

**SOW 309**  
**Social Casework**

PROPERTY OF DISTANCE LEARNING CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

# **Ibadan Distance Learning Centre Series**

## **SOW 309 Social Casework**

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## **Vice-Chancellor's Message**

I congratulate you on being part of the historic evolution of our Centre for External Studies into a Distance Learning Centre. The reinvigorated Centre, is building on a solid tradition of nearly twenty years of service to the Nigerian community in providing higher education to those who had hitherto been unable to benefit from it.

Distance Learning requires an environment in which learners themselves actively participate in constructing their own knowledge. They need to be able to access and interpret existing knowledge and in the process, become autonomous learners.

Consequently, our major goal is to provide full multi media mode of teaching/learning in which you will use not only print but also video, audio and electronic learning materials.

To this end, we have run two intensive workshops to produce a fresh batch of course materials in order to increase substantially the number of texts available to you. The authors made great efforts to include the latest information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly. It is our hope that you will put them to the best use.

**Professor Isaac F. Adewole**

*Vice-Chancellor*

## Foreword

The University of Ibadan Distance Learning Programme has a vision of providing lifelong education for Nigerian citizens who for a variety of reasons have opted for the Distance Learning mode. In this way, it aims at democratizing education by ensuring access and equity.

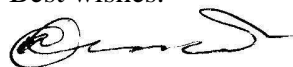
The U.I. experience in Distance Learning dates back to 1988 when the Centre for External Studies was established to cater mainly for upgrading the knowledge and skills of NCE teachers to a Bachelors degree in Education. Since then, it has gathered considerable experience in preparing and producing course materials for its Programmes. The recent expansions of the programme to cover Agriculture and the need to review the existing materials have necessitated an accelerated process of course materials production. To this end, one major workshop was held in December 2006 which have resulted in a substantial increase in the number of course materials. The writing of the courses by a team of experts and rigorous peer review has ensured the maintenance of the University's high standards. The approach is not only to emphasize cognitive knowledge but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The materials have had the input of experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind, since such people can often feel isolated from the community of learners. Adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

The Distance Learning Centre also envisages that regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks will find these books very useful. We are therefore delighted to present these new titles to both our Distance Learning students and the University's regular students. We are confident that the books will be an invaluable resource to them.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.



**Professor Bayo Okunade**

*Director*

## **General Introduction and Course Objectives**

This course is designed to introduce to you social casework and its importance in social work practice as it affects the individuals and families as clients.

The course will equip you with specific knowledge and skills in

1. What social casework is;
2. Importance of social casework in social work practice;
3. Social diagnosis as a step in intervention;
4. Processes in social casework intervention; and
5. Ethical considerations in social casework.

PROPERTY OF DISTANCE LEARNING CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## LECTURE ONE

# What is Social Casework?

### Introduction

Individuals and families with problems seek help to solve their problems. These problems may be marital issues, delinquent children, truancy, beyond parental care, paternity dispute, abandonment of spouse or child(ren) etc.

Social workers are expected to approach all these problems with all the weight of their knowledge and skills. Therefore, the social workers must be grounded in the art and science of social casework.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define social casework
2. list importance of social casework
3. discuss social casework in relation to social work practice

### Pre-Test

1. What is social casework?
2. List the importance of social casework in social work practice.

## CONTENT

### Definition

Social casework is defined in different ways by different social work experts and practicing social workers. These experts have defined it in concepts that follow the content of their area of practice such as health, social work, family/child social work, industrial/occupational social work,



community and group work, etc. It is, however, certain that social casework is a living event. Therefore, it cannot be contained within a definition.

Social casework is defined as a process employed by social workers and organized human welfare agencies, to help individuals and families to cope effectively with their problems with the main aim of restoring them to social functioning.

The main issue is that of professional relationship building by the social workers with the clients: individuals and families, to be able to help solve the problems which are principally social in nature.

Prins and Whyte (1972) also defined social casework as a method of helping people who present a large variety of human problems which they, as individuals, seem unable to solve for themselves, and that the way of going about the task is based on certain principles of proven value. This helping is aimed to last, but not outlast, the phase of the client's need and to leave him free to take new directions protected, for the time being at least, against his "sea of troubles".

