

Field Assignment: Written Paper on the Use of Spirituality In Social Work Practice

Number of pages Double-Spaced	Point Value
6 - 9	2 points
10+	3 points

Social Workers and other social service practitioners have viewed spiritual needs as a basic human characteristic, asserting that all human beings need a sense of meaning and purpose in life. The Social Work Field Education Practicum offers students an opportunity to reflect on the meaning, experience, and usefulness of developing both a personal and professional perspective on spirituality as it relates to social work practice and the social work practitioner.

According to the Encyclopedia of Social Work – 19th Edition,

*“...**Spirituality** refers to the views and behaviors that express a sense of relatedness to something greater than the **self**. Spirituality connotes transcendence or a level of awareness that exceeds ordinary physical or spatial boundaries. It represents a belief system that guides individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and actions. Spirituality is found in the ordinary/extraordinary experiences of daily living. It is grounded in the interpersonal relationship experience, which is the heart of Social Work practice...”*

In this Field Assignment, the field practicum student is to research and write a paper on the use of spirituality in Social Work Practice. The content of the paper should be relevant and applicable to the service mission of the agency.

In preparing the paper, the field student is encouraged to address the following issues in the preparation of the Field Assignment:

- Define spirituality in your own words.
- Describe the similarities and differences of spirituality and religion.
- Identify ways that a spiritual perspective can help a Social Worker respond to the issues encountered in practice.
- Identify ways that a personal spiritual perspective can hinder a social worker in responding to the issues encountered in practice.
- Identify ways that a spiritual perspective can help a client respond to life issues.
- Identify ways that a spiritual perspective can hinder a client in responding to life issues.

- Identify legal and ethical conflicts which may arise with some spiritual/religious practices (e.g. withholding medication or medical interventions, discipline practices with children, sexual practices, etc.).
- Describe specific ways a social worker can respectfully explore spirituality with clients.
- Describe ethical issues to be considered when exploring spirituality with clients with regard to:
 - ✓ Appropriate social work boundaries.
 - ✓ Respect for the differences that may exist between the Social Worker and client in their respective experience of spirituality.
- Describe specific ways a respectful perspective on spirituality can be of service to the mission of the Field Agency.
- Consider presenting and publishing the paper in a professional social work venue or journal.

References:

- Dwoskin, Jacquelyn Sue, "*Crossing Paths with the Spirit: Thinking, Relating, and Imagining in Social Work Practice*," Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 2003, 64, 6, December.
- Roeder, Kevin R., "*Ethics: Practicing with Honorable Spirit: The Use and Non-Use Of Spirituality in Social Work Practice*," The New Social Worker, 2002, 9, 4, Fall.
- Quattlebaum, Ann Anshus, "*A Study of the Use of Spirituality in Social Work Practice*," Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 2002, 63, 5, November.
- "*National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics*." (Available on the SW Field Website).