

Description of Clinical Social Work Practice with Children & Their Families.

Practice with Children and Their Families.

Effective practice in this area requires that clinical social workers have advanced knowledge, skills, and behaviors that enable them to address bio-psychosocial problems and disorders that affect children and their families. The scope of practice consists of *all aspects of clinical social work practice that might contribute to ameliorating the problems and disorders experienced by the child*. This very wide range encompasses some areas that may not be seen as specifically “clinical” or “direct-practice” in nature: parent training; collaborative work with schools and collaterals; case management; treatment planning and staff development related to helping children; and consulting with and supervising other professionals who work with children (including administrative involvement in clinical decision-making).

The Nature of the Specialist.

The specialist has superior knowledge of relevant theory and the ability to apply it flexibly. Entry-level, intermediate, and advanced-generalist clinical social workers may practice in the same skills arena as the specialist, but not with the same level of mastery. In comparison with non-specialists, the specialist is measurably and obviously better: more accomplished, efficient, and effective. The specialist is especially adept at forming a therapeutic alliance with clients. Expertise in child development and relationship dynamics is matched by a knowledge of systems—school, medical, welfare, legal—and by skills that foster collaboration with other professionals and access to community resources. Competence comes from years of relevant experience, buttressed by education and training and insights from reading, supervision-consultation, and multidisciplinary collaboration. The specialist understands the value of evidence-based interventions, pursues professional development, and may serve as a mentor or consultant to colleagues.

Competency: Practice Skills.

The specialist has the skills to bring about positive outcomes with children and their families. Specialty work in each of the following areas requires proficiency in a detailed sub-set of skills that are considered necessary to competence:

- Assessment and Diagnosis Skills
- Treatment Planning Skills
- Outcomes Evaluation Skills
- Intervention and Termination Skills
- Supervision and Consultation

Competency: Knowledge Base.

The specialist’s knowledge-base informs every aspect of his/her work and skills, and includes significant learning in the following areas.

Biological

Physical growth and development
Genetics and neurobiology
Medical conditions
Psychopharmacology

Practice Methods

Family & Group Therapy
Larger systems work
Parent-Infant Therapy
Play-based approaches

Psychological (primary list)

Attachment Theory
Developmental Theory
Diagnostic psychometrics and assessment
Trauma Theory

Regulatory, Legal, and Ethical

Professional codes of ethics
State and federal regulations & legislation
(including confidentiality)

Social

Cultural factors
Environmental factors (e.g. economic)
Family system
Peer Group influences
Social systems (e.g. schools, courts, health facilities, religious organizations)