COMMUNITY PRACTICE CERTIFICATE:
In Community Organizing, Planning, Development, and Change

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Dear University or School Partner:

Students continually consider degrees to strengthen their resume and gain qualifications necessary for building stronger communities and enhancing the capacity of those who build communities in our society. Schools of Social Work with macro practice specializations and other professional schools or academic disciplines recognize the importance of educating the next generation of community practitioners. As students critically assess their own skills and professional development strategies to advance their careers, certification that defines practice competencies has become increasingly important to their advancement.

The Association of Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA) will now offer the Community Practice Certificate as a guide to help your students advance their careers in community organizing, community planning, community development, and community (social) change.   This opportunity for your school to partner with ACOSA to promote the strength of the macro social work and community practice curriculum you currently provide.

The Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA) is initiating a new Community Practice Certificate Partnership Program with Schools of Social Work and other professions/disciplines that offer curriculum programs that focus on the domains of community practice - community organizing, community planning, community development, and community or social change. ACOSA is a national membership organization with international reach and with individual and institutional members that include educators, students, and practitioners of community practice.   ACOSA sponsors the *Journal of Community Practice: Community Organizing, Planning, Development, and Change*, in partnership with the Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, which publishes this journal internationally in both hard copy and online. ACOSA also administratively sponsors the Special Commission to Advance Macro Social Work Practice and supports United for Macro Practice efforts.

We hope you will partner with the Association for Community Organization and Social Action to provide your graduating students and alumni with this Community Practice Certificate. Through this partnership you will:

• Promote your school's alignment with the Association for Community Organization and Social Action's mission of advancing social change through community practice.

 • Receive endorsement from the Association for Community Organization and Social Action, an international association dedicated to advancing community practice, relative to your community practice curriculum.

• Provide a certificate to your students and alumni, which they can use to strengthen their portfolio as in seeking employment after graduation and career advancement.

The following manual describes this ACOSA Community Practice certification process, defines Community Practice – its domains and competencies, and provides a checklist of practice domains and competencies to guide your school/program in aligning your curriculum with ACOSA's new certificate.

Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (www.acosa.org)

Certification Process

Applications are now being accepted for the first cohort of Community Practice Certificate partners to offer this nationally recognized certificate for graduating students and alumni of partner schools and programs whose curriculum complies with the definition, domains, and competencies of community practice as detailed in this guidebook.

You will submit (electronically) the Community Practice Certificate checklist and any supporting documentation, e.g., course descriptions, internship/field education evaluation forms with your partnership application. A working group of ACOSA's Education Committee will review your submission and approve certificate partners based on classroom curriculum and field learning that demonstrate compliance with at least 70% of the Community Practice skill domains and practice competencies as presented herein. You will then receive a memorandum of agreement (MOA) as a Community Practice Certificate partner, which you will sign and submit with the application fee.

Approved Community Practice Certificate partner schools and programs will be able to extend this certificate to their graduating cohorts. Once approved, this certificate may also be extended to past alumni of your school or program who graduated under the complying curriculum. Alumni will then need to submit correspondence documenting their alumni status.

The **application fee** for Certification Partnership recognition is **$250** (one-time application fee) due with MOA. Sponsoring Institutions of ACOSA (those who join at the $300 or $1000 annual sponsorship level) will have this application fee waived as a benefit of institutional sponsorship. Thereafter, the **Certificate fee** will be **$50 per student** payable collectively by the partnering institution, school, or program on an annual basis for all students graduating during any academic year. Once approved, individual alumni of Community Certificate partners may submit for certification with documentation of alumni status with a one-time fee of **$75 per alumni** for certificate processing.   The initial graduating student or alumni certificate will also include a one-year membership in ACOSA.

The following is an introduction and overview of Community Practice Certificate and the requisite community practice skill domains and competencies that correspond with the checklist/review form which is to be completed by the partner institution, school, or program and submitted with any corresponding curriculum, course, and field/internship documentation of classroom and experiential learning of skills and competencies.

Questions on this process and application materials can be addressed to: **admin@acosa.org**

We welcome you to this exciting new Community Practice Certificate. Thank You.

Community Practice – Introduction and Overview

The following introductory definition and accompanying community practice domains (four) and competencies (nine) provide a framework and guidelines for university schools and program to align their curriculum with the Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA) Community Practice Certification partnership initiative. This framework is accompanied by a checklist for schools and programs to assess their curriculum against both community practice domains and competencies.

