



CONNECTING CORE COMPETENCIES SERIES

Generalist Social Work Practice

AN EMPOWERING APPROACH

EIGHTH EDITION

Karla Krogsrud Miley
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Brenda L. DuBois



CSWE EPAS 2015 Core Competencies and Behaviors in This Text

Competency	Chapter
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW <i>Code of Ethics</i> , relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	3, 6, 8, 13, 15
Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	1, 3, 4
Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	6
Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	10
Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	1, 13, 16
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	2, 6, 9, 13
Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	4, 7, 14
Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	3
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	5
Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	4
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	15
Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	9, 15
Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	2, 10
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services	14
Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services	1, 5, 14
Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice	9, 11



CSWE EPAS 2015 Core Competencies and Behaviors in This Text

Competency	Chapter
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	7
Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	5, 7, 12
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies	7, 9
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies	2, 10
Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies	5, 8, 11
Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies	8, 10, 11
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies	8, 12
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies	1
Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes	13, 16
Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies	6, 12
Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals	16
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
<i>Behaviors:</i>	
Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	15
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	2
Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	11
Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	3

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Preface

The approach to social work practice presented in this text acknowledges our interdependence and celebrates the resources that collaboration creates. It reflects a broad-based view of human functioning and explores processes for activating resources in people and their environments. Moreover, it specifically focuses on the nature of the helping relationship itself as a resource for both workers and client systems. Collaboration is the heart of this empowering approach. We believe in the creative synergy of collaborative processes. It's how we wrote this book.

New to This Edition

This eighth edition of *Generalist Social Work Practice: An Empowering Approach* provides updated information about topics in generalist social work practice and integrates additional pedagogy to support student learning. The authors have incorporated new material relevant to contemporary trends in social work practice, offered revisions to critical thinking questions consistent with the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) current core competencies and practice behaviors, and added links to e-resources to promote student learning and assessment. Specifically, this edition does the following:

- Better prepares students for present-day generalist social work practice by offering *new material* about biological influences on behavior, trauma theory, trauma-informed practice, and evidence-based practice
- Ensures extensive coverage of required outcomes identified by CSWE in 2015, with revised critical thinking questions that target the current core competencies and associated practices behaviors
- Uses a new full-length case example in Chapter 2 that demonstrates how a generalist social worker applies key theoretical perspectives to her work with a veteran reintegrating into civilian life after combat
- Adds to students' professional foundations by including the National Association of Social Work's (NASW) strategies for professional action through 2020 and revisions to material based on current NASW policy statements as well as the current International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) definition of social work
- Promotes students' self-assessment by using formative essay assessments at the end of each major section (Assess Your Understanding) and summative multiple-choice assessments at the end of each chapter (Evaluate Your Competence)
- Facilitates an interactive learning experience throughout the Pearson eText by integrating e-resources including links to a glossary of key concepts; and video assets integrated into the text presentation
- Uses carefully crafted case examples to illustrate the core competencies of social work practice across a wide range of practice settings

- Updates demographic information to ensure currency
- Supports students' inquiry into specialized topic areas with updated bibliographic references and text citations throughout
- Improves readability by fine-tuning the organization of material in many chapters

Organization of This Book

This book organizes material into four parts. Part I creates a perspective for empowerment-oriented generalist social work practice. Parts II, III and IV articulate processes for generalist social workers to apply with clients at the micro- mezzo-, and macrolevels of practice.

Part I, "Social Work Practice Perspectives," describes how generalist social workers using an empowerment-based approach can meet the core purposes of social work to enhance human functioning and promote social justice.

Chapter 1, "Generalist Social Work Practice," overviews the profession of social work, including its value base and purpose. This chapter defines generalist social work, delineates roles for generalist practitioners, and introduces the empowering approach to generalist practice featured in this text.

