

# SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

## EDUCACIÓN PARA EL TRABAJO SOCIAL EN LOS EEUU

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### ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the principles and organization of social services and social work education in the US. It covers basic facts about the employment of social workers and issues of governance of social services at the various government levels. The article includes a review of the structure of social work education in the US and standards for licensing. The basic requirements for accreditation of social work programs are also reviewed.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo ofrece una síntesis de los principios y de la organización de los servicios sociales en los EEUU. Cubre datos básicos sobre el empleo de trabajadores sociales y responde a preguntas sobre la administración de los mismos. Incluye también una descripción del sistema de educación para el trabajo social en los EEUU y de los estándares para el registro de los trabajadores sociales. Finalmente, se discuten los requisitos para la acreditación de programas universitarios de trabajo social.

**KEY WORDS:** United States social work, education, standards, voluntary sector, public sector, licensing, employment

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** EEUU, trabajo social, educación, estándares, sector no gubernamental, sector publico, licencias de profesión, empleo

Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, American social work has been dedicated to professionally educating its practitioners in ways that will make them effective in overcoming the social problems people face such as poverty, ill health, and the difficulties associated with disruptions in family life, child rearing, and aging.

### EARLY HISTORY

Training for social work began in the United States as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Associations for the Improving the Conditions of the Poor as well as the Charity Organization Societies provided in-service training for their workers but also thought that

some formal education would be required for effectively preparing their staff members (Frumkin & Lloyd, 1995).

Most students of social work education believe that professional social work education began in 1898 in New York, with the preparation of professional social workers for the Charity Organization Societies. Mary Richmond, an executive with that Society, is generally regarded as the founder of professional education for social workers. This is so because of Richmond's plea for such education and the eventual implementation of the plans she called for in a chapter in her book (Richmond, 1930). She helped begin a one year program as the New York School of Philanthropy in 1898, which became the first school of social work in the United States and, beginning in 1962, the Columbia University School of Social Work. A similar effort by others during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century led to the development of the Chicago School for Services and Philanthropy, which became, in 1907, the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration (Frumkin & Lloyd, 1995). The year of 1898 is treated as the date when the social work profession originated in the U.S. The National Association of Social Workers celebrated the centennial of the profession in 1998.

#### EARLY QUALITY CONTROL AND STANDARD-SETTING EFFORTS

The earliest voluntary efforts to set and maintain the quality of American social work education began after World War I, when the 17 existing programs organized the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Work. It became, in 1927, the American Association of Schools of Social Work (Frumkin & Lloyd, 1995).

#### UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION

In the 1930's, the American Association of Schools of Social Work required that schools affiliated with that body be part of higher education institutions that were recognized by the Association of American Universities. They also established recognition or accreditation of a social work education offering two year master's degree program (Frumkin & Lloyd, 1995).

The Council on Social Work Education did not recognize the baccalaureate degree in social work, which had existed throughout the United States for most of the history of social work education, until 1974. Later on, CSWE also allowed the two year master's degree programs to grant one year of credit towards the degree to the graduates of accredited Bachelor of Social Work programs. There were some early efforts to make the one year master's and/or the bachelor's a viable professional degree for the profession, but that position did not prevail. (Ginsberg, 2001).

In the earlier days, social work professional preparation was provided by a few organizations and institutes devoted exclusively to that purpose, very much like the preparation of professional social workers for the practice of social work in many other nations including those in Latin America and Europe. However, over the years, accredited professional education for social work became affiliated only with higher education institutions, with their own forms of governance and quality control. Consequently, the evaluation of social work programs moved from agencies determination of their effectiveness to a determination of their quality by programs of higher education, which have quite distinctive approaches to quality control and development in the United States.

## LEVELS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

There are some 600.000 people in the United States who are classified, in one way or another as social workers by, for example, the U.S. Department of Labor, which offers statistics on the American labor force (Ginsberg, 2001). There are some 150.000 members of the professional association, the National Association of Social Workers, which enlists bachelor of social work degree holders, master's degree recipients, and social work PhDs. Persons prepared in 'community colleges', institutions which offer only two years of post secondary schooling, practice social work in many places and in some states are licensed. Baccalaureate graduates, Master's of Social Work degree holders, and persons with the Ph.D. in social work all work within the profession. For a more detailed discussion of the roles and functions of all social workers, Margaret Gibelman's (2003) *What Social Workers Do*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), is an excellent resource.