An understanding what social casework is must take an important position in social work practice. Social casework is an art in which knowledge of the science of human relations and skills in relationships are used to mobilize capacities in the individual and resources in the community appropriate for better adjustment.

A summary of the definition of Social casework may be put this way, that, social casework is a personal service provided by qualified workers for individuals who require skilled help in solving some material, emotional or character problem. It is a disciplined activity which requires a full appreciation of the needs of the client in his family and community setting (Prins & Whyte, 1972).

The application of social casework, seeks to perform this service on the basis of mutual trust, and in such ways as will strengthen the client's own capacities to deal with his problem and to achieve a better adjustment with his environment.

Improvement in social functioning is achieved by means of mobilizing the capacities within the individual and family and the appropriate resources in the community. Therefore, the mobilization of inner capacities and environmental resources is accomplished primarily through the relationship between the caseworker and the client.

The basic concepts of casework are generic and are applicable to any setting in which casework is practiced. Their application is adapted to the specific function and programme of the setting. In family agencies, these concepts are adapted to meet a wide range of social, somatic, and psychological problems in interaction, to meet the needs of the various individuals within the family constellation and those of the family group itself.

### **Importance of Social Casework**

Social casework is involved in services that cover many kinds of human needs, ranging from relatively simple problems of material assistance to complex personal situations involving serious emotional disturbance, or character defect, which may require prolonged assistance and the careful mobilization of resources and of different professional skills.

Social casework concerns itself with the following major functions:

1. Materials accessible in the conscious mental life of the client. The issue is about what could be done to help the client NOW.
2. Social casework is concerned with the total socio-cultural environment of the client. Therefore, the social worker is more likely to be dealing with significant others in the client's environment.
3. Social casework is concerned with contacting social resources in the client's interests.

**Summary**

Social casework is a personal service provided by qualified social workers for individuals who require skilled help in resolving some material, emotional or character problems. Social casework is both an art and science and concerns itself with relationship building for better adjustment targeting full restoration to social functioning. Generally speaking, social casework concerns itself with materials accessible in the conscious mental life of the client; total socio-cultural environment of the client and contacting social resources in the client's interests.

Social casework is also about relationship. The relationship, which is established during the period of study and exploration and is developed throughout the treatment process, enables the client to work towards a constructive solution to his problem. A professional relationship in casework is controlled and directed by the caseworker in accordance with technical principles and procedures and is modified according to the clients' capacities and needs, the phase of the casework process, and the nature of the solution.

**Post-Test**

1. What do you understand by the term "Social casework?"
2. What are the functions of social casework?

**References**

Prins, H.A. and Whyte, M.B.H. (1972) *Social Work and Medical Practice*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 31-38.

Sainsbury, E. (1970) *Social Diagnosis in casework*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

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## LECTURE TWO

# The Methods of Social Casework

### Introduction

Social casework is the professional method employed by a caseworker with an individual who needs help with some aspect or aspects of social functioning. Improvement in social functioning is achieved by means of mobilizing the capacities within the individual and family and the appropriate resources in the community.

The mobilization of inner capacities and environmental resources is accomplished primarily through the relationship between the caseworker and the client. The relationship, which is established during the period of study and exploration and is developed throughout the treatment process, enables the client to work towards a constructive solution of his problem. A professional relationship is controlled and directed by the caseworker in accordance with technical principles and procedures; and is modified according to the client's capacities and needs, the phase of the casework process, and the nature of the solution.

### Pre-Test

1. Discuss the method of social casework.
2. State the importance of method in casework practice.
3. Discuss social casework relationship.

### CONTENT

The basic concepts of casework are generic and are applicable to any setting in which casework is practiced. Their application is adapted to the specific function and programme of the setting. In family agencies, these

concepts are adapted to meet a wide range of social, somatic, and psychological problems in interaction, to meet the needs of the various individuals within the family constellation and those of the family group itself.

### **Social Casework in the Family Agency**

Social casework in a family agency is based on the concept of the family as the social unit which provides for the group and its members the primary opportunity for growth and development and which contains potentials for physical and emotional health or illness. The family, therefore, is conceived as part of the individual and the individual as part of the family. Thus both family and individual are units for study and treatment; the family is not conceived as background, but is in the foreground of each phase of the casework process. The individual affects and is affected by the family in a continuous flow of psychological interplay, and each family member is understood and considered within the context of family interaction as well as within the context of his own psychological structure.

