



**Social Workers
Registration Board**

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

**COMPETENCE TO PRACTISE SOCIAL WORK
WITH MAORI AND DIFFERENT ETHNIC
AND CULTURAL GROUPS**

POLICY STATEMENT

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Competence to Practise Social Work with Maori and Different Ethnic and Cultural Groups

1. Introduction

The Social Workers Registration Act (2003) requires the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) to establish criteria for the registration of Social Workers. Section 6 entitles a person who has a New Zealand recognized qualification to be registered if the Board is satisfied;

- a) that his or her competence to practise social work has been found satisfactory under Part 3; and
- b) that he or she is a fit and proper person to practice social work; and
- c) that (whether because of the inclusion of an appropriate component in that qualification, or else as a result of his or her satisfactory completion of a separate course or courses of training) he or she -
 - i. is competent to practice social work with Maori; and
 - ii. is competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand; and
- d) that he or she has enough practical experience in practicing social work.

With regard to competence to practice social work with Maori, the Social Workers Registration Act (S6 (i), 2003) states the following;

that (whether because of the inclusion of an appropriate component in that qualification, or as a result of his or her satisfactory completion of a separate course or courses of training) he or she;

- 1.1 is competent to practice social work with Maori;
- 1.2 is competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand.

Section 7 in relation to entitlement to registration of overseas-qualified social workers states that a person is entitled to be registered if the Board is satisfied that

- (c) he or she has satisfactorily completed a course or courses of training ensuring that he or she –
 - (i) is competent to practice social work with Maori; and
 - (ii) is competent to practice social work with different cultural and ethnic groups in New Zealand

Section 13 (1) (b) (iv) (a) in relation to competence states that the Board may decide that the applicant should be registered fully if-

- (i) that (whether as a result of his or her satisfactory completion of a course or courses of training, or because his or her practical experience in practising social work in new Zealand is enough to compensate such a course) he or she-
 - (a) is competent to practise social work with Maori.
 - (b) Is competent to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand.

A course or courses of training are defined by the Board to mean a process or course of learning that is able to be validated by attestation (evidence) of training, continual professional development or self directed learning.

2. COMPETENCE

Competence, for the purposes of the SWRB, is primarily defined in s42 (1 (a) (b)); s 42 (1)

2.1.1 ... skill and knowledge required to practice social work in accordance with their registration and;

2.1.2 (to) meet the professional standards reasonably to be expected of a social worker

In addition “The assessment of competency needs to account for the essential elements of social work practice and for individual practitioner competency regardless of agency, setting or method of work” ((Aotearoa) New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 1993, p.19), and “competence is about standards or levels of performance ((Aotearoa) New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 1993, p.21).

Professor Mason Durie comments “Cultural competence is about the acquiring of skills to achieve a better understanding of members of other cultures” (cited in Bacal, Jansen & Smith 2006, p.306).

In defining competence one must also consider the meaning of culture. “Essentially, culture is understood to relate to some shared elements which connect people in a common way of experiencing and seeing the world. These perceptions of the world guide day-to-day living, influence how decisions are made and by whom, and determine what is perceived to be appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within any given context” (Connolly, Crichton-Hill & Ward, 2005 p.17).

The SWRB has identified a range of core competencies that reflect practice standards accepted in New Zealand (SWRB, 2004) and that are cognisant of international social work literature. The core competencies are regarded as a minimum requirement for Social Work practice and are regarded as a part of ongoing professional development (Appendix 1).

This paper addresses competence requirements described in sections 6 (c) (i); Section 13 (1) (b) (iv) (i) (a); and Section 7 (c) (i) of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. The paper suggests key attitude, knowledge and skill areas for the assessment of competence to practise Social Work with Maori and different ethnic and cultural groups.

3 CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS: COMPETENCE TO PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK WITH MAORI AND DIFFERENT CULTURAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN NEW ZEALAND

Competence to practice social work with Maori and different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand are components of a range of core competencies that require evidencing at five yearly intervals in line with evidencing the other core competencies.

Competence is not an end point but is developmental in nature. It can be thought of as consisting of the following components; attitude, knowledge, and skills (Lum, 2003; Tsang & George, 1998). Tsang and George suggest the following conceptual framework for practicing culturally responsive social work.

3.1 Attitude

This relates to the applicants ability to identify awareness of their own limitations (cultural biases, lack of knowledge and understanding) and to develop openness to cultural diversity and a willingness to learn from others. It involves a demonstrated commitment to the ongoing development of one's cultural awareness and practices as well as those of colleagues.