## BASIC STRUCTURE OF U.S. SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

There are four levels at which social work education is offered in the United States, all in higher education, as is discussed above. Social work is generally not taught at the secondary school level but only in post-secondary programs.

At the community college level, social work is taught as part of programs preparing for work as social work or human services assistants or as two year social work educated persons. Community colleges generally require two years for the completion of an Associate of Arts degree, which is the commonly awarded degree for community college graduates. Some community colleges offer programs in various disciplines as criminal justice or corrections, aging, or child care. These often incorporate social work education into their curricula. The Council on Social Work Education, the social work accrediting body which is described below, does not accredit two year, community college level programs in social work, even though general accrediting organizations accredit community colleges by region.

Baccalaureate social work education provides the Bachelor of Social Work degree or the Bachelor of Arts or the Bachelor of Science in Social Work. Not all such programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, but most aspiring programs request that they be reviewed for accreditation. Graduates of accredited bachelor's programs may be admitted with up to one year's advanced standing in Master of Social Work programs that offer such an option. There are about 500 accredited Bachelor's programs in the United States.

The Master of Social Work degree is the oldest recognized professional education credential in American social work. There are some 150 programs in the United States, some with affiliated Bachelor's programs but many without. Although not all accept Bachelor's graduates for advanced standing status, all are required, as part of the accreditation process, to demonstrate that their curricula are not redundant—that those who have social work degrees are not required to repeat the same courses or content while earning the Master's.

There are some 70 doctoral degree programs in social work offering either the Ph.D. in social work or the D.S.W (Doctor of Social Work). All have associated Master of Social Work programs and some also have baccalaureate degree programs. The Council on Social Work Education does not accredit doctoral programs.

Of course, programs that are not accredited by the Council on Social Work Education are still evaluated (as are the CSWE-accredited programs) by the university's regional accrediting bodies.

#### AMERICAN GOVERNMENT—ITS UNIQUENESS

To understand the governance of higher education in the United States, it is critical to understand to some degree the complexity of the United States government.

The United States has a history that is distinctive, although it has some parallels in European nations. That is, many European nations are composed of several predecessor nations such as the United Kingdom, which now includes England, Scotland, and Wales; Spain, which includes many cultures and histories of autonomous regions; Italy, which is composed of many different national entities. There are many other examples throughout the world. The history of the United States is unique, however, in that it was originally a collection of colonies of Great Britain.

The colonies came together in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, 1776, to promulgate a Declaration of Independence and to mount a revolution and War of Independence against Great Britain, which the Americans won. At the time, there were thirteen colonies, which became states under the new government.

The people of the United States have always resisted a strong central government. In fact, for several years in its history, after the 1776 Revolution and until the adoption of the US Constitution in 1789, the country operated under the Articles of Confederation, and had no central government or president and no Congress. These features emerged after the Constitution was written and ratified by the states. Before the Constitution was ratified, the nation operated as a sort of consortium or as the name implies, a confederation of governments rather than as a single government.

The drafting and ratification of the Constitution in 1789 led to the creation of the president and vice president positions and to the House of Representatives and Senate as the Legislative Branch, the US Congress. It also established a Supreme Court to handle judicial matters. This separation of powers, following the philosophy of Montesquieu, impacted many other nations. Although the US government followed some of the governmental processes inherited from Great Britain, the US had no king and there was a written constitution, instead of Great Britain's 'unwritten' one. However, the US Constitution remained unique in that it limited the powers of the central, federal or national government and specifically provided that that government could exercise no powers that were not specifically given to it. Although certain human rights were guaranteed in the Bill of Rights or the first ten amendments to the Constitution, which was enacted shortly after the ratification by the state of the Constitution, the basic powers of government in the United States remained with the states.

Still, today, for example most law enforcement on local and state matters is a function of the states. Health is a state matter. And, most importantly for this discussion, education is a function of the state governments.

Over the years, the US federal government has created a US Department of Education and has passed various laws dealing with education. However, the basic educational issues of operating schools or of approving educational institutions is a function of the states, not the federal government.