Chapter 2, "Human System Perspectives," considers the importance of theoretical frameworks for practice. It describes the key perspectives of ecosystems, feminist theory, critical and critical race theories, social constructionism, biology and behavior, and a trauma-informed perspective. This chapter also discusses useful concepts about human systems and proposes an ecosystems framework to apply these perspectives in practice.

Chapter 3, "Values and Multicultural Competence," explores the various filters through which we experience the world, including expectations, values, and culture. It describes how practitioners can infuse professional values and cultural competence into their practice.

Chapter 4, "Strengths and Empowerment," introduces the strengths perspective, describes the principles of empowerment, and discusses the implications of these orientations for social work practice.

Chapter 5, "An Empowering Approach to Generalist Practice," integrates the various perspectives offered in Part I to create an empowerment-based generalist practice model and extensively applies it to examples at the micro-, mezzo-, and macrolevels of practice.

Part II, "Engagement: The Dialogue Phase," describes the practice processes related to constructing and maintaining empowering client-worker relationships, communicating effectively with diverse clients about their situations, and defining a purpose for the work.

Chapter 6, "Engagement: Forming Partnerships," examines the social worker-client system relationship and the qualities necessary for building professional partnerships. To ensure a social justice perspective, this chapter also discusses how to relate with clients who are culturally different, oppressed, or reluctant to participate.

Chapter 7, "Engagement: Articulating Situations," discusses dialogue skills. It emphasizes how social workers respond proactively to clients in ways that clarify their challenges, validate their feelings, and respect their perspectives on the presenting situation.

Chapter 8, "Engagement: Defining Directions," explains how social workers reorient clients and constituencies away from describing what is wrong toward creating a vision of how they would like things to be. It also discusses how to increase client motivation, collaborate with clients who resist, partner with involuntary clients, and take priority actions in response to crisis situations.

Part III, “Assessment: The Discovery Phase,” presents solution-oriented processes to identify client system strengths and environmental resources as preliminary to developing a plan of action.

Chapter 9, “Assessment: Identifying Strengths,” describes how social workers orient their conversations with clients to uncover strengths and potential solutions. Specifically, this chapter helps practitioners locate strengths through solution-focused dialogue, exploration of clients’ cultural memberships, and clients’ responses to adversity.

Chapter 10, “Assessment: Assessing Resource Capabilities,” offers processes and tools for social workers and clients at all system levels to discover their own abilities and the resources of their environments.

Chapter 11, “Assessment: Framing Solutions,” describes planning processes in which clients and social workers collaborate to look at situations in strength-focused ways, set concrete goals and objectives, and generate possible strategies for change.

Part IV, “Intervention and Evaluation: The Development Phase,” features generalist social work skills for implementing, evaluating, and stabilizing change efforts.

Chapter 12, “Intervention: Activating Resources,” describes intervention activities to empower clients with their own capabilities and increase access to the resources of their environments. Social workers implement processes to enhance interactions, develop power, change perspectives, manage resources, and educate clients.

Chapter 13, “Intervention: Creating Alliances,” explores ways to initiate alliances in support of client systems’ change efforts. All new relationships with clients and their constituencies have potential benefits, including such examples as empowerment groups, natural support networks, and service delivery alliances.

Chapter 14, “Intervention: Expanding Opportunities,” examines possibilities for resource expansion through social reform, policy development, legislative advocacy, and community change. These activities fulfill the professional mandate to ensure a just distribution of societal resources.

Chapter 15, “Evaluation: Recognizing Success,” discusses how to monitor the success of the social work effort in order to maintain client motivation, determine effective strategies, and recognize successful outcomes. Specifically, this chapter describes practice evaluation, social work research, single-system design, and how an empowerment perspective influences research processes.

Chapter 16, “Intervention: Integrating Gains,” focuses on closure processes. Social workers use skills to complete contracts with clients, make necessary referrals, stabilize the progress achieved, and resolve the emotional elements of the relationship. Endings with larger systems receive special attention.

