SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY PRACTICE  
Social Work 655  
Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Department Of Social Work

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to provide students with knowledge, values and skills to engage in macro level advanced policy practice in organizations and communities in order to promote social and economic justice. This course focuses on policy issues relevant to rural and small communities and diverse populations residing in rural and small communities. Global issues and policy advocacy is also examined. Students research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice. In order to develop competencies for becoming an effective policy advocate, students learn, analyze, design and implement strategies for promoting policy change within an organization, community, or public policy making body. Students learn how research, in particular collecting data to support effective, evidence-based practice, can be utilized to influence policy makers and enact policies that promote social and economic justice. Finally, students examine the values and ethical issues related to policy practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) Analyze the contemporary policy issues impacting rural and small communities and the degree to which social and economic justice is achieved (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).

2) Examine the contemporary policy issues impacting diverse groups, including diversity of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, age and national origin (MSW 1.4, 1.8C, 2.1, 3.1).

3) Research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).

4) Understand and demonstrate utilization of strategies and tactics to effectively influence agency and governmental social welfare policy and programs in order to promote social and economic justice (MSW 1.5, 1.6, 1.8C, 1.10C, 3.4C, 4.2).

5) Critically examine ethical issues in policy practice with an emphasis on issues pertaining to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 2.4C).

6) Critically examine political social work and opportunities for social workers to engage in and influence the political process (MSW 2.4C, 3.4C).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Social Welfare Policy Analysis Paper (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.3C)
Students will research and write a policy analysis paper on an issue of significance to advanced
generalist rural and small community social work practice using the Karger and Stoesz policy
analysis framework provided in class. The analysis may be of an agency policy, state policy, or
federal policy. The analysis will include an examination of the degree to which the policy
promotes the values of the social work profession, including social and economic justice and
dignity and worth of the person.

Policy Proposal
Using the policy selected in the policy analysis paper, students will draft a policy proposal
advocating changes for changes in the current policy or ways in which the current policy is
implemented. Students must interview a minimum of 3 key informants (with at least one being
a social worker implementing the policy or advocating for change) for information or feedback
regarding this proposal.

Advocacy Project (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.4C)
Students will assume the role of a change agent and begin to put the policy proposal in action.
Students will develop and implement a social action plan utilizing an array of advocacy
strategies and tactics, including but not limited to lobbying a government official, attending a
meeting or public hearing, writing a letter to the editor, working on a task force, participating in
a public rally, etc.

On-Line Discussion of Critical Policy Issues Impacting Rural Social Work Practice
Students will respond to discussion questions posed by the instructor based upon the readings
examining critical policy issues impacting rural and small community social work practice within
a diverse society. Issues of diversity examined may include age, class, culture, disability,
ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual
orientation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
Topic: Introduction to the course: Social Worker as Policy Advocate

Week 2
Topic: Ethical Issues in Policy Practice; Theories of social justice

Week 3
Topic: Review of Policy Analysis Framework
Topic: The Policy Advocate Context
**Week 4**  
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Welfare Reform and Rural Poverty

**Week 5**  
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Food Policy

**Week 6**  
Topic: Preparation for Creating a Policy Proposal

**Week 7**  
Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part One

**Week 8**  
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Homelessness in Rural America

**Week 9**  
Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part Two

**Week 10**  
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Aging in Rural America

**Week 11**  
Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part One

**Week 12**  
Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part Two

**Week 13**  
Topic: Global Issues and Policy Advocacy

**Week 14**  
Topic: Report on Student Outcome of Advocacy Project

**Week 15 – Finals**