## STATE GOVERNMENT ROLES

It is impossible to talk about social work education and the authority for conducting it without discussing the powers and functions of the fifty state governments of the United States.

Each state has a different set of rules and regulations for governing education. All states have state departments of education, some of which are directed by appointed officials chosen by the state's governor, while others operate with a board of education that is appointed by the governor and that selects the superintendent of education. In some states, the state superintendent of education is elected by the voters. This particular function, however, is applicable primarily to elementary and to secondary education, in most states, rather than to university education.

The states of the United States all establish rules for the operation of their higher education systems. The public higher education institutions, of which every state has many, are established by the state legislatures. Their budgets are, in large measure, provided by appropriations of taxes by those state legislatures.

## STATE GOVERNANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

All states also have some sort of formal governing body to deal with higher education matters. In some states the same board or department that handles elementary and secondary education also governs higher education. In many other states a board of regents or a board of higher education, which is appointed by the governor but elects its own director or chancellor or commissioner (the names vary by state,) governs higher education matters. In some other states, each institution has its own board of trustees or governors who direct those colleges and universities as they go about their work. The institutional boards are also usually appointed by the governor or by the governor with the approval of the state's legislature, usually the Senate.

In addition to the public institutions in each state, the United States also has thousands of private universities. That is, they are not governmental institutions but are organized by and governed by churches, independent boards of trustees, or, in some cases, by owners of the institutions.

Both the public and private institutions may receive grants of funds from private foundations and government entities, including entities of the federal government, which sponsors programs to support mental health professional education, vocational education, military training, agricultural work, and many other areas of instruction and education. So higher education in the United States is a very complex phenomenon.

In some states, educational institutions may be established and come into existence with only a minimum of government approval or participation—or even none. In other states, it is a violation of the law to establish and operate a higher education program without the approval of the proper governmental body such as the state board of higher education or the state board of regents for higher education.

The foregoing is an outline of the basic structure of a complex higher education system in the United States. However, it is interesting to note that in reality, most of the governance, and the quality and content of higher education, is operated, essentially, by voluntary bodies through an accreditation process. Most approval of programs in the

United States is voluntary.

Of course, that is not totally the case and government bodies are involved as participants in the voluntary efforts, since they must be recognized by government in order to function. So, one might say higher education governance in the United States is only quasi-voluntary.

#### ACCREDITATION

The primary means of quality control and assurance in much of American education and particularly, in social work education is the process called accreditation, which is a voluntary scheme and is done at the regional and national levels.

#### REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

The basic form of American accreditation of educational programs is regional accreditation (Ginsberg, 2001.) The nation is divided into six regional accrediting bodies and all 50 states as well as the other political entities that are part of the U.S. such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S Virgin Islands, are associated with one or the other of the regional bodies. For example, southern universities such as the author's are affiliated with the Southern Association of College and Schools, one of the regional accrediting bodies. These are voluntary associations and their primary support comes from dues paid to them by the educational institutions and organizations in the states that affiliate with them. However, they are also recognized by and provided authority to carry on their work by the U.S. Department of Education. Their importance is much greater than one might suppose for a voluntary group because U.S. government loan and scholarship programs as well as grants are usually only provided to accredited institutions. So even if they are voluntary in nature, the accrediting associations wield immense power over the higher education functions of the nation. In general, only degrees from accredited institutions are recognized for licensing and employment in many fields.

The basic function of these regional accreditation bodies is the quality control of all higher education programs. However, they typically defer to the specialized accrediting bodies, such as the American Bar Association or Council on Social Work Education, for determining the accredited status of professional programs such as law, social work, medicine, engineering, and many other fields.

Typically, institutions of higher education are evaluated every ten years by regional accrediting bodies. It applies to the public universities as well as the private institutions such as those sponsored by contributed funds or by religious organizations. The institutions prepare self-studies, much like those for social work accreditation, which are discussed below. Site visits are organized to the institutions, which receive as well as react to reports from their site visitors.