Therefore, casework treatment in the family agency influences constructively not only individuals but also the interplay between individuals in the family group. Treatment is directed toward creation of as healthy a climate as possible, whether the family maintains itself as an unbroken unit or is broken by deliberate plan or by forces beyond the individual's or family's control. At the same time the family agency caseworker has responsibility for assessing the potential capacities, and aiding in the optimal development of all family members.

Identifying the characteristics of a family group requires knowledge and understanding of the family's values and patterns of response; of the adequacy with which individuals carry their respective roles; of the influence of each individual's patterns of response upon other family members and upon the family as a group; of the balance of demands and gratification occurring in relationships between individual family members; and of the ways in which family members and family units affect and are affected by social, economic and cultural factors.

## **The Casework Relationship**

Essential to all aspects of the casework process are:

1. the possession by the caseworker of an accurate body of technical knowledge about human development and social experience, skillfully brought to bear on the client's behalf; and
2. the development and use of the relationship between the caseworker and client.

A professional casework relationship is one that enables the client to express facts, attitudes, and feelings with a guaranty that the worker's response will be geared to the client's needs, not to the worker's needs.

Relationship develops out of the caseworker's inquiry into and response to the client's problem and situation, his expressed and unexpressed needs, his attitudes, feelings, and motivation. It is adapted to the client's capacities and needs and to the purpose and objective of each phase of the casework process. It depends upon the establishment of an emotional response in the client which permits communication between him and the caseworkers.

In combination with the application of his technical knowledge, the caseworker's response, which contains the elements of compassion, impartiality, respect, spontaneity, and stimulation, ordinarily results in a relationship that is predominantly one of confidence in casework. Such a relationship must be attained before maximum results can be achieved.

The caseworker has responsibility for the establishment, development, control, and direction of the relationship and for enabling the client to make constructive use of his current and potential capacity for it.

The caseworker must be aware of the elements of the relationship both from the client's and from his own point of view throughout the casework process.

The caseworker keeps the relationship a realistic one, using the positive elements in the relationship to motivate and influence the client toward the maximal solution of his problems. The caseworker does not use techniques that invite or enhance any unconscious symbolic meaning that he may have for the client. The client may direct both positive and negative reactions toward the caseworker, these the caseworker needs to understand and deal with realistically, in treatment, in terms of their rational and irrational origin.

The caseworker has responsibility for becoming aware of, understanding, controlling, and changing any of his own reactions which are subjectively rather than objectively related to the client and his situation. The relationship is not an end in itself but a dynamic one that is used by the caseworker to influence the client's motivation to seek and use help in any phase of the casework process.

### **The phases in casework process:**

There are phases in casework process that are professionally followed. Caseworkers must fully understand this and be adequately knowledgeable in these phases of casework process.

### **The study phase**

This phase is the initial period in the casework process in which pertinent social, somatic, and psychological facts about the client and his family are obtained by the caseworker in a systematic way. Starting with the applicant's presenting request, the initial study phase continues until certain purposes are, if possible, achieved. They are:

1. to acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding of the client, his family group, and their life situation, to determine kind of help the client requires;
2. to enable the client to understand and accept the reasons for the arrived-at-plan.

### **Social Casework Treatment as a Phase:**

Social casework treatment is that phase in the casework process which is undertaken within a planned and systematic framework to enable the client and family group to restore, strengthen or improve certain aspects of adaptation and social functioning. The choice of a specific plan of treatment for an individual client depends upon the caseworker's appraisal of the ego's adaptive adequacy, the significance of somatic, socio-economic-cultural factors, and the attitude of individual family members and the interplay among them.

A treatment method and its techniques need to be viewed as a whole throughout the period of treatment. And, in the treatment process, the caseworker seeks to engage and develop the conscious participation of the

client in so far as this is compatible with the client's capacities and motivations.

