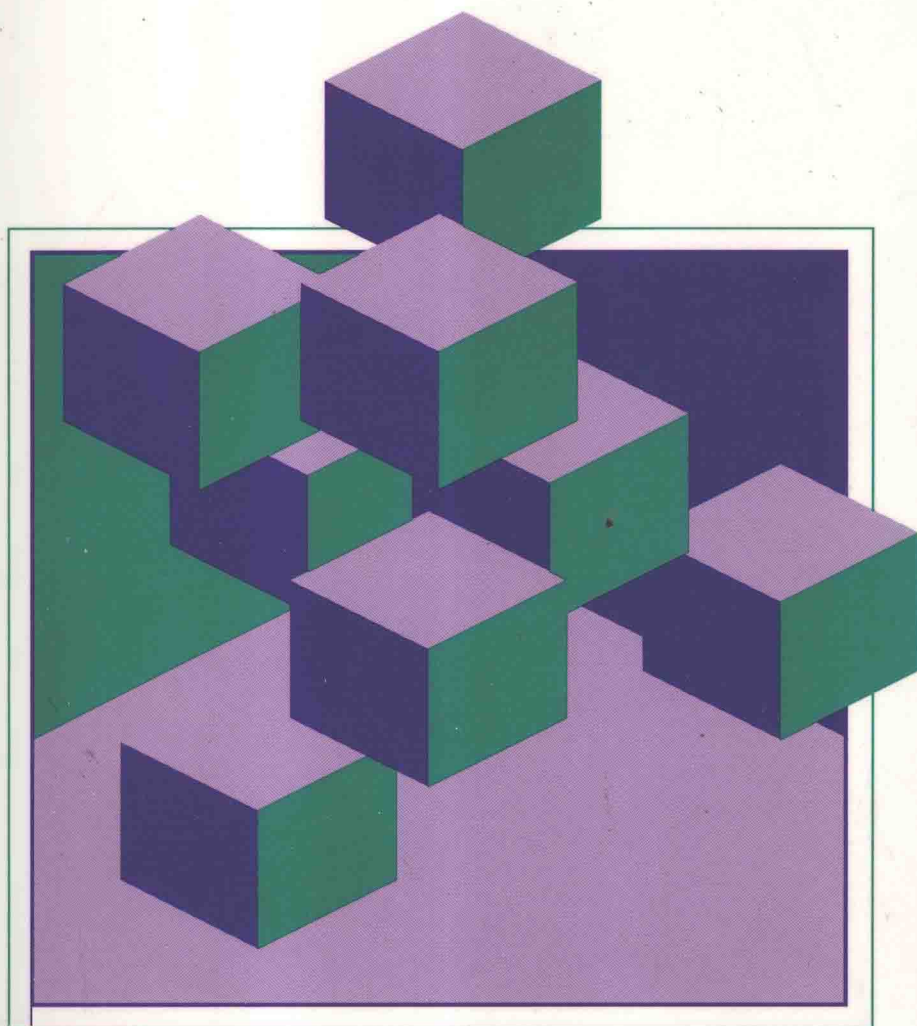
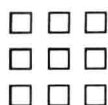


EAMWORK IN HUMAN SERVICES

MODELS AND
APPLICATIONS
ACROSS THE
LIFE SPAN

HOWARD G. GARNER
FRED P. ORELOVE





Teamwork in Human Services

Models and Applications Across the Life Span

Edited by

HOWARD G. GARNER, PH.D.

Professor, School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

FRED P. ORELOVE, PH.D.

Executive Director
Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

WITH ELEVEN CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Butterworth-Heinemann

Boston London Oxford Singapore Sydney Toronto Wellington

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Teamwork in human services : models and applications across the life span / edited by Howard G. Garner, Fred Orelove : with 11 contributing authors.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7506-9519-6 (acid-free paper)

1. Social service—Team work. 2. Health care teams. 3. Human services. I. Garner, Howard G. II. Orelove, Fred P.

HV41.T43 1994

361'.0068'4--dc20

94-9103

CIP

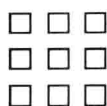
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Butterworth-Heinemann
313 Washington Street
Newton, MA 02158

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America



Contributors

Christine A. Ameen, Ed.D
Director of Program Evaluation and Planning
Starr Commonwealth Schools
Albion, MI 49224

Maité deLamerens-Pratt, M.D. FAAP
Pediatric Consultants, P.C.
777 Washington Avenue, Suite 400
Memphis, TN 38105

Corinne Welt Garland, M.Ed.
Executive Director
Child Development Resources
Lightfoot, VA 23090

Howard G. Garner, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
Division of Teacher Education
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284-2020

Gerald S. Golden, M.D.
Adjunct Professor of Neurology
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
and Consultant
Children's Seashore House
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Judith Hernan, MSN, RN, NHA
Administrator
York Lutheran Retirement Community and Center
1801 Folkemer Circle
York, PA 17404

