

**Legal Education for Human Rights Work:  
Social Work Practicum Students in Forensic Placements**

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## Abstract

The Council on Social Work Education tasks social work programs to ensure students illustrate competency with regard to advocating for and advancing human rights. Given the three generations of human rights experience differing levels of guarantee and protection, multiple tools are needed in order to advance human rights across the board. As human rights cannot be sufficiently realized until they are protected by law, many of those tools are made more useful when combined with knowledge of the legal system and processes. Advocacy is a key aspect of social work practice, and therefore social work education provides a solid foundational understanding on the legislative branch of government. However, as all three branches of government have the ability to impact human rights law, we advise social work programs to integrate more opportunities for students to learn about the judicial and executive branches as well. Recognizing that not all programs are positioned to inject forensic social work education into their curriculum, we discuss an interdisciplinary practicum model that integrates social work students into university legal clinics.

*Keywords:* Forensic Practicum Model, Forensic Social Work, Human Rights, Legal Education, Social Work Education, University Legal Clinics

### Legal Education for Human Rights Work:

#### Social Work Practicum Students in Forensic Placements

As a field of practice social work has the capacity to touch each sphere of our societal existence. As those who carry out society's work, social workers are well-positioned to be the metaphorical thread connecting systems and bridging gaps. Consequently, the process of preparing future social workers for such a broad field of work, often results in a knowledge base that is a mile wide and an inch deep. Further, preparing students for human rights practice presents additional changes. As a means to fortify preparation for human rights work within social work education, the following will discuss the benefits of forensic social work placements and present one such model implemented in a large midwestern university.

#### **Three Generations of Human Rights**

Though we may understand human rights as inherently available to all human beings irrespective of label or status, it is only through the creation and enforcement of human rights law that such rights may be realized and protected (United Nations [UN], n.d.). This likely explains why the majority of human rights practice literature exists within the field of law, with other fields remaining on a theoretical level (Ife, 2012). Even within the field of social work, our educational standards generally speak to advocating for human rights as opposed to engaging in human rights practice (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015). Yet, as a field deeply rooted in the pursuit of social justice (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017), it behooves us to consider opportunities to not only educate social work students on how to advocate for human rights but to also provide opportunities for students to engage in human rights practices as discussed within the legal literature.

The cleavage between how social work and law approach human rights has much to do with how the two fields construct human rights. Scholars such as Wronka (1994), Reichert (2004, 2011), and Ife (2012), have spoken to rights identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) as existing within three generations of rights. The first generation encompasses civil and political rights (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2004, 2011; Wronka, 1994), which are also referred to as negative rights as they protect against governmental overreach (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2004, 2011; Wronka, 1994). This generation is how many Americans conceptualize human rights (Reichert, 2004, 2011), as these are seen as the natural rights we inherently possess and therefore need not be granted (Ife, 2012). Recognizing first generation rights as the basic rights that we all possess, and have agreed upon as a society, it follows that there be a system to protect against or rectify any violation of those rights. In most cases, constitutions,

bills of rights, treaties, and conventions have formalized these agreements and created legal pathways for people to redress violations (Ife, 2012).

The second generation are the economic, social, and cultural rights (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2004; Wronka, 1994) that ensure an adequate standard of living (Reichert, 2004, 2011). This set of rights is also referred to as positive rights (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2011; Wronka, 1994) as they require the state or government to take a more active role (Ife, 2012). For this reason, these rights are more contentious as there are significant ideological divides regarding whether or not the government should be required to provide social service supports for individuals to reach their full potential (Ife, 2012). As such, second generation rights are not guaranteed to the same extent as first generation rights (Ife, 2012), and we must therefore engage in actions to gain access to, and otherwise preserve, these rights (Reichert, 2011).