### **Termination**

This is another phase which may occur during any of the previous phases mentioned above. In other words, the client or caseworker may terminate casework process at any stage of the phases i.e. study phase or treatment phase. This may be due to several reasons such as lack of interest on the part of the client, lack of progress in the process, death of client or transfer of clients e.t.c.

In summary, termination in social casework process occurs because of the following:

1. agreed goals being achieved within a pre-set time;
2. clients deciding they have been helped enough;
3. workers learning or clients moving from the district;
4. the end of statutory requirements;
5. agency policy on time limits;
6. workload management and priority systems;
7. resource limitations;
8. lack of time and pressure of work;
9. advice from supervisor;
10. influence of other agencies; and
11. death of the client (Coulshed & Orme, 1998).

The caseworker may need to discuss with the client, possible future circumstances that may make him wish either to reapply or to avail himself of another resource. Unless there are sound contraindications, the client should understand that he may reapply if the need arises.



### **Summary**

Social casework has been defined as the professional method employed by a caseworker with an individual who needs help with some aspect or aspects of social functioning. Social casework is about relationship between the caseworker and the client. This relationship is established during the period of study and exploration and is developed throughout the treatment process to enable the client to work towards a constructive solution of his problem. Social casework in a family agency is based on the concept of the family as the social unit which provides for the group and its members; and the family is conceived as part of the individual and the individual as part of the family.

There are three major phases in social casework process namely: the study phase, the treatment phase and the termination phase.

The study phase is the initial period when facts about the client and his family are obtained by the caseworker. Treatment phase is the middle and a period when the caseworker intervenes in the client's case. Termination phase is the ending of the casework process. Only professionally trained social workers or caseworkers implement these phases as demanded and required by both the caseworker and the client.

### **Post-Test**

1. What is the method of social casework?
2. What is the importance of method social casework practice?

### **References**

Coulshed, V. & Orme, J. (1998). *Social Work Practice: An Introduction*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, London: Macmillan.

Howe, D. (2009). *A Brief Introduction to Social Work Theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kirst-Ashman, K.K. (2007). *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Belmont, S.A: Brooks/Cole.

## LECTURE THREE

# The Process of Social Casework

### Introduction

This lecture will discuss the process of social casework in social work practice. The discussion will be on the following subtitles:

1. Social diagnosis in social casework
2. The process of diagnosis in social casework

Social casework primarily involved itself in direct interaction with individual clients. The key is engagement. Frequently, clients seeking help have the expectation that the agency or the caseworker will take over. This is an erroneous conception of the casework process, which may have resulted from the client's previous life experiences – with doctors, lawyers, the clergy, educators, and others whose help-giving models tend to be that of prescribing for, preparing briefs for, performing marriages for, and teaching by telling students what they are to learn. Engaging the client meaningfully begins with the study phase (Skimore, Thackeray & Farley, 1997).

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. state social diagnosis; and
2. state the process of social diagnosis

### Pre-Test

1. What is social diagnosis?
2. What is the process of diagnosis in social casework?

## **CONTENT**

Social casework addresses itself to the solution of problems that block or minimize the effectiveness of the individual in various roles. Problems within the family that interfere with or prevent the discharge of family's social and economic obligations are of paramount concern to the caseworker, as are those that block communication and free expression. Difficulties in classification of problems are immediately apparent when viewed in relation to the discrete needs of individuals.

### **A. Social Diagnosis in Social Casework**

Diagnosis is a process of discovering patterns of significance in the information directly obtained or inferred. It is tentatively constructed and refined throughout the whole period of contact with the client. It is a way of thinking about situations so that help is made available now and in the future. Its value can be assessed only by its relevance to:

- a. the solution of the social problems presented;
- b. the client's material and emotional needs (both in the present and where unfulfilled, in the past; and,
- c. the capacities of the agency and the worker to help.

It is not a static conclusion, for it reflects changes in situations brought about by new events and by the effects of the help already given.

Social diagnosis is a shared activity with the client, it is dynamic in that it is directly instrumental in changing situations by enhancing perception of them (Sainsbury, 1970). In social diagnosis, there is the attempt to arrive at as exact a definition as possible of the social situation and personality of a given client.

