

SW 790

**Social Work Services That Make a Difference:
Meaningful Supports for Transgender Youth and Their Families**

Winter 2019

Dates: Feb. 16 and Feb. 23, 2019

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: TBD

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Office Hours: After class (*or by appointment, upon request*).

Preferred contact is email: skrrad@umich.edu

I will make every effort to respond to your emails within 24 hours – Please let me know your matter is urgent by stating: “URGENT” in the subject line.

Phone: 313 405 9717

Course Design and Content:

This course is designed to teach Social Workers and MSW students specific information about transgender youth and adolescents within the context of their family of origin.

According to research conducted by the Family Acceptant Project:

“Even though the family is the primary support for children and youth, and family involvement helps reduce adolescent risk, there have been no previous comprehensive studies of how parental, caregiver and family reactions contribute to their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children’s risk and well-being...”

Early intervention can help families and caregivers build on strengths and use evidence-based materials to understand the impact of acceptance and rejection on their child’s well-being.”

This mini-course is designed to be highly interactive and will rely on active participation from all members. The goal of this mini-course is to increase each student’s capacity to understand the issues faced by trans- and gender non-conforming children, adolescents and young adults and their families so that evidence based mental health services can be provided to support youth and their families. Participants will also learn about resources needed by the youth

and families of transitioning youth and will be able to consult and connect their clients to needed community services.

My goal is that this mini-course will be a safe, respectful, and dynamic space for learning so that, upon conclusion, all members will be better equipped to serve transgender youth and families and to work toward building more inclusive, welcoming, agencies, communities, and schools.

This course will offer a working definition of terms, including (but not limited to): Transgender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Gender Expansive, Intersex, Gender Nonconforming, Non Binary, Cisgender, Intersex, Gender Transition, and Ally. Language and terminology will be examined with emphasis on using **affirming language** and avoiding offensive terminology.

This course will examine multiple risk factors that impact transgender youth from a strength based lens. These risk factors include, but are not limited to, the following: a 40 percent rate of attempted suicide, increased incidence of homelessness, increased vulnerability to school bullying and harassment, lack of access to health, mental health, and educational opportunities, systemic discrimination in housing and employment, increased vulnerability to hate crimes (including assault, sexual assault and murder). The prevalence of mental health issues experienced by transgender youth (and adults) will be considered within the framework of systemic discrimination experienced by members of the transgender community.

Family relationship dynamics, will be explored, during the critical time at the onset of the child's gender transition process, and ongoingly. There will be an emphasis on strategies that can be used to increase parental capacity to support the transgender youth. (Family acceptance is a protective factor that is associated with a decrease in transgender youth homeless, a decline in the frequency and severity of mental health issues and an increase in overall physical and mental wellness.)

This mini course will examine some of the specific concerns that apply to transgender children younger than age 13. Understanding gender identity at younger ages will be explored, along with specific facts about working within elementary and preschool setting to advocate for affirming and, and offering long term guidance and planning recommendations to parents and children that are developmentally appropriate.

The gender transition process will be reviewed – social, legal, medical aspects be considered, with examination of the role of the Social Worker.

Strategies to advocate for transgender youth at school and in community settings will also be addressed. Advocacy, individual and group support, staff training and implementing days of action will be considered.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the role of the family as a protective factor for transgender youth and children.
2. Students will become aware of at least four issues facing transgender children and adolescents at home, school; and in the community.
3. Students will identify three or more protective factors that positively impact outcomes for transgender clients.
4. Students will learn at least three intervention strategies to assist parents and other adult caregivers to support their youth in the coming out process and in the gender transition process. We will examine increasing parental support even in the face of resistance by the parents.
5. Students will learn at least three strategies to implement to support transgender youth in schools and community settings.
6. Students will articulate at least four challenges facing parents of transgender youth and will also identify at least one evidence based strategy that is relevant for each challenge.
6. Recognize the impact of age, race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, power and privilege on interpersonal practice by (a) Demonstrating self-awareness of their own privilege, identity, positionality and life experiences impact on their capacity to relate to others with different personal privilege, identity, sociopolitical and life experiences. (b) Describing how others who are very different may perceive them and how status and power issues impact professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and other professions.

Relation to Social Justice:

Social Justice theme will be an intrinsic and central focus of this class. While the focus of the course is on small system change (transgender youth, children, families, schools, and groups) the larger social context and implications for advocacy and social change will be embedded in person in the environment (PIE), ecological assessment, and in the experience of transgender persons and their families as they enter and/or engage with social agencies. These themes will be integrated into this course through a combination of lecture, guest speakers, and case examples and case scenarios that will be selected by the instructor to exemplify skills in practice.

Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research:

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be presented in this course to support practice methods, skills and assessment procedures. Planning, decision-making and intervention procedures will be directly borrowed from the behavioral and social sciences.

Relationship to SW Ethics and Values:

Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with transgender children and their families individually, within the context of the family and within systems. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues.

In particular, this course will focus on the following social work principles, ethics, and values.

Value: *Social Justice*

Ethical Principle: *Social workers challenge social injustice.* Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

Value: *Dignity and Worth of the Person*

Ethical Principle: *Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.*

Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

Value: *Importance of Human Relationships*

Ethical Principle: *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.* Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners

in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

Competency Practice Behaviors:

Competency #3 - Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers

- Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom;
- Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation;
- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.