Third generation rights are referred to as solidarity (Wronka, 1994) or collective rights (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2004, 2011). These represent the human rights that require cooperation between multiple governments and nations to achieve (Reichert, 2004, 2011; Wronka, 1994). One example of third generation rights would be the right for countries such as the Philippines or Japan to prosper without the increased risk of severe hurricanes due to global warming (Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, 2020). As human activities such as greenhouse gas emissions are negatively contributing to global warming (Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, 2020), it requires collective action on the part of nations across the globe to reduce emissions. Third generation rights are the least developed, with few existing policies or protections in place; therefore, these rights are not frequently realized (Ife, 2012; Reichert, 2011).

### **Human Rights and Social Work**

When considering the three generations of human rights in relation to social work, there is significant overlap between the goals of second generation rights and social work practice (Ife, 2012). As outlined in the NASW's (2017) *Code of Ethics*, social workers are obligated to address social injustices with a particular focus on those related to economic, cultural, and social services. Social work's value on challenging social injustice lines up perfectly with the second generation's economic, social, and cultural rights. Additionally, the *Code of Ethics* states that the primary goal of social workers is to provide assistance to those in need and address larger social issues. This value on service highlights social work's tendency to focus on needs as opposed to rights. Considering Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, as social workers often do, many of our most basic physiological needs are not protected

within first generation rights. Therefore, social work's desire to first focus on ensuring individuals and communities have access to food and shelter, before focusing on one's access to civil and political rights, follows logically, given human need and benefit from social work services.

All too often social work practices that utilize a needs-based approach are contrasted to practices that utilize a rights-based approach (Ballantyne, 2019); with needs-based approaches being constructed as individualistic and case-oriented, and rights-based approaches constructed as systemic and cause-oriented (Ballantyne, 2019; Cox, Tice, & Long, 2016). Yet, this is a false dichotomy as not only can these two approaches be blended (Ballantyne, 2019), but when social workers speak to client or community needs, those statements are generally predicated on a belief that the client or community has a right that is failing to be realized (Ife, 2012). This notion is supported by CSWE's (2015) statement that social workers utilize their knowledge of human need to advance human rights. Though it may not be explicitly stated in our *Code of Ethics*, it is argued that social workers believe that individuals have the right to self-actualization (Ife, 2012). Within the broad field of social work, practitioners are readily working with clients to meet their basic needs, help them feel safe, find their place of belonging, feel good about themselves, and to ultimately feel fulfilled. Many of these practices are supported by our ethical values, such as the importance of human relationships and the dignity and worth of the person (NASW, 2017). As such, it is clear that helping individuals move up the hierarchy of needs is the ethical thing to do. Whether or not social work has drawn our ethical values from implicit human rights that we hold to be true, is less clear. It is clear, however, that social work curricula must integrate a more explicit education on human rights.

**Human rights education.** Though social work programs have informally provided human rights education for decades (McPherson & Libal, 2019), the accreditation standards were initially updated in 2008 and then again in 2015 to require increased formal education on the topic (CSWE, 2008, 2015). The initial 2008 mandate required social work programs to provide students with opportunities to become competent in human rights advocacy (CSWE, 2008; McPherson & Libal, 2019). Potentially recognizing that the average American equates 'human rights' with first generation rights, the 2015 mandate includes a call to advance second and third generation rights as well (CSWE, 2015; McPherson & Libal, 2019). Further, social work programs are to instruct students to advocate and engage in policy practice as a means to advance human rights (Cox et al., 2016; CSWE, 2015). We teach students about different approaches as a means to advocate for human rights on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. In doing so, we argue here, social work education is creating an unneeded separation. For example, social work

literature constructs case advocacy as applying to one case and relegates it to the micro level yet establishes cause advocacy as a macro-level intervention aimed at creating social change (Cox et al., 2016). However, from a legal perspective, one case has the potential to create large scale change.