An individual or a family seeks the help of social worker (who is also called a social caseworker) or is sent to the caseworker because of an unmet social need or a disturbance in social functioning. These may have an external source; for example, environmental factors beyond the individual's control may lead to shortage of money, of suitable housing or of work. Sometimes the need or disturbance is located wholly within or between individuals: in how they feel about themselves or in their responses to each other.

But most frequently the need or disturbance is experienced by the individual or family as both internal and external; as, for example, in the various kinds of loss associated with bereavement, family separation, court appearances, surgery or unemployment. The caseworker seeks to alleviate these difficulties, directly and through support of the client's own efforts, and the elements involved in helping are:

- a. the skills of sustaining the quality of relationship relevant at different times to the individuals or family in their particular situation; and
- b. the rules and procedures of the appropriate social agency or agencies. In short, a problem or need is presented by a client, and assistance of various kinds made available by one or more representatives of social agencies such as Social Welfare Department of the Government and Medical Social Services Department of the Hospital and so on.

#### **B. The Process of diagnosis in Social Casework**

The first step in this regard is the respect that must be given to the client's opinion about the source and content of his need. This is in contrast to physician – patient relationship. A physician may frequently have to ignore the diagnostic opinion of his patient.

The next step in the process is that the social worker must understand the client's problems and start help immediately. The worker's intuitions, emotions and value-judgments may appropriately find a place in diagnosis, and the social worker should seek to be objective and unemotional.

The social worker shall in the process, establish a relationship that is both intellectual and temporal between diagnosis and (a) the investigation of facts, and (b) the giving of help.

Diagnosis is an intellectual conclusion determining the whole course of future treatment, or a continuing process which develops as treatment proceeds.

The process examines, in a continuous manner, the purpose, content and skills of diagnosis. The extent to which diagnosis is a shared activity between the social worker and the client is an integral part of the process. The social history of a client is a useful process in the diagnosis but the social worker must recognize that the client's history cannot be re-written

and must have relationship with the case the client is presenting to the social worker.

Therefore, the understanding which social diagnosis provides goes beyond the comprehension of objective data and their interrelationships. It includes the state of mind of the client: what facts mean to him/her at any moment and in any particular situation.

In summary, the process of social diagnosis is as follows:

1. The principal source of information is the client. The social worker starts with problems as they are perceived by the client and introduces discussion which the client sees as relevant. Facts are sought about the duration and extent of the difficulty, the way it came about, how the client feels about it, the source of circumstances of his referral to the agency.
2. From this information, the social worker begins to construct descriptive pictures of how certain facts and feelings interact to form the case situation. The social worker will also be trying to estimate whether the quality of the client's feelings seems appropriate or inappropriate (for example, excessive, misplaced, insufficient) to the problem as presented.
3. The social worker shall then decide which related areas of the client's life and experiences need more systematic exploration. These may include, for example, the composition of the family, his expectations of the agency's function, his education or employment record, his health, his income and the management of household budget. Some aspects of present and past family relationships may seem to have direct bearing on the problem as the client experiences it; for example, the way in which the family is reacting to the client's problem and is likely to react (or has already reacted) to social worker's intervention.
4. The social worker moves to the next phase which is to structure these data (information). The data comprise thoughts, feelings, events and responses which to a greater or lesser degree, form in the client's mind a coherent pattern of part of his life.

For the social worker, some of the facts, feelings and responses may seem anomalous, at least for a time. Similarly, for a client who suffered traumatic hardships or a succession of bewildering experiences, the pattern may seem to have broken down; some

events, and his responses to them, seem unexpected and inexplicable. Thus the structuring of information can sometimes usefully be shared with the client as part of the process of helping.

5. Hypotheses are then developed about the relative probable causes of the problems and the likely effects of intervention of different kinds upon all the people involved in the case situation. Hypotheses suggest what might usefully be discussed in future interviews, both as part of the helping process and as part of the verification of information.
6. As new information is added, so the structures and hypotheses are revised; the help given so far is evaluated as part of the client's changing environment, so that future help may be made more relevant.

#### **Summary**

Social diagnosis is a process of discovering patterns of significance in the information directly obtained or inferred. This is a way of thinking about situations to make help available to the client now and in future. Social diagnosis has its values in solution of the social problems presented, client's material and emotional needs and the capacity of the agency and the social worker to help. The major aspect of the process in social diagnosis is the respect for the client to own and express opinion on all issues affecting him/her.

