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Professional Development and Identification Paper

The mission statement of Partnership for Families, Children and Adults is “Empowering People to Live Better Lives.” I wholeheartedly agree with the statement because as a future generalist practice social worker, I am currently seeking to be committed to my current case load of five older women (1.01) to help promote their well-being. I also respect and promote the right of my clients to self-determination and will assist them in their efforts to identify and clarify their individual goals (1.02). I have one client that I have known for several years; she is extremely talented but has had very little confidence in herself because of past abuse experienced in her life. For over a year, I have encouraged her to use her gifts and talents and have sought to help her understand her own capabilities. I visited this client last week and was extremely happy for her as she eagerly told me of how she is using her talents to be self-supporting. She now has a job and is also teaching classes in two local arts and crafts stores. She plans to buy a computer and begin her own business. She made the statement that she thought she could do really do this! I was, of course, overjoyed to hear her be so excited about the future! She has become so “empowered” that her case will probably be closed soon. Seeing her small steps of progress has been rewarding for me as a future social worker. It is exciting to know that just believing in someone else’s ability to self-determination and being able to encourage a person can make such a huge difference!

The three separate ethical principles that I feel are important to my field setting of working with VOCA (Victims of Crime) clients who are mostly elderly are based on the NASW values of social justice, integrity, and the importance of human relationships.

The ethical principle I chose states that social workers are to challenge social injustice. Since I have a case load of five VOCA elderly adults, I will pursue social change on their behalf. Most of my clients are vulnerable and oppressed, and I have already observed working with groups of people in the family because elder abuse often does involve family members as well; in fact, the majority of the perpetrators are family members. I am still in the process of building my knowledge of needed information regarding services and resources so that I will be able to empower my clients to make the best possible decision for their own lives. It has been encouraging for me to realize that so many resources are available; unfortunately, most clients have little knowledge of services that are available to them. I know that it will be a rewarding experience for me to be able to implement needed services for clients in my field placement now and in the future as I serve the community.

Integrity has always been an important value in my life, and I pledge to continue to behave in a trustworthy manner in my field setting. I am very much aware of the agency mission statement to empower people to live better lives, and I don't believe I could practice that statement if I were not a person who practices ethical principles in my own personal life; therefore, I believe that my personal integrity is foundational for my field placement and future job as a social worker.

Because many times I will not only be working with the clients, but will also be involved with family members, neighbors, friends, etc., I recognize the ethical principle

of the central importance of human relationships. People are important in my field of practice because they are an important vehicle for change and are partners in the helping process. Human relationships can be fragile; therefore, I will make an effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of my clients and their families.

I have heard it said many times that clients have the right to make unwise decisions – that is the real world. The theoretical framework for practice is simply a model for social work practice that can possess many blind spots. It is important for me as a future social worker to have a healthy professional boundary to prevent over-involvement with the clients; if healthy boundaries are not kept, I realize the danger of draining myself of needed energy for myself, my family, and other current and future clients. A wise seasoned social worker told me once that when a client makes wrong decisions and self-destructs, there will be another social worker there to pick up the pieces. I plan to tuck these nuggets of wisdom away for future use in my professional career as a social worker.

I have enjoyed the professional relationships of colleagues at my field agency. Everyone has been cordial and helpful to me in my times of need. When I receive my degree, I hope to be a field supervisor as well some day to pass along the help and encouragement. I enjoy seeing my peers at my field placement but have experienced some difficulty in keeping school conversations and work-related conversations separate. One of my weaknesses is that I have a hard time saying “no” when asked for help; therefore, as a strategy, I am trying to be aware to continually set healthy boundaries with my peers from UTC in the field placement setting concerning school work and activities.

I feel that I am respected as a future social worker at my field placement which makes it easier for me to view myself as being more professional as well. I believe that being able to carry a case load and act independently on the field has strengthened my professional identity. It is also helpful to know that I am not alone on the field. My field supervisor has made it clear that I can call him on his cell phone any time that I need him. Being at the agency since August 8th, I can look back and see the steps that my supervisor has taken for me to grow and become more confident in the work that I am doing, and I am thankful for his wisdom and intervention in my personal growth in the social work field.

I plan to continue to facilitate my transition from student to professional generalist social worker by taking advantage of all the training sessions that my agency provides; so far, I have attended a training session by the Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability, Legal Aid, and the Coalition of Domestic Violence. I plan to continue to explore different ways of serving my clients' in not only providing services but learning new ways of empowering them to enable themselves. My supervisor possesses strengths that I do not have and has many years of experience in the field, so I will continue to respect him and learn from him as much as I possibly can while I am under his supervision. There are several case managers at the agency who have received degrees from UTC and Southern Adventist University who are knowledgeable; I plan to continue to learn from them as well. Since Partnership for Families, Children and Adults abides by the NASW Code of Ethics, there are no conflicts that I am aware of involving my value system and the agency value system; I will, therefore, continue to be aware of how my agency responds to problems and ethical situations according to the Code and Ethics

and learn from the process. I am also paying attention to the memos sent out by Dr. Radu about upcoming events and continuing education courses, and I am trying to take advantage of everything that my busy schedule will allow me to attend.

This past summer during an environmental science college course I was taking, I was automatically applying social work knowledge, ethics, and skills to the class. It was encouraging for me to realize how much I have learned as a result of my social work classes at UTC. My desire is to have many more experiences similar to this one, and I do believe that is attainable. The hard work of the classes, projects, group work, etc. is rewarding; therefore, I will continue to be as thorough as I possibly can be to learn more about social services and to apply my knowledge to my professional career as a social worker.