?
- The successful candidate will be working with long-term, well-trained individuals. What will you do to fit in?
- What can you do for us that other applicants cannot?
- What would you like to tell me that would convince me that I should hire you for this position instead of another candidate?
- How do you see yourself contributing to our organization?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges you'll face in this position?
- The COVID-19 pandemic has brought (negative impacts, e.g., reduction in service recipients) to the agency. What are your views to improve the situation?



FOLLOW-UP

After your interview, send a formal thank-you letter (usually by email) to the prospective employer. This step is good practice in the professional world, as it can show your enthusiasm about the role. The letter need only be a few lines long; its tone should always be professional, courteous, and respectful.

Documenting every connection you make is an important element of follow-up. You can keep a hard-copy folder or use an Excel spreadsheet to manage contact information about the people you meet. Reflect on the following questions after every connection:

- What did I learn?
- How does what I learned fit with my skills, values, and interests?
- What else do I need to know?
- Who else do I need to talk with?



BECOMING A REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER IN CANADA



In Canada, the provinces and territories exercise legislative authority and jurisdiction over social work as a profession. Each jurisdiction has established a social work regulatory body to govern the profession in accordance with that jurisdiction's legislation. Regulatory bodies protect the public from unqualified, incompetent, and unfit professionals. Regulatory bodies ensure that social workers adhere to a code of conduct when performing their duties. Individuals register as social workers by becoming members of a jurisdiction's regulatory body. To practice as a social worker in Canada, students must register with the regulatory bodies in their respective jurisdictions.

SOCIAL WORK COLLEGES, ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

All provinces and territories in Canada regulate the social work profession within their jurisdictions. The titles of "Social Worker" and "Registered Social Worker" are reserved for practitioners who are registered with their jurisdiction's regulatory body and who meet that jurisdiction's qualifications and standards. Each regulatory body's website has information about that jurisdiction's registration process.

- **Alberta:** Alberta College of Social Workers
- **British Columbia:** British Columbia College of Social Workers & British Columbia Association of Social Workers
- **Manitoba:** Manitoba College of Social Workers
- **New Brunswick:** The New Brunswick Association of Social Work
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers
- **Northern Canada (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut):** The Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada
- **Nova Scotia:** The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers
- **Ontario:** Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers & Ontario Association of Social Workers
- **Prince Edward Island:** Prince Edward Island Social Work Registration Board
- **Quebec:** Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec
- **Saskatchewan:** Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers





CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (CASW)

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) was founded in 1926 to monitor employment conditions and to establish standards of practice within the profession. CASW has evolved into a national voice.

MEMBERS

The CASW represents Canadian professional social workers, and it exists to make the social work profession credible (Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW], 2020). The CASW Federation is comprised of provincial and territorial partner organizations. Each partner organization appoints one member to the CASW board, thus assuring a unified voice for the Canadian social work profession.

CODE OF ETHICS AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Ethical behaviour is the foundation of every profession, and social work ethics is informed by the code of ethics, standards of practice, and scope-of-practice documents. Of note, the current CASW Code of Ethics will be updated based on the 10 principles established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to reflect new developments and practices in the field. The CASW recognizes the importance of integrating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in professional social work practice. Students can develop competencies through continuous professional development, supervision, and a self-reflective practice approach.

The scope of social work profession is advanced through evidence-based practice. Social work practice can be bolstered by adopting person-in-environment construct as a guide and using the social determinants of health framework (CASW, 2020). The person-in-environment approach is dynamic and evolves depending on historical, social, environmental, economic, and global influence (Greene & Schriver, 2016). Social workers can use the social determinants of health framework because the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age heavily influence a person's health and well-being (CASW, 2020). Students are invited to visit the [CASW website](#) for training/webinars, professional development, and scope of practice documents.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (IFSW)

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is the global body for the social work profession. "The IFSW and its national members strive for social justice, human rights and inclusive, sustainable social development through the promotion of social work best practice and engagement in international cooperation" (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2022, para. 1). The IFSW has five regional structures. The North American Region comprises the United States of America, represented by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and Canada, represented by the CASW.

The IFSW, International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) publish International Social Work, a scholarly, refereed journal designed to extend knowledge and promote international exchange in the fields of social work, social welfare, and community development.

