Instructor’s Manual: Chapter 1

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# Learning Objectives for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

After reading this chapter, you should be able to   
1. Describe the work, goals, and values of social workers.  
2. Explain the importance of diversity and advocacy in social work.  
3. Appreciate the dynamic nature and roles of the social work profession.  
4. Understand educational and practice options for social workers.  
5. Compare a social work career to other human services occupations.

# Lecture Notes for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

**What is Social Work?**

Social work is a helping profession, similar to counseling, psychology, and other human services. Social work is different, though, and addresses issues of economic and social justice through advocacy for individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities that face disadvantages. Social work requires an understanding of politics and power, and requires the ability to assess human needs and the environment. A degree in social work is needed in order to call oneself a social worker, and many social workers also obtain various licenses and certifications. The core values, competencies, and responsibilities of social workers have been identified by the National Association of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education. Since social workers serve a diverse clientele, it is important for social workers to have knowledge of multiple cultures, beliefs, and social identities.

There are multiple options for social work education and careers. Employment opportunities vary depending on the level of education achieved, such as BSW, MSW, DSW, or Ph.D. Social workers can obtain employment in multiple settings, and growth is expected in future employment of social workers. In any field of social work practice, interventions are categorized on the basis of the level of practice, or size of the client system, including micro (individuals), mezzo/maso (families, groups, and organizations), or macro (communities and society). Unlike many other helping professions, social workers consider the environment of the client or client system.

The Professional Social Worker

* Requirements - a professional social worker is generally considered to be someone who has received a social work degree and has become certified or licensed by the state in which he or she practices. Some jobs do not require licensure or certification.
  + Educational – bachelors, masters, doctoral degrees
  + Certification and Licensure – requirements vary by state
* Many social workers have achieved historical prominence.
  + Jane Addams, Dorothy Height, Frances Perkins
  + Del Anderson (veterans), Bernice Harper (hospice), Dale Masi (EAP)
  + Some well known individuals who are not social workers have a social work background, such as Samuel Jackson, Alice Walker, and Suze Orman.

Social Work’s Unique Purpose and Goals

* The central concern of social workers is to help people live meaningful, healthy, and successful lives. Social workers help people secure both tangible items such as food, water, or shelter, and intangible resources such as emotional, economic, and social support.
* Comparison to Other Professions - People often confuse social workers with other human service providers. There is some overlap, but social workers, as generalist practitioners, incorporate knowledge from other fields to serve clients and communities.
* The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has identified four major goals for social work practice, with a fifth goal added by The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).
  + To enhance people’s coping, problem-solving, and developmental capacities
  + To link people with systems that provide opportunities, resources and services
  + To promote the effectiveness and humane operation of systems which provide people with resources and services
  + To develop and improve social policy
  + To promote human and community well-being

Social Work and Human Diversity

* Social workers interact with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultivate an appreciation of human diversity. Some factors that influence values and beliefs include family, spiritual beliefs, culture, norms**,** race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, as well aslife stage, socioeconomic status, ability, and disability. These factors can lead to issues of social injustice and discrimination. Social workers advocate for justice and human rights for all people
* Intersectionality refers to the entirety of a person’s dimensions of difference and social identities. Most diversity includes a complex range or intersection of issues, not simply one.

Theory and Practice

* Social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors. The social work perspective emphasizes the importance of resilience, strengths, solutions, social justice, and safe, sustainable communities
* Social workers are committed to evidence-based practice, which means using a particular intervention for an issue, problem, or disorder based on the results of research.