Advocacy is a strong tool, and an essential aspect of social work practice (Cox et al., 2016). In relation to human rights work, however, it may not always be the best tool. Consider second and third generation rights, which are less likely to be codified in the law. Advocacy and legislative policy practice to address the lack of protection and oversight of these generations is critical. Alternatively, given that first generation rights generally have pre-existing legal pathways in place to rectify violations, advocacy presents as a far less useful tool. Similarly, when we educate students about social change, might we focus heavily on legislative policy practice and fail to provide other pathways? Further, how are we preparing future social workers to advance third generation rights that require collaborative action amongst multiple nations? As advocacy and legislative policy practice might not be the most effective tool for guaranteeing all three generations of human rights, what other tools are we providing future social workers within order to actively engage in human rights work? Finally, recognizing that first generation rights are more commonly positioned in the legal realm, second generation in the social services, and third generation in the political or environmental realm (Ife, 2012); how might social work programs effectively provide adequate education on human rights work that exists across multiple realms?

### **Forensic Social Work**

Given the rate at which social work schools and programs are currently growing, now more than ever we have the opportunity to provide additional human rights education and experience to students. Engaging students in forensic social work topics, courses, and practicum placements is a useful tool in meeting this goal. Broadly speaking, forensic social work can be thought of as any kind of social work practice that relates or connects to the law or legal system (National Organization of Forensic Social Work [NOFSW], 2020). If human rights can only be truly realized and protected through the creation and enforcement of human rights law, legal engagement seems a logical step. Further, when social work constructs social change as a result of macro policy practice and advocacy (Cox et al., 2016; CSWE, 2015; Haynes & Michelson, 2010; Jimenez, Pasztor, Chambers, & Fujii, 2015), we are essentially speaking about law. When social workers advocate for macro policy change, these collective actions are to support or discourage the drafting, introduction, or passing of bills (i.e. proposed laws) through legislative bodies (Haynes & Mickelson, 2010). Bills that successfully pass through both houses and are signed by the president (or

governor), become law (Haynes & Mickelson, 2010).

The Constitution distributes power between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the U.S. Government. Collectively, the three branches establish, execute, and interpret the law. In relation to social workers advancing human rights, it is beneficial to engage with all three branches of government. Likely shaped in part by the accreditation standards (CSWE, 2015), social work education tends to focus primarily on the legislative branch of government. Yet, the president holds the right to executive order, which carries the force of the law (“What is an,” 2016). Executive orders do not require the approval of Congress and they are not legislation, though they remain in place until overturned by a sitting president (“What is an,” 2016). Executive orders are useful as they can be enacted quickly in order to address immediate human rights crises. Further, the judicial branch offers additional opportunities via statutory interpretation to expand existing first generation rights to potentially include some protection of second generation rights. Additionally, the judicial branch has the power to potentially overturn oppressive laws that can be interpreted as existing out of agreement with primary direction (e.g. the Constitution, federal law, legal precedent, etc.). Educating future social workers on how to advance human rights through the courts is especially worthwhile as social workers often work first-hand with individuals who have been harmed by the law and therefore have standing to bring a court case (“Standing,” n.d.).

If social work education is to effectively prepare students to advance human rights, educating students on how law is created and enforced is critical. Further, social workers are key informants and experts on human rights issues as we actively engage with individuals who are most in need of human rights protections. As such, it fits social work education to prepare and position students within legal settings in order to appropriately orient them to human rights practice. Further, providing students with an understanding of the law is applicable (and arguably required) within all social work practice (Coleman, 2001; Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). This point is supported by the *Code of Ethics*, which advises social workers to remain knowledgeable and seek legal counsel as a means to ensure that their practice is compliant with local, state, and federal laws (NASW, 2017). Additionally, studies have illustrated that social workers with an increased knowledge and understanding of the law are more effective practitioners (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). Given that legal knowledge is important to effective social work practice, and not just required for intensive human rights practice, it is essential that students gain, at minimum, a basic understanding of the law and how it applies to social work practice prior to graduation (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996).

### **Why Social Workers need to Understand Law**

Given the sensitive nature of much of our work, there are necessarily various laws and regulations in place to protect ourselves, our clients, and those otherwise at risk. These laws intersect with social work practice and service in a minimum of four ways. First, practitioners must understand the legal regulations and mandates that are placed upon social work practice (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996; NASW, 2017). Across the various levels of government, there are legal regulations that define a 'social worker', the type of services they can provide, to whom, and the manner in which service provision may occur (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). As is often the case with legalese, discerning the legal parameters of one's practices is not easily accomplished, however, failure to comply with such regulations may be punishable with loss of licensure or even jail time for the more egregious offenses.