Community practice acknowledges community as a social environment that is broadly defined and rich in diversity. The following overview addresses knowledge, values and skill area that are integral to community practice and define the work of community practitioners. This framework for community practice drew upon earlier ACOSA national efforts that brought together macro and community practice scholars and practitioners to identify and define macro social work and community practice domains and competencies. This work and these competencies have been published in the *Journal of Community Practice*, *the Encyclopedia of Social Work*, and, most recently, in the Council on Social Work Education's *Specialized Curricular Guide Macro Social Work Practice* and referenced as follows:

Gamble, D. N. 2011. Advanced concentration macro competencies for social work practitioners: Identifying knowledge, values, judgment, and skills to promote human well-being. *Journal of Community Practice. Vol. 1/4.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Gamble, D. N. and Soska, T.M. 2013. Macro practice competencies. *Encyclopedia of Social Work (Online).* National Association of Social Workers Press and Oxford University Press.

Council on Social Work Education. 2019. Specialized Practice Curricular Guide for Macro Social Work Practice. 2015 EPAS Curricular Guide Resource Series. Council on Social Work Education. https://cswe.org/getattachment/Education-Resources/2015-Curricular-Guides/2015-Macro-Guide-Web-Version.pdf.aspx

Community practitioners know that the social environment that sustains all people consists of many types of communities, including:
- geographic
- identity and cultural
- faith or spiritual
- mutual interest
- organizational or associational

Community practitioners value the understanding that people belong to many different communities simultaneously; therefore,

- practice in community targets diverse stakeholders, constituencies, and power holders, all of whom need to be understood and respectfully engaged.

Community practitioners engage with community partners to:

- mobilize on issues and needs in ways that ensure the voices of the community
- develop strategies, services, and organizations that enhance community well-being
- build community capacity to foster and strengthen human and social capital

Community practitioners work in a range of settings, including:

- Community and neighborhood-based organizations,
- Faith-based organizations,
- Community development corporations,
- Public development agencies
- Broader human services agencies in public, private nonprofit or for-profit sectors,
- Coalitions, collaborations, and other alliances
- Non-traditional settings, e.g., libraries, corporations, and social enterprises

Community practitioners address geographic, identity, cultural, faith or spiritual, mutual interest, and organizational or associational communities to:

- engage and mobilize constituencies and stakeholders for collective action
- persuade public, organizational, and local community decision-makers to provide funds, resources, services, and community input to best address community- identified needs and issues, especially with those who are oppressed, vulnerable, and at risk.
- Build community responses, programs, and organizations to address community- identified needs and issues using community assets and external resources.

Community Practice Outcomes. Social workers in community practice seek outcomes that improve community well-being; address oppression, discrimination, and racism; are culturally grounded; and consider the historical context and evolving dynamic shifts in communities. These outcomes include the following:
- an engaged community mobilized for collective power and action.
- greater awareness of community needs and issues for actions that advance solutions to address those needs and issues.
- formal community plans and agendas that ensure community participation and action.
- stronger relationships and bonds within the community that help bridge relationships outside the community.
- skilled community-based leadership and effective organizations to implement community plans and sustain community action; and
- new and revitalized local communities, programs, organizations, and assets (e.g., parks, businesses, housing, community services).

Community practice includes skill domains of:
- Community Organizing
- Community Planning
- Community Development and Capacity Building
- Social Action and Community Change.

Community Practice Certificate Domains

Community practitioners should develop competencies across a comprehensive range of skill areas that incorporate the knowledge and values of community practice.

Community Organizing

1. Engage effectively with diverse communities and constituencies.
2. Communicate effectively in written and oral forms, as well as via social media.
3. Cultivate and promote community-based leadership and capacity that empowers community action.
4. Facilitate meetings and other small and large group process that support identifying community assets and issues, as well as prioritizing and addressing issues.
5. Educate community constituencies on strategies and tactics of collective community intervention, as well as the internal and external power essential to intervention.
6. Mobilize community constituents to address community-identified issues and secure resources or responses to address those issues.
7. Build and maintain coalitions, collaborations, and organizations that sustain community interventions.
8. Monitor, assess, and analyze the process for collaborative engagement and collective interventions.
9. Assist communities in monitoring and evaluating their collective intervention and impact.

Community Planning

1. Collaborate with the community to critically assess and use their indigenous and diverse knowledge to understand and address community assets, issues, and needs.
2. Assess and analyze the power internal and external to the community that must be targeted to address community issues and needs.
3. Use a broad range of fact-finding and assessment tools and methods to map assets for and barriers to effective community well-being (social, economic, and political).
4. Educate the community on and employ applied research approaches, including community-based participatory and action-based research to examine community issues.
5. Assist community constituencies in developing mission, vision, goals, programs/services, and strategies and tactics for community intervention.
6. Support the production of community studies and reports that assess community conditions and assets, strategize on community interventions, and promote larger system responses.
7. Implement community programs, services, and organizations that incorporate and reflect the community assets in strategically addressing community conditions and issues.
8. Conduct community campaigns to educate the community and disseminate information on community issues, needs, assets, and interventions.