NASW Code of Ethics and Social Work Values

The NASW Code of Ethicsserves as a social and moral compass to social work professionals. This Code has four sections--Preamble, Purpose/Overview, Ethical Principles, and Ethical Standards. The NASW Code of Ethics serves six purposes:

* Identifies core social work values
  + Competence
  + Dignity and worth of the person
  + Importance of human relationships
  + Integrity
  + Service
  + Social justice
* Summarizes broad ethical standards
* Identifies professional obligations when conflicts arise
* Holds the social work profession accountable
* Socializes new practitioners to social work’s mission, values, ethical standards and principles
* Defines unethical conduct and guides the ethical decision making process

Additional social work values include professional identity, self awareness, and advocacy (activities that secure services for and promote the rights of individuals, groups, and communities). Social workers are expected to know and care about clients’ environments. Awareness of clients’ environments is an important factor in the ability to advocate.

Social Work Education

* The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the professional entity that accredits social work programs. CSWE has identified ten social work competencies that students in the discipline must acquire and demonstrate before they graduate.
  + Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
  + Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
  + Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
  + Engage diversity and difference in practice.
  + Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
  + Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
  + Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
  + Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
  + Respond to contexts that shape practice.
  + Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
* Social work degrees include a BSW, MSW, DSW, and Ph.D.
* Field work is required in order to obtain a degree. This provides an opportunity to practice skills learned in the classroom.
* After obtaining a degree, social workers may pursue a professional license or certification.

Social Work Practice

* Practice skills include assessing, strategizing, brokering, collaborating, intervening, linking, listening, and motivating, as well as an ability to pose alternative solutions, seek consensus, negotiate, and mediate.
* The social work profession’s dual purpose and responsibility is to influence social and individual change. Knowledge from a variety of disciplines, absorbed from formal classes and personal learning, helps social workers to assess complex situations and determine effective interventions.
* The main goal of social work is to empower people to grow and live healthy, productive, and meaningful lives. Social workers accomplish this purpose by working directly with people, organizations, and communities and by acting to change society. Most people who consider social work as their career choice do so because they want to help people and make a difference.

Multiple Practice Settings

* There are multiple settings in which a social worker can practice, including medical facilities, government agencies and non-profit agencies, corrections facilities, home health and long-term care settings, state and federal government, schools, community-based mental health agencies, faith based organizations, the military, veterans programs, corporations, and private practice.

Levels of Practice

Social work categorizes interventions on the basis of the level of practice, or size of the client system.

* micro – individual or couple
* mezzo/meso – family, group, or organization
* macro – community or society

Social Work as a Career Option

There is wide variety in social work income, based on level of education, type of social work, and employer. The expected growth rate for social work employment is higher than other occupations, with most growth expected in the areas of healthcare, mental health, substance abuse, and school social work.

# Key Concepts for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

field education

intersectionality

level of practice

Master of Social Work (MSW)

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

profession

social work

social workers

# Case Study for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

[Diversity Issue](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/24/amish-girl-refuses-chemo_n_3806806.html?utm_hp_ref=amish) on Amish in Ohio

Since 1950 the Amish population in Lancaster, Pennsylvania has almost tripled. Sara is an Amish woman, who is married with four children and residing in Lancaster, amidst the productive farmlands called the Pennsylvania Dutch Country. Known as one of the “old-order Plain People” Sara is devout in the literal application of her faith and her belief in shunning. She adheres to a scripture often quoted in Amish worship: “Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). Her home is devoid of electricity, telephone, and television. She travels by horse and buggy. Sara has a strong work ethic and her “family values” are heralded as a model for restoring the family. Because of her religious and cultural beliefs, Sara is excluded from social security and health insurance coverage, and she does not believe in birth control or immunizations. Sara’s rural attitude about health care does not mesh with the current health care industry.

Sara’s ten year old daughter has leukemia and she and her husband are refusing treatment. As a last resort, Sara took her child to the hospital. Out-of-pocket payment for the hospitalization will come from Sara, her family and her neighbors. A hospital social worker has been consulted to speak with Sara and her husband, in an effort to secure their permission to continue treatment. The social worker showed Sara a news clipping from the Huffington Post wherein another Amish couple residing in Ohio has also refused chemotherapy to treat their daughter’s lymphoblastic lymphoma—an aggressive form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma that is seemingly curable.

