

# Creating Links Between Theory and Practice: a Professionalization Path for the Initial Training of Social Workers

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**JUNE 28, 2017**



# Presentation outline

- Social work in Quebec
- Practice context
- Specific training given at the School of Social Work of the Université de Sherbrooke
- Observations and focus on the involvement of persons

# Social Work in Quebec

- Minimal requirement: three-year undergraduate university program
- Professional Order of Social Workers and Marital and Family Therapists of Quebec (OTSTCFQ)
  - Mandate to regulate and monitor professional activities that involve risks and consequences for the general public (<https://otstcfq.org/l-ordre>)
  - Social worker = reserved title

# Social work in Quebec (cont.)

Social workers primarily work in the health and social services public network

- Integrated University Health and Social Services Centres
  - Youth protection
  - Hospitals, long-term care and residential settings, rehabilitation centres
  - Local community service centres (mental health, home support ...)

They are also working in:

- other departments such as justice or education
- the community network (community organizations)

# Practice context

## Transformation of the practice context

- Increasing / emerging issues\*
- Changes in the health and social services network
- Competency framework of the OTSTCFQ
- Bill 21: scope of practice and reserved acts
- Shortage of social workers and loss of expertise

\*Bourque 2010, Cwikel et al, 2010; Social work department, 2011; MSSS, 2009

# Specific training given at the School of Social Work

- The mission
  - The School is involved in the community
  - Professionalization path aiming at integrating practice and research
  - Training students to be aware, critical and committed
  - Sense of participation, cooperation and co-construction

“The Bachelor of Social Work degree, provided at the School of Social Work, is aiming at training social workers or committed social workers who think critically, are open to diversity, are also reflexive, autonomous, responsible and **who are acting competently in practice situations**”  
(Department of Social work, 2011).

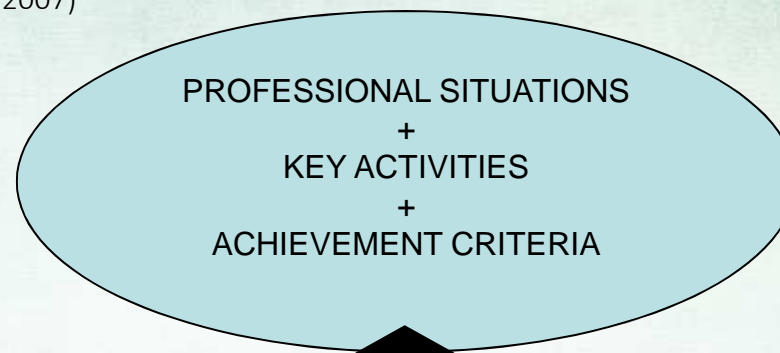
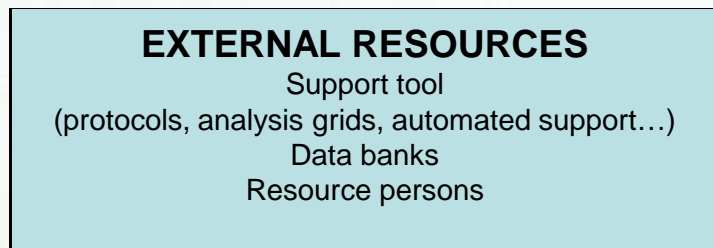
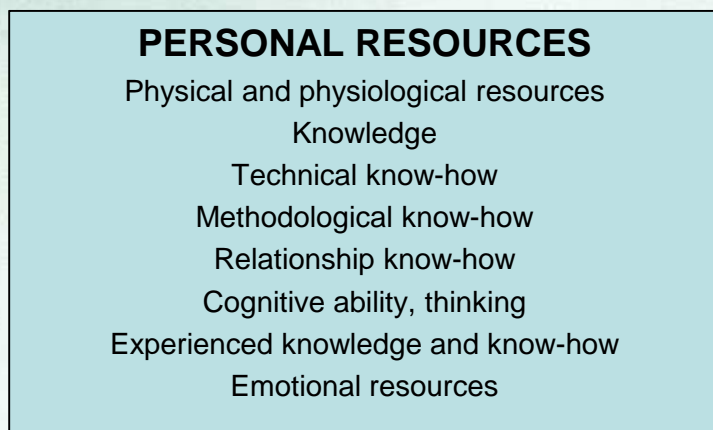
## a. Professionalization path

- “a learning process that prepares individuals for a career, while contributing to the development of professional competencies, taking ownership of the professional culture and building a professional identity through significant experiences they had and related to situations similar to those in professional practice. This process also enables individuals to assume the roles that define the profession”

Free translation of Bélisle, 2011, p.236

# b. How to act competently

(inspired from de Le Bortef, 2007)



RELEVANCE AND  
LINKS TO PRACTICE



ACCOMPANIMENT





## c. Professional situations

Situations of **accompanying** persons, families, groups or communities



Intervention situations on social and psychosocial issues  
**in a voluntary or involuntary context**



**Situations of evaluation** in social work



Intervention situations in a context involving the **complementarity** of several practitioners, stakeholders or resources



Situations that require the use of **research** abilities to understand situations and for the advancement of knowledge and practices

## d. Educational activities of the program

- Theoretical courses: introduction to practice, issues, intervention and research methodologies, conditions of actual practice
- Practice-oriented activities:
  - Workshop on intervention
  - Interventions in real-life situations
  - Observation and intervention internships
- Reflexivity and practice analyses

