

Professional skills required  
for the Social Care Field

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Erasmus+

# A contested concept

## Social Workers and Social Care Workers



Professionalism itself, with its traditional implication of elitism, is a contested concept and not universally agreed to be a good thing.



Whatever the perspective, the trend towards the increased fragmentation of social work into a series of distinctive tasks or roles - such as child protection, adult mental health or working with disabled people - potentially diminishes collective professional identity.



This work on this topic has led to consider social work professionalism as a shared endeavour, with common values, norms and culture, in which - despite initial appearances - we are all engaged together.

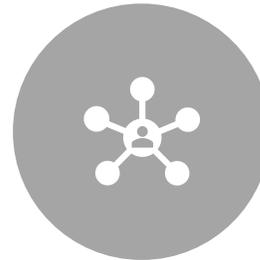


Besides conceptualising professionalism as a set of unifying values for social work, that have been exploring what it means in practice.

# Examples



For example, if one is acting in a professional manner as a social worker in a family court setting, what does that mean?



What might that 'look like' and what skills might be required? And, does professionalism in any context mean the same, look the same or require the same set of skills as conducting research as a social worker, setting up a community housing project or providing counselling and support in the aftermath of a natural disaster

Name few examples of the different tasks and activities that, globally, social workers might engage in

# **TABLE DISCUSSION**



# FAMILY STAR Method

- We suggest that there are eight key elements that need to be in place to support professionalism based on FAMILY START METHOD and training for professionals in the areas of self-management, communication, risk and safeguarding, and leadership.

These are:

- Self-awareness about professional and personal values;
- Appropriate and ethical use of professional power;
- Critical analysis;
- Research mindedness;
- Emotional resilience;
- A sense of professional identity;
- Engaging actively in supervision;
- Continuing professional development

# Professional skills required for the Social Care Field

## FAMILY STAR Method

- Every Social Worker and Social Care worker should possess a core set of transferable skills that should allow them to work in either adults or children's social work and these should be recognized by employers for those looking to make the move from children's to adults or visa versa.
- What distinguishes one from another is the knowledge base. This can be supplemented by agency based offered by the specific organization or population based training offered in the community by the experts in that population.
- The knowledge base would include legislation; service specific policy and procedures; service specific IT systems; and information regarding community based and organizational services.

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Interviewing:

- Being able to ask the right questions
- Being comfortable probing and digging beneath the answers given
- Listening to the stories of clients
- Explaining the concerns of the local authority
- Explaining their service specific role and the extent to that particular involvement

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Engagement:

- Meeting people where they are
- Not using jargon/Social Work while speaking with clients
- Compromise: this means balancing:
  - Meeting some of the needs identified by the client/addressing some of their concerns and,
  - Meeting our statutory duties or the duties outlined by the organization
  - Working with the client not against them

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Assessment:

- Gathering the facts
- Reporting/recording the facts as given to you
- Corroboration: medical, education, psychiatry, psychology, probation, police, housing, substance abuse, support services, probation/parole, youth services, youth offending

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Analysis:

- Based on facts gathered during assessment)
- What are the presenting needs or risks  
What are the strengths
- Do the strengths mitigate the risks and why this is your view
- If not, what effect will not meeting these needs/addressing the risks have on the client system

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### **Advocacy:**

- Referral to appropriate services
- Based on analysis
- Answering the question: how will identified needs be addressed
- Multidisciplinary Agency Approach

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### **Inter-disciplinary/Multi-disciplinary working**

- Professional accountability
- Valuing multi-agency expertise and contributions
- Regular meetings (case conferences/coordination) as a matter of course
- Incorporating all professionals in the planning

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Care Planning

- Based on the assessment
- Actions to address identified needs
- Reviewed regularly and updated
- Statements as to why unmet actions not addressed
- Situation and client specific (bespoke service)

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Recording

➤ Do not write the way you speak!

