**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?