Instructor’s Manual: Chapter 4

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# Learning Objectives for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

After reading this chapter, you should be able to  
1. Differentiate case advocacy and cause advocacy.  
2. Summarize the ethical issues involved in advocacy.  
3. Explain how advocacy is a signature aspect of social work practice.  
4. Identify costs and benefits associated with advocacy.  
5. Describe a cycle of advocacy.  
6. List and describe four tenets of the dynamic advocacy model.

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# Lecture Notes for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

The element of social work that greatly distinguishes it from other helping professions is advocacy. Social workers are unique in being oriented to and knowledgeable about **advocacy**— engaging in purposeful actions that will help people to advance their rights, opportunities, causes, and human dignity—a hallmark of social work. Advocacy can involve one case (many times an individual or family) requiring some kind of change, which is known as **case advocacy.** It may also take the form of a larger structural or systematic effort to change policies, common practices, procedures, and laws to advance social justice for a larger segment of society, which is known as **cause advocacy***.* Cause advocacy necessitates social workers to be knowledgeable about **social action** and ways to create social change.

The goals of case advocacy are often to meet individuals’ **absolute needs,** or the basic goods and services that support human survival in the short term (water, food, shelter, sanitation, medical care). The goals of cause advocacy involve causes that impact a group of people and, like case advocacy, can encompass **relative needs**, which are the goods and services that promote human dignity and well-being over the long term: meaningful employment, equal status before the law, social justice, quality education, and equal opportunity.

Social workers do not just work to match their clients with available resources; they actively attempt to change “the way things are” in order to improve their clients’ lives and the communities in which clients pursue their lives. Advocacy requires value orientation, ethnics, knowledge, skill, and passion. Advocacy should be collaborative, client centered, ethical, and act to help people in need.

**The Need for Professional Advocates**

Social workers connect individuals, families, and communities with the available resources.

When services and resources are unavailable to meet serious needs within communities, social workers advocate for policy and program changes with larger systems – organizations, communities, and society.

**Power and Social Inequality**

Some people have more access to society’s benefits and resources, and some have less.

This creates social inequality. Social workers combat inequality at many levels.

Social workers aim to empower clients to participate in decision making and the process of determining the best outcomes for themselves.

**The Ethics of Advocacy**

Advocacy is often viewed by social workers as a professional mandate and mark of competency. The *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and International Federation of Social Workers’ (2004) statement of principles for ethical social work practice provide guidance on advocacy.

* Client Self-Determination
  + Consumers of services make decisions and choices based upon their will and value orientations.
  + Social workers are set aside their personal values and attempt to examine an issue or cause from the perspective(s) and voice(s) of the client.
* Self-Interest and Advocacy
  + Focus on one’s own benefit (self-interest) vs. client centered (advocacy)
  + Case advocacy- specific individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities address needs and concerns.
  + Cause advocacy - social change and enabling larger groups of people to improve their social and economic situation.
* Individual Benefit Versus Community Benefit
  + Who is the primary beneficiary of the change process?
  + **Individual Reigns Supreme perspective** equates individual gain and interest with the common good.
  + **Community Reigns Supreme perspective** places client benefit in a context of promoting policies and practices for the common good.
* Pathways to Community Benefit
  + Social workers advocate for pathways that will give groups of people access to resources, rights, and opportunities.
  + Social workers help clients to access power resources within themselves, their families, and their contexts.
  + Social workers create opportunities for significant participation in community.
  + Need to assess and understand political, economic, social, and environmental factors that can influence decision making that affects large groups of people.

**Human Aspects of Helping**

* The human nature of advocacy involves both emotional and rational aspects.
* Passion to confront issues can be a powerful asset in promoting change, but it can also blur many of the realities associated with a situation or issue.
* Objectivity is an important aspect of advocacy and a quality that social workers can contribute to the process.
* Social workers need to able to put clients’ values and interests first while providing professional insight concerning the realities, good and bad, associated with proposed change.