Instructor Resources

Prepared by the authors and available online, the Instructor’s Manual contains comprehensive resources for each chapter, including an overview, student learning outcomes, detailed outlines, discussion questions, in-class activities, out-of-class assignments, and multiple choice and short answer essay test items. To supplement these materials, the authors also offer a full-length generalist-focused case study that coordinates with each of the four parts of the book as well as tables to encapsulate the social service agencies and social workers in the fictitious Northside Community examples that are featured throughout the text.

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Generalist Social Work Practice



BLEND IMAGES / SHUTTERSTOCK

“What’s working well that you would like to see continue?” With this question, Andrea Barry, a family preservation worker, shifts focus in her work with the Clemens family. She carefully studies the reactions to her question on the faces of the family members who are gathered with her around their kitchen table. She reads caution, apprehension, maybe even a little anger, and yes, there it is, a growing sense of surprise, of intrigue with her approach. As a social worker with the family preservation program of Northside Family Services, Andrea has seen this before. Preparing to fend off the blame of abuse or neglect, families involved with the program are often taken off guard by the careful, nonjudgmental phrasing of her questions. With the query about “what’s working well,” Andrea recognizes family strengths and looks toward the future, toward things families can still do something about. In other words, she sets the stage for empowering families by focusing on their strengths and promoting their competence.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Describe the value base and purpose of the social work profession.
- Explain generalist social work as an integration of practice at multiple client system levels, policy, and research.
- Compare and contrast the multiple functions and roles of generalist social workers at various system levels.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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Andrea's question embodies her view of how families might find themselves in this predicament. To continue to focus on "What are your problems?" doesn't make sense to Andrea, who sees family difficulties arising from the challenge of scarce resources rather than resulting from something that the family is doing wrong. As reflected in her question, Andrea believes that even those families referred by the Child Protective Unit for work with the family preservation program are actually doing a lot right. She regards families as doing the best they can with currently available resources. So, of course, in trying to overcome their present difficulties, the subsequent question becomes, "What can we do to build on your strengths?" rather than "What else is wrong?" Her approach presumes that all families have strengths and are capable of making changes; it prompts them to collaborate with her as partners in the change process.

Andrea has learned from experience that different families benefit from different constellations of resources for optimal functioning. Some family members need to understand themselves and each other better. Others need information about how to cope with the inevitable, and also the unexpected changes that occur throughout their lives. Often, isolated families benefit from connections to the support of interpersonal relationships. Still other families need to access resources from within the community. Andrea teams with families to manage a network of social services, selecting among possibilities ranging from housing assistance to job training to crisis child care to child abuse prevention.

Andrea also recognizes that to serve their best interests, she must broaden her focus and look beyond the needs of individual families. Many times, families confined by forces they consider to be beyond their personal control seek a professional voice to speak for them at the levels of government, policy, and resource allocation. They certainly need power and resources to take charge of their own direction in a world that continues to grow more complex and confusing.

As Andrea provides opportunities for the members of the Clemens family to respond to her questions she reminds herself that this family is unique. She knows to attend to the ways that her clients are similar as well as to the ways they are different. As an African American woman, Andrea herself is sensitive to the confinement of prejudgments. The strengths the Clemens family members have to offer and the challenges they face are particular to their own situation. Demonstrating her cultural competence, Andrea thoughtfully examines the assumptions she makes about people based on their obvious similarities so that she will not ignore their inevitable differences.

Clients have taught Andrea that individual differences themselves can be the key to solutions. Social work practitioners accept the challenge of enabling each client system to access its own unique capabilities and the resources of its particular context. Andrea's role in the professional relationship is that of a partner to empower families with their own strengths, not to overpower families with her own considerable practice knowledge and skills. Andrea has learned to depend on each family system's special competencies to guide her in this empowering process.

