

Social work in Norway today; the power aspect

The social workers decision-making power gives them control over the resources allocated to clients. This gives them power, and it is therefore of crucial importance that they acquire ethical awareness. In some situations they must be able to take initiative and assess whether the limits given should be challenged. As employees, the social workers loyalty to the clients is challenged by their loyalty to the interests of society in the institution in which they work. The principles of professional ethics focus on interaction with the clients and on respect for the clients' right to decide.

Purpose and aims; the institutions' responsibility for offering an education based on the highest level of research and experience.

The university must:

1. offer a training programme which will help students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by a social worker, based on the highest level of research, development work and experience
2. offer a learning environment which promotes the students' involvement, participation and personal development
3. promote the students' ability to reflect on academic studies, ethics, professional role workers and society
4. motivate and form the basis for the students' ability to integrate knowledge and academic development
5. be in dialogue with practical social work, user organizations, research and other related education programmes

After having completed their education, the student must:

1. have acquired knowledge about and insight into how social structures and processes may create and maintain social problems
2. have acquired knowledge about and insight into human needs and behaviour
3. have acquired knowledge about certain administrative principles and relevant legislation and be able to do casework which will protect the clients' needs and rights
4. be familiar with the main aims and means in social politics, be able to view these critically, and suggest the premises for decisions made within the social services in relation to political authorities
5. be familiar with the social service system and be able to utilize it in order to reduce social problems, in interaction with other professional groups and users/clients
6. be familiar with a variety of working methods in social work, in particular focusing on working methods where the clients may be active participants and mobilize their own resources, whether they are individuals, families, groups or social networks
7. be able to work in situations with cross-pressure and conflicting interests, and handle such conflicts while focusing on the interest of the clients
8. meet clients with respect and empathy; acknowledging principles of equality as basis of all social work
9. show solidarity with people who find themselves in a vulnerable, marginal position in terms of living conditions and quality of life, be able to make visible and promote their rights and interests, and be able to cooperate with them
10. be able to work with people who see the world differently and to do social work in multicultural contexts
11. be familiar with other relevant professional groups, be able to assess their own skills and the skills of others, and be able to do interdisciplinary work.
12. be able to participate in academic development work, utilize new working methods based on research and other innovations and see the importance of personal and academic development
13. be able to document, improve the quality of and asses their own work.