#### SPECIALIZED OR PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

In addition to regional accreditation, which is a prerequisite, professional programs in many fields may also seek professional or specialized accreditation in the U.S. That is true of social work education. Specialized bodies such as the Council on Social Work Education evaluate and determine the accredited status of programs in their fields. In social work, this specialized accreditation is crucial. Bachelor's graduates from accredited programs,

as has been mentioned, may be granted advanced standing in graduate programs. In most states, social work licenses are given only to graduates of accredited programs.

Professional or specialized accreditation is less important in other fields, especially those that are in states that license or otherwise authorize and monitor educational programs. For example, most states control the offering of teacher education programs and that is sufficient authorization for graduates of those programs to obtain licenses and employment. Still, many programs are also involved in the accreditation processes of the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education, a parallel organization to CSWE.

The primary purpose of accreditation is the maintenance of quality (Raymond, 2003; Wolotkiewicz, 1980.) It first began in 1905 with the accreditation of medical schools by the American Medical Association (Raymond, 2003.) Accreditation has changed in character as educational programs have evolved over the years. In its earliest development, the process was geared to making sure that adequate resources were devoted to providing educational services. But it has changed to the extent that it has become more sophisticated and more geared to providing opportunities for programs to be imaginative and creative than to strictly controlling their activities.

According to Raymond (2003), social work accreditation, was originally directed 'towards processes or inputs into the educational endeavor, rather than resultant outputs or outcomes...' (pp.1-2). Currently, the standards have come to reflect a concern with establishing empirical means of assessing quality based on the measurement of outcomes. Today, accreditation is based largely on general standards that help guide program and curriculum development. Programs are allowed to express their individuality rather than focus on meeting rigid, uniform standards that make them virtually indistinguishable from one another. 'Social work education accreditation is a voluntary, peer review process that educators believe is the best guarantee of quality education' (Randolph, 2003).

The regional accrediting associations, which were discussed above, are joined by professional accrediting bodies and together develop standards for and provide approval of higher education programs. The regional accrediting bodies are responsible for the accreditation of programs in many of the arts and sciences and for the basic accreditation of the institutions that are affiliated with them. However, the professional accrediting bodies deal with fields such as engineering, business, nursing, medicine, law, and social work. They set the standards for their professions under the assumption that they know more about their disciplines than any outside group might.

As has been stated, all of the accrediting bodies have the approval of the United States Department of Education, so there is a direct connection between the government and the accrediting process. The US Department of Education gives the accrediting bodies the authority to carry out accreditation but the accrediting bodies themselves are voluntary associations, that is, non-governmental organizations. Each professional accrediting body is a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and each accrediting body, through its membership in that group, is approved for monitoring the specialized education that it oversees. The US Department of Education authorizes the authority of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

#### SOCIAL WORK LICENSING

There are other intersections between these voluntary efforts and government. For

example, social workers in the United States are licensed, process that was mentioned earlier. Every state has its own licensing or regulation law and determines who may or may not practice social work or be called a social worker. The licensing organizations of the states are organized by a group called the Association of Social Work Boards. Every state deals with the licensing or certification of social workers by requiring, primarily, that the social work program from which the licensee graduates, baccalaureate level or master's, be accredited by the professional accrediting body for social work education, the Council on Social Work Education. There are similar organizations for licensing in fields such as engineering, business, medicine, psychology, and many disciplines. Those licensing bodies that recognize community college two year graduates, and doctoral level social workers do not, of course, require the accreditation of the social work degrees—although they generally require that the institution that awarded the degree be accredited by the regional association.

So a university may offer a social work program and provide various degrees in social work. However, graduates of those programs may not necessarily achieve licensing so that they can practice social work in the state if the programs from which they graduated are not accredited.

#### THE COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation is the basic program approval body in the United States, although it, and accrediting bodies for other professions, is voluntary, non-governmental associations.

The Council on Social Work Education has its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. It is governed by a Board of Directors of 29 members who are elected by the members, who include both individuals who are members of the organization and representatives of educational programs. It has a large and specialized staff, which carries on many functions through the Council's various divisions.

For the purposes of this discussion, the most important division is the Office of Social Work Accreditation and Educational Excellence, which supports the Commission on Accreditation. The Commission has 25 number members who represent baccalaureate and master's education throughout the United States as well as social work students, social work practitioners, and the community at large.

