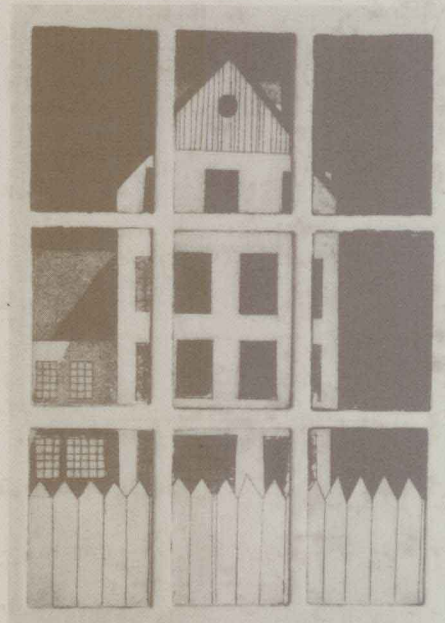


SOCIAL WELFARE

A Response to Human Need



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Social Welfare

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Preface

We have written this book for students in introductory social work courses and social service courses that focus on understanding the nature of the social welfare system in the United States. As a background for these courses and the book, an introductory course in sociology or social problems and some understanding of U.S. history are helpful but not necessary.

We view the social welfare system as one way we, as a people, attempt to respond to human needs within our society. Although these needs are individual in nature, they also have a universal quality. The social welfare system, then, is defined as a system of arrangements, programs, and mechanisms that can be formal or informal, governmental or nongovernmental, that tries to meet the needs of individuals and families who cannot fulfill such needs through their own resources. The theme carried throughout our book is society's response to human need. We examine the social welfare system from an historical as well as from a contemporary perspective. History is presented in a way that emphasizes its relevance to the current functioning of the system.

We have divided the book into four major parts. In Part One, we consider how societal values and philosophies, as well as "the needs of the times," have influenced the development of the social welfare system. We also trace the emergence of professionalism with social welfare. In the second part, we deal with the conditions that make it difficult for individuals and families to meet their needs, thereby requiring them to rely on the social welfare system. We discuss the availability of resources to meet these needs, and conclude with a discussion of specific types of prejudice and discrimination. In Part Three, we provide a thorough look at the fields of practice and service areas that constitute the social welfare system. Services specifically for children and families are covered in two chapters. In the remainder of this section of the book we deal with health care services, mental health services, the structure of the criminal justice system and the role of social work in juvenile corrections, gerontological social work, and two fields of practice, industrial and rural social work,

that lay fallow for many years but are now reemerging. In the fourth and final part, we look at social work as a profession. In so doing, we provide an organizing framework for integrating the various themes and cases discussed throughout the book.

Each chapter includes a listing of key terms developed for the first time within that chapter. Thoughtful questions are provided, along with a brief selection of suggested readings for those who wish to further develop their understanding of the material presented.

We have found the writing of this book an exciting challenge. The opportunity to explore the development of the U.S. social welfare system and to develop an analytic framework for understanding that system was stimulating.

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Our hope is that through the use of this book, students of social work will develop sufficient knowledge, values and skills needed for analyzing policy issues, for understanding the various roles and functions of professional social workers, and for working within the structure of the contemporary social welfare system. The book is dedicated to all students beginning their journey toward becoming effective social work practitioners. We hope that you become excited about joining a host of social workers who labor to meet human need, and to help those who, for whatever reason, cannot help themselves.

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Part One

Social Welfare as a Response to Societal Concern

Part One introduces the basic concepts and gives a framework for understanding the social welfare system in the United States. In Chapter 1 six different arrangements that are used by our society to provide for the needs of those who are a part of the societal system are defined and discussed. These arrangements give one facet of the framework of the book. A second facet is the history of the development of the U.S. social welfare system. Important milestones are introduced in Chapter 1. (This history will be expanded in later sections of the book.) A third facet is a discussion of the motivations that influence the decisions that affect our social welfare programs and policies.

Chapter 2 considers the professionalization of social welfare. It discusses professional attributes particularly as they relate to social work—the core profession in the social welfare system. The historical development of social work is also discussed in Chapter 2.