**Social Workers and Social Change**

* Social work pioneers
  + became aware of the need for cause advocacy when they recognized that addressing clients’ immediate needs from a charitable perspective held little promise for creating substantial and sustainable change in people’s lives. (“Give a man a fish” perspective.)
  + Dorothy Height
    - admitted to Barnard College, denied entry due to race
    - prominent leader during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s
    - four decades as President of the National Council of Negro Women
    - 1994 Presidential Medal of Freedom, 2004 Congressional Gold Medal
  + Florence Kelley
    - Labor rights, children’s rights, women’s suffrage, Hull House
  + Whitney Young
    - Urban League, Civil Rights, 1969 Medal of Freedom
* Cause and Function
  + Porter Lee - social workers are professionals with responsibilities involving community practice, social action, and leadership. They have the ability to create social change and lead social movements. He believed in moving the identity of social workers away from “simple helper” toward agent for systemic change. He emphasized objectivity, as opposed to emotion, in providing services and promoting social change.
* Responses to Hard Times
  + Great Depression of the 1930s - social and economic conditions challenged prevailing assumptions about public assistance and the belief in individual responsibility.
  + 1964 – President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty
    - Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) – domestic Peace Corps
    - Job Corps – job training for school dropouts
    - Head Start – low income preschool
  + Mid-1960s to 1970s – Civil Rights, Vietnam War, Women’s Rights
  + 1980s - social workers exposed the consequences of President Reagan’s tax reforms, which reduced financial support for social welfare programs for the poor and provided benefits for the rich. Social workers also brought new issues--problems of drug abuse, homelessness, and sexually transmitted diseases, among others--to the attention of the public and decision makers.
* Cause Advocacy Today
  + 2008 election of President Barack Obama provides renewed inspiration for advocacy. Obama ran for office on a platform of social change.
  + Issues include health care reform, LGBT rights, services for veterans, immigrants, housing, older adults, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental health, environmental concerns such as climate change.
  + Cause advocacy is a part of professional social work identity.

**The Cost of Advocacy**

* There is potential for advocacy to deplete resources and potentially work against the cause. For instance, bad publicity, adverse effects, and false hope can be just as detrimental as the expenditure of funds and other resources.
* There are expenses related to advocacy activities, such as the value of each person’s time to engage in research, analyze and draft policies, attend meetings, develop media strategies, lobby, organize communities, and campaign. Communication itself—with constituent groups, leaders, politicians, and decision makers—requires a great deal of time, as well as expertise in modes ranging from the telephone and print media to text messages, websites, e-mails, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites.
* To evaluate the benefits of advocacy, those involved need to clearly define the criteria for success and ongoing means for evaluating whether advocacy outcomes are being reached.

**A Model for Dynamic Advocacy**

* Advocacy Practice and Policy Model
  + Systems Theory – Advocacy encompasses work with individuals, families and communities
  + Empowerment Theory - Both case and cause advocacy involve social workers building relationships with clients of various system sizes to participate in and impact decision making processes.
  + Strengths Perspective - In advocacy, it is important that social workers give appropriate attention to both the problems confronting client issues and the various strengths available to create needed change.
  + Ecological Perspective - When advocating for change, assessment of the total environment, not just people and social systems, is vital.
* The Cycle of Advocacy
  + The change process for generalist practice can be adapted to guide social work advocacy and link practice goals and outcomes.
    - Engagement, Assessment, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation
    - Important to pay attention to connection between evaluation and assessment – there is a feedback loop.
* The Advocacy Model in Action
  + Advocacy includes actions taken to defend or represent others in order to advance a cause that will promote social justice
  + Social workers promote fairness, secure needed resources, and empower people (especially members of disadvantaged groups) to have an active influence on decision-making.
  + Specific advocacy activities and efforts to advance policy development include:
    - Supporting clients in court and in front of appeal committees.
    - Promoting human rights and dignity in everyday life.
    - Educating clients to advocate on their own behalf.
    - Working to change policies, practices, and personnel in an organization (
    - Making organizations accountable for the welfare of people being served
    - Improving service delivery systems.
    - Creating new functions within organizations and communities so they can better address human needs.
    - Educating people about important social issues.
    - Conducting research to document the needs and the plight of disadvantaged population groups.
    - Campaigning for a new law or for politicians who support socially beneficial legislative initiatives.
    - Advancing projects and programs in communities and nationally.
    - Combating discrimination and oppression.
    - Educating communities to advocate on their own behalf

