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## **Designing Program Evaluation Outcomes to Mirror Council for Human Services Education (CSHSE) Standards at the Baccalaureate Degree Level**

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### **Introduction**

The Council of Standards for Human Services Education (CSHSE) requires all accredited human services programs to articulate strategies for improving their programs (2019). Although such improvement is an essential aspect of the accreditation process, it can end after the accreditation is received if the university or program does not require annual evaluations of program performance. Fortunately, many universities and colleges require annual outcome evaluations. Regular program evaluation aids the accreditation process while enhancing and ensuring the goals of the program are addressed and accomplished annually (Walvoord, 2010). By designing program evaluation outcomes to mirror the CSHSE's Standards, human services programs provide a ready infrastructure for continual improvement that will strengthen and enhance programs overtime. This brief note provides a description of one accredited Baccalaureate Degree program's attempt to integrate the CSHSE professional standards into its formal programmatic evaluation process.

### **The Importance of Program Evaluation**

Program evaluation is an important tool for enhancing the quality of higher education programs through assessment of student performance (Walser, 2015; Walvoord, 2010), serving students' evolving needs (Mizikaci, 2006; Walvoord, 2010), meeting accountability demands (Mizikaci, 2006; Murray, 2009; Walser, 2015), and ensuring programs are meeting the standards for respective accreditation bodies (Mizikaci, 2006; Murray, 2009; Walvoord, 2010). CSHSE (2019) publishes the agreed upon standards that human services programs must meet in order to receive the only programmatic accreditation available within the human services field. However, when programs fail to illustrate programmatic alignment with the professional standards of CSHSE, the authors believe it threatens the legitimacy of human services programs and consistency in the process of educating human services professionals. This is particularly alarming when considering that out of more than 300 existing human services programs in the United States, only 51 currently hold the accreditation (CSHSE, 2019). CSHSE Standards have been used to accredit human services program for 35 years since 1983 (CSHSE, 2018a), and this rate of accreditation is notably low. When programs apply for the CSHSE accreditation, their understanding of how to incorporate program evaluation into the accreditation process is critical to their potential success in obtaining accreditation. Designing program evaluation outcomes that mirror the CSHSE standards may enhance the likelihood that human services programs are successfully accredited. The authors contend that increasing the number of programs securing CSHSE accreditation contributes to the legitimacy of the human services profession and improves professional consistency within the field of human services.

### **Operationalizing Professional Standards into Program Evaluation Outcomes**

There are four important steps for operationalizing professional standards into measurable program evaluation outcomes (i.e., using the phrasing of the standards to write outcomes that are readily quantifiable). The first component of the program evaluation process is establishing program learning outcomes (Walvoord, 2010). Second, programs must align courses and assignments to each of the learning outcomes and should include identifying both indirect

and direct measures of how well students are achieving each outcome (Murray, 2009; Walvoord, 2010). For example, the program illustrated in the current paper uses several indirect outcomes measures such as an evaluation completed by internship site supervisors who observe students in their fieldwork, as well as the collection of a self-reported evaluation of the human services program from each graduating student during their last course. Examples of direct measures include students' grades in coursework and on individual assignments.

The third step for operationalizing professional standards into measurable program evaluation outcomes is to secure representative stakeholder involvement in the assessment process (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Therefore, measures should incorporate input from faculty, community partners engaged with the program (e.g., site supervisors), and students (Mizikaci, 2006; Walser, 2015). The fourth and final step in operationalizing professional standards into measurable program evaluation outcomes is disseminating findings and recommendations in order to implement changes and improvements in the program (Pasovic, 2011; Walser, 2015; Walvoord, 2010). Collectively, these four steps will strengthen the probability of any human services program earning CSHSE accreditation.

Writing outcomes that mirror the CSHSE standards in this way characterizes many of the human services programs that are currently accredited. For example, the curriculum standards outlined by CSHSE are articulated in standards 11 through 21. Each of these standards refers to the knowledge, theory, skills, and values that human services students should obtain through completion of coursework at the baccalaureate level (CSHSE, 2018b). Table 1 illustrates how one baccalaureate program operationalized the CSHSE curriculum standards into program evaluation outcomes. Each of the operationalized program evaluation outcomes incorporate the four steps described above, thus mirroring the CSHSE curriculum standards.

Table 1

	<i>Council for Standards on Human Services Education Standards (CSHSE, 2018b)</i>	<i>Operationalized Program Evaluation Outcomes</i>
<i>Standard 11</i>	History	Students will be able to evaluate how the human services profession has developed historically.
<i>Standard 12</i>	Human Systems	Students will be able to determine the appropriate responses to human needs: individual, interpersonal, group, family, organizational, community, and societal.
<i>Standard 13</i>	Human Service Delivery Systems	Students will be able to appraise the scope of conditions that promote or inhibit human functioning, including aging, delinquency, crime, poverty, mental illness, physical illness, addiction, and developmental disabilities.
<i>Standard 14</i>	Information Literacy	Students will be able to evaluate and disseminate information related to client data and records.
<i>Standard 15</i>	Program Planning and Evaluation	Students will be able to analyze service needs, plan strategies and interventions, and evaluate outcomes.
<i>Standard 16</i>	Client Interventions and Strategies	Students will be able to demonstrate clinical intervention skills such as case management, group facilitation, and use of consultation for providing direct services to clients.

<b>Standard 17</b>	Interpersonal Communication	Students will be able to develop genuine and empathic relationships with others in ways that a) clarify expectations, b) deal effectively with conflict, c) establish rapport with clients, and d) develop and sustain behaviors that are congruent with the values and ethics of the profession.
<b>Standard 18</b>	Administrative	Students will be able to demonstrate skills for indirect service as related to the administrative aspects of the human services delivery system by demonstrating skills in a) leadership and management, b) human resources, c) grant writing and fundraising, d) risk management, and e) budget/financial management.
<b>Standard 19</b>	Client-Related Values	Students will be able to critically analyze and apply values and attitudes that reflect human services ethical practice.
<b>Standard 20</b>	Self-Development	Students will be able to develop awareness of their own values, personalities, reaction patterns, interpersonal styles, and limitations as part of producing effective interactions with clients.
<b>Standard 21</b>	Field Experience	Students will be able to integrate knowledge, theory, skills, and professional behaviors in a human services field experience.

### Conclusion

Pursuing accreditation takes time, energy, and concerted effort, but it provides a strong foundation of accountability and excellence which students, colleges, and accreditation bodies are increasingly demanding. CSHSE accreditation provides human services programs with professional legitimacy, and thus contributes to the legitimacy of the human services profession, the practitioners working in the field, and the faculty educating them. Furthermore, it offers consistency across programs for agreed upon standards human services students, practitioners, and programs should all be meeting. This brief example of clearly linking program evaluation outcomes both direct and indirect to CSHSE standards can provide insight for programs seeking CSHSE accreditation. By operationalizing the standards into a program's formal evaluation processes, programs will be strengthened and enhanced, while also simplifying some of steps needed to pursue CSHSE accreditation.

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