Tips for Post-Election Clinical Interactions & Engagement
Social Work Students, Supervisors and Faculty Field Advisors

Engage with your client in whatever way the client chooses in bringing issues forward. Be open and responsive to your client’s experiences and create space for differences. Consider the applicability of these tips to ensure that you are responding to your client’s needs and goals in the most clinically appropriate manner.

- Listen carefully and actively to your client’s experiences, perspectives and concerns.
- Allow space for your client’s expression of emotion; don’t censor client experiences and reactions.
- Empathize with your client and work to understand perspectives, regardless of how a client feels about the results of the election.
- Follow your client’s lead in the conversation, and be careful not to impose your own agenda.
- Hold space for differences in views.
- Explore the specific experiences that may be unfolding for your client and the communities in which they live.
- Validate real fears; listen for and respond to the real threats and lack of safety some clients may experience.
- Be mindful of your own countertransference feelings and possible reactions. Keep checking your bias in your work (in plans, assessments, etc.). Remember that when your own feelings are most intense, your need for supervision is the greatest!
- Write process recordings; they provide an important opportunity to reflect on and monitor your own work.
- Understand that a client may be triggered and re-experience previous losses and trauma.
- Particularly (but not solely) for those of you working with children, listen for fears related to wars, nuclear war, immigration, deportation, racism, sexism, homophobia and bullying.
- Consider the political tenor of the community and its potential impact on families and relationships.
- If clinically appropriate, help a client to move to action (for example, to do Phase III of trauma work, to find like-minded people to join with in activism groups, to move from case to cause).
Revisit your assessments within a biopsychosocial frame and re-calibrate your work within the context of the current situation.

- Does this new sociopolitical context alter your assessment of your client?
- Are there possible policy changes pending that could impact your client (re: health insurance, immigration or visa status, paperwork related to gender identity, adoptions etc.)? Might you need to revisit some aspects of your assessment in light of these changes?
- If so, how might this affect your treatment interventions?
- Are there particular resources your client may need in light of the possible changes?
- When appropriate and indicated, offer concrete assistance, information and resources regarding immigration status, health insurance and planning.

Use your resources

- Draw upon your own developing skills and resources.
- Reach out to your educational team and resources including:
  - Your supervisor, agency staff and colleagues
  - FFA and integrative seminar facilitator
  - Field directors
  - Fellow students, student groups and alumni groups, including field reps
  - Marta Sotomayor fellows

Tips on working in the agency

- Talk with your field supervisor and faculty field advisor about the political environment of your agency.
- Know agency and School policies around social action and arrest; understand agency's policies and NASW code regarding separation between the professional stance one can assume within the agency or as a representative of the agency vs. one's own activism outside of the agency.
- Find allies (if possible) in agencies.
- What can your agency do? If appropriate, explore opportunities with your supervisor for the agency to move to action.
- Consider organizing a voter registration guide at your agency.
Information for faculty and field affiliates

- Help students develop an understanding of the historical collective racial trauma that clients have experienced, and which has often been denied and is only partially dissolved.
- Help students recognize and acknowledge victim/victimizer/bystander enactments.
- Encourage students to access FFAs, supervisors and other supports.
- Track issues and themes clients are bringing to clinicians; plan team meetings, in-service trainings and staff discussion groups to help address issues and support staff and students alike.