These two chapters are an introduction to the material that will deal with specific fields of practice in Part Three. They provide an overview of the whole social welfare system so that the reader may better understand the specific discussion of services to various segments of the population.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Social Welfare System in the United States

This chapter introduces the theme of this book—the social welfare system as a response to human need. It starts by considering human need as a part of the human condition and moves through how people meet their needs. In a complex technological society not all human need can be met through personal efforts. Thus, throughout history people in their collectives or social structures have created mechanisms or systems of organizing their responses to human need. This chapter gives us an overview of these mechanisms as they affect the system in the United States from three perspectives: first, approaches used in providing for human need, second, historical milestones that changed the structure and philosophy underlying the contemporary U.S. social welfare system, and finally, the motivations that influence decisions about how human need should be met. Later chapters will develop these themes in more depth.

Human Needs

(*Human needs* refers to those resources people need if they are to survive as individuals and to function appropriately in their society. No definitive list of needs can be given because people and situations vary both in terms of specific individuals and specific situations and in terms of different needs at varying stages of development. For example, a child with an enzyme deficiency has different nutritional needs from a child of a similar age who does not have that problem. The needs of young children for

protection and care are very different from those of young adults. For individuals to develop self-esteem (a sense of self-worth that allows people to function comfortably in their environment), one culture may require considerable freedom of choice; another culture may require considerable conformity to societal expectations about roles and behaviors. Families with an unemployed breadwinner in densely populated cities do not have the means to raise a portion of their food while a rural family living in poverty may be able to. Every individual and family has needs that, if provided for, would enable the family and its members to function more adequately. But these needs differ, depending on the individual and the situation.

Human needs can include the following:

1. Sufficient food, clothing, and shelter for physical survival.
2. A safe environment and adequate health care for protection from and treatment for illness and accidents.
3. Relationships with other people that provide a sense of being cared for, loved, and belonging.
4. Opportunities for emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth and development. This includes the opportunity for individuals to make use of their innate talents and interests.
5. Opportunities for participation in making decisions about the common life of one's own society. This includes being able to make appropriate contributions to the maintenance of life together.

Any specification of some need of any particular group of people must consider its life-style, culture, and value system. It must also consider the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual attributes of the individual being helped. Need must also be considered in the light of issues of responsibility for self, others, and the general social condition.

In the context of the United States a theme of *rugged individualism* has influenced our thinking about social welfare—the belief that each person should be responsible for meeting his or her own needs. To truly live this life-style, one must be adult, a hermit, and live where the environment allows living off the land. This situation is neither possible in contemporary society nor desirable in terms of optimal human growth and development. Human beings have always depended on others to provide for their needs. These others may have been family, clan, tribe, neighbors, co-workers, or a part of some organized structure such as church, city-state, feudal systems, or governmental unit.

Human beings have always had some means for meeting human need. The means for meeting human need that serves the common good is known as *social welfare*. The network of services that result from custom and public policy forms what is known as the social welfare system.

This system is particularly concerned with individuals and families that cannot meet their needs with their own resources. Children, older people, and the handicapped are of particular concern. The system includes government programs, private nonprofit organizations, and informal helping endeavors.

Important questions within this social welfare system are: which needs should be met by individuals and families in caring for themselves and each other? Which needs should be met through relationships among people outside formal structures (the informal system)? And which needs are the responsibility of the formal social welfare systems (government and other formal organizations)? The search for this balance in meeting human need is an ever-present issue in the development of the contemporary social welfare system in the United States.

Societal Responses

Society has evolved six different kinds of societal arrangements for meeting human need: mutual aid, charity-philanthropy, public welfare, social insurance, social services, and universal provision.¹ Each arrangement has developed from people's responses to societal structures and from beliefs about human needs; why people are unable to meet their needs and what society's responsibility is in meeting these unmet needs. Each arrangement has particular qualities that make it especially appropriate for meeting particular kinds of needs under differing circumstances. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Today's social welfare system makes use of all six arrangements. (See Table 1.1 for definitions of these arrangements.) Thus, in evaluating the U.S. social welfare system it is important to consider which arrangement is most appropriate to meet specific needs of a particular circumstance.

Mutual Aid

- *Mutual aid* is the oldest form of social welfare. It probably has been used ever since humans banded together in extended families or loose social
- groups. It is, however, the least recognized and documented in welfare literature. Mutual aid is the expression of the need of people to have responsibility for each others' well-being. Friends and neighbors have provided for children when family capacity for care has broken down. Social groups have cared for their own aged, weak, and deviant. Studies show mutual aid mechanisms are present in primitive societies. Imperatives for mutual aid are a strong part of the Judeo-Christian traditions. Mutual aid was present in the craft guilds of the Middle Ages when they provided funds for the burial of members and the support of their