The social worker shall establish relationship in the investigation of facts and giving of help. The social worker shall hold as important that the client is the source of information needed to solve his/her problems; explore systematically clients life and experiences; structure the information collected and develop interventional approaches.

#### **Post-Test**

1. Define social diagnosis in social casework.
2. Explain the process of social diagnosis in social casework.

#### **References**

Sainsbury, E. (1970) Social Diagnosis in casework. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Roberts, R.W. & Nee, R.H. (Eds.) (1970) Theories of Social Casework. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

## LECTURE FOUR

# Components of Social Casework

### Introduction

Social casework embodies four essential components that are interrelated with each other. This interrelatedness of the components bothers on relationship which is essential in social work practice.

These four essential components are:

1. The person
2. The problem
3. The place
4. The process

These components are generally referred to as the 4P's.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define the 4P's; and
2. explain fully the components of social casework.

### Pre-Test

1. What are the essential components of social casework?
2. State the relevance of each of these components to social work practice.

## **CONTENT**

### **1. The Person**

The person in this context is the client. This client may be a man, woman or child. The person is the client who requires help from social worker in some aspect of his/her social – emotional stability. The person is the center of social work practice. The focus of social work is the restoration to social functioning of all clients.

### **2. The Problem**

The problem is the issue that has destabilised the person. The problem has prevented the person from performing socially, psychologically in relation to the societal expectation. The problem arises from some need or obstacle or accumulation of frustration or maladjustment, and sometime all these together (Ojesina, 2000).

### **3. The Place**

The place in the sense of social work profession refers to social service agency or social service department. The examples of this are Ministry of Social Welfare and Medical Social Service Department.

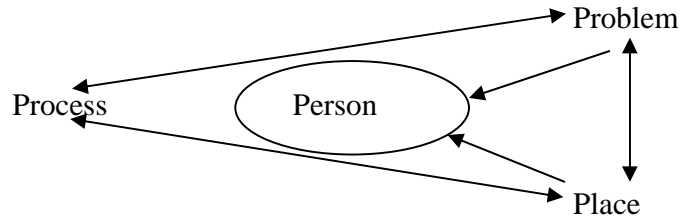
The place is a specialized social service agency of some kind of human welfare. The place may be for health which means that the agency in this regard has its focus on health matters, there are others for family, juvenile, rehabilitative matters.

The place is to help individuals with the particular social problems caused by faulty person-to-person, person-to-group or person-to-situation relationships. Here, the agency's purpose and functions come to life in the person and professional performance of the caseworker (Ojesina, 2000).

### **4. The Process**

The process may simply be referred to as the methods. These are steps or approaches in social casework. The process consists of a series of problem-solving operations carried on within a meaningful relationship. The caseworker must understand the nature of the person who is the client, the kind of his/her problem and the kind of the place which contains the problem-solving means. The process is always viewed and analysed to derive its best approach to problem-solving.





**Figure 1: The 4P's and their interrelatedness**

Figure 1 shows the relationship among the four essential components. The problem a person (client) had is related to both the place, which is the agency that will render service, and the process, which is the approach or method. Still the process (method) depends on the agency which is the place; the method to be employed also depends on the problem. Usually, it is the problem that will dictate the necessary process and place to go.

Casework is an active problem-solving approach in social work practice. A *person* beset by a *problem* seeks help from a *place* (either a social agency or some other social institution) and is proffered such help by a professional social workers who uses a *process* which simultaneously engages and enhances the person's own problem-solving resources.

It must be clear that each social agency or each social work section of another type of welfare agency (such as a hospital) is set up to meet certain kinds of human agency i.e. Child Guidance Clinic, Family Service Agency, Public Assistance Department, e.t.c. Sometimes the purpose of an agency is specific and limited and sometimes, the purpose is more general such as family and child welfare agency where any problem which arises in family life might be considered for service.

For the process, casework is essentially one of the problem-solving procedures. It must be emphasized that social casework does not resolve all problems brought to it. It also does not mean that the caseworker bases his knowledge and skills on casework process. It is an idea, a vehicle that leads to problem-solving.