The accreditation process for social work education is, in itself, quite complicated. Baccalaureate and master of social work programs must have their accreditation reaffirmed by the Commission on Accreditation every eight years. That process begins with the educational program preparing for the reaffirmation with an extensive self-study, which usually begins three or four years before the actual reaffirmation is acted upon. It often starts with consultation, which helps the school begin its self-study. The self-study design is outlined in a manual published by the Commission on Accreditation (Raymond & Rank, 2003.) It covers the various standards for social work education, which are modified periodically by the Commission on Accreditation and the Council on Social Work Education, a process which includes commentary from the Annual Program Meetings of the Council on Social Work Education and, comments by mail and through other mechanisms by members of the Council and social work educators through the nation.

The self-study seeks to demonstrate that the program is in compliance with all of the

current standards for social work education.

The self-study is delivered by the program to the Commission on Accreditation which then assigns teams of social workers, who are chosen because they are peers of the educational program, to conduct an on-site evaluation of the program. That is, baccalaureate educators are typically chosen to review baccalaureate education programs, and master's educators are typically chosen to review master's education program. When the program combines the baccalaureate and masters, representatives from both kinds of education programs are included on the team.

The team of educators conducts what is known as a 'site visit' at the program and they prepare a detailed report, using forms that are developed by the Commission on Accreditation. They also meet with higher officials of the institution, visit the library, talk to social work practitioners in the program's community, and otherwise try to become totally familiar with the program and its environment. The team determines, for each standard and sub-element of each standard, whether the school appears to be adequate or if there is a concern about the program's performance. The team also prepares a narrative statement of the program's strengths and concerns. Team visits last 2-4 days and the teams are composed of 2-5 educators depending on the complexity of the program. A program that has both baccalaureate and master's programs might have five members, one of whom is usually a social work practitioner. A small bachelor's program may have only two visitors

The team's report goes back to the Commission on Accreditation which then sends a copy of the report to the program and the institution's president for their comments and corrections. The Commission then sends the reports and other documents to two or three members of the Commission who read the reports and all the other materials and make recommendations about the program's future accredited status to their fellow commissioners at a meeting of the Commission.

The Commission meets three times each year and divides itself into three panels of Commission members. These Commission members all study a number of reports and make their reports to the panel members, who in turn vote on the program's accredited status. Each panel then reports its recommendations about the programs that it has covered to a meeting of the entire Commission, which votes on the decisions about each program's accredited status.

The program may simply be reaffirmed for eight years or, more commonly, the program is asked to prepare an interim report on specific issues about which the Commission has questions. In cases in which the program is not in compliance with one or more of the accreditation standards, the program may be given conditional accreditation which signals it must make changes and improvements of special significance and implement them within one year or face losing their accredited status.

The most extreme negative action a Commission may take is to act to withdraw the program's accreditation. Of course, the withdrawal of accreditation is quite rare but it occasionally occurs.

#### NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The social work accreditation enterprise is very extensive. The process for becoming an accredited program is equally complicated. Programs must go through a period of

'candidacy.' The materials these programs prepare are a bit different than those that are prepared for reaffirmation of accreditation. During the period of candidacy, the program is first visited by a member of the Commission on Accreditation who recommends whether the program should enter the candidacy status. If it does, the program may have a series of additional visits by members of the Commission on Accreditation who consult with the program and help it improve its plans. Each year, the program prepares a report on its movement from candidacy to accreditation.

At the end of the candidacy period, which is normally three years, the program may apply for initial accreditation and the Commission on Accreditation may or may not approve its application for initial accreditation. If it approves the application, the program has a site visit comparable to that which a program seeking reaffirmation has. The program may then be granted initial accreditation at the next meeting of the Commission on Accreditation. If it is granted accreditation at that time, the initial accreditation is for four years, rather than eight.

It is crucial to understand that the accreditation process approval of programs of social work education is essentially a self governing peer process. Nevertheless, federal and state governments are involved at several points. For example, government may pay the cost of the social work education program which is the case in official universities which are by and large owned and operated local or state governments. Or government agencies may provide grants and contracts to enhance the operation of the program. The states are also responsible for the licensing of social workers and the regulation of social work practice. However, state government and local government organizations employ large numbers of social workers, although not all of them.

#### EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation promulgates and determines compliance with its educational policies and accreditation standards. The policies state the purposes of social work education and basic curriculum expectations. The accrediting standards specify the ways in which programs must comply with the administrative and curriculum requirements for professional accreditation. These standards are reformulated and enacted by the Council and the affiliated programs periodically.

In its most recent statements, the purposes of social work education are stated as:

The purposes of social work education are to prepare competent and effective professionals, to develop social work knowledge, and to provide leadership in the development of service delivery systems. Social work education is grounded in the profession's history, purposes, and philosophy and is based on a body of knowledge, values, and skills. Social work education enables students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession for competent practice. (Council on Social Work Education, Commission on Accreditation, 2003)

#### ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The current accreditation standards number only eight, which is a smaller number than had been promulgated in earlier versions. However, they include most of the demands

that earlier versions of the standards had required, by combining various themes and expectations. The current 8 standards (Council on Social Work Education, Commission on Accreditation, 2003) deal with:

1. The program's missions, goals and objectives—which must relate to and conform to those specified in the educational policies.
2. Curriculum—this is the most detailed standard, which includes a large number of sub-standards and which also contemplates the program's compliance with the curriculum expectations stated in the educational policies. Essentially, the program must meet the standards for and include education in Social Welfare Policy and Services, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Work Practice, Social Research, and Practicum Education. The graduate programs must define a foundation program and an advanced program, which is specialized. Bachelor's programs offer only the foundation.
3. Program governance, administrative structure, and resources—standards are set for the sufficiency of the program's budget, classrooms, office space, and authority to carry out its activities.
4. Faculty—the size and qualifications of the program's faculty are specified. A ratio of about one faculty member for each 25 baccalaureate students and one for each 12 graduate students is suggested, along with specialized qualifications for teaching practice courses and a reasonable workload for faculty members.
5. Student professional development—the admissions process for students as well as the guarantee of student rights, advising policies, and evaluation of student performance, are among the issues covered in this standard.
6. Nondiscrimination and human diversity—programs are required to demonstrate that they do not discriminate and that they educate students about human diversity in the curriculum.
7. Program renewal—under this standard, programs explain how they keep themselves current and how they connect with the larger community to insure the currency and relevance of the program.
8. Program assessment and continuous improvement—programs are called upon to demonstrate that they regularly and systematically assess their movement toward the achievement of their objectives, as they are defined in the first standard.

#### CONCLUSION

As can easily be discerned from this article, social work education in the United States is complex and decentralized in some ways. The authority of the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education provides some centralized authority over the process and tends to provide some degree of quality assurance. But, in many ways, all American education is closely tied to the governance of the 50 states.

Social work education follows the American pattern of the mixed economy, with non-governmental organizations (voluntary or private sectors) partnering with government entities to operate the whole social work enterprise. That is a common way in which much is accomplished in the United States. The private, the non-governmental, the religious, and the government, combine to carry on certain functions and do so with a high degree of interaction and co-operation. In social work education, the hope is that the quality

processes guarantee the graduation of high quality social workers who can effectively serve those who need their help.

Of course, one of the consistent issues facing professional education in the United States, including professional education for social work, is the tension between standardization and flexibility. A profession such as social work, whose members may practice, during their careers, in many different states and nations, needs to know that its members are prepared with some basic skills and knowledge. However, not all environments and therefore not all social workers need to be educated in exactly the same ways. There are many schools of thought about counseling, social policy, and the adaptation of skills to specific environments. Consequently, the accrediting body encourages all educational programs to, first, provide a core or foundation education that makes all social workers similarly educated on certain basic skills and knowledge but, second, and increasingly so in recent years, to analyze their own environments and make the kinds of special adaptations that are required for effective service in those environments.

Of course, American social workers practice in a broad variety of communities—urban settings such as Chicago and New York; largely Spanish speaking communities in California and Texas; American Indian communities in Oklahoma and Native Alaskan communities in that state; and rural enclaves almost anywhere. Therefore the professional education programs are encouraged to be certain that they arm their graduates with the basics but that they also prepare graduates to work in specific distinctive communities. But they also want to help their graduates understand the importance of adapting what they know to the unique environments in which they may practice, which is a prerequisite to effective services to social work's clients.

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