Even though Andrea considers the Clemens family as a whole, she will not neglect her professional mandate to act in the best interest of the Clemens children. Ethical considerations and legal obligations compel Andrea to protect the children in this family. However, family service social workers simultaneously focus on the preservation of families and the protection of children. Andrea sees the needs of families and children as convergent.

What benefits the family will help the children's development. What benefits the children will contribute to the cohesiveness of the family. Theoretically, she sees the whole family system as her client and knows that any change in the family system will create changes for individual family members.

Andrea's work with the Clemens family reinforces her opinion that social policy that aims to keep families together is good policy. She always feels best when implementing a policy that reflects a professional philosophy that so neatly fits her own values. The policy of family preservation makes sense in Andrea's practice experience as well. She has observed the trauma for families and children when children at risk are removed from their own homes. Reuniting them, even after positive changes occur, always seems to be a difficult transition. Research in the field of child welfare confirms Andrea's practice observations and lends support to the current policy of family preservation. Andrea believes that keeping families together makes good economic sense, too. She suspects that economic considerations are a major force motivating the development of policies that favor family preservation.

"What's working well that you'd like to see continue?" This is a simple question, yet it reflects Andrea Barry's empowerment orientation toward social work practice. Andrea has learned that even simple questions can have dramatic effects. Simple questions set the tone, bond relationships, and lead to successful solutions.

This overview of social work practice describes the underlying values, purposes, and perspectives that contribute to the empowering approach used by Andrea Barry and articulates what generalist social workers do. The outcome is a foundation on which to build an understanding of social work practice from a generalist perspective.

SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND PURPOSE

Andrea Barry practices in family services—one of the many fields of **social work**. Other practice arenas include school social work, medical social work, probation and other criminal justice services, mental health, youth services, child welfare, community organizing, and housing and urban development, to name a few. The predominant fields of social work practice, representing more than 70 percent of the professional workforce, are mental health, medical health, child welfare, and aging services (Whitaker et al., 2006).

All social work practitioners, regardless of their particular field of practice, share a common professional identity and work toward similar purposes. The National Association of Social Workers (1999), in its *Code of Ethics*, defines this unifying purpose, or mission, of all social work as "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (Preamble). To meet this purpose, social workers recognize that personal troubles and public issues are intertwined.

Thus, social workers strive to both strengthen human functioning and promote the effectiveness of societal structures. This simultaneous focus on persons and their environments permeates

Ethical and Professional Behavior



Behavior: Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations

Critical Thinking Question: Human dignity and worth along with social justice are the two cornerstone values of the social work profession. In what ways are these professional values consonant (or not) with your personal values?

all social work practice. As a social worker, Andrea Barry works with the Clemens family to facilitate the adaptive functioning of their family and preserve its unity. She also works to create a resource-rich and responsive environment that will contribute to the development and stability of the Clemens family. Both of these activities reflect Andrea's integration of the fundamental values of the social work profession. The overarching values of **human dignity and worth** and **social justice** shape her attitudes; the purpose of the profession directs her actions.

Human Dignity and Worth

Valuing the inherent human dignity and worth of all people reflects a nondiscriminatory view of humankind. The *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1999) ensures social workers treat clients with respect, attend to individualization and diversity, promote self-determination, strengthen clients' capacities and opportunities for change, and responsively resolve conflicts between the interests of clients and those of society. Similarly, in their joint statement on ethics in social work, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) affirm that human rights follow from respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all people. As such, social workers are expected to defend and uphold the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual integrity and well-being of all persons by

1. Respecting the right to self-determination—Social workers should respect and promote people's right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.
2. Promoting the right to participation—Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.
3. Treating each person as a whole—Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person's life.
4. Identifying and developing strengths—Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups, and communities and thus promote their empowerment. (IFSW & IASSW, 2004, Sec. 4.1)

Respectful interaction with others affirms a person's sense of dignity and worth. Social workers treat people with consideration, respect their uniqueness, appreciate the validity of their perspectives, and listen carefully to what they have to say. Ultimately, according to people dignity and worth affords them the opportunities and resources of a just society.