### **Summary**

There are four essential components of social casework which are: the person; the problem; the place and the process.

The person in this context is the client, the man/woman with a social problem, who requires the services of a social worker or caseworker in meeting his/her needs or solving the problem. The problem is that issue or condition that is destabilising (or has destabilized) the person (client). This problem may be social, psychological or even medical. This problem leads the client to frustration and maladjustment thereby impeding on the client's social functioning.

The place is the agency. The agency determines type of social services being rendered. The Agency with health as its focus will render services that are health-related. Likewise, family welfare agency will work with family on issues affecting the family such as child welfare, separation, lack of care of the children by parent or parents, etc. This is what is called agency function.

The process may be said to be the method being employed by qualified social workers. The process is the approach and the success of casework is principally based on these four essential components; the person, the problem, the place and the process.

### **Post-Test**

1. What are the essential components of social casework?
2. Write fully on these components.

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## LECTURE FIVE

# Preparing A Professional Interview with The Client

### Introduction

A professional social worker must take some steps before engaging a client in a professional interview. This will prepare a good premise for an interview with a client.

The social worker is expected to bring to the interview his/her knowledge of social work practice especially in casework services, and his/her skills in the act of interviewing and communication. Therefore, working with the client means setting goals – intended goals about the social problems to be resolved.

Professional interview in social work, as important as it is, has some obstacles which may mar any interview process. The obstacles could be from the social worker or the client or both. If an obstacle is allowed to get into an interview, resolution to the client's problem would be difficult to find to the problem. Every social worker is expected to guide against all obstacles to professional interview.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. identify and explain basic skills needed before engaging in an interview with the client.
2. identify and explain obstacles in interviewing.

### **Pre-Test**

1. What is a professional social work interview?
2. What are the purposes of a professional social work interview?
3. What are the obstacles in a professional social work interview?
4. How can these obstacles affect social work intervention?

### **CONTENT**

#### **Definition**

The social worker is trained to use the problem-solving process to assess and intervene with the problems confronting individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. There are three characteristics that must be found in a social worker in practice as expressed by Anderson (1981):

1. the social worker is often the first professional to see clients as they enter the social welfare system. The social worker may make referral if necessary.
2. the social worker is expected to be found competent to assess clients' needs and to identify their stress points and problems; and
3. the social worker must draw on a variety of skills and methods in serving clients.

#### **Interview**

The Interview, in social work setting, is a conversation with a purpose involving verbal and non-verbal communication, exchange of ideas and feelings. In other words, interview in social work practice is with, and for, a purpose. This purpose, generally speaking, is to restore the individual, family, group, organization or community to social functioning.

Therefore, in achieving results from the interview exercise, the purpose must be clearly defined.

#### **Purposes of interview:**

1. Identification: The social worker conducts an interview to know the client and the problem to be solved.
2. To make the clients realize that he has come to the right agency/place.

3. To get client's commitment. This is necessary in social work profession. The social worker must obtain full commitment of the client to be able to offer help.
4. Clarification: To clarify information and determine steps of action.
5. If the client initiates the contact, find out the purpose(s). You can only know this by conducting an interview.
6. To ensure adequate supervision. The client is known to the social worker and vice versa. The social worker supervises the client's issue.
7. To obtain information: facts, feelings etc. These are all ingredients needed to identify and solve the client's problems.
8. To know the level of the client's intelligence. We need to know this to be able to relate well with each other (client and social worker).
9. To plan together with the client. In every step taken in casework service, the client must be carried along.

In conducting an interview, we should find out if the client is in right place. In other words, we must abide by the agency function. If the problem of the client does not fall within the scope of our agency, we should REFER the client to appropriate agency.

We must obtain specific information at first contact such as names of the client, addresses including phone number, type of marriage, number of children (married or single), type of work (occupation), religion, nature of problem. We must reduce tension at interview by fully accepting the client as he/she is.

The end of an interview is as important as the beginning. Leave a positive impression of you with the clients through assurance and re-assurance of the casework relationship.