Second, social workers must understand and comply with the legal implications of the practitioner's role in client settings (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996; NASW, 2017). Within the client setting, social workers are expected to provide safety, privacy, and confidentiality to their clients (NASW, 2017). Further, based on information that is shared within the client setting, practitioners may be mandated to warn potential targets and/or report any harm admittedly inflicted by or to their clients (Cole, 2017; NASW, 2017; *Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California*, 1976). As is illustrated by the preceding two sentences, though practitioners are legally expected to protect their clients' confidentiality, there are exceptions when the practitioner may be legally compelled or otherwise required to break such confidentiality. As such, when working within the client setting, social workers must understand the threshold at which liability to protect their client gives way to liability to protect others.

Third, practitioners must ensure clients are advised of their legal rights (Coleman, 2001; Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996; NASW, 2017). In order to do so, social workers must first understand the rights afforded to their clients and then provide that information to the client appropriately. Such information provided to the client may need to include the potential limitations of privacy and confidentiality, the right to records, and/or whom to contact in order to report social worker misconduct or malpractice. Further, the social worker must adequately assess the client's level of understanding in order to appropriately advise the client. If the client is not completely and appropriately informed of their rights, their level of informed consent or assent comes into question.

Finally, social workers must understand the law and how it impacts and applies to clients as a means to appropriately advocate, council, support, and otherwise provide beneficial services (Coleman, 2001; Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996; NASW, 2017). In order to appropriately advocate for social change, as social workers are tasked



to do by the NASW's (2017) *Code of Ethics*, it is imperative that social workers have an understanding of oppressive laws and how they impact vulnerable populations. Further, as the field of social work places a premium on understanding the individual and their issues holistically, social workers frequently must consider environments and the various systems that impact the client and their issues (Coleman, 2001). Therefore, beyond the need to accurately understand law in order to effectively advocate for oppressed populations, social workers must also consider the impact that legal issues have on clients' wellbeing in order to fully address a client's need.

### **Providing Legal Education to Social Work Students**

Over the years, a number of social work schools have joined with law schools to provide joint degrees (Coleman, 2001; Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). Though there are many benefits to having the two degrees, there can also be a number of professional obstacles and challenges given the differing professional codes and cultures (Cole, 2012; Coleman, 2001). Further, depending on the student's goals and level of access, the added time and money required to secure a law degree may not be possible nor desired. For those students, taking a few courses from a law school without seeking an additional degree, minor, or certification may be a better option. However, given the nature of law curricula, students may need to take a number of courses in order to gain a sufficient breadth of legal knowledge. As such, time and money may still be an obstacle and social work students may be limited to the number of courses available given a non-law student status.

A more effective way for social work students to gain applicable legal knowledge would likely be through integrating legal content into the existing social work curriculum (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). Literature suggests that adding a semester-long course dedicated to the legal implications of social work practice would be best (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). However, as some social work programs may already struggle to appropriately include all of the accreditation standards (CSWE, 2015) into their curriculum, the addition of a new *Social Work and Law* course may not be an option (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996). Further, injecting legal content into existing social work courses may not sufficiently provide an adequate amount of legal knowledge or understanding. As courses are likely already burgeoning with content, the addition of limited legal discussion may prove to be inconsequential and difficult to retain. Therefore, recognizing the limitations of social work students taking courses at law schools and the challenges of integrating legal education into the social work curriculum, providing additional opportunities for students to gain legal knowledge within their field placements might be a more feasible option.

