

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR HEALTH POLICY

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Welcome to MHS 6706-- Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Policy-- one of the four core courses in the MS degree in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Program, offered through the Department of Child and Family Studies and the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences at the University of South Florida. The course faculty are myself-- Bruce Levin-- and Dr. Ardis Hanson.

My background's in public health, from the University of Texas. And I went to undergrad at the University of Wisconsin. So you will hear, probably periodically, about the Badgers and the Longhorns. I hope that nobody in the class went to Texas A&M University or the University of Minnesota, because they are archrivals and the enemies of my schools.

On a serious side, my background is in public health. And Dr. Hanson and myself have spent the last 20 years working on books and peer-reviewed papers and teaching in the broad field of behavioral health-- which we define as alcohol, drug-abuse, and mental disorders-- and developmental disabilities from a public-health perspective. My recent areas of interest include policy and translational research, where I participate in a National Institute on Drug Abuse-funded translational research center for adolescent behavioral health.

Working with Dr. Levin is like coming into a wild kingdom, between the Badgers, the Longhorns, and the Bulls. So it's always an exciting moment.

My background is in health and organizational communication, with a particular emphasis on public-sector mental-health policy as it is created and implemented into practice. Specifically, I am interested in the social languages and user constructs that are important components in the design and implementation of services, whether we are talking about one-on-one delivery of services to large policy groups, who are maybe deliberating best practices and envisioning strategic and operational changes. That means I'm interested in how language is used in talk and in text. And this is a component that we'll be coming across as we go through the course.

Course objectives. The first objective is to understand how policy and the policymaking process affects the delivery of child and adolescent behavioral-health services. Another objective for the course is to understand how history, legislation, and policy interact, and how they drive what services are delivered to whom, and how those services are evaluated.

We have also identified five learning objectives that you see on your screen that we hope will provide a solid foundation for you to understand how policy is framed, communicated, and supported, through the use of experts and evidence, as well as driven by various stakeholder groups. It should also give you an understanding of how best to interpret the research and to effectively communicate the dynamics of selected health-policy issues.

This course, as well as the MS degree program, is set up to meet certain national competencies. The competencies you see on the screen are competencies that this course will meet, as well as the other three core courses in the MS degree program. In addition, each concentration has their own competencies. And when you take a concentration core course or a concentration elective course, you are meeting specific concentration competencies, to be differentiated from these core course or program competencies for the MS degree program.

Now, you may ask, why do we have program competencies? What is interesting about this particular program is that we have identified program and core competencies. Within each of the four required MS core courses, there are competencies that have been determined, and within each of the concentration areas within the program. Competencies have been determined also for those required core and elective courses.

The advantage of this is that, when you take either core or concentration courses, that you meet the levels of competencies for the program. This has larger implications for when you graduate, because you can demonstrate that you have mastered a specific set of program and core competencies within the areas in which you are most interested.

Grading is simple and straightforward, in this course. There are three major components upon which you will be graded. The first counts for 25% of your grade. That includes the introductory assignments and the weekly assignments, throughout the semester. The second component, which counts for 50% of your grade, covers two policy briefs and policy-brief presentations you will be making, during the semester. And finally, the third component is the final exam, which counts for 25% of your grade.

More information is provided in the course syllabus. So please be sure to read it carefully and understand the requirements for this course.

You have several items that you need to attend to, on both the first day and the first week of this course. On the first day, please sign in to the course for first-day attendance and post a brief introduction about yourself on the discussion board or the cafe. Next, take three short quizzes, signifying that you have read, understood, and agreed to meet the requirements outlined in the course syllabus, and that you have reviewed, read, and understood the university's policy on plagiarism. Finally, that you have viewed and understood what the basic elements of information literacy are. More information, of course, is provided in the course syllabus.

In this next section, we will talk a little bit about the course resources embedded into the course to help you. In this class, we use the Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research-- JBHS&R--referencing style. It is not at all like the APA citation style, so we have uploaded the referencing and paper format guidelines, for easy reference. We have also posted the instructions on how to create a citation output style in EndNote, for those of you who use the citation-management software.

We are also providing samples of policy briefs, presentations, and papers that should give you ideas of how to prepare for the major assignments in the class-- the two policy briefs and accompanying presentations, and the final paper.

Don't forget that the USF libraries are a rich source of information on policy and policymaking, as well on issues in child and adolescent behavioral health. We are fortunate to have the FMHI library housed within the college. There are two librarians on staff to assist you with your reference needs.

There are also a number of services available to students, including setting up an interlibrary loan account, receiving training in how to find resources at different databases, and how to use EndNote or RefWorks-- the two free citation-management programs available to students on campus. Be sure to check out what the USF libraries also offer as additional support to graduate students.

Some final thoughts regarding this introduction. Policy, policymaking, and policy analysis in child and adolescent behavioral health are complex topics. This course provides the basics on how policy is created, shaped, and who and what shapes and drives policy. We have to admit we find the process of policymaking quite exciting, and we hope that you find the topic equally fascinating.

We also offer a few final tips, to help you get through this semester. Keep up at the weekly assignments and readings. Refer to the course syllabus, frequently. And be sure you read it, at the beginning of the course, all the way through. Watch for weekly announcements.

And, if you have any questions, please contact myself or Dr. Hanson. We look forward to working with you throughout this semester.