

The Ethics of Accommodations for Social Work Students with Disabilities: Balancing Student, Program & Agency Needs

Dawn Hobdy
hobdydm@gmail.com

Allan Barsky
allanbarsky@gmail.com

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Key Concepts

- Disability vs. Ability
- Disability Joy
- Accommodations
- Competency-Based Education
- Professional Readiness
- Inclusivity / Participation
- Equity
- Good Ethics vs. Legal Compliance

Types of Disabilities



PHYSICAL



COGNITIVE



PSYCHOLOGICAL
- EMOTIONAL

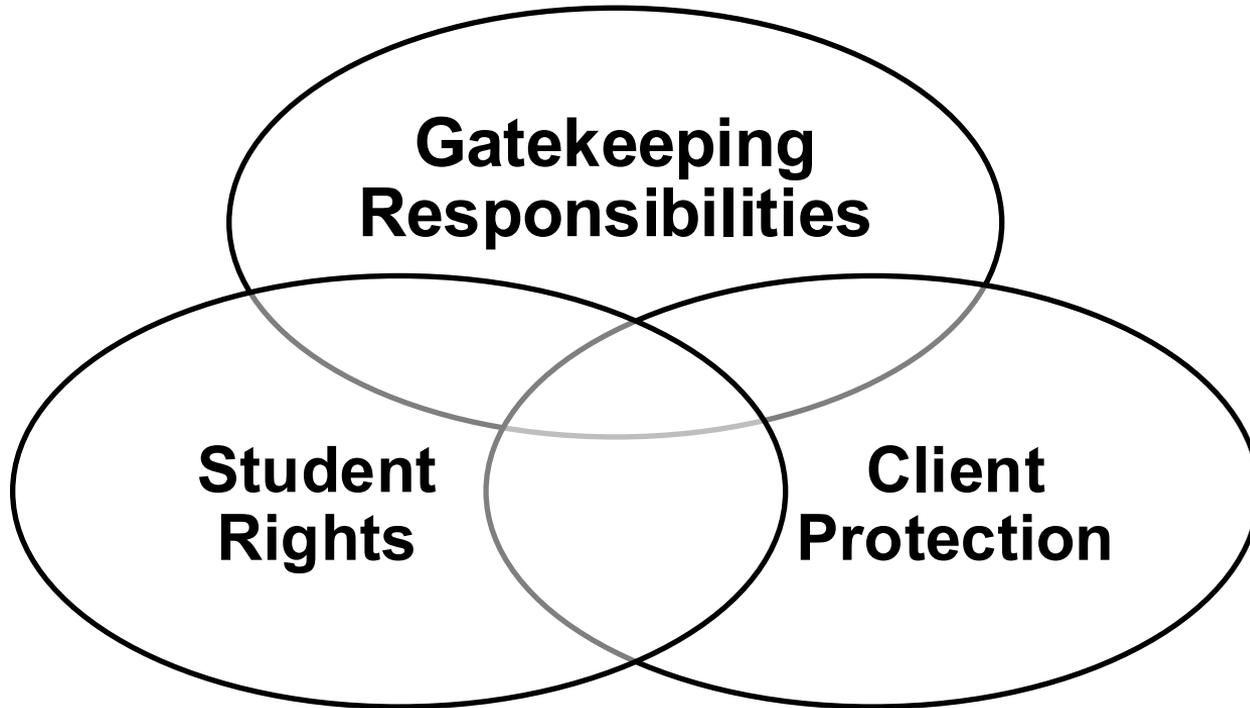


TEMPORARY-
PERMANENT

Learning Objectives

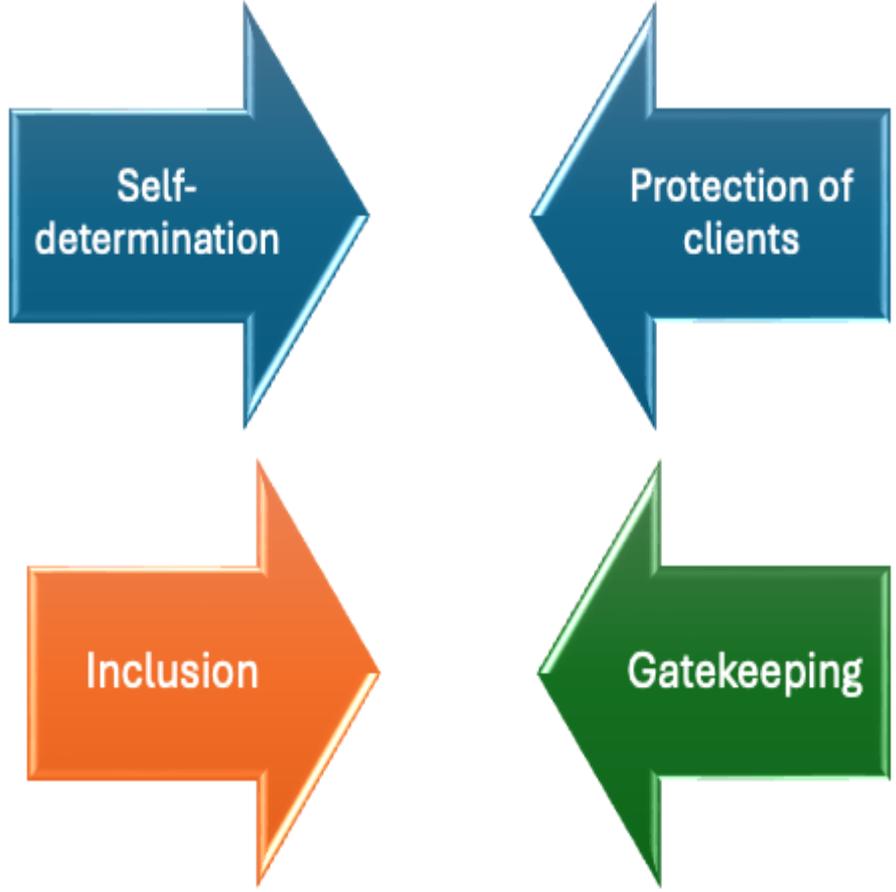
- Clarify ethical, legal, and programmatic obligations for students with disabilities
- Manage real-world accommodation dilemmas
- Employ practical strategies for inclusive, respectful, empowering, and competence-based education

Rationale for Today's Discussion



Relevant Ethical Standards and Tensions

- Dignity and worth of the person
- Cultural competence and humility
- Non-discrimination
- Professional competence
- Social Justice (inclusivity)



Cultural Humility



