



# Human Services in Contemporary America

~ 8th edition ~



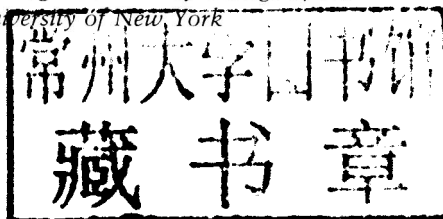
William R. Burger

# HUMAN SERVICES IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

EIGHTH EDITION

**William R. Burger**

*Kingsborough Community College of the  
City University of New York*



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William R. Burger

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HUMAN SERVICES IN  
CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

## Dedication

*To my daughter Kim, a “real” human services professional who contributed to this book and to her new daughter and my granddaughter, Anabelle, who has already contributed so much to my life.*

---

W. R. B.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



William R. Burger received his doctorate in social psychology, but his academic background also encompasses the fields of educational psychology and philosophy of education. While attending graduate school at Harvard University, he was awarded a research assistantship for his work in the area of community decision making.

Bill is the former director of the Mental Health and Human Services Program and is currently chairperson of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Human Services at Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York. He has served as a consultant to a variety of human services programs in New York and Massachusetts, has lectured at various colleges and universities, and has written a number of guest editorials for various newspapers.

Bill resides in New York and Massachusetts with his wife, two cats, and a dog.



## PREFACE

This text was written in the hope of enhancing the student's ability to help others with problems in their lives. The ability to help others in a professional context requires a base of knowledge along with a range of helping skills that can, to a large extent, be taught and learned. This text is intended to help the beginning student take the first steps toward acquiring the needed knowledge and skills.

The content provides a general introduction to the field of human services and is designed for introductory college courses in human services, mental health technology, social work, community mental health, and other human services programs. It is expected that most students who read this text are headed toward careers that involve direct contact with people. However, the book would also be useful to those considering administrative work in the human services.

Students in the human services typically begin their training with hopes of helping other people lead more fulfilling lives. Unfortunately, these hopes are sometimes dampened by the realities of the outside world. Although humanistic values do play an important role in present-day America, they must compete with other motives such as profit, power, and self-aggrandizement. In order to be effective, the human services worker must be able to face the harsh realities of our complex, imperfect society even while keeping the ideal society in mind and working toward it in a realistic way.

In the pages that follow, I have sought a balance between idealism and realism. I certainly do not intend to discourage idealism in students. However, experience has shown me that discouragement often attacks those who expect too much of clients, helping agencies, and themselves. This disillusionment can be avoided if the student knows what to expect.

This text offers a great deal of valuable information about human services, a field that has greatly increased in scope and complexity over recent decades. The material is presented in a provocative manner, raising issues not usually addressed

in introductory texts. The impact of political, economic, and social pressures on human services is explored.

First the goals, functions, and organization of human services are examined in the context of contemporary social problems. Next the groups of people who receive help from human services are described. A historical survey of human services follows, providing a background against which current efforts can be viewed. The major theories that govern helping efforts are covered, along with techniques and methods. The student is also provided with practical information about career options in the human services field.

The final chapters are certainly unusual for an introductory text. I feel it is important for students to know something about how social policies are developed and about how human services workers might influence policies. These social policies, which determine who receives what kind of help, have a great impact on worker and client alike. It is undeniable that today's student is the policymaker of tomorrow.

In the chapter on prevention, I demonstrate a strong bias in favor of programs aimed at preventing problems and dysfunctions from developing in the first place. Frankly, I try to persuade students, instructors, and human services agencies that prevention programs should play a major role in the future of human services.

The text concludes with a sampling of current controversies affecting human services. This section is offered with the intent of fostering a realistic understanding of conflicts and issues that confront human services workers. In addition, I also discuss the issues of the various titles by which human services workers are identified.

The introductory course in human services is perhaps the most important a student will take. It is here that the student's attitudes and philosophy are developed. I believe that a humanistic perspective, combined with a realistic awareness of societal problems, provides the best foundation for creative and effective helping.

## NEW TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

During the three years since the publication of the last edition of this text there has been historic change in this country. America became the first majority-white democracy in the world to elect an African American as its national leader. Barack Hussein Obama, the former democratic senator from Illinois, was elected the 44th President of the United States, sweeping away the last major racial barrier in American politics. It was a symbolic movement in the evolution of this nation's racial history: a breakthrough many believed was long overdue.

President Obama inherited a number of domestic and foreign policy debacles from the former two-term Republican president. President Obama is confronted with a nation well into a major recession, the likes of which have not been seen in seventy-five years. Our national unemployment rate is the highest in over a quarter of a century. The housing market has experienced a major decline, which in turn affects a significant number of businesses that rely on real estate development. A rise in home foreclosures is commonplace in many areas throughout the country. As a result of the sub-prime mortgage meltdown, major Wall Street firms declared bankruptcy and ailing bank and auto manufacturers asked for government bailouts.

The stock market has dropped to new lows, wreaking havoc to those with pensions and hopes for retirement. For most Americans working longer is no longer



a choice but a necessity. Meanwhile, prices for essential items such as food, clothing, and energy continue to rise. On the foreign policy front, the United States is still heavily involved in military actions abroad, costing billions of taxpayer dollars that otherwise might be allocated to domestic priorities.

Events such as these often affect groups in need disproportionately. Consequently, the human services system must continue to adapt and change as necessary in order to be responsive to an ever changing cultural landscape. As I have stated before, to be effective on every level of our human services system, it is important for workers to understand the current social, economic, and political climate in which human services will operate. To this end, new material has been added to examine the various political and social changes emanating from the new Obama administration. There is new material on current controversies, substance abuse, and stress management. As the field of human services continues to evolve it is necessary to include new information on changes in licensure in various fields as well as examining emerging career paths.

In this edition, I have added two new additional features. The first is real life examples of the diversity of human services workers, written by the actual workers in the field. The second is a representative sample of actual jobs in the field from across the country along with salaries and job responsibilities. As before, many topics throughout the text have been expanded and/or updated to include the most current information.

This eighth edition was developed to provide the reader with a comprehensive framework of our contemporary human services system. Hopefully, having read this text you will be equipped with the essential information needed to be more effective in your chosen career path.

W.R.B.

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I must also thank my friend and colleague Dr. Edward Martin for his invaluable technological assistance and his patience with this technologically challenged author. Special thanks goes to my wife, Mary Gifford, for her many hours entering my material onto our laptop. Also thanks to Ms. Sydell Basile for helping at the later stages of this manuscript to also enter material onto the disc.

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*William R. Burger*

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CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

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