**Social Work: Exam Preparation/AATBS**

Orientation to the National Social Work Examination Strategies for Approaching the Examination

Association for Advanced Training

in the Behavioral Sciences @2010 AATBS

**Content Areas**

• Human Development and Behavior in the Environment (18%)

• Diversity and Social/Economic Justice (7%)

• Assessment, Diagnosis, and Intervention Planning (11%)

• Direct and Indirect Practice (22%)

• Communication (7%)

• Professional Relationships (5%)

• Supervision, Administration, Policy (8%)

• Practice Evaluation and the Utilization of Research (2%)

• Service Delivery (9%)

**Developing a Positive Attitude Toward the Examination**

**Adopting a Positive Attitude**

1. "I will Pass!"

2. "The Exam is Good" - Not the Enemy

3. Anxiety is Normal - Preparation & Practice Help

**Developing a Positive Attitude Toward the Examination**

**Avoiding a Negative Attitude**

1. Eliminate "Superstitious Theorizing"

2. Refuse to "Chase the Exam" Seeking Answers to Your Version of the Exam - Not Doing the Work of Study, Study, Study - Practice & Practice

3. Denial - Be prepared for the possibility your family and friends may not be as sympathetic to your situation as you need them to be.

**Format of the Examination**

• 170 four-option multiple-choice

• 20 are pretest questions and don't affect your score

n You won't know which 20 these are

• 4 hours to complete the exam

• Taken on a computer

• You will know your score immediately upon completion of the exam

**The Examination Questions**

• *Recall -* recognize or remember information

n Example: A client would like help applying for TANF, and wonders whether she is eligible for this assistance. The social worker explains that the program uses the means test to determine eligibility. "Means eligibility" depends **primarily** upon which of the following:

• A. Financial well-being

• B. Number of dependents

• C. Payroll contributors

• D. Health status

**Examination Questions Cont...**

• *Application -* making use of known information in a novel situation

n Recall relevant information and apply it to the

specific situation (or question)

n Example: A four year old is told that her parents have gone our of town for the weekend to visit "grandpa." Since the girls is in Piaget's preoperational stage, her response to this news is **most** likely to be:

• A. Indifference

• B. A belief that her parents have left for good

• C. Anger

• D. Protest

**Examination Questions Cont...**

• *Reasoning -* using your judgment n Usually more complex

n Use previous knowledge to apply it to the new

situation or stem of the question n Need to draw on multiple numbers of information sources:, theories, principle, ethical standards etc...

**Reasoning Example**

• A client tells her social worker that her father, a widower, has been having difficult dressing himself appropriate and no longer cleans his apartment. He was recently ticketed by the police for driving the wrong way on a one way street. The next day, he drove to his local market and got lost on the way home. The client says she is worried that her father has Alzheimer's disease. What should the social worker do **first?**

**° A. arrange to see the client's father and perform a mental status exam**

**° B. Recommend that the client take her rather to a physician for physical examination and lab tests**

**° C. Support the clients perceptions about her rather, ask her for more information concerning his daily function, and determine whether he should be moved to a long-term care facility ° D. discuss safety issues and options with the client, such as preventing her father from driving by raking away his car keys**

**Types of Questions on the Exam**

• *Ordinary multiple choice questions* - require you to recall information related to practice

• *Case study questions* - require you to apply information and use your reasoning ability

n Often use a hypothetical client and case n The question itself ("the social worker's best intervention is..") usually appears in the last sentence of the stem

**Types of Questions on the Exam Cont...**

• *Best answer questions -* the correct answer is less obvious than a recall question

n Two or more answers may appear to be correct but

you must decide which is the "best answer" n It may provide answers that are wrong answers but are acceptable social work practice; thus, it's essential to differentiate which is the best approach

n Often include qualifiers: "best", "first", "most important", "most appropriate", "least likely" etc..

**General Strategies**

• Don't be too hard on yourself

• Use a systematic and deliberate strategy for each question the first time you work with it

• Don't skip around

• Take breaks

• Don't expect trick questions

• Read ALL of the answers

• Make "educated guesses"

• Watch for "qualifiers" in questions

**Approaching Case Study Questions**

• Make the case "real"

• Read the case study carefully and completely

• Read the answers first to find out what the question will ask you to do

n Optional strategy that applies best to longer questions

• Read and consider every answer before choosing

• Use all the information you have

• Don't make unsupported assumptions

• Assume that there is, at least, a best answer

**Approaching Case Study Questions Cont..**

• Apply knowledge for social work practice, not what you do and your agency, clinic etc...

• Notice when questions ask you to apply a particular practice or theory

• Assume, unless otherwise stated, that you should choose the first or most important/appropriate step or intervention

• Be alert to indicators of danger or risk

• Use the process of elimination if necessary

• Use your "common sense" as well as your knowledge

• Draw from all areas of knowledge