1. Is the social worker’s choice to show the Huffington Post article to Sara appropriate and ethical? Why or why not?
2. What would be a way for the social worker to share her concerns about Sara daughter’s condition and medical needs while still respecting Sara’s religious and cultural beliefs?
3. How might your own religious and family background influence the way you react to Sara and her family’s situation?

# Discussion Questions for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

Discussion Question #1

Your text mentions the importance of recognizing the dignity and worth of each person when you’re working with clients. This may seem like an obvious value, but it can be difficult to uphold under certain circumstances. Are there certain clients that would be difficult for you to view with dignity and respect, to see as worthwhile? What would happen if you found yourself working with such a client?

Discussion Question #2

Some people pursue a career in social work because they have gotten help from a social worker while dealing with some of their own personal struggles. What are the good and bad sides of having had that experience? If a client asks a social worker, “Have you ever personally dealt with a problem like this in your own life?” what is the best way to respond?

Discussion Question #3

If you were in a position to serve on a hiring committee for a new coworker at a social work agency, and you had two equally likable and intelligent candidates—one who had earned his/her degree at a local university and one whose program was entirely completed online—would their differing educations influence which one you hired? Why or why not?

Discussion Question #4

Should faith-based social service organizations be allowed to suggest religious ideas to clients who do not share the faith that the organization is based upon? Should they be able to suggest to atheists or nonbelievers that the lack of a relationship with God may be part of the reason for their struggles? Why or why not?

# Chapter Exercises for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

1. What is important to you in a career? Interview a social worker, and then interview a sociologist, a psychologist, or another human service professional. Compare and contrast their roles and responsibilities. Ask about their level of education and how quickly they got a job working with people upon graduation.

2. How would you respond to people (clients) who are poor, ill, or addicted and oppressed? Find out more about these population groups: Read articles or stories; watch a movie, Fox News, or C-SPAN; listen to NPR; or interview social workers who work with addicted, mentally ill, impoverished, and oppressed people. Then record your thoughts and feelings about working with people who are vulnerable and in need of services. For example, here are some of the questions you might explore in a few relevant movies:

a. *The Help:* What was your reaction to the oppression of lower-class African American women?

b. *Losing Isaiah:* What was your reaction to this transracial adoption?

c. *Maria Full of Grace:* What do you think about how drug/sex trafficking was portrayed?

3. What workplace features or career goals are most important to you? With which clients

might you most like to work?

4. On the BLS website (www.bls.gov/home.htm), find the range of salaries for social

workers in your local area or state. Compare salaries across practice settings, such as

aging, child welfare, corrections, health, mental health, and school social work. Then

compare the salaries for entry-level BSWs and advanced-practice MSWs.

# Class Activities for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

**Class activity #1**

Break the class into groups and have them discuss their own individual reasons for taking this introductory level social work class. Do they want to be social workers? If not, what area do they want to pursue, and how does this class relate? What makes some of them feel social work might be the right profession for them to enter? What sort of individual factors do they have in their own lives that may impact their ability to be an effective social worker, whether positive or negative?

Ask the small groups to notice any common threads and to bring any difficult questions about the social work field to the larger full group for discussion. What are some of the most common reasons for students considering pursuing social work as a field?

**Class activity #2**

Have your class break into groups. Make sure at least one person in each group has a device that can access the Internet. Have the groups see how quickly they can identify the following:

1. What is the nearest university (perhaps other than your own) that offers a master’s degree in social work?
2. What is the nearest university that offers an advanced standing program for their MSW degree?
3. Can they find two local agencies or employers that have social work jobs available? What are the requirements for those varied jobs, and what are the salaries for those positions?

If groups struggle, you may want to direct them to specific websites like cswe.org, simplyhired.com, or other job sites, where they can find some of this information. Obviously, you should also know the answers to the first two questions and have done some recent research on the third one before this class.