Treating students as experts in their own lives, including how they can succeed in the classroom and in practice.



Being aware of our own assumptions, biases, and power



Modeling good practice

Legal & Programmatic Frameworks

ADA

Reasonable accommodations

Essential functions

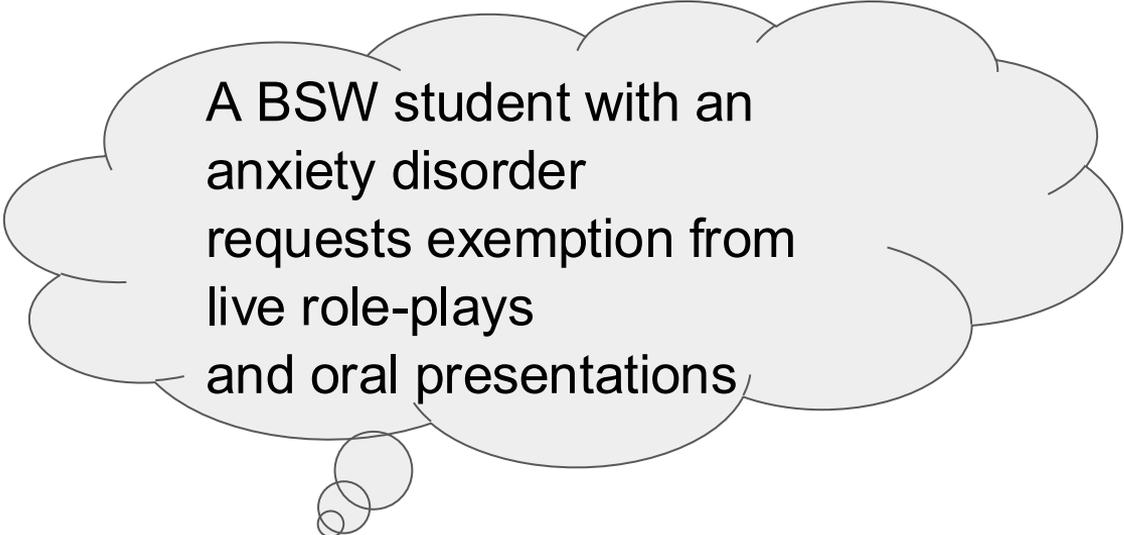
- Coursework
- Practicum

Undue hardship & safety

Managing risks to...

- Clients
- Students
- Practicum Agencies
- BSW Programs
- Faculty

Situation 1: Classroom Accommodations vs. Professional Expectations



A BSW student with an anxiety disorder requests exemption from live role-plays and oral presentations

Situation 2: Accommodations and Client Safety

Gloria is a BSW student at a child protection agency for her placement

Agency is concerned that Gloria will be unsafe because she is Blind and may not know when there is danger entering a home

Situation 3: AI-Assisted Documentation as Accommodation

- Hugo has an accommodation from SAS to record classes
- Hugo enters the recording into AI which creates notes for him
- What ethical issues does this situation raise?

