**What is Clinical Advocacy?**

It has been said that “the personal is political”. We are each affected by the societal structures and conditions we live in, for better or worse.

House fires in early America used to be very common and often catastrophic. It is an extremely difficult situation when your house is on fire, when it’s just you, and you only have a water bucket. At some point communities organized, deciding that it was a much more efficient and effective idea to combine forces; to build fire halls, complete with volunteer firefighters and a big fire truck.

Likewise, social workers often find themselves, water bucket in hand, confronting the same needs with different clients over and over again. Practitioners often desire to pursue collective solutions to address problems before they start because fire trucks are often better than water buckets. Working at a community, political, or systemic level complements and enhances individualized support, helping entire people groups.

King University’s MSW Clinical Advocacy Specialization addresses the dual challenges of helping people resolve significant personal problems while also addressing the systemic issues that contributed to the development of these problems in the first place. This is especially true in rural and underserved communities, where social services are often in short supply.

The Clinical Advocacy Specialization is uniquely designed to contribute to both the capacity of individuals to satisfy their own needs but also to contribute to the cache of social resources critical for individual well-being. This specialization is designed to prepare social workers for agency-based interpersonal practice in underserved areas on behalf of people with relatively few helping resources readily available to them.

While it emphasizes clinically-informed case management as a primary practice modality it also recognizes the role social workers have in identifying resource gaps and inadequacies. This is with the goal of going beyond direct practice by also emphasizing the importance of advocating for and developing resources critical to improve individual social functioning. It is designed to do so by providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for resource and program development within under-resourced areas.

The Clinical Advocacy specialization is also distinguishable by its emphasis on Motivational Interviewing (a powerful and client-centered approach to practice) as the lens through which generalist social work practice will be taught. This distinctiveness sets apart the King University MSW program from most other MSW programs, engendering enthusiasm from students and agency consumers alike. King MSW graduates are prepared for advanced clinical practice but leavened with knowledge and skills for resource and program development. This is intended to equip practitioners with the ability to change not just individuals but social welfare systems of the region.

The fires will come, but social workers who are able to both carry their own water buckets and get the fire station built will be most effective in rural and underserved areas.