

Geriatric Social Work Competencies Related to Health Literacy

Prepared by Janet C. Frank, DrPH

Source: CalSWEC Aging Initiative (Jan 2006). California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) Aging Initiative: Aging Competencies. Retrieved from:

http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/AgingCompetencies_All_Feb2006.pdf.

- ◆ Engage, maintain rapport, and sustain effective working relationships with a wide range of older adults (including those with behavior problems, mental illness and dementia) and their family and caregivers
- ◆ Develop intervention based on the stages in the late life-family and intergenerational roles and interaction.
- ◆ Establish rapport and maintain an effective working relationship with older adults and family members.
- ◆ Use empathy and sensitive interviewing skills to engage older persons in identifying their strengths and problems.
- ◆ Adapt interviewing methods to potential sensory, language, and cognitive limitations of the older adult.
- ◆ Assess and assist caregivers in order to reduce their stress levels and maintain their own mental and physical health
- ◆ Develop clear, timely, and appropriate service or care plans with measurable objectives for older adults
- ◆ Educate families and others to improve communication with older people in light of sensory, speech, and cognitive limitations of older adults.
- ◆ Intervene to assist individuals and families dealing with complex end of life issues regarding death, dying, bereavement, and loss.
- ◆ Utilize family interventions with older adults and their families (e.g., promote safety, restore relationships) in order to assist caregivers to reduce their stress levels, maintain their own mental and physical health and promote better care of the elder
- ◆ 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).

- ◆ Design and implement service plans to help older people and their families manage/improve functioning with cognitive loss or mental health problems (e.g., depression, dementia, and delirium), health issues, and/or physical functioning
- ◆ Respect and promote older adult clients' right to dignity and self determination within the context of the law and safety concerns.
- ◆ Understand the social work principles of autonomy and self determination as applied to decision making with or on behalf of older adult clients, with special attention to those who have limited decisional capacity.
- ◆ Recognize inequality in the aging experience as it relates to gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, functional ability and class.
- ◆ Address respectfully the diversity of cultural, spiritual, and ethnic values and beliefs of older adults and families.
- ◆ Appreciate the influence of culture on roles, stages, and transitions in the life course.
- ◆ Understand and direct the ways one's own values and biases regarding aging impact professional practice and ethical work with older clients, their families, and the provision of aging health and mental health services.
- ◆ Integrate into the practice of social work an understanding of the life experiences and unique needs of older adults belonging to specific racial, ethnic, socioeconomic groups; of men and women; and of those with different sexual orientations.
- ◆ Incorporate into treatment and service planning the relationship of race, ethnicity, and culture on health status, health belief, help-seeking behaviors, health practice (i.e., traditional medicine), and health outcomes.
- ◆ Intervene sensitively and according to professional ethics to assist older adults and families who have diverse cultural, spiritual, and ethnic values and beliefs
- ◆ Identify how policies, regulations, and programs differentially impact older adults and their caregivers, particularly among historically disadvantaged populations (e.g., women and elders of color)
- ◆ Identify service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact service utilization among older persons.
- ◆ Assure appropriate access, utilization, continuity, coordination, and monitoring

of the continuum of public resources for older persons including community-based care, residential care, nursing home, and health/mental health services.

- ◆ Assess and address impacts of social and health care policies on practice with historically disadvantaged populations.
- ◆ Develop strategies to address service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact older persons, including intergenerational approaches
- ◆ Support individuals and families dealing with end of life issues related to death, dying, bereavement, and loss.
- ◆ Incorporate the needs, values, and perspectives of older adults in planning and designing aging programs.
- ◆ Identify ways to outreach to older adults and their families to insure appropriate use of the service continuum (e.g., health promotion, mental health, home and community based care, long term care) that includes understanding the diversity of elders' attitudes toward the acceptance of services
- ◆ Engage older adults actively in planning and designing programs