### **University Legal Clinic Practicums**

Integrating social work practicum students into law school clinics is beneficial in multiple ways for the students, the schools, and the larger community. First, such a collaboration not only presents the typical opportunity for social work students to enhance their classroom education by gaining hands-on practice experience, but provides students with the opportunity to gain beneficial knowledge of the legal system through interviewing and assessing clients, providing counseling, and researching client issues, policies, and laws (Leon, Kazmerski, & Dziegielewski, 2001). Additionally, in a number of traditional field placements, clients are specifically seeking or otherwise intending to receive social work services. In the case of social work supported law clinics, students have the opportunity to use theory and critical thinking to provide social work services that travel across the micro-macro spectrum of service provision.

Second, collaboration provides additional benefit for law students as social work students are taught specific professional skills that though equally advantageous to lawyers are not frequently acquired during law school (Aiken & Wizner, 2003; Barkai & Fine, 1983; Feldman & Wilson, 1981). Aiken and Wizner (2003) identified these skills to be “empathic interviewing, listening, and counseling; cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity; identification of the causes of clients’ problems; assisting clients to formulate goals and strategies for achieving them; crisis intervention; group work; and community organization” (p. 66). Coleman (2001) concurs with Aiken and Wizner but also considers the ability to evaluate and refer clients as additional skills taught in the social work curricula that are also beneficial for lawyers. Barkai and Fine (1983) recognize that legal cases are fraught with emotional components for clients that cannot be ignored. Further the authors state that “good lawyering resembles good therapy” (Barkai & Fine, 1983, p. 511). Though law students may be tempted to focus solely on the facts of the client’s legal issue (Barkai & Fine, 1983; Feldman & Wilson, 1981), social work students are taught to utilize systems and ecological approaches to understand more holistically the client’s issue (Coleman, 2001). Additionally, law students may assume that their legal competence will be enough to ensure client satisfaction. However, research suggests that it is the lawyer’s ability to connect and relate to the client that contributes highest to the client’s level of satisfaction, and not the lawyer’s level of competency (Feldman & Wilson, 1981).

Finally, placing social work students in university legal clinics benefits social work programs and extends social work’s reach and accessibility. At its very basic, creating and/or utilizing an existing model of integrating social work students into university law clinics helps secure field placement opportunities for social work students

while providing additional services and support to community members (Leon et al., 2001). As law clinics provide services for low-income and other disadvantaged individuals, incorporating social work students not only benefits the educational experience of students from both schools, but provides an empowering, culturally competent, holistic provision of services for the clients (Zumdahl, 2011). These additional services and supports are provided in two separate ways. First, social work and law students learn how to work collaboratively and gain mutual respect and understanding of the other's profession. Second, law students gain additional skills that allow them to provide therapeutically informed legal services.

University legal clinics offer an opportunity for social work and law students to work in an interdisciplinary setting. As such, it allows students from both fields to understand the significance of holistic care and see the benefit for clients, gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within both fields and the legal system, and develop a familiarity with interdisciplinary collaboration (Burry et al., 2011). The ability to work together effectively is especially poignant as social workers and lawyers frequently come into contact with each other. For example, social workers within the child welfare sphere frequently collaborate with lawyers in the process of providing essential services to their clients (Taylor, 2006). Given the passing of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in 1997 and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act in 1980 (Taylor, 2006), it is likely that such collaborations will necessarily continue between the two professions. Similar structural supports and rational connections perpetuate a continued collaboration between the legal field and social workers practicing within the fields of criminal justice, geriatrics, addictions, and mental health (Kozakiewicz, 2008). Therefore, the ability to work well together has a significant impact on the quality of services received by the clients, which further supports the aims of social work.

Though these types of practicums pave the way for continued interdisciplinary work, benefit still remains in situations when interdisciplinary collaboration is not an option in future work. Through working as part of interdisciplinary teams, social work students bring the "perspectives, values, and experiences of the social work profession" (NASW Code of Ethics, 2017, "2.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration") to the table, essentially instilling these concepts into law students. Winick and Wexler (2006) speak to the significance of lawyers practicing in a manner to increase clients' wellbeing and reduce clients' risk of negative psychological consequences as a result of their legal services. The authors refer to such practice as *therapeutic jurisprudence* and identify its characteristics as mirroring those skills frequently taught in the social work curriculum but not readily available in the law school

curriculum. Therefore, lawyers taught in interdisciplinary clinics would be able to provide more holistic legal services in the future, even in situations when a social worker was unavailable.