Joyce G. Losen, Ed.M.
Assistant to the Superintendent
Westport Public Schools
Westport, CT 06880

Stuart M. Losen, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor
Graduate School of Education and Applied Professions
Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT
and Licensed Clinical Psychologist
260 Riverside Avenue
Westport, CT 06880

Martin L. Mitchell, Ed.D.
Vice President of Program Evaluation and Planning
Starr Commonwealth Schools
Albion, MI 49224

Fred P. Orellove, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284-3020

Vicki C. Pappas, Ph.D.
Director, Planning and Policy Studies Program
Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

Tawara D. Taylor, MA
Director of Community Services Division
University Affiliated Program
Georgetown University
3800 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007-2197

Virginia J. Williams, MA
Senior Advisor
University Affiliated Program
Georgetown University
3800 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007-2197



Preface

In the 1990s teamwork has become a major goal of almost all organizations—from small businesses to large corporations, from clinics to hospitals, from schools to school divisions, from day-care centers to residential programs. Teams in human services programs across the life span provide high-quality services that are individualized and carefully coordinated. In a work world of restricted resources, complex problems, renewed focus on quality, and increased competition, the need to work together in pursuit of common goals has become both evident and imperative.

No longer can organizations afford to have small groups of specialists organized in departments and working in isolation on narrow aspects of multifaceted issues and problems. The old way of doing business produced distrust and competition among professionals who were serving the same patient, student, or client. Today, teams are being formed to include professionals with different knowledge and skills who are expected to work together, communicate, collaborate, analyze and solve problems, make collective decisions, and monitor the delivery and coordination of services. The person receiving services and the family are often viewed as important members of the team because of their special interest, vital information, and perspective.

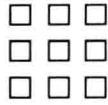
In hospitals, schools, community agencies, and other human services programs, everyone seems to favor teamwork and to desire its many benefits, but, unfortunately, not everyone engages in behavior that promotes teamwork. Sharing the values and goals of teamwork is not the same as actually participating as a member of an ongoing team in which stress and conflict are inevitable. Put simply, teamwork is not as easy to achieve as one might think. Teamwork in health and human services, as in the world of sports, requires a detailed knowledge of the rules, skill development, a great deal of practice, and success. Thus,

education and training in teamwork have become a new priority in many programs within universities, continuing education, and human resource development.

In addition to learning and practicing the knowledge and skills of their highly specialized disciplines, all professionals now need to learn how to be a member of a team, which involves skills such as communicating effectively with others, collaborating in problem solving and decision making, and maximizing the benefits of the overlap among the helping professions. These are complex skills that require a strong knowledge base, including an in-depth understanding of different types of teamwork and the various settings in which teams work.

The goal of *Teamwork in Human Services: Models and Applications Across the Life Span* is to provide the knowledge base for the development of teamwork skills in health and human services across the life span of the persons receiving those services. This book is designed for both graduate students and practicing professionals. It can serve as a textbook for interdisciplinary courses in both university and in-service training experiences. It provides both theory and practice—the theoretical bases for teamwork in human services, an analysis of the different models of teamwork, and discussion by practicing professionals of how teamwork actually works in early intervention programs, special education, residential child care, medical settings, community services, and programs for older persons.

Working together in teams has brought a new level of effectiveness, excitement, and satisfaction to professionals in health and human services. Those with experience, who are now enjoying these benefits, have an obligation to share their understanding of teamwork and its processes with those who are just beginning. *Teamwork in Human Services* represents such an effort.

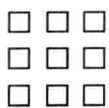


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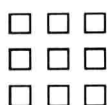
We would like to acknowledge our colleagues who work daily with infants, children, and adults with special needs and who have contributed to our knowledge of and experience in teamwork and the helping process. We also recognize the work of professionals in University Affiliated Programs for People with Developmental Disabilities across the country who have been pioneers in developing interdisciplinary training programs in teamwork. We especially want to acknowledge the teamwork we have enjoyed with our wives, Ann Sarratt Garner and Irene Carney, in helping to rear our children and building our respective families.

PART

I



MODELS OF TEAMWORK



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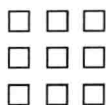
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1



Critical Issues in Teamwork

Howard G. Garner

INTRODUCTION

The Need for Teamwork

Today it is widely accepted that professionals need to work together in teams to meet the complex needs of their students, clients, and patients across the life span. In schools, hospitals, clinics, and community-based programs, professionals from different disciplines are working together in teams, communicating information, making shared decisions, and pursuing common goals. Depending on the setting and the services provided, teams vary in size, membership, and scope of responsibilities. Some of these differences are based on the model of teamwork being employed: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, or inter-agency. Across all models teamwork is valued as the best means of ensuring that decisions regarding people who are receiving services will be based on complete information and that services will be coordinated, consistent, and goal directed. Most teams work to include the person receiving services and the person's family in the process of establishing goals and implementing a plan determined through consensus.