3.2 Knowledge

Areas of cross cultural knowledge include the following domains:

Specific cultural context relates to the ability to identify specific cultural protocols and values

Systemic context necessitates the ability to develop an understanding of the socio historical milieu

Internalised culture refers to 'a selective combination of different elements taken from different cultural systems adopted to different extents' (Tsang & George, 1998, p. 86). This knowledge domain rejects the idea of homogeneity within

cultural groups, and acknowledges the client as the best guide to their cultural identification.

Resource context refers to knowledge of the resources and networks available for cultural consultation and the provision of culturally responsive services.

Partnership context refers to knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and the implications of the Treaty for social work practice in Aotearoa.

3.3 Skills

The above components of attitudes and knowledge need to transfer to useful skills that enable workers to interact cross culturally, support clients to meet their own goals and needs, and that enable social workers to work to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

4 CONSIDERATIONS: COMPETENCE TO PRACTISE SOCIAL WORK WITH MAORI

For at least two decades the social service sector has attempted to deliver services in a culturally responsive way. This includes;

- By Maori for Maori services
- Kaupapa Maori services
- Taha Maori services
- Mainstream services with Maori staff
- Services for Maori clients

This service delivery context also reflects the development of a range of practice models that include;

- Evidence based practice
- Best practice
- Clinical practice
- Bicultural practice
- Maori models of practice

Cultural considerations for practicing Social Work with Maori **could** include;

4.1 *Maori in New Zealand society*

This consideration calls for an understanding of the historical and contemporary context of Aotearoa. This necessitates an understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and its relationship to New Zealand society and social work practice, and an understanding of tikanga Maori, kaupapa Maori and the concept of biculturalism.

4.1.1 Diversity of Maori

Diversity within Maori needs to be acknowledged and respected. In this sense the Social Worker's attitude needs to be one that recognizes Maori are not a homogenous population group. An understanding of how whanau perceive their own commitment to, and understanding of, culture is necessary in order to work competently and safely with them.

4.1.2 Language

Social Workers should seek to provide and advocate for the provision of information, referrals, and services in te reo Maori if appropriate to the client. Individuals and whanau have a right to use their language. The use of interpreters may be required. A respect of language and an ability to communicate in a range of social work situations is essential.

4.2 *Community and Family Systems*

4.2.1 Whanaungatanga

A Social Worker who demonstrates whanungatanga is able to articulate their understanding of the relationship of whanungatanga to social work practice; and is able to demonstrate the skills required to incorporate Maori social networks and relationships in the process of social work practice. It includes an ability to appropriately network with key whanau, hapu and iwi (Te Kai Awhina Ahumahi, 2005).

4.2.2 Whakapapa

Whakapapa is considered fundamental to Maori society in that it defines the connections between individual and kin groups and “governs the relationships between them” (Ministry of Justice, 2001 p. 270).

4.3 Rangatiratanga

“Rangatiratanga develops self-awareness, self-esteem and self-determination. It honours the past, present and future” (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2003 p.15). A Social Worker competent to work with Maori will understand both the political and personal relevance of Rangatiratanga to Maori clients in the 21st century and the social responsibility attached to it. A Maori world view acknowledges that any client interaction is cognisant of whanau, hapu, iwi.

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APPENDIX ONE: SWRB CORE COMPETENCIES

Excerpt from p.6 “Social Workers Registration Board (2004). Entitlement to Registration: Competence. Policy Statement. Wellington”.

5. Core Competencies

The Board recognises core competencies that reflect practice standards accepted in

New Zealand (Section 42 (3)). These core competencies will apply to all competency

processes that are set and approved by the Board.

The requirements of the Act, The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

definition of Social Work and the ANZASW standards of practice, have served to inform the Board in determining the following as initial core competencies that must apply to all social work: A registered social worker will

- Be competent to practice social work with Maori
- Be competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in NZ¹
- Promote social change
- Promote problem solving in human relationships
- Promote empowerment and liberation of people
- Utilise theories of human behaviour and social systems
- Utilise social work practice approaches
- Promote the principles of human rights and social justice
- Ensure systems of accountability are in place for their work
- Adhere to professional social work ethics

¹Components would include:

1. Awareness of self and openness to cultural difference;
2. Knowledge of social and political historical context, intercultural communication, specific cultural content; and internalised culture and
3. Ability to translate the above two components into skills (Tsang, A.K., & George, U 1998 Towards an integrated framework for cross-cultural social work practice. *Canadian social work Review*, 15(1), 75-93.