Situation 4: Verbal Processing

- Harmony, a BSW student, has challenges with verbal processing
- After every class, she meets with Professor X to discuss what she missed in the lecture that day
- With this accommodation, Harmony is passing the course
- Professor X is concerned that Harmony will not be able to work effectively with clients once she graduates

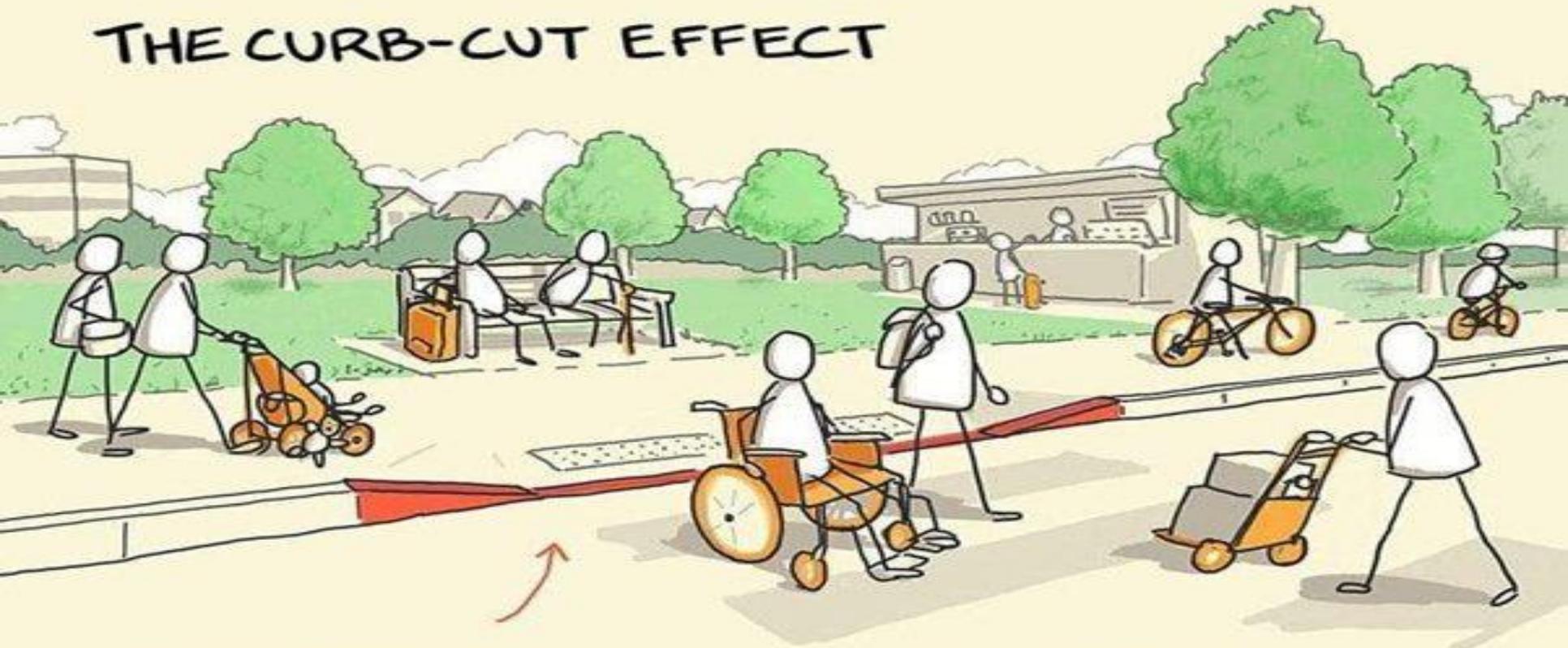
Beyond Individual Accommodations: Systems & Structures

- What types of supports, policies, and practices, do you think you and your BSW program could use from the university?
- What has been useful to you?
- What problems or concerns have you encountered?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Social Work Education

- Accessible presentation slides and online learning modules
- Multiple methods for communication and completion of assignments
- ADA-compliant buildings and rooms
- Incremental improvements (may not be perfect, but heading that way)
- Use of technology (accessibility tool on CANVAS)
- Tolerance for error

THE CURB-CUT EFFECT



WHEN WE DESIGN
FOR DISABILITIES

... WE MAKE THINGS
BETTER FOR EVERYONE

Assistive Technologies & Inclusive Tools

- Text-to-voice translation
- Voice-to-text translation
- Online exams (quiet, own pace)
- AI-assisted learning modules
- Other?

Advocacy & Policy-Level Strategies

- Being proactive - having systems in place for all
- Advocating on student-by-student basis
- Securing funding for tech and other accommodations
- Practicum-oriented advocacy
- Ensuring policies are put into practice

Closing Reflections and Takeaways

Be a good SW!

- Honest
- Respectful
- Accountable
- Inclusive
- Strengths-based
- Competence and continuing professional development

Resources & References

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