

Social Worker Principal

I. KIND AND LEVEL OF WORK

Under limited supervision, performs expert-level professional social work and advanced case consultation as the third class in a three-class series. Develops individualized strategies when established approaches may not be sufficient. Provides expert guidance to social workers, interdisciplinary teams, providers, and other partners on issues such as assessments and case formulations, crisis prevention, and community reintegration plans.

II. DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The Social Worker Principal classification is the expert professional level in the Social Worker series. Positions at this level serve as advanced practice and case consultation resources for matters involving conflicting information, competing perspectives, limited-service options, significant risks, or barriers spanning multiple service systems. Incumbents must develop new solutions based on significant expertise and the guiding principles of social work practice.

This class differs from Social Worker Senior by the depth of expertise required, and the nonstandard nature of the work. Established approaches may not be sufficient to resolve the issues presented in case formulation, service planning, and consultation. Employees synthesize complex information, develop individualized strategies to address the needs of the individuals served, and provide guidance to lower-level social workers and other partners by navigating difficult or unusual situations that often include integrating multiple assessments, service system constraints, and other complicating variables.

This class is distinguished from supervisory or managerial classes because positions may provide clinical guidance, mentoring, training, consultation, or direction related to professional practice or case strategy, but do not have full supervisory authority.

III. EXAMPLES OF WORK/DUTIES

(A position may not include all the work examples given, nor does the list include all that may be assigned.)

- Conducts highly complex assessments and synthesizes clinical information from multiple sources into case formulations and recommendations.
- Develops, implements, monitors, and revises individualized plans for individuals with highly complex needs and limited or difficult-to-access service options.
- Provides expert social work consultation, guidance, technical assistance, and resource expertise to interdisciplinary teams, agency staff, service system partners, families, and other stakeholders.
- Coordinates complex multi-system services and negotiations to resolve barriers involving care needs, service access, risk, stakeholder conflict, or limited resources.

- Develops and delivers training, coaching, tools, and technical assistance to build provider, staff, and support-system capacity so that the individuals served receive the most effective care.

IV. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- Expert principles, practices, standards, ethics, and techniques of professional social work and clinical case consultation.
- Advanced clinical, psychosocial, behavioral health, transition, discharge, placement, and community support assessment methods.
- Case formulation, person-centered planning, recovery-oriented practice, psychiatric rehabilitation, crisis prevention, crisis response, motivational interviewing, harm reduction, positive behavior support, trauma-informed practice, and evidence-based or best-practice social work interventions.
- Complex health, behavioral, cognitive, legal, social, environmental, and community factors affecting the population served.
- Community, healthcare, legal, residential, correctional, housing, financial, vocational, and social service systems and resources.

Skill in:

- Conducting highly complex assessments and synthesizing information from individuals served, families, guardians, providers, courts, counties, hospitals, treatment teams, and other sources.
- Developing coherent case formulations and individualized recommendations from complex, incomplete, conflicting, or rapidly changing information.
- Designing, implementing, monitoring, and revising person-centered plans that address clinical, social, legal, environmental, safety, resource, and system barriers.
- Providing advanced consultation and clinical guidance, to providers, clinical teams, and support networks.
- Facilitating difficult conversations and influencing acceptance of recommendations or plans.
- Coordinating complex services across multiple programs, agencies, jurisdictions, providers, and community systems.
- Communicating complex information clearly to individuals served, families, providers, decision-makers, and interdisciplinary teams.

Ability to:

- Exercise expert professional judgment and independent decision-making within laws, policies, professional standards, scope of licensure, and program requirements.
- Balance individual choice, dignity, recovery, least restrictive alternatives, public safety, clinical need, legal requirements, service availability, and professional ethics.
- Anticipate, prevent, and respond to crises using internal and external resources and evidence-informed social work approaches.
- Build the capacity of providers and support networks to sustain services and supports after direct involvement ends.
- Maintain effective working relationships with individuals served, families, agency representatives, service system partners, and other stakeholders.

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION/STATUTORY REFERENCES

Licensed by the Minnesota Board of Social Work

[Minnesota Statutes, Sections 148E.001 and 148E.290](#) require that all people either 1) practicing social work based on a social work degree accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or 2) representing themselves as a social worker must be licensed, except when practicing in an exempt setting.

SPECIAL WORK CONDITIONS

N/A

REFERENCES

Former title(s): Social Worker Specialist Senior, 08/1996

REVISION HISTORY

Established: 10/1995

Checked: 12/2003

Revised: 07/2026