TRANSITION TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE



The first year in practice represents a critical period in your professional development. New social workers must demonstrate a range of generalist social work skills during the initial stages of their careers. Some key considerations in bridging the transition are to acknowledge that your learning comes through doing (Donnellan & Jack, 2014). You need time to gain experience in different tasks and situations.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

As social workers, you have to meet your own goals and objectives and manage the expectations you and others have about your work. Social workers often have a deep compassion and selfless dedication to their profession and the people they care for. Your pursuit of this profession may be motivated by personal reasons and identify with certain professional ideals of being a social worker. Although the work itself can be challenging, you are likely to persevere in your efforts to advocate for those in need and create new opportunities.

Clients, agencies and organizations, and the community and wider society also have expectations about social workers and the work they do. The job-related expectations from your employer and stakeholders, and sometimes the absence of clearly identified work roles and responsibilities in some practice settings, can affect your workplace satisfaction. Communities may expect social workers to deliver high-quality services and care and to contribute to the betterment of society (Malley & Fernandez, 2010).

LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Social workers are often expected to work in adverse situations and be able to deliver effective services to client populations and communities. Your work with clients experiencing trauma, sometimes with limited resources or support, can lead to compassion fatigue.

Burnout is highly correlated with a younger age, newness to the profession, and being female (Hamama, 2012). Increasing the attention given to risk and resiliency factors can help beginning social workers be more aware of their own vulnerabilities and develop strategies to promote resilience.

Mindfulness-based practices appear to be a promising approach to strengthen resilience in social workers by increasing self-compassion and the ability to de-centre, and by reducing perceived stress, compassion fatigue, and the risk of burnout (Crowder & Sears, 2017). Professional development, individual reflection, and building support networks are also important to address stress (Graham & Shier, 2014). You can also use eco-mapping, a tool social workers use to map their clients' support networks and assess their social relationships (Donnellan & Jack, 2014), to identify your personal social-support network. There are other non-western approaches that practitioners could consider for their well-being, such as Indigenous and Eastern ways of healing, collective care, etc.


SUPERVISION

Social work supervision is the administrative and educational process used to support practitioners and to develop and refine their skills, enhance motivation, and ensure quality assurance for clients (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019).

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) provide a three-function description of supervision as administrative, educational or clinical, and supportive functions. The supervisor's administrative role in the organization can include induction, work assignment, and monitoring and evaluating workers in their roles. Educational or clinical supervision involves teaching staff what they need to know about their job performance and helping them master their work. When performing supportive functions, supervisors address various forms of work-related stress, including burnout.

Effective supervision is critically important in social work practice; it helps social workers cope with the stress and expectations of their roles and responsibilities, reduces turnover and compassion fatigue, and increases job satisfaction and commitment (Hamama, 2012). Social workers in a supervisory role are guided by ethical responsibilities. This includes supervising in a manner that is fair, respectful, and consistent with the expectations of the place of employment (CASW, 2020).





ONGOING COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

Social work is a dynamic and ever-changing profession that requires ongoing competency development. Competency development is essential for social workers to stay informed of new trends, practices, and policies. Ongoing competency development is crucial for students transitioning to professional practice as it enables them to improve their skills, knowledge, and abilities to effectively serve individuals, families, and communities. By continuously updating their knowledge and skills, student transitioning to professional practice can meet the changing needs of their clients, ensure ethical practice and advance career growth.

By engaging in ongoing competency development, students transitioning to professional practice can improve their effectiveness, enhance their professional growth, and ultimately provide better services to their clients. Competency development is essential to stay current with new developments, evidence-based practice, and emerging trends in the field. Students transitioning to professional practice can attend workshops, conferences, and other training programs to learn about new research, theories, and interventions. Although requirements differ slightly across Canada, regulatory bodies determine eligibility of professional development activities. Please click [this link](#) for continuing education requirements in Canada (CASW, 2015).

Another important reason for ongoing competency development in social work is to ensure ethical practice. Social work is a profession that requires a high level of ethical and professional standards. Social workers need to adhere to ethical codes of conduct and maintain confidentiality, respect, and dignity for their clients. Ongoing competency development helps students transitioning to professional practice to understand and apply ethical principles to their practice. It enables them to recognize ethical dilemmas and make ethical decisions that protect their clients' interests and promote their well-being.

Career growth is another benefit of ongoing competency development in social work. Social work is a competitive field, and student transitioning to professional practice need to continually enhance their skills and knowledge to advance their careers. Ongoing competency development enables student transitioning to professional practice to specialize in specific areas of practice and develop expertise that can set them apart from their peers.



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Transforming the Field
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