**Tenets of Advocacy and Policy Practice**

* Social and Economic Justice
  + Social justice is a core value of social work in the NASW *Code of Ethics.*
  + Justice includes **distributive justice***,* and Social justice in this sense encompasses **relational justice,** which is people’s ability to exert influence over decision making processes and in relationships with dominant groups. Economic justice is captured in the concept of **distributive justice,** which is the ability to allocate resources, income, and wealth in a manner to ensure that people’s basic material needs are met.
  + Considerations include:
    - Am I sensitive to my client’s right to think and act independently?
    - Am I supporting equality of opportunity for my client?
    - Am I encouraging with my client meaningful participation in decision making?
    - Am I helping my client to unearth opportunities for social and economic justice?
    - Am I helping my client secure needed resources?
    - Am I ensuring that all parties’ rights are being respected?
    - Am I advancing thought about the need for social responsibility?
* Supportive Environment
  + Social work involves not just a client but a client system—all the people and social systems surrounding that client.
  + A thorough assessment and holistic awareness of the environment is essential for contemplating and enacting change.
  + Clients need a supportive environment.
  + Considerations include:
    - Has a determination been made in collaboration with the client about which elements of the environment are currently supportive and which are detrimental or not as supportive as possible?
    - Are existing resources available in order to advocate successfully?
    - Is collaboration occurring to generate ideas for solutions and to make reasonable and effective choices about courses of action?
    - Am I examining with the client ways to work with people and organizations to create a more supportive environment?
* Human Needs and Rights
  + People in positions of power and policy makers often determine who have needs, what is needed, and how programs and services should be implemented and evaluated. These top-down decision making processes yield disconnects between how clients view needs and what others believe they deserve.
  + Social workers focus on client point of view.
  + Considerations include:
    - Who is defining the need, for whose benefit?
    - What are the consequences for the client of such a definition of need?
    - Are consumers of services being included or consulted when defining what is needed?
* Political Access
  + The primary interest of politicians, CEOs and board members, may not be what is best for the general welfare or the welfare of clients.
  + Effective social workers identify ways to become politically involved and develop political access for their clients.
  + Considerations include:
    - Am I assisting clients to understand the bigger, fuller context of their problems?
    - Am I facilitating the collaboration of others who have similar challenges or who work to overcome those kinds of challenges?
    - Am I assisting clients with communicating their predicaments to politicians and policy makers?
    - Am I enabling politicians and policy makers to look beyond these clients’ situation to assess the structural and systemic issues contributing to the creation of private troubles?

# Key Concepts for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

absolute needs

advocacy

basic human rights

case advocacy

cause advocacy

cost of advocacy

dynamic advocacy model

economic and social justice

relative needs

social action

# Case Study for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

Thelma is a social worker employed with a local homeless coalition. She assists as the coordinator of homeless shelters and soup kitchens and provides counseling to homeless men seeking shelter, many of whom have mental health and substance issues. A considerable number of her clients are veterans. Thelma regularly visits many of the areas (street intersections, overpasses, and sections of town) where homeless men congregate. She has developed an excellent relationship with this client population. Thelma is known and respected by clients and community partners for her knowledge, helpfulness, and straightforward interpersonal style.

During the past six months, city and community leaders have been threatening to move the longstanding men’s drop-in shelter and soup kitchen from its present, centrally located site. Politicians and civic leaders want to renovate this section of the city to encourage and permit new businesses and homes. At its present location, the drop-in and soup kitchen have been deemed a deterrent for economic progress. Little thought has been given to where the drop-in center and soup kitchen would reside. Most of the conversations by community leaders have been on removing the “eyesore.” Clients and professionals involved with the drop-in center and soup kitchen are concerned about displacement to a remote site and adequate space for services and programs.

Because homeless men are a transient population group experiencing struggles with day-to-day absolute needs, Thelma and her colleagues with the homeless coalition have struggled garnering participation by clients in advocacy efforts. Thelma and other helping professionals have been very cognizant and careful to solicit the ideas and concerns of their clients concerning any relocation of the men’s drop-in shelter and soup kitchen. Most of the men agree that a change of location may be inevitable. The primary concern is to keep services and programs readily available and fully funded in adequate and healthy space. Thelma and her colleagues have begun a healthy conversation with community leaders concerning various options and locations. She works diligently to keep her clients informed and to hear and echo their voices for use in future meetings.