Provide some sort of reward or recognition to the group that is first to turn in three correct answers. Discuss all the groups’ findings as a whole class.

**Class activity #3**

Have the class individually write down the first 5-6 adjectives or descriptive phrases that come to mind when they think of social workers. What are some of the stereotypes, both positive and negative, that they have of social workers?

After giving them sufficient time to come up with their individual lists, break the class into small groups and have them share their lists, looking for commonalities and discussing unique responses as well. Then have them report back to the class.

Discuss where these ideas come from, and whether or not they are really accurate. Why do some people have such negative views of social workers? Why do some of the students in class want to work in this field, despite having knowledge of the negative views many people may have of social workers?

# Video and Multimedia Links for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

#### Video Clips

* [The Many Faces of Social Work](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77UGDj48oHs)   
  This video shows the wide range of potential employment areas in social work.
* [On Any Given Day, Social Workers Help](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGGIKZE0deU)   
  A look at what makes social work unique compared to other helping professions, and why the world needs social workers.
* [Social Work in a New Light](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kjEPKVVL6s)   
  Discussions with social workers about why they chose their various jobs, and with clients who share what social work has meant to their lives.

#### Audio Clips

* [Social Work: Not for Everyone](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=2&t=1&islist=false&id=5150030&m=5150031)   
  The personal account of someone who realized social work was not the career for her as she completed a social work internship.
* [A Library With Its Own Social Worker?](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=2&t=1&islist=false&id=306102523&m=306102524)   
  In some cities, libraries serve as unofficial homeless shelters. In San Francisco, this led to one library hiring a full-time social worker.

# Web Resources for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

* [National Association of Social Workers](http://www.socialworkers.org/)   
  The home page of the #1 organization of social workers in America.
* [CSWE Program Database](http://www.cswe.org/Accredited-Programs.aspx)   
  Database of accredited social work degree programs which users can search by state, name, or program type (baccalaureate, master’s, doctoral).
* [Social Work Job Bank](http://jobs.socialworkjobbank.com/jobseeker/search/results/)   
  A searchable database of available social work jobs from Juneau, AK to Miami, FL.

# SAGE Journal Articles for Chapter 1: The Social Work Profession

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

Article 1.

[Chu, W. C. K., Tsui, M., & Yan, M. (2009). Social work as a moral and political practice. International Social Work, 52(3), 287-298](http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/52/3/287?ijkey=rkUl1rEzdqLeY&keytype=ref&siteid=spisw). doi:10.1177/0020872808102064

This article explores how the Global Standards for social work education and training emphasize human rights and social justice—the moral and political foundation of the profession—and argue for Western nations to recommit to these foundations in social work practice.

#### Questions:

1. What are the moral dimensions of social work practice, according to the authors?
2. What is the role of critical self-reflection for social workers in realizing the social justice mission of the profession?
3. In what ways do social workers (today and throughout the profession’s history) engage in political practice?
4. What has happened to the moral and political basis for contemporary social work in Western developed nations?  What do the authors recommend in response to these changes?

Article 2.

[Kam, P. K. (2014). Back to the ‘social’ of social work: Reviving the social work profession’s contribution to the promotion of social justice. International Social Work, 57(6), 723-740.](http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/57/6/723?ijkey=VoqAeQ7EQqb1A&keytype=ref&siteid=spisw) doi:10.1177/0020872812447118

In response to the trend toward individual change and therapeutic approaches, this article presents a theoretical and practice framework designed to resuscitate the “social” dimensions of social work.

#### Questions:

1. What are the two broad traditions associated with the social work profession?  Describe the central features and focus of each traditions.
2. What is the basic concern of distributive justice?  How does distributive justice relate to social work?
3. Describe one of the four explanations offered for why—and how—social work’s commitment to social justice and human rights has diminished over time.
4. How does the 6S framework proposed here aim to strengthen social work’s commitment to social justice?