Social Justice

Social justice describes circumstances in which all members of a society have equal access to societal resources, opportunities, rights, political influence, and benefits (DuBois & Miley, 2014; Healy, K., 2001). Social justice prevails when all members benefit from the resources that a society offers and, reciprocally, have opportunities to contribute to that society's pool of resources.

The philosophy of social justice is deeply rooted in the social work profession; however, political realities and ethical dilemmas confound workers' attempts to apply the principles of social justice in practice. For example, Reisch (2002) describes two problems associated with relating social justice principles to the social policy debates taking place in today's political and economic environment. First, Reisch notes a paradox of defining justice principles based on a socio-political-economic system that for the most part perpetuates injustice. Additionally, Reisch highlights the tension between asserting individual rights and advancing the common good in allocating societal resources. Group and individual interests do not always converge. Clearly, social workers face dilemmas when choosing actions in practice that promote a social justice ideal. The International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work (2004) detail the fabric of social justice:

Social justice describes circumstances in which all members of a society have equal access to societal resources, opportunities, rights, political influence, and benefits.

1. Challenging negative discrimination—Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.
2. Recognising diversity—Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences.
3. Distributing resources equitably—Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.
4. Challenging unjust policies and practices—Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.
5. Working in solidarity—Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation, or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society. (Sec. 4.2)

Social injustice prevails when society infringes on human rights, holds prejudicial attitudes toward some of its members, and institutionalizes inequality by discriminating against segments of its citizenry. Encroachments on human and civil rights deny equal access to opportunities and resources, limiting full participation in society. Collectively, the injustices enacted by advantaged groups create conditions of discrimination and oppression for disadvantaged groups. Members of oppressed groups often personally experience dehumanization and victimization. Social workers understand the consequences of injustice and intervene to achieve individual and collective social and economic justice.

Defining Social Work

Social work is a profession that supports individuals, groups, and communities in a changing society and creates social conditions favorable to the well-being of people and society. Social workers strive to create order and enhance opportunities for people in

an increasingly complex world. The social work profession charges its members with the responsibility of promoting competent human functioning and fashioning a responsive and just society. To achieve these goals, social workers require a clear understanding of the way things are and a positive view of the way things could be. Social work practitioners fine-tune their vision by incorporating professional perspectives on human behavior, cultural diversity, social environments, and approaches to change. The International Federation of Social Workers (2014) defines social work as:

a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (Global Definition section, ¶ 1)

Similarly, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), which accredits undergraduate and graduate social work programs, describes the dual focus of the social work profession as promoting the well-being of individuals and the collective betterment of society through the “quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally” (2015, p. 1).

Framing social work’s commitment to respect the dignity and worth of all people and the profession’s quest for social justice, the **core values of the social work** profession also set the standards for what is desirable in practice. Based on the National Association of Social Workers’ *Code of Ethics* (1999), the professional values that guide social work practice include:

- Service—Helping people and solving social problems
- Social justice—Challenging injustices
- Dignity and worth of the person—Respecting inherent dignity
- Importance of human relationships—Recognizing the importance of belongingness
- Integrity—Being trustworthy
- Competence—Practicing competently

Achieving the Purpose of Social Work

Social work focuses on releasing human power in individuals to reach their potential and contribute to the collective good of society; it emphasizes releasing social power to create changes in society, social institutions, and social policy, which in turn create opportunities for individuals (Smalley, 1967). This view conceptualizes the **purpose of social work** in relation to both individual and collective resources. The trademark of the social work profession is this simultaneous focus on persons and their impinging social and physical environments.

To this end, practitioners work with people in ways that strengthen their sense of competence, link them with needed resources, and promote organizational and institutional change so that the structures of society respond to the needs of all societal

members (NASW, 1981). Additionally, social workers engage in research to contribute to social work theory and evaluate practice methods. To achieve these purposes, social workers engage in a variety of activities.


