Social Work

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSION

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Printed in the United States of America
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 06 05 04 03

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2002116398

ISBN 0-534-62672-6

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Preface

The start of the twenty-first century has brought with it challenges that affect people's lives. Many Americans struggle against poverty, oppression, and violence. Millions live without adequate wages, health care, food, and education. Large-scale terrorism on American soil requires us to try to make our lives safer without turning to hate, bigotry, and repression. Social work and social workers are called upon to address these challenges. Social work educators must recruit a new generation of practitioners and prepare them to help individuals, families, and communities develop and expand the strengths they need to address their problems. This process often begins in introductory social work classes.

Introductory social work courses attract a variety of students. Most are drawn to the profession because they want to help people. *Social Work: An Introduction to the Profession* provides a foundation of knowledge about social work practice that will prepare students for future social work classes and more advanced study. Although wanting to help people is critical for anyone working in human services, there is much more to becoming a professional social worker. The book also provides students with information about the breadth of social work practice and what it means to be a social worker, helping them determine whether social work is a good fit for them. Thus, the book is designed to encourage knowledge building and self-exploration, both of which are essential to developing good social work practice.

Social Work: An Introduction to the Profession, like many other texts, informs students about what it means to be a professional social worker. Unlike some other books, it also instills interest and enthusiasm about pursuing a social work career. The chapters include detailed first-person stories by social work practitioners. These social workers describe what daily work in their areas

of expertise is like and highlight cases that exemplify their work. The stories show the many sides of social work practice. The chapters also include More About . . . and Point of View boxes with additional detail and differing points of view on topics of interest.

Pedagogically, the book includes several aids to learning and teaching. Besides the boxed material, the book features challenging but uplifting case examples. Some of them remind us why we do this type of work; others end less positively and make us wonder how to make a difference. The stories give students a very real picture of social work practice and help them better understand what social work practice is like. Each chapter is followed by a conclusion and a list of the key terms that are set in bold type within the chapter and are also defined in the glossary at the end of the text.

The book is a combination textbook and workbook. Brief questions are interspersed throughout the chapters to encourage students to engage more deeply with the material. At the end of each chapter are questions that can be used for full class or small group discussions or on exams. Based on the material presented in the chapter, the questions encourage students to obtain additional information and explore their thoughts about important issues. The chapters end with exercises that are designed as group or individual assignments. Many are experiential and emphasize self-exploration as well as review of the material presented in the chapter. We have deliberately included more exercises than can be done in the available time in order to provide choice and flexibility. Instructors and students can choose which exercises to complete, or individuals or groups can work on different exercises and report back to the class. The exercises can be used to stimulate discussions or to serve as semester-long assignments. The discussion questions, exercises, and stories challenge students to explore the concepts introduced in the text and relate them to their own interests.

This book was developed from our combined years of practice experience and teaching of introductory social work courses. We are appreciative of all the assistance we received from colleagues, especially those who helped write some of the chapters, and from the professional social workers who shared their experiences. We are also grateful to our students who, over the years, have let us know what does and does not work in the classroom. In particular, we thank the students who reviewed chapters and provided valuable insights from the perspective of the target audience.

We are appreciative of the feedback of the reviewers: Anita Sharma, University of Louisiana at Monroe; Carolyn Tice, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; James L. Wolk, Georgia State University; and David Woody III, The University of Texas at Arlington. We tried to address all their suggestions and incorporate their valuable input.

Special thanks goes to Donald Brieland, Advisory Editor in Social Work. Don's insights and contributions have been invaluable, as has been his men-

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toring over the years. Without Don, we would never have found F. E. Peacock Publishers, and we are most grateful to him for introducing us and having faith in our work.

Finally, appreciation goes to the wonderful people at F. E. Peacock Publishers. The editing skills of Sybil Sosin were incredible. Her work was of the highest caliber and really made the book flow. We also appreciate her attention to detail. We have the highest regard for the guidance of Richard Welna, Vice President. Dick Welna is truly an author's ideal. He was always available to help us, his knowledge of publishing is vast and worldly, and he is incredibly patient. His support over the years has been unwavering; he never gave up on us, always sharing kind words of encouragement. We cannot thank him enough. And last, but most certainly not least, our thanks to Ted Peacock, the president of F. E. Peacock Publishers. Ted's enthusiasm for education and sharing knowledge through the medium of books is inspiring. Being an author for Ted Peacock has been an honor, and the confidence he has in his authors is a real gift. We are most grateful to Ted and all the fine people he gathered to make F. E. Peacock such a wonderful publishing house.

While we have incorporated much of the advice and direction we received, an introductory textbook cannot thoroughly cover all the topics important to all social workers. Thus, the responsibility for the content and design of this book rests solely with the authors. We hope that students and instructors alike will find *Social Work: An Introduction to the Profession* useful, informative, and engaging.

Liz Segal
Karen Gerdes
Sue Steiner
Tempe, Arizona

Editor's Note: Wadsworth is pleased to welcome Elizabeth Segal, Karen Gerdes, and Sue Steiner to our publishing family through our recent acquisition of the former F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. We also thank Ted Peacock, Richard Welna, and their entire staff for their contribution to this work and to the field of social work.

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UNIT ONE

Foundations of Social Work

The social work profession grew out of a rich history of responses to social need and a unique set of values and ethics. This unit introduces the many concepts that help define social work and outlines the historical development of the profession. The values and ethics that are primary to the profession are presented and discussed.

Chapter 1 introduces the ideas and terms used by social workers. It helps you understand the development of the profession and the professional expectations for a career in social work. The chapter lets you compare your own interests and characteristics with those of a professional social worker. After completing it, you will be ready to embark on a more in-depth study of what it means to be a social worker.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the major social welfare events that have helped shape the professional actions of social workers. The values and beliefs that have evolved over time are highlighted and explained to help clarify the way responses to social need developed in the United States. The chapter presents information on major social welfare programs and resources available in this country.

Social workers serve in a variety of roles and intervene on numerous levels. Chapter 3 introduces the primary modes of practice used by professional social workers. The chapter highlights the core components of individual, family, group, and community practice and identifies the ethical challenges unique to each level of practice.

1 What Is Social Work?

Jane is a thirty-two-year-old single mother with a five-year-old son and an eight-year-old daughter. She has supported her family by working thirty hours a week at a small local grocery store. Her job performance was excellent, but because of a decline in business she was laid off. Now she needs to find a way to support her family. Her low-income neighborhood has very few businesses, and most of her neighbors subsist on small amounts of earned income and public social service programs.

Jane contacts her local family service agency for advice and direction. "My neighbor said I should come here. I just lost my job; I have two young kids to support; my rent is due next week; and I don't know what to do. Can you help me?"

If Jane came to you, what would you do?

This book will help you identify the resources available to Jane. You will learn about the skills that the professional social workers at the family social service agency will draw on to help Jane and her family. Social work is not only about Jane and her lost job. It is also about neighborhoods and communities. It is about the childhood experiences that have contributed to Jane's identity and concerns. It is about government and public policies. This book is a guide to understanding how social workers fit into all these different areas.

Once you have learned about the resources and skills needed by a professional social worker, you will be better prepared to decide whether a career in social work would suit you. You will be ready to decide on your next step in pursuing a career in this ever-changing and diverse field.

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