Competency #4 - Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers

- Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
- Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups including transgender children and youth
- Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
- View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants in a respectful, non-exploitative manner.

Competency #6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers

- Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
- Use research evidence to inform practice.

Competency #7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Social workers

- Use conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation
- Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

Competency #10 (a)–(d)—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Assessment

Social workers

- Collect, organize, and interpret client data;
- Assess client strengths and limitations;
- Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives;
- Select appropriate intervention strategies.

Accommodation:

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, student performance evaluations (e.g., exams) and the way the course is taught can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress throughout the semester. The earlier you make me aware of your needs the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site, Sweetland Writing Center, and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will (to the extent permitted by law) treat that information as private and confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000, (734) 615-4461 (TDD), (734) 619-6661 (VP) or Email ssdoffice@umich.edu .

Also, please notify me if religious observances conflict with course expectations in any way.

Safety & Emergency Preparedness:

In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone. All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-SSWB (7793) for up-to-date School closure information.

Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least (2) emergency exits nearest the classroom.

If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services and/or email ssw-ADAcompliance@umich.edu.

Office of Student Services School of Social Work | Room 1748 [734-936-0961](tel:734-936-0961)

Register for UM Emergency Alerts at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergency-management/alert/>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class attendance and participation:

Students are expected to attend both classes for the full period, complete assigned reading for each day, participate fully in class activities and discussions, and complete all assignments on time. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class using a sign in sheet. There will be two 15-minute breaks and a one-hour lunch break.

Your attendance and participation also reflects the basic ingredient of any social work relationship – your presence, “**showing up**” or “**being there**”. For this reason, I ask you to adhere to the following guidelines concerning the use of computers or cell phones in class:

- Using electronic devices to assist in note taking and specifically directed class activities is permitted for those who find this beneficial.
- Checking email, texting, searching the net for non-class related activities, reading non-class materials, etc. equate to talking/interrupting while someone else is talking and are not acceptable during class.**
- Students who feel they must monitor email and texts are asked to do so during breaks and/or to leave the room to do so.*
- Use of non-class related computer/phone/electronic devices/reading materials will be considered as the equivalent of being absent from class and will result in deductions in class participation grades.

REQUIRED READING:

All other required reading materials for this class are available in the “Files” section of the canvas site for this class or on the Internet.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS (Due dates are highlighted)

1. Self-awareness paper on gender identity Due Feb. 23

This paper should be approximately 4 double-spaced pages (12 pt. font) and should discuss your personal experiences, history, reflections and questions regarding your own gender-identity and expression and your personal experiences with the compounding complexities of race, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, ability/disability, etc. Include a description of your intersecting identities, including all of the above.

Questions that will help your thinking for the paper include:

1. How do you identify in regard to your gender identity, and how do you know who you are?
2. What internal and external factors have shaped your gender identity?
3. What was your first awareness of transgender people?
4. How has your gender and/or gender identity, culture, ethnicity, class, race, religion, ability/disability, environment, etc. helped to shape your identity and affected your biases?
5. What are your biases and assumptions about gender and where do they come from?

2. Implicit Attitude Test and Reflective Journal Due March 2.

In support of your capacity to work with a diverse range of clients, you may find examining your own, unconscious, implicit attitudes to be illustrative. To assist you, please complete at least two of the Implicit Attitude Tests offered through Harvard University. (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>). Links to an external site.)

You can choose any two tests you like. Each will take about 20 minutes. The introduction to the test notes that sometimes people do not like the “results” and they offer a disclaimer about any interpretations. Please read that section carefully before taking the tests. Please note that having an implicit bias and being actively prejudiced are two different issues. I only hope to have you contemplate the biases you are likely to hold based on culture, ethnicity and environment.

Once done with two of the tests, please write a brief (two to four page, double spaced) reflective journal response. You do not have to report the findings of the test! That part is for your personal contemplation unless you want to share the findings with me.

In your response, please consider the following (but you are not limited to them):

- What did you notice about the test itself? I don’t necessarily want a critique of the test, but more of an inquiry into your own internal reactions. Were you

feeling worried, eager, curious, and defensive, put-off or neutral?

- When you saw the “results” did they make sense to you? Did either one or both match what you believe about yourself? What were your first thoughts as you read what the “results” said about you? How do you make sense of them now? You can contemplate your own experiences, your family and community values and other influences.

- Moving forward, what are the ways in which you see having a window into your possible implicit biases informing your social work practice?

- Any other thoughts you may wish to share ...

Class 1

Overview of the Day

Class Norms,

Ethics and Bias

Overview of Working with Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Children and Their Families

Language and Terms – from an Affirming Lens

Guest Speaker

Family Support Services and Strategies

Class 2

Overview of the Day

What is a Gender Transition?

Special Considerations for Young Transgender Children (13 and younger)

Addressing Mental Health Issue in the Transgender Community (including suicide risk)

**Please be advised that the syllabus and daily agenda may be subject to modification by the Instructor.*

Readings: Several books are recommended.

1. Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community 1st Edition by Laura Erickson-Schroth (Editor)

2. The Transgender Teen by Stephanie A. Brill
3. I am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
4. Jacob's New Dress by Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman
5. Kicked Out by Sassafra Lowrey and Jennifer Clare Burke

All other required reading materials will be made available on Canvas.

Course Grading

Attendance & Participation	40 Points (20 points for each date)
Assignment One	30 points
Assignment Two	30 points
Total	100 points