First, social work practitioners engage with clients to assess challenges in social functioning, process information in ways that enhance their ability to discover solutions, develop skills to resolve problems in living, and create support for change.


Second, social workers link people with resources and services, a vital strategy in any change effort. More than simply connecting people with services, workers advocate optimal benefits, develop networks of communication among organizations in the social service delivery network, and establish access to resources. When necessary resources do not exist, practitioners generate new opportunities, programs, and services.

Third, the NASW charges practitioners to work toward a humane and adequate social service delivery system. To accomplish this, social workers champion the planning of pertinent programs by advocating client-centeredness, coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency in the delivery of services. Importantly, they strengthen lines of accountability and ensure the application of professional standards, ethics, and values in service delivery.

Fourth, social workers participate in social policy development. In the arena of social policy, workers analyze social problems for policy ramifications, develop new policies, and retire those that are no longer productive. They also translate statutes, policies, and regulations into responsive programs and services that meet individual and collective needs.

Finally, practitioners engage in research to further the knowledge and skill base of social work. Effective and ethical social work depends on practitioners using research-based theory and methods as well as contributing to the knowledge base of the profession through their own research and evaluation activities.

 Watch this video where work students describe their “fit” with the social work profession. In what ways do their ideas reflect social work’s core purposes and values? How do you describe your own fit with the social work profession?
www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPw9LZOCG0o

 Assess your understanding of the values and purpose of social work by taking this brief quiz.

GENERALIST SOCIAL WORK

Generalist social work provides an integrated and multileveled approach for meeting the purposes of social work. Generalist practitioners acknowledge the interplay of personal and collective issues, prompting them to work with a variety of human systems—societies, communities, neighborhoods, complex organizations, formal groups, families, and individuals—to create changes that maximize human system functioning. This means that generalist social workers work directly with client systems at all levels, connect clients to available resources, intervene with organizations to enhance the responsiveness of resource systems, advocate just social policies to ensure the equitable distribution of resources, and research all aspects of social work practice.

The generalist approach to social work practice rests on four major premises. First, human behavior is inextricably connected to the social and physical environment. Second, based on this linkage among persons and environments, opportunities for

Policy Practice

Behavior: Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services

Critical Thinking Question: Generalist social workers practice in the context of personal and collective issues. In what ways does policy practice impact their work with clients in direct practice?



enhancing the functioning of any human system include changing the system itself, modifying its interactions with the environment, and altering other systems within its environment. Generalist practitioners implement multilevel assessments and multimethod interventions in response to these possible avenues for change. Third, work with any level of a human system—from individual to society—uses similar social work processes. Social work intervention with all human systems requires an exchange of information through some form of dialogue, a process of discovery to locate resources for change, and a phase of development to accomplish the purposes of the work. Finally, generalist practitioners have responsibilities beyond direct practice to work toward just social policies as well as to conduct and apply research.

Levels of Intervention in Generalist Practice

Generalist social workers look at issues in context and find solutions within the interactions between people and their environments. The generalist approach moves beyond the confines of individually focused practice to the expansive sphere of **intervention at multiple system levels**. In generalist social work, the nature of presenting situations, the particular systems involved, and potential solutions shape interventions, rather than a social worker's adherence to a particular method.

The perspective of generalist social work is like the view through a wide-angle lens of a camera. It takes in the whole, even when focusing on an individual part. Workers assess people in the backdrop of their settings, and interventions unfold with an eye to outcomes at all system levels. They visualize potential clients and agents for change on a continuum ranging from micro- to mezzo- to macrolevel interventions, small systems to large systems, including the system of the social work profession itself (Figure 1.1). Generalist social workers view problems in context, combine practice techniques to fit the situation, and implement skills to intervene at multiple system levels.