Community Development

1. Engage diverse community constituencies to build consensus on plans and efforts to revitalize and develop a community.
2. Facilitate consensus building and decision-making among diverse community constituencies to network and collaborate on strategies and tactics for community revitalization and development.
3. Develop human and social capital to support capacity building of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and alliances (partnerships, coalitions, and collaborations) as they interact in communities.
4. Strengthen community leadership and organizational capacity to promote community social and economic development.
5. Support organizational development, maintenance, and sustainability that manages human and financial resources (e.g., budgeting oversight, fundraising, and allocation; human resources policies and procedures) in strategically addressing community needs and issues.
6. Ensure equitable and sustainable development to address social, economic, racial, and environmental justice in communities.

Community Social Change/Action

1. Mobilize community constituencies to advocate and contest for social, economic, racial, and environmental justice.
2. Conduct community campaigns to educate and advocate on community conditions and issues and to ensure resources and organizational capacity to effectively address those conditions and issues.
3. Use power analysis and power building and organizing strategies and tactics to empower communities and advance their issues and diverse assets.
4. Support grassroots lobbying and direct lobbying (the latter as feasible) to address larger local, state, and federal legislation and policies that impact community conditions, equity, and the sustainability of communities.
5. Provide facilitation, networking, and other technical skills to support coalition building, collaboration, and other alliances in response to community and social issues in order to advance social, economic, racial, and environmental justice.
6. Demonstrate bargaining, negotiating, and mediation skills to resolve conflicts.
7. Use contest and protest as necessary to advance community and social change.

Universities and their schools and programs in social work and related disciplines with community practice curriculum need to address these practice skill domains to demonstrate alignment with ACOSA's Community Practice Certification process.

Competency Practice in the Social Work Perspective

The following competency practices are derived and presented relative to the **Council on Social Work Education's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS 2015).** They also reflect the competencies as delineated in CSWE's *Specialized Curricular Guide in Macro Social Work Practice (2019),* which have relevance to schools of social work seeking ACOSA's Community Practice Certification; however, these hold relevance to any school or program in a range of disciplines with community practice curriculum**.**

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

<u>**Domain: Values and Ethics**</u>

- Critically uses the NASW, International Federation of Social Workers, and other appropriate professional social work codes in practice
- Promotes a vision of intervention that reflects social work values
- Engages in critical ethical decision-making that incorporates the perspectives and concerns of vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged communities and community members
- Uses strategies and tactics that reflect social work values
- Demonstrates ethically informed self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-care and uses supervision and consultation appropriately in professional work
- Understand how to use technology effectively and ethically in advancing community practice

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

<u>**Domain: Diversity**</u>

- Understand the intersectionality and many individual forms of diversity and difference, such as race, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status, ability, privilege, and other relevant factors in developing helping relations in communities and organizations
- Facilitates a climate of inclusion at all stages of an initiative or intervention that builds on strengths of community diversity
- Demonstrates understanding of systems of oppression, power, and privilege and how these factors impact disenfranchised, marginalized, and vulnerable communities
- Promotes the development of leadership that reflects diversity of the community
- Engages with diverse community stakeholders with particular attention to historically and currently marginalized community groups
- Demonstrates awareness of one's own power and privilege, its impact on practice, and reflects cultural humility

- Employs culturally appropriate techniques to address and mediate tensions and conflicts that may arise from cultural, political, and social differences

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Domain: Human Rights and Justice

- Integrates knowledge of human rights theories and frameworks, including relevant law, documents, and covenants, into one's approach to community practice
- Facilitates approaches to practice that promotes human rights and social, economic, racial, and environmental justice and equity
- Engage in critical analysis to identify key stakeholders who would support human right and justice campaigns for vulnerable and marginalized communities
- Engage in individual and political advocacy to support the human, economic, social, and environmental rights of vulnerable and marginalized communities
- Identify practice models, strategies, and tactics – including coalitions and collaborations - that promote human rights and social, economic, racial, and environmental justice; understand those that do not

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Domain: Practice-Informed Research and Research -informed Practice

- engage in critical analysis and ongoing review of research findings, macro practice models, and practice wisdom to inform community practice
- develop and select research questions that strategically inform the research process and its impact on communities, programs, community-based organizations, and the social policies that impact them
- identify, critically evaluate, and use data and scholarship to build new knowledge and inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of social policy and community programs
- consciously integrate the voices and experiences of those directly affected by social, economic, and political inequality throughout the research process, recognizing the differences in conducting research with, research by, and research on a community
- collaborate, mobilize, and organize constituents, stakeholders, and colleagues to engage in research for advocacy, policymaking, community planning, and intervention evaluation, and the dissemination of research findings to improve community interventions; (communicating it effectively to community and constituencies)