Teams have been used in some areas of health care for several decades (Ducanis & Golin, 1979). Garrett (1955) observed that in the fields of treating chronic illness and rehabilitation, "the team approach" was then so widely used that its validity had been accepted unconsciously, and the term had become a platitude almost without meaning. Today teamwork is more than a value and a philosophy of service delivery—it is now embedded in the structure of many organizations. Medical centers include specialized teams in trauma centers, operating rooms, transplant units, and cancer rehabilitation. In the growing field of gerontology, where the complex needs of the elderly involve all aspects of a person's life, teams are used in both assessment and treatment planning (Campbell & Cole, 1987).

In some settings teamwork is required by federal and state laws. For example, early intervention teams serving infants with special needs are mandated by the federal Public Law 99-457. This law explicitly directs teams to work with the infant's family in planning and providing services (McGonigel & Garland, 1988). Since 1978, when P.L. 94-142 went into effect, multidisciplinary teams have been required of all public schools in assessing students for special education, determining eligibility for services, and planning individualized educational programs (Losen & Losen, 1985).

Interagency teams are now being used to plan and assist persons in making important life transitions from hospital to home-based care (Katz, Pokorni, & Long, 1989), from infant intervention programs to preschool programs (Kilgo, Richard, & Noonan, 1989), and from school programs for students with severe disabilities to the world of work and independent living (Everson, Barcus, Moon, & Morton, 1987). Families of persons with disabilities report the greatest stress occurs when their family member has to make significant changes in their status, program, location, and the professionals from whom services are received (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1986). Interagency teams of professionals work with the families and the person with a disability to prevent the phenomenon of clients "falling through the cracks" in the service delivery system.

Most human problems, occurring from early childhood to old age, result from the interaction of a number of physical, psychological, spiritual, and environmental factors, and thus cross the traditional boundaries of the helping disciplines (Mariano, 1989). As a result, most professionals today acknowledge that no discipline has "the answer" to the problems being faced. Most acknowledge, further, that only when the knowledge and skill of all disciplines and professionals serving an individual are combined and coordinated, can the needs of the whole person be met.

Consequences When Teamwork Does Not Occur

When teamwork is absent, the consequences for clients, students, and patients are frustration, inefficiency, inconsistency, and even serious mistakes. When communication does not occur among helping professionals working with the same individual, important decisions are made without complete information regarding the nature of the problems, the person's strengths and needs, and the resources and supports available. When communication among professionals serving the same individual is absent or incomplete, mistakes are made. The most common excuse for errors in human services is captured in the statement, "If I had known *then* what I know *now*, I would have made another decision and acted differently."

When interventions and treatment strategies are not jointly planned and carefully coordinated by teams, the individuals receiving services too often are confused, because specialists, who have different insights and priorities, sometimes give inconsistent and contradictory advice. This often leads to failure on the part of the client or patient to comply with the professional prescriptions. As a result, the client or patient is often blamed for the failure of the treatment plan to effect change. In this situation responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness of the treatment plan are diffused.

Competition and conflict among the professionals frequently result as well. In too many settings professional turf is carefully guarded, and distrustful camps plot against one another beneath a veneer of professionalism. The human services disciplines may be called "the helping professions," but they can be extremely competitive and even vicious with one another under certain conditions.

BASIC TENETS OF TEAMWORK

"Teamwork in the helping professions" means different things to different people, depending on the model of teamwork being used, the setting, and the persons being served by the team. There are, however, a few basic tenets to which most advocates of teamwork seem to be committed.

Communication Is Essential

Communication among the professionals serving the same individual is viewed as fundamental and essential for teamwork to occur. Each discipline has important information to communicate regarding the nature of problems and needs of the person being served. This information is based on formal and informal assessment procedures, observation, research, and professional experience. Each discipline has a somewhat different and sometimes unique perspective regarding the effects of these problems on the client and the family. Only when complete information from all disciplines is brought together can one understand the complexity of the problems being faced (Garner, 1988).

Collaboration in Treatment Planning and Service Delivery

A second tenet of teamwork is that collaboration in both planning and implementing a course of action in pursuit of common goals is necessary to achieve coordination, consistency, and a positive outcome (Spencer & Coye, 1988). Each helping discipline employs a variety of strategies, treatments, and techniques that can be used in response to specific problems and needs. Only when these interventions are carefully selected and coordinated can they achieve their promise.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution

A third tenet of teamwork is that functioning teams provide a mechanism for both preventing and resolving conflicts. Conflict is viewed as inevitable in human organizations, especially when several people work independently in pursuit of different goals. Unresolved conflict is viewed as a major barrier to effective services and a source of stress for both professionals and those being served. Teams provide a forum in which different values and priorities can be discussed and reconciled prior to their being acted out. In those situations where conflict does occur, teams provide a process through which frustration and misunderstanding can be expressed and resolution and a renewed sense of common purpose can be achieved.