Microlevel Systems Intervention

Microlevel intervention focuses on work with people individually, in families, or in small groups to foster changes within personal functioning, in social relationships, and in the

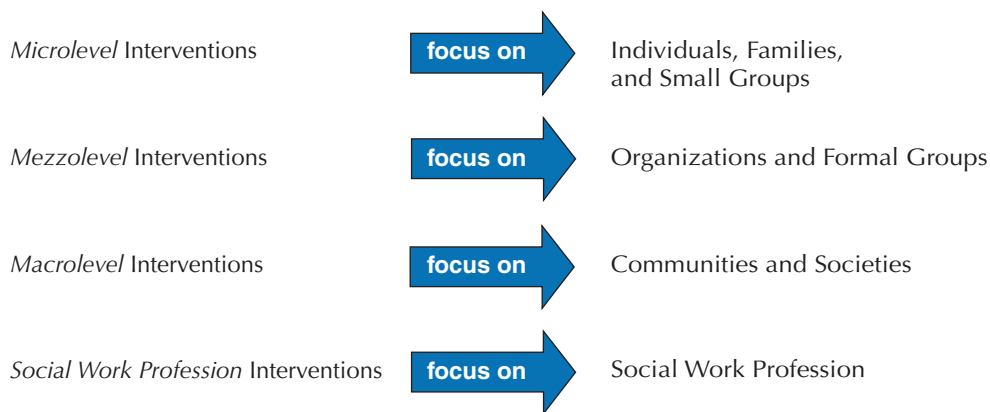


Figure 1.1
System Levels for Social Work Intervention

ways people interact with social and institutional resources. Social workers draw on the knowledge and skills of clinical practice, including strategies such as crisis intervention, family therapy, linkage and referral, and the use of group process. For instance, in this chapter's introductory example, Andrea Barry could work with Mr. and Mrs. Clemens to improve their parenting skills or refer them to a parent support group.

Although microlevel interventions create changes in individual, familial, and interpersonal functioning, social workers do not necessarily direct all their efforts toward changing individuals themselves. Workers often target changes in other systems, including changes in the social and physical environments, to facilitate improvement in an individual's or family's social functioning. These activities involve work with systems at other levels.

Mezzolevel Systems Intervention

Mezzolevel intervention creates changes in task groups, teams, organizations, and the network of service delivery. In other words, the locus for change is within organizations and formal groups, including their structures, goals, or functions. For example, if, in working with the Clemens children, Andrea learns of their embarrassment at receiving lunch subsidies because the school physically segregates the "free lunch" students from the "full pay" students in the cafeteria, she can help them and other families who report similar concerns by working directly on the school's policy. Andrea's work with the school to address this demeaning and discriminatory practice represents a mezzolevel intervention. Effecting change in organizations requires an understanding of group dynamics, skills in facilitating decision making, and a proficiency in organizational planning. Working with agency structures and the social service delivery network is essential for developing quality resources and services.

Macrolevel Systems Intervention

Macrolevel intervention addresses social problems in community, institutional, and societal systems. At this level, generalist practitioners work to achieve social change through neighborhood organizing, community planning, locality development, public education, policy development, and social action. A worker's testimony at a legislative hearing reflects a macrolevel strategy to support a comprehensive national family welfare policy. Working with neighborhood groups to lobby for increased city spending on police protection, street repair, and park maintenance is another example of a macrolevel intervention. Social policy formulation and community development lead to macrosystem change.

Generalist social workers look at issues in context and find solutions within the interactions between people and their environments.

Professional-Level Intervention

Finally, when working with the social work profession, generalist practitioners address issues within the system of the social work profession itself. These **professional-level intervention** activities project a professional identity, define professional relationships with social work and interdisciplinary colleagues, reorient priorities within the social work profession, or reorganize the system of service delivery. For instance, by supporting social work licensure and the legal regulation of practice, practitioners use their collective influence to ensure the competence of those persons who become social workers. Standard setting and accountability call for social workers to be actively involved in the system of the social work profession.