Real and simulated activities

## e. Major actors

### Students

- Enrolled in our program - benefit from activities and play an active role

### Practitioners-trainers

- Current social workers – supervise practice-oriented-activities

### Professors-lecturers

- Members of the department - responsible for various activities in the program – act as coordinators for practice-oriented activities

### Supervisors

- Current social workers – supervise students

### Users-trainers

- Persons using services or carers - play their own role in practice-oriented activities and provide leadership or play an active role in other activities

### Professionals

- Members of the department - ensure the smooth operation of various steps in preparing activities

### Actors

- Students or people from the community - contribute to practice-oriented activities

# Observations about the program

- Bridging the gap between theory and practice:
- Wide range of experiences for students in different contexts
  - use of resources acquired
- Decompartmentalization of social work methodologies and a perspective of integrated practices
- Retreat Day" of SCW actors in November 2015
  - Prioritizing certain projects including the involvement of users and carers

## a. Specific role played by users-trainers

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- Theoretical courses: introduction to theoretical issues, intervention and research methodologies, conditions of practice
- Practice-oriented activities:
  - Workshop on intervention
  - Interventions in real-life situations
  - Observation and intervention internships
- Reflection and analysis

**Speakers,  
testimonials,  
evaluators, co-  
teachers**

**Actors,  
users-trainers**

Real and  
simulated  
situations

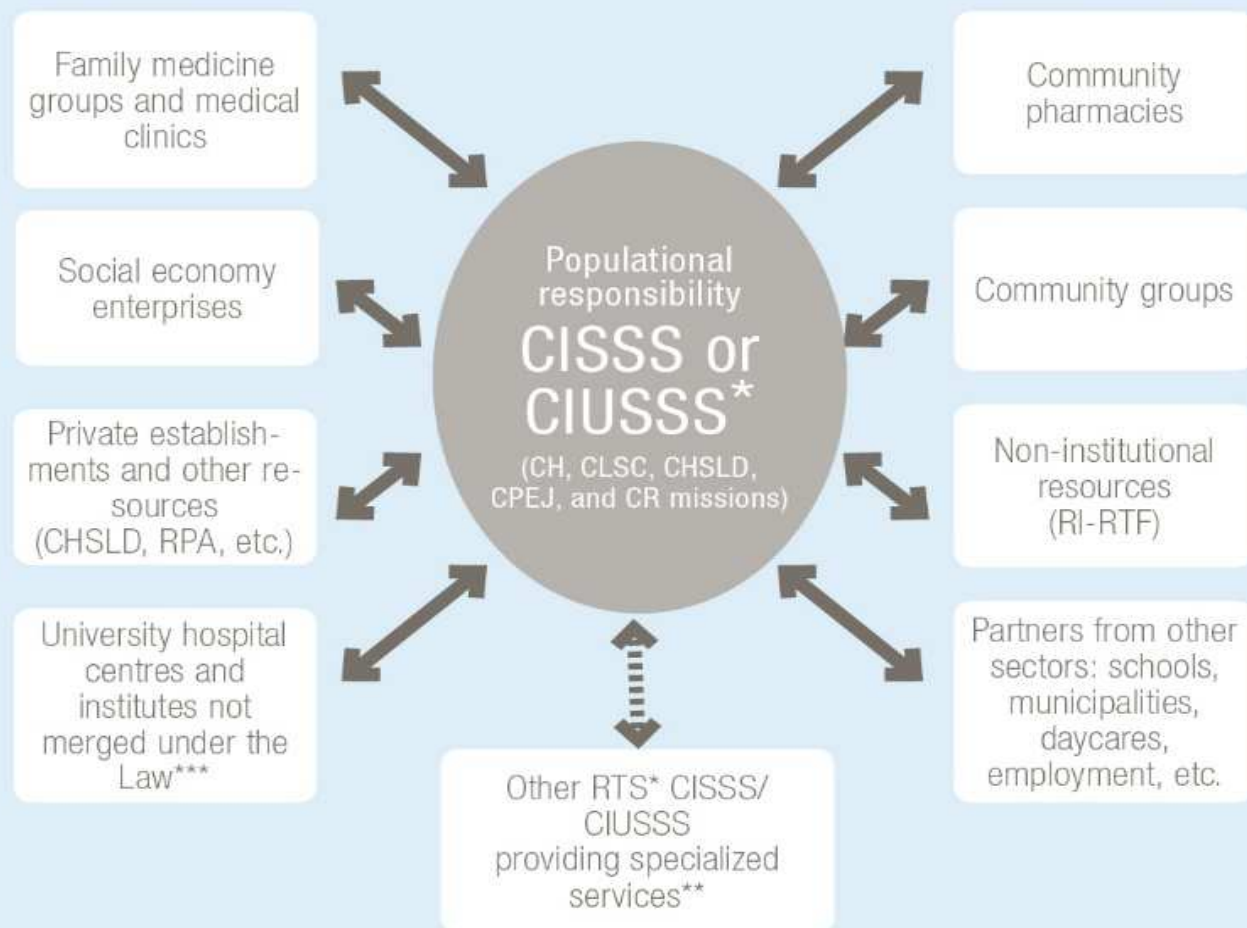
**Thanks for your attention!**



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## MAIN ACTORS OF A TERRITORIAL OR LOCAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK\*



\* Any given RTS may include more than one RLS that uses identical categories and partners at the local level.

\*\* The CISSS or CIUSSS must establish, if necessary, regional or interregional service corridors in order to complete the services provided to the population of their territory.

\*\*\* An Act to Modify the Organization and Governance of the Health and Social Services Network, in Particular by Abolishing the Regional Agencies (CQLR, c. 0-7.2).