Overall, social work programs should aim to provide social work students with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience needed to advance human rights and provide competent services. Therefore, the question is not *should* legal education be incorporated into the social work curriculum, but *how* should it be incorporated. Though adding an additional course dedicated to the intersection of law and social work might be the most effective way to ensure proper coverage of the topic, there are certainly barriers and challenges that prevent adding a new course to the curricula. Nonetheless, integrating social work practicum students into existing university law clinics presents an opportunity to provide much-needed legal education while also offering a number of other benefits to the students, the schools, and the larger society. Therefore, as a means to further support the creation, maintenance, and continued existence of interdisciplinary work in university law clinics, provided below in a model of one such clinic.

#### **A Model Law School Clinic Field Placement**

A large Midwestern university recently piloted a field placement for social work students within a law school. The structure of the practicum will be discussed, followed by key components for success and ethical dilemmas that arose. The first step in creating a field practicum within a law school is to partner with a local law school clinic. Nearly all law schools house clinics in which faculty supervise law students who serve as student counsel on active cases. Most clinics specialize in one area of law. The particular clinic used for this pilot model represents clients in civil matters such as divorce, protective orders, and child support modifications; however, law schools house multiple clinics in a wide range of focus areas, such as criminal matters, wrongful conviction, immigration, disability law, conservation law, etc. A model similar to the one described in this section could be implemented in nearly any law school clinic. Key components of the piloted civil practice clinic include pairing of law and social work students, field unit meetings co-led by the law supervisor and social work field instructor, and a combination of micro- and macro-level practice experiences.

#### **Law and Social Work Student Pairs**

Pairing law and social work students is integral to interdisciplinary learning in a clinic setting. Due to the extensive supervision required to ensure student learning and efficacy to clients, the suggested maximum number of social work students is five, along with five law students. Thus, the clinic would support a total of 10 students, with five student pairs of one social work and one law student. In the pilot program, it was logical to pair students by

schedules. Each student was asked to provide their weekly schedules at orientation, and law and social work pairs were created based on the ease with which students would be able to coordinate to meet together with clients.

### **Interdisciplinary Field Meetings**

Lengthy weekly meetings co-led by the social work field instructor and the law student supervisor were a required component of the clinic practicum for both law and social work students. Each four-hour weekly meeting was similarly structured: Two hours were conducted in a traditional classroom manner, interdisciplinary case rounds occurred during the third hour, and finally an hour of discipline-specific supervision where both the law supervisor and social work field instructor provided separate group supervisions. The classroom portion was co-taught by the social work field instructor and the law supervisor, with guest speakers utilized when beneficial. The material varied greatly by week and consisted of material that is beneficial to both future social workers and attorneys. Example topics covered included how to build rapport with clients, courtroom procedures, and how discrimination is assessed by legal scholars. Discussion of second and third generation human rights was interwoven throughout the class as students discussed issues such as access to justice and the disparate impact facially neutral laws can have on vulnerable populations. Case rounds consisted of each student pair discussing updates on their open cases and advocacy projects. Additionally, case rounds permitted brainstorming on how to handle a problematic issue. For example, if a client is in need of housing, the group could pool their knowledge of local housing assistance programs.

### **Micro and Macro Practice Activities**

The student practicum activities give students the opportunity to advocate for second and third generation human rights at both the micro and macro level. An equal divide of micro and macro activities ensures the practicum meets generalist curriculum competencies; however, the emphasis could be adjusted for concentration-level field placements.

At the micro level, law and social work student pairs are assigned clients. All clinic clients were referred from the state legal aid office, and therefore, were all financially indigent. Student pairs conducted in-take interviews with clients, in which students entered knowing only the legal issue facing the client. After confidentiality acknowledgements and consents were obtained, the law student interviewed the client regarding the legal issue and the social work student conducted an assessment for services that could be provided, such as connection with TANF, SNAP, housing, medical, or other benefits.