1. Would it be difficult for you to work with political and community leaders who wanted to make changes like this that could negatively impact your clients? Could you do so in a calm and professional manner? What might happen if you did not?
2. What message does it send to the clients of a program like this drop-in center and soup kitchen when the agency is deemed a barrier to economic progress? Why do so many politicians seem not to be concerned with the plight of the homeless?

# Discussion Questions for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

Discussion Question #1

Social workers have significant power in some clients’ lives; for example, some social workers have major input into custody decisions made by child protective services. How can a social worker show a client that despite being in a position of power and having the potential to cause negative outcomes for the client, they actually want to work as a team with the client?

Discussion Question #2

Are there clients for whom you would have a hard time advocating? What would you do if you and your client had very different perceptions of what the core issue at the foundation of their presenting problem was?

Discussion Question #3

What current problems for which social workers engage in advocacy seem most important to you? Which are you most passionate about? What practical steps do you think you could take as a social work to alleviate some of these social problems that particularly motivate you?

Discussion Question #4

All of us have biases and values. However, it’s important that we refrain from using our own biases and values to sway a client toward a particular plan of action. What biases do you have that could bleed into your work with a client? What would be a value conflict you could have with a client that might be difficult for you to understand?

# Chapter Exercises for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

1. Consider attending a rally or some form of public advocacy event. Can you identify the objectives and desired outcomes of the gathering? Are social workers involved in the demonstration? How do you explain their presence or absence?

2. Contemplate attending a political fund-raiser or rally for a candidate. Be attentive to the seating arrangements and interaction patterns of participants. Is there an “inner circle” of confidants surrounding the politician? How are those in attendance given opportunities to ask questions or enter meaningful dialogue with the candidate?

3. Many schools offer a legislative day in the state capitol. Sessions allow students to listen to legislators and their legislative aides describe how the business of state government and the legislative branch takes place. Attend and ask questions about effective ways to become involved in political processes. How challenging do you think it would be to get involved? What seems to be the secret to accessing decision makers and policymakers?

4. Select a human service organization in which to serve as a volunteer. Observe social

workers at the agency and inquire about their typical workday and workweek. What

kinds of activities do they perform? Use the chart in Exhibit 4.5 to record information

about their time spent in activities such as advocacy and policy practice. Ask them

directly, if necessary. In summary, how much of their work is related to advocacy?

# Class Activities for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

**Class activity #1**

Ask for volunteers to fulfill roles in a class simulation. Assign roles as:

1. a social worker for the residents of an inner-city housing project
2. a resident of the housing project who has been chosen by residents to represent them
3. a city official who has proposed the destruction of the project to improve the area’s economy
4. the owner of a local business who believes the presence of the project hurts her bottom line

The goal of the social worker is to represent his/her clients’ interests while also hearing out everyone’s perspectives, and making sure the resident representing his/her peers has a voice in the process. The social worker would like to see the project remain in place, but recognizes this may be a losing battle. Can she find a way to advocate successfully for her clients anyway?

The students playing the city official and business owner should not be willing to agree to let the structure stay in place. (You may want to coach them all separately, briefly, outside the classroom before the role play.) Can the social worker find a way to suggest alternatives that will still meet her clients’ needs as well as possible given her limitations?

**Class activity #2**

Have the class break up into dyads. (If there is an odd number, you may wish to jump in and join the final student.) Randomly assign one to be the social worker and one to be the client. This activity aims to illustrate some of the struggles inherent with advocacy at times.

The weekly meeting between client and case manager has just begun. The “client” should be very upset when the meeting begins, saying that child protective services has decided they are going to move to terminate her parental rights despite the fact that she believes she’s done all she can to earn custody of her children again. She’s been clean and sober for 1 ½ years and has attended mandated parenting classes, which she’s completed successfully. She also has enough space and a home considered adequately large the return of the four children. However, she also has a physically abusive live-in girlfriend who was not living with her when her children were initially removed from her home. Additionally, she has recently lost her job and is looking for a new one. The social worker does not believe that it’s currently a good idea for the children to return home, but the client wants the social worker to call child protective services and advocate on her behalf. The client has signed a release of information to facilitate this.

