



North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)
PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404 *** Phone/Fax (tollfree): 888.426.4712
Email: info@nacsww.org *** Website: <http://www.nacsww.org>

“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

**CURRICULUM MODULE OR INTEGRATING FAITH AND
SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Interdisciplinary Relationships with Chaplains

By: Cynthia Harr, Ph.D.

Primary course: Practice with Individuals and Families

Secondary course(s): Health and Social Work; Gerontology; Field Education

CURRICULUM MODULE ON INTERDISCIPLINARY RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHAPLAINS

I. Core Competency Addressed:

Educational Policy 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. Social workers commit themselves to the profession's enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth.

Social workers:

- advocate for client access to the services of social work;
- practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development;
- attend to professional roles and boundaries;
- demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;
- engage in career-long learning; and
- use supervision and consultation.

II. Specific Practice Behaviors Related to the Module:

1. Students will know the basic characteristics of a well functioning interdisciplinary team.
2. Students will understand the professional qualifications of chaplains.
3. Students will understand the role of the chaplain in various settings and know when it is appropriate to refer to or consult with a chaplain.
4. Students will have knowledge of the basic core values, standards of practice, and professional ethics of the chaplaincy profession and be able to compare and contrast with social work.

III. Materials Needed and/or Assigned Readings:

Bronstein, L. R. (2003). A model for interdisciplinary collaboration. *Social Work, 48*, 297-307.

In this article, Bronstein suggests that interdisciplinary collaboration requires skills that are imperative for competent professional social work practice. The author discusses the various roles that social workers assume on interdisciplinary teams in a variety of settings and possible professional and structural influences on interdisciplinary collaboration. Bronstein stresses the importance of mutual trust, respect, understanding, and informal communication between collaborators.

Harr, C., Openshaw, L; & Moore, B. (2006). Moving toward effective interdisciplinary collaborations to address spirituality: Chaplains share their perspectives on working with social workers. *Arete, 30* (1), 101-111.

As human service organizations place increased emphasis on interdisciplinary teamwork in professional settings, social workers must be prepared to interface with chaplains to address the spiritual needs of clients. The authors present the results of a mixed-method study which explored chaplains' perceptions (N=403) of their professional relationships with social workers. The findings suggest that chaplains perceive a generally positive working relationship to exist between social workers and themselves, although areas for

improvement also exist. The article discusses practical ways to improve interdisciplinary relationships with chaplains in order to provide holistic client services.

Association of Professional Chaplains Code of Ethics. Retrieve at:
www.professionalchaplains.org/uploadedFiles/pdf/code_of_ethics_2003.pdf.

The Association of Professional Chaplains website is a valuable resource for both instructor and students. It provides information as to the qualifications for professional chaplains, the standards of practice, and the ethical guidelines.

IV. Description of the Module:

Divide the module into two class sessions.

Session I.

Assign students the Bronstein and Harr, et.al. articles as readings two weeks before the class session. The instructor leads the students in developing two lists on the board based on the material in the readings, their own experience in field, and creative brainstorming. One list should describe the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork for holistic assessment and intervention. The other is a list of the various challenges encountered in interdisciplinary collaboration such as the potential for overlapping responsibilities, territorialism, and conflicting priorities. The discussion should then focus on the various settings where social workers regularly interface with chaplains (i.e. hospitals, hospice, prisons, mental health facilities, faith based organizations/agencies, law enforcement/victims assistance).

Possible questions for discussion:

1. When working with a chaplain, what transference or counter transference issues might you face as result of your own personal spirituality or past experiences with faith leaders? How might this create issues of trust/mistrust or respect/disrespect?
2. When would you feel it appropriate to refer a client/patient to a chaplain or request that a chaplain visit with a client/patient?
3. Why can issues of territorialism be especially problematic with chaplains if roles are not clear?
4. What are specific ways social workers and chaplains can collaborate and assist each other in practice with patients/clients?

Session II

Invite professional guest speakers for the second session. This could be a chaplain, a social worker and a chaplain who work together in a health care setting or a panel discussion with an interdisciplinary team that includes a social worker and a chaplain.

Possible topics for discussion:

1. Professional roles, building respect and trust, and the day to day collaboration and communication between the professions.
2. The challenges and benefits of working together as a team to address client/patient needs in a holistic manner.
3. Addressing spirituality with the client/patient while maintaining respect for spiritual/religious diversity of clients/patients
4. Training and qualifications of chaplains.
5. Spiritual assessment and intervention as practiced by chaplains.

6. Overview of the spiritual/religious practices of various faith groups.
7. Legal standards/guidelines for provision of spiritual care.

V. Additional Class Activities and Assignments:

The course instructor may use one or more of the following assignments or activities to reinforce the learning experience:

1. Assign the Code of Ethics document found on the Association of Professional Chaplains website as a reading and have students respond to the following questions in a paper (two to three pages) due at the beginning of the second session.
 - a. What are similarities between the values and ethics of the professions of social work and the chaplaincy?
 - b. How is the subject of diversity addressed in these documents?
 - c. Are there any areas that seem contradictory between chaplaincy and social work values, ethics and practice standards?
2. If a chaplain is not available to come to class as a guest speaker, assign students to interview a professional chaplain who works with social workers at a human services agency or organization. The topics suggested above for guest speakers can be the focus for the student interview. This assignment should be due by the second-class session that focuses on interdisciplinary relationships. The instructor can require either a 2-3 page paper or a short class presentation.
3. Students who are in field can be assigned to shadow a chaplain (or other professional from another discipline) at their field internship for a day and write two-page reflection which incorporates material from the suggested articles.