At the macro level, students were required to develop an advocacy project. Flexibility was granted on group size based on interests, but all groups were required to be interdisciplinary. In consultation with the law and social work supervisors, the students identified a violation of human rights and advocated for a socially-just solution to the state legislature. The project involved in-depth analysis of the issue and creation of a plan for all phases of implementation and evaluation. An example of a second generation human rights project involved student advocacy to cap the cost of a specific pharmaceutical. A third generation human rights project involved reducing single-use plastic. When students realized the state prevented banning single-use plastic by statute, students moved on to a wider view of advocacy by focusing on actions to encourage corporations to ban use in their stores.

There are two ethical dilemmas that must be considered by any university considering implementation of a similar field placement model. First, state laws regarding mandatory reporting for each discipline must be explored. Some states exclude lawyers with attorney-client privilege from reporting requirements. Social workers working within the entity of a law school clinic can also be exempted from reporting, but it is not required. Decisions on how reporting will be handled must be made in advance of implementing the field placement. Second, public universities are bound by advocacy regulations to maintain tax-exempt status. Implementation of a clinic model with macro advocacy requires consultation with university attorneys to determine how to advocate within university parameters.

### **Discussion**

Proactively working to advance human rights necessitates involvement in the legal realm. In order for social work education to adequately prepare social work students to advance human rights, we argue that social work programs must integrate opportunities for students to acquire legal knowledge. Though law schools provide existing curriculum, social work students might struggle to access those courses. Further, as social work and law have different values and ethical standards (American Bar Association, 2019; NASW, 2017), educating a developing social worker within a law school might complicate the acquisition of ethical values. Thus, providing legal knowledge within the social work curriculum would be optimal. However, as discussed in the preceding, adding legal content to the curriculum might be out of reach for some social work programs. Therefore, providing legal education by way of forensic practicum placements presents as a possible solution.

The nature of social work practicums is such that social work students will always have access to an experienced social worker for guidance. In the model discussed above, the social work field instructor was placed within the law clinic. However, social work field directors may struggle to identify forensic placements where

experienced social workers are already employed. In such cases, it is recommended that an external field instructor be utilized. Additionally, though our model was implemented within a university law clinic, we believe the model can be adapted to fit other placements. For example, students could be placed in legal aid clinics and public defenders' offices, where they would be overseen by task supervisors. Students could then meet as a group with an external field instructor for classroom time, rounds, supervision, and macro practice activities. Additionally, there are other beneficial forensic placements that actively engage with multiple branches of government. A number of civil and human rights organizations both act as counsel in legal cases and actively advocate and lobby for legislative change. In these types of placements, students could participate in activities that span the micro-macro spectrum. Therefore, in adapting the model for use with an external field instructor supporting rights organization placements, macro activities may be able to be removed from the field instructor's responsibilities.

As the field of forensic social work grows, it is likely that identifying forensic social work placements will become easier. Similarly, as social work programs place students within legal settings, it is possible that those placements will see the benefit of social workers and create new forensic social work positions. Until then, providing legal education by way of forensic placements could initially require more work, as placements might need to be created as opposed to identified. Given the number of reasons previously discussed, we believe such activities to be worthwhile investments for the social work program, students, and larger community. Additionally, as legal engagement is an integral part of human rights advancement, we suggest that providing students with forensic placements further prepares them for future human rights work.

### **Conclusion**

We argue that if social work education is to adequately prepare students to advance human rights, providing legal education is critical to achieving this goal. As illustrated above, the benefit of legal education surpasses the gaining of essential knowledge to advance human rights, but also supports any and all future social work practice. Recognizing that the CSWE accreditation standards already require a substantial amount of content, we suggest that forensic social work placements have the potential to provide legal education in a manner that can be quickly implemented and not place significant burden on a social work program. We further described an interdisciplinary practicum model, which integrates social work students into university legal clinics.

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