

Indiana University
School of Social Work

**S 635: Special Topics in Social Work Practice with Children and Families:
Involuntary Populations, Addictions and Domestic Violence**

Course Rationale and Description

This course is designed to teach strategies for working with families impacted by challenges of addictions, domestic violence and mental illness. Building upon knowledge of assessment and intervention with diagnosed mental illnesses, students will explore the relationships between and among the social problems of addictions, mental illness and domestic violence in relation to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability, and other socio-environmental factors of vulnerability. Core knowledge for practice with these families will focus around a theoretical understanding of the dynamics of being an involuntary client and the legal and ethical dilemmas that abound for social work practitioners working with them. This will include the examination and analysis of power differentials between client and worker as well as understanding the nature and dynamics of what has been identified as “resistance”. The class will provide students with the opportunities to further develop knowledge, skills, judgment, sensitivity, and self-awareness necessary to meet the challenges of social work practice with involuntary populations in the context of strengths-based, empowerment and eco-systems perspectives.

The knowledge on practice with involuntary populations will be built upon to develop knowledge and skills relevant to various aspects of social work practice in prevention and intervention of selected addictions with an emphasis on screening and identification of appropriate interventions. This course will also cover the basic theoretical perspectives on domestic violence and best practices in social work practice with families experiencing domestic violence. In addition, students will examine the relationship between addictions, mental illness and domestic violence with particular emphasis on the challenges within the public child welfare, mental health and correctional systems.

Instructional methodology includes didactic presentations with an emphasis on experiential style of teaching. This is a participatory class and students will be expected to participate in class discussions, field trips, role plays, case presentations and simulated exercises. Active involvement enhances the learning experience by providing the opportunity to learn from each other as well as from the professor.

Objectives

Through active participation in the learning experiences and completion of the readings, assignments, and learning projects offered throughout this seminar, learners are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

1. Critically analyze personal beliefs, stereotypes, biases, and prejudices in social work practice with a range of involuntary populations, within the context of professional values and ethics.
2. Describe and apply the dynamics of power and other dynamics related to involuntary participation in mental health/addiction, corrections and child welfare services and identify their implication for social work practice in those systems.
3. Describe, apply and analyze a range of ethical and legal issues involved in social work practice with involuntary populations in the service delivery systems of child welfare, corrections and mental health.
4. Describe and apply an understanding of the complex interplay of biological, genetic, psychological, social, and cultural forces involved in addiction processes and identify the unique characteristics and practice needs of families impacted by addiction.
5. Describe and apply an understanding of the basic dynamics of domestic violence and the potential challenges for practice with families impacted by domestic violence
6. Describe, analyze and synthesize a range of practice interventions with involuntary clients to engage, screen, assess, contract, intervene and terminate services including individual, family and group practice modalities.
7. Discover, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate evidence of practice effectiveness and apply that knowledge in all aspects and processes of service delivery to and for persons impacted by or at risk of addiction, domestic violence and mental illness.