Unless you speak perfect English

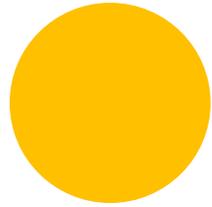
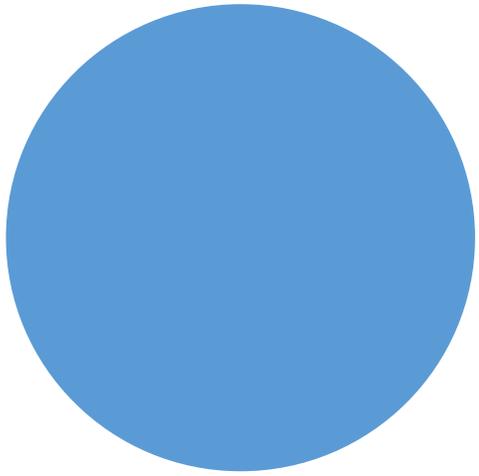
➤ Details of contact: exactly what happened, with whom  
and any follow up measures

## FAMILY STAR

The skills which are imperative  
for all Social Workers  
and Social Care workers are:

### Workload Management

- Prioritizing: what's the most immediate
- Person specific (based on your own practice)
- Tools: diary, to do lists, planning, diarising deadlines
- Self care/self awareness
- Can you tell when it's all becoming too much and what do you do
- Responsibility for your own professional development
- Using supervision
- Come ready with an agenda that is equally case management and equally professional development
- Have a career plan that informs your professional development



STOP FOR A MINUTE

TAKE A BREAK

# FAMILY STAR BE:

- F - FLEXIBLE
- A - ASSERTIVE
- M - MINDFUL
- I – INDEPENDENT
- L - LOVED
- Y - YOGISTIC
  
- S – SET GOALS
- T – TIME MANAGEMENT
- A - ACTION
- R – RISK MANAGEMENT AND RESULTS

# F FLEXIBLE

- Social Workers and Social Care workers should be flexible. This means, they should be able to adapt the best strategies for a client and the client's family. This means creating an environment with "flexible scheduling, lots of continuing education, self education, identifying opportunities for growth and development, increasing time off, and including self-care not only for a client but also for the worker. It is important, that the worker treats the client as a partner. There is no place to patronise the client.
- Flexibility is a way for social service professionals to balance activities and preserve longevity and happiness in both their relationships and their careers. To do this, they need to accept that it is OK — and actually essential — to put client's needs first by setting the goals that the client will be able to meet.

# A ASSERTIVE

- Resist the urge to take on new clients. Decline to do tasks that will add extra work. Focuss only what is needed. Support client only in the field the client is struggle. Sometimes clients may ask you for a favour. Remember: The client is not your friend. Tell the client, that he / she cannot rigng you outside of your workig hours.
- It's OK to say no because it means you are saying yes to your health and keep professional boundries.
- For social service professionals, this can be difficult because they don't want to disappoint people who are relying on them.
- You can say: "I try to explain to those in my life that I appreciate that they came to me to ask for help, but I'm working very hard these days on achieving my goals. Although I want to help, I have to decline and thank them for thinking of me,"

# M MINDFUL

- Practice Mindfulness
- Mindfulness can help lessen anxiety and depression symptoms, and there are many ways to put it into practice. Take up yoga or unplug from technology and social media. Try out a few breathing exercises. Elana Sandler, field education liaison, says that when she started participating in a weekly mindfulness meditation group with co-workers at a previous job, it was transformative.
- “We sat together for 30 minutes each week and slowly learned how to sit with mindfulness,” she says. “This practice provided a welcome, needed break from a fast-paced job, as well as a chance to just sit and work on accepting my thoughts, and has helped enhance my mindful awareness.”
- Burnout can feel all encompassing, but it doesn’t have to stay that way. Remember, you don’t have to sacrifice your own well-being for the health of your career. After all, the healthier you are, the better you can help those who rely on you.

# INDEPENDENT

- [INDEPENDENT Problem solving External link](#) assists people with the problem solving process. Rather than tell clients what to do, social workers teach clients how to apply a problem solving method so they can develop their own solutions.