Observe how the social workers react to the situation. How do they approach the call to advocate for a client about whom they have some concerns?

**Class activity #3**

Have the class break into groups. Give them the following problem aimed at illustrating the cost of advocacy.

A rural community is struggling with low employment and the emergence of methamphetamine abuse on a wide scale. Police are frustrated with the scope of the problem, as the police force is too small to handle all the calls it’s getting. The schools are reporting a lot more student absences as parents struggle to keep their addictions in check enough to take care of their children. Many other families are concerned about their safety and want something to be done to get methamphetamine users out of the town, one way or another.

A social worker for a local child protection agency is aware that many of the parents in the town are struggling with methamphetamine addiction. She also knows that many of those parents recognize they have a problem and want to get help for their addiction, but have no insurance and cannot afford treatment. Public funding for treatment would help these families have a chance to put their lives back together, and the social worker believes it could make a positive difference, but recognizes the idea may not be a popular one.

What are the potential costs of advocating for the clients suffering in this community? What are the potential benefits? How could a savvy social worker navigate this issue and appropriately advocate for those in the community who need help?

# Video and Multimedia for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

#### Video Clips

* [Is the American Dream still a thing?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYGc8-L_NmE)   
  An analysis of social inequality and the American Dream.
* [Dr. Dorothy Height on racism](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBnSng9HoQk)   
  A modern interview with civil rights pioneer and social worker Dr. Dorothy Height.
* [Money and politics](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7xZdEYf0wY)   
  A look at the impact of campaign donations on the political process.

#### Audio Clips

* [Advocacy with Immigrants and Refugees](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=248198314&m=248198627)   
  A discussion of how social workers can advocate for this specific population.
* [Is social mobility more or less than it used to be?](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=265356290&m=265358328)   
  Has social mobility changed in the U.S. in the last 20 years?

# Web Resources for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

* [Federal Election Commission](http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/blogs/embracing-strengths-perspective)   
  Find out who has contributed to the politicians who represent you.
* [ACLU and LGBTQ Rights](http://societalvogue.blogspot.com/2011/08/planned-change-in-casework-social-work.html)   
  The American Civil Liberties Union takes on the fight for LGBTQ equality.
* [Social Welfare History Project: Lee](http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/people/lee-porter-r-2/)   
  A profile of social work educator and author Porter R. Lee

# SAGE Journal Articles for Chapter 4: Advocacy in Social Work

[**SAGE Journal User Guide**](http://www.uk.sagepub.com/sageEdge/orvis3e/files/SJ-userguide.pdf)

Article 1.

[Lundy, C., & van Wormer, K. (2007). Social and economic justice, human rights and peace: The challenge for social work in Canada and the USA. International Social Work, 50(6), 727-739.](http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/50/6/727?ijkey=7pQrxFPEaVqtk&keytype=ref&siteid=spisw) doi:10.1177/0020872807081899

This article argues that the current social and political context—specifically, increasing militarization and social welfare retrenchment—pose obstacles for social work to achieve its mission of social and economic justice.  The authors argue for a social justice, human rights oriented social work framework.

#### Questions:

1. How does individualism (in the U.S.) influence the well being of individuals and communities and shape social welfare in response to human needs?
2. What role does militarism play in the creation and maintenance of an unjust society?
3. What does it mean to suggest that social workers occupy a “contradictory” position in relation to the society in which they work?
4. What is the U.S. response to social and economic rights?  Why does this set of rights matter for achieving social justice and human rights?

Article 2.

[McNutt, J. (2011). Is social work advocacy worth the cost? Issues and barriers to an economic analysis of social work political practice. Research on Social Work Practice, 21(4), 397-403.](http://rsw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/21/4/397?ijkey=wKF/UxbC7JCHQ&keytype=ref&siteid=sprsw) doi:10.1177/1049731510386624

This article explores the conceptual and methodological challenges involved with assessing the impact and effectiveness of social work advocacy efforts.

#### Questions:

1. What is the role of cause advocacy in the social work profession?
2. Why is it important to evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy?
3. What are the obstacles to evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy efforts?
4. Describe the main features of each of the three existing tools for evaluating advocacy:  Return on Investment (ROI), cost-effectiveness analysis, and cost-benefit analysis.