# Legal Skills for Social Work Practice

**Course Name/Number:** SOWK 412  
**Faculty/Department:** School of Social Work & Human Services  
**UFV Credits:** 3  
**Calendar Description:**
This course focuses on both the development and demonstration of statutory social work practice skills in child welfare, youth criminal justice, and family court counselling. Students learn and demonstrate skills related to the various mandates that govern their work as professional social workers. The course involves experiential learning related to dispute resolution, advocacy, and legal skills such as investigation, evidence-giving, and report writing. Fundamental to practicing these skills is an understanding of empowerment, partnership, working across differences, and individual and systemic change. The course uses a critical perspective and promotes an understanding of the strengths and limitations of these skills and the legal system.

**Prerequisites:**
CYC 310A & B, or SOWK 330; and CYC 350 or SOWK 312. Students must be enrolled in either the Bachelor of Social Work or the Bachelor of Arts (Child and Youth Care). Note: Priority enrolment is reserved for Bachelor of Social Work students in the Child Welfare specialization; other Social Work students may register with department permission, based on seat availability.

**Corequisites:**
PRE or corequisites:

**Synonymous Course(s):**
(a) Replaces: SSSW 412  
(b) Cross-listed with:  
(c) Cannot take: for further credit.

**Total Hours Per Term:** 45

**Training Day-Based Instruction:**
Length of course:  
Hours per day:  

**Structure of Hours:**
- Lectures: 15 Hrs
- Seminar: 15 Hrs
- Laboratory: Hrs
- Field experience: 10 Hrs
- Student directed learning: 5 Hrs
- Other (specify): Hrs

**Other:**
- Maximum enrolment: 30
- Expected frequency of course offerings: 1 section per year (every semester, annually, every other year, etc.)

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**Course Implementations:**
- September 2001
- September 2012
- March 2018 (six years after UEC approval)

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**Course Designer(s):** Dr. Adrienne Chan, Curtis Magnuson & Karen Hedman

**Department Head:** Dr. Elizabeth Dow

**Supporting area consultation:**
**Curriculum Committee chair:**
**Dean/Associate VP:** Dr. Rosetta Khalideen

**Undergraduate Education Committee (UEC) approval:** Date approved: June 3, 2011  
Date of meeting: February 2012  
Date approved: February 2012  
Date of meeting: March 2, 2012
LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

At a Personal Level:
1. Articulate beliefs and values as they relate to the use of power inherent in the application of laws related to your professional social work practice.
2. Critically analyze reflect upon your knowledge of the law and the legal skills required of professional social workers.
3. Critically analyze and apply relevant literature and research, as well as identify areas where additional training is required.
4. Identify professional obligations in relation to dispute resolution, advocacy, investigations, and testifying in court.

At a Theoretical Level:
5. Identify the relationship between law, social policy, social change, and social justice in your practice.
6. Identify the range of options available to social work professionals when applying the laws related to social services, including dispute resolution, advocacy and formal legal proceedings.
7. Articulate larger theoretical and policy issues to the application of skills in practice situations (e.g., feminist theory, structural theory, ecological systems theory, developmental theory).

At a Practice Level:
8. Articulate the application of a continuum of dispute resolution skills of negotiation, mediation, arbitration and consensus-building to practice situations.
9. Examine and describe and apply appropriate advocacy skills in practice situations.
10. Identify and demonstrate the process of investigative interviewing and the documentation and presentation of the results of investigations in formal legal proceedings.
11. Identify and demonstrate the skills of giving evidence in a formal legal setting.
12. Identify the impact that the various legal and quasi-legal processes may have on children, youth, and families.

METHODS: (Guest lecturers, presentations, online instruction, field trips, etc.)

The course will be conducted in lecture style with exposure to guest speakers, videos, class discussion, and small group activities. Students may be required to attend court and to participate in the demonstration of skills related to the material (e.g., evidence giving, advocacy, mediation, etc.)

METHODS OF OBTAINING PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOGNITION (PLAR):

☐ Examination(s) ☐ Portfolio assessment ☐ Interview(s) ☐ Other (specify):

☐ PLAR cannot be awarded for this course for the following reason(s): As part of the Child Welfare Specialization, the Ministry of Children and Family Development requires that this course be completed before students may proceed to a partially-delegated practicum in a child protection setting.

TEXTBOOKS, REFERENCES, MATERIALS: [Textbook selection varies by instructor. Examples for this course might be:]


Other readings as assigned by the instructor.

SUPPLIES / MATERIALS:

STUDENT EVALUATION: [An example of student evaluation for this course might be:]

Written Assignment on the Application of Framework for Practice to a Case Study 20%
Investigative Report on Child Protection (removal, custody and access, youth custody) 35%
Demonstration of Legal Skills (Mediation, Consensus-building, Negotiation, Evidence-giving) 20%
Final Exam 25%
COURSE CONTENT: [Course content varies by instructor. An example of course content might be:]

Week 1: Foundational Concepts & Legal Skills
Week 2: Child Protection Law and the Court System
Week 3: Investigative Interviewing and Risk Assessment
Week 4: Confidentiality and Report Writing
Week 5: Removal
Week 6: Alternative Dispute Resolution
Week 7: Restorative Justice and the Criminal Legal System
Week 8: Disclosure
Week 9: Presenting a Case to the Court
Week 10: Evidence Giving
Week 11: Demonstration of Giving Evidence
Week 12: Demonstration of Giving Evidence
Week 13: Demonstration of Giving Evidence