# L LOVE YOURSELF AND OTHERS Connect with Your Emotion

- If you're feeling anxiety or stress in certain situations, your brain and body are trying to tell you something. Listen to what your emotions are saying about what you want and need, potentially with the help of a mental health professional. Fallon says she always preaches the importance of balance to her clients, and social service professionals should remember it as well.
- "I listen to myself and my behaviors all the time. I know that if I am off balance because I'm worrying, my body is in knots, and I feel tight and breathless," Fallon says. "Once I realize that something is off balance, I try to really pay attention until I figure out what it is."

# Y YOGISTIC

- REMEMBER to breath. Breathing reduces stress. Yoga consciousness for a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility that is achieved through the regular paths of actions, knowledge and devotion.
- Breath where the situation is difficult for you. Breath when you can't control your emotions while being with the client. Control it.
- Being 'Yogistic' means the balance between inside and outside understanding of the world. It is a system of physical, breathing and meditation exercises practiced to promote control of the body and mind.

# SET GOALS

# S

- The overarching key to preventing burnout is to reduce the stress levels in your life. One way to do this is by setting short-term goals. Break down your obligations to small, attainable chunks or set out to learn a new skill. For social service professionals, the goal can be simple: Don't give up on your clients.
- "Tell yourself you can quit tomorrow," says Elise Magnuson, who teaches an assessment and diagnosis class. "You need to do what you need to for today, but you can quit tomorrow. When tomorrow comes, tell yourself the same thing."

# T TIME MANAGEMENT Take a break

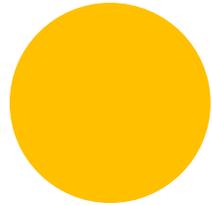
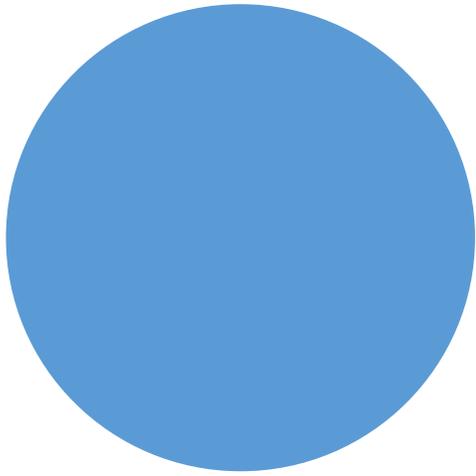
- “Scheduling time for self-care is just as important as scheduling time for everything else,” says Shari Robinson-Lynk, professor of practice at SocialWork@Simmons. “Hoping and waiting until you have time means you rarely have the time to do it.”
- Once the need for self-care is acknowledged, creating new habits is essential to keeping burnout at bay. Below are six tips compiled from interviews with SocialWork@Simmons faculty members you can use to practice self-care. Remember to give yourself a rest. Take an hour to read a book or watch your favorite movie. If you have vacation or personal days, use them to step away from the workplace and recharge. Erin Benner, an instructor in foundational clinical practice courses, says that heading outside can be extremely beneficial, even if it’s just for a five-minute break.
- “For me, taking time to be out in nature is important and what I need to do for self-care,” Benner says. “Sometimes that can take the form of walking or kayaking, but if I am really overwhelmed with work, it can also mean taking my paperwork or my laptop outside and sitting in the sun, rather than in my office.”

# A ACTION

- Your personal vision for the community is your ideal picture of how things should be and how you should act but also, how your client would like to act. It is important, that your views are the same as you can not tell your client how to do things and what to do.
- Once you have a professional vision, you want to go about turning it into a shared vision. Get feedback from your client, listen to their concerns and hopes for the community. At this point, you need to be open-minded and willing to change the vision to incorporate ideas that will be suitable for your clients. You don't teach the dog to fly. Be mindful, then act.

# R RISK MANAGEMENT & RESULT

- [Rational choice theory External link](#) is based on the idea that all action is fundamentally rational in character, and people calculate the risks and benefits of any action before making decisions.



THANK YOU!

Dominika Marcinkowska

EDU SMART TRAINING CENTRE LIMITED

[WWW.EDUSMART-TC.NET](http://WWW.EDUSMART-TC.NET)

[OFFICE@EDUSMART-TC.NET](mailto:OFFICE@EDUSMART-TC.NET)