**Case Study for Chapter 6: Family and Child Welfare**

Thomas is an early childhood intervention social worker at a community-based children and family services agency. He is passionate about the impact of the underfunding of early intervention services in the county, particularly for children under the age of 6. His urban area has very few child-centered early intervention programs aimed at improving child development and promoting well-being. Children in his city typically don’t qualify for daycare services. Temporary placement for children is often limited to voluntary agreements with relatives facing similar social and economic problems. Although a few private therapists have agreed to work with children on an au gratis (free) basis, physical proximity, child care, and transportation are barriers to delivery of service. Because Thomas acquired special education and training thorough his MSW program and subsequent continuing education workshops and courses, he is very prepared and confident with intervening with young children living in very challenging and often traumatic conditions.

As an illustration of the breadth of Thomas’ commitments and responsibilities as a social worker, he has been very committed to advocate for additional federal, state, and local funding to support specially designed services to intervene families with young children in the context of their specific family and social-economic environment. Additional family-centered services are needed to focus on the unique needs of children, while parents acquire employment assistance, adult education, self-help, healthcare insurance, housing, and childcare. He believes that provision of mental health and substance abuse programming for parents and children, a subject examined in other parts of this book, is paramount. In Thomas’ client load, parental neglect is common, frequently resulting in youth being placed both temporarily and on a long-term (more permanent) basis into foster care. Thomas has witnessed how early detection and intervention via community support services can be effective and improve child development and well-being outcomes. He sees parent hotlines, crisis nursery and daycare services, crisis intervention, mental health services, and parental support groups as very exciting and powerful lifelines for parents seeking to protect their children.

1. Given the breadth of services Thomas sees as necessary for the well-being of his clientele, sufficient funding and support for all of them can be difficult to obtain. Where do you think Thomas should focus his strongest initial efforts and time?

2. Thomas is clearly devoted to his work, as many social workers are. While devotion is admirable, it can be easy for social workers who are very passionate to struggle to keep a healthy work-life balance. What do you think you can do as a social worker to make sure you do not burn out at an early stage of your career? How can you keep work at work and keep healthy boundaries for yourself that allow you to have the energy necessary to keep striving for social justice on the job?