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Domain: Policy Practice

- analyze policies at local, state, national, and international levels to assess their impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities and on the values of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice
- educate stakeholders about how policies affect individual well-being and the communities and organizations that support them
- engage, motivate, and mobilize constituents to participate and even lead in the policy process
- strategically document and disseminate information to key policymakers about unmet needs and program accomplishments by using research evidence, practice wisdom, stories of lived experience, and lenses of race, class, and gender
- use interpersonal communication, relationship building, group work, and organizing skills to form coalitions, lobby policymakers, engage and mobilize constituents, and leverage political capital to challenge structures of power and privilege and effect positive change
- encourage broad-based participation in the political process through voter mobilization and educating the public about positions of candidates for office, political party platforms, the benefits of political engagement, and electoral processes and procedures.
- advocate and engage allies and supporters in lobbying activities to enhance services, increase access to resources, and ensure sustainable and equitable community development

Competency 6: Engagement with Communities

Domain: Engagement

- Acknowledge and address how aspects of their own identities (e.g., background, status, privilege) affect the engagement process
- Critically and actively engage with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations affected by the issue or problem in ways that value, respect, and include their expertise, knowledge, and culture
- Understand the roles, structure, and operational challenges of a range of organizations in which they work when engaging with communities
- Develop and implement multiple engagement strategies with stakeholder groups that reflect an understanding of structural, environmental, and power dynamics; policymakers' characteristics and objectives; and the strengths, priorities, and interests of stakeholder groups
- Use group facilitation and mediation skills to promote dialogue and

collaborative processes

- Use interpersonal and relationship building skills to clearly define and communicate community and organizational needs and advance potential solutions with decision makers
- Demonstrate leadership skills to initiate and facilitate dialogue that mobilizes and sustains action
- Facilitate collaborative processes with members of a community groups and organizations to work together on a problem or condition they have mutually identified and want to solve or change
- Identify relevant constituencies, partners, and targets with whom relationships are necessary for policy change
- Use multiple digital, written, and verbal communication skills to engage different constituencies, partners, and target audiences

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and) Communities

Domain: Assessment

- assess and analyze assets, needs, benefits, gaps in services, rights, and the inequitable distribution of resources and power to identify appropriate community interventions.
- use power analyses to identify appropriate individual, organizational, community, and political decision makers to target for intervention
- develop, select, and conduct assessments using appropriate theories, metrics, analytical methods, frameworks, tools, and technology, including primary data sources (e.g., surveys, interviews), secondary data sources (e.g., census, polling, precinct data), and the lived experience of affected individuals, families, groups within organizations, communities, and policy arenas
- collaborate with community members, colleagues, and other stakeholders throughout the assessment process
- prepare reports that summarize and analyze collected data and frame options for intervention
- design and conduct assessments of the structure, composition, process, and environmental factors that affect communities

Competency 8: Intervene (with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and) Communities

Domain: Community Intervention

- select and implement theoretically and empirically informed interventions to achieve community goals that enhance well-being for constituencies

- negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse constituencies and facilitate their participation in community interventions
- identify the strengths, expertise, and potential contributions of relevant stakeholder groups (e.g., coalitions, think tanks, organizations, associations, voters, and affected constituencies) to collectively exert power for community and social change
- initiate and facilitate collaborations within and between organizational, community, and policy partners to achieve positive system change
- apply intervention skills to develop and revitalize social, economic, and environmental assets and build community capacity
- draw on policy analyses and a nuanced understanding of policy processes and contexts to develop advocacy strategies

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice (with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and) Communities

Domain: Evaluation

- select appropriate evaluative questions to facilitate documenting, improving, or changing community performance processes and outcomes
- develop collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders to engage them in the evaluation process
- integrate theoretical and conceptual frameworks into evaluation strategies that facilitate an understanding of community, organizational, and policy dynamics and outcomes
- develop evaluation plans that include clear goals, outputs, and outcomes, and operationalize all aspects of a planned evaluation, including partners, measures, data collection, analysis, and dissemination
- demonstrate the ability to use and apply quantitative and qualitative data analyses and current technological processes and resources, such as SPSS, geographic information systems (GIS) to inform and enhance evaluation activities
- use and translate evaluation outcomes to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of communities and to advocate for policies and planned change efforts that advance community values

PLEASE USE THE ACCOMPANYING CHECKLIST TO ASSESS THE ALIGNMENT OF YOUR CURRICULUM TO ACOSA'S COMMUNITY PRACTICE DOMAINS AND COMPETENCIES.