Obstacles in interviewing are those unexpected, sudden interruptions and abnormal behaviour either exhibited by the social worker or the client or both, that could jeopardize expected or supposedly positive results from the interview process. Obstacle targets relationship and may destroy it. Once a casework relationship is destroyed, social work intervention cannot take place.

### **Obstacles in interviewing:**

Some of the obstacles that may work against result-oriented interview are:

#### **1. Intrusion of the worker's feelings**

Whenever a social worker allows his or her feelings to manifest in any interview, the result or outcome of such interview may not reflect the true position of the problem of the client. Furthermore, the principle of non-judgemental attitude has been breached. Intrusion of social worker's feelings in client's issue is professionally forbidden.

#### **2. Client resistance**

Resistance from the client may come from different sources. But it is still an obstacle to the issue of interviewing. Some of these sources of resistance are:

- a. **Lateness:** Whenever the client does not promptly keep an appointment with the social worker, it may be a manifestation of resistance coming from the client. The social worker must be aware of this development. She/he (client) has problem and should be seen in finding solution to it.
- b. **Cancellation:** The client and social worker should not call off or cancel an appointment except for a reason fully understood and accepted by both parties. Cancellation of an interview appointment is a major obstacle that should be avoided.
- c. **Silence at interview:** The social worker would not get any information out of the client if the client decides to be silent at interview. This may be an obstacle and will not be good for social work intervention.
- d. **Client manipulation:** The client may be manipulating the social worker. This may manifest in different forms. For example, the client may be interviewing the social worker instead of the other way round, the social worker must be knowledgeable enough to recognize this quickly as an obstacle.

#### **3. Environment**

An interview environment must be conducive, e.g. a private office to assure confidentiality. An hostile environment – both physical and behavioural is an obstacle.

#### **4. Euphemism**

This is the use of flattening words when it is uncalled for and this may erode confidence. The client may not like such “flattening” words and this may cause him to lose interest in the interview.

#### **5. Prejudice**

This may be from the social worker or the client. This may be as a result of gender difference, religious beliefs, marital status, occupation, or educational status. Others could be tribal or racial. The social worker must avoid prejudice in whatever form. This is an obstacle to a result – oriented interview.

#### **6. Lack of skills and experiences**

Any social worker who lacks skills and experiences is doomed to fail. The interview would not be properly managed and may result in failure. The Social worker must be well equipped for the task of interviewing.

#### **7. Lack of knowledge of other professions like medicine and law**

Every social worker is expected to learn some aspects of other relevant professions such as medicine and law. Adequate knowledge about other professions will help in social work profession such as knowing one’s limitations medically and legally. This knowledge will make referral appropriate where needed. Lack of knowledge of other professions could be an obstacle.

#### **8. Lack of information**

If the client does not volunteer information to the social worker, getting positive result will not be possible. Information is one thing that must always be available to the social worker. Insufficient information is a major obstacle.

#### **9. Lack of motivation**

If the social worker is not well motivated, his/her performance may not be at best to serve the plight of the client. In other words, a well-motivated social worker is a result-oriented social worker. Sometimes, the client too needs to be motivated to feel the effect of coming to a social welfare office.

### **Summary**

A professional social worker is trained to use problem-solving process to assess and intervene in clients' problems. One of such process is the interview – professional social work interview. Professional social work interview is a conversation with a purpose involving verbal and non-verbal communication, exchanging ideas and feelings. The major purpose and goal of any social work interview is restoration to social functioning of the clients. Interview is, therefore, conducted to identify the client and the problem; to find out if the problem of the client is within the agency function; to obtain positive commitment from the client; to obtain information – facts, feelings, etc. from the client and to plan together with the client. Ending an interview in social work is as important as the beginning of an interview. The social worker must leave a positive impression on the client to allow for professional continuity of casework service.

Obstacles in interviewing are those unexpected, sudden interruptions and abnormal behaviour either being exhibited by the social worker or the client or both, that could jeopardize expected or supposed positive results from the interview process. Relationship is always the target of any obstacle during any process interview to destroy it, so that it will fail to produce any positive result. The obstacles in interview are: intrusion of social worker's feelings which may breach the principle of non-judgmental attitude; client resistance, which may come in form of lateness, or cancellation of appointment; silence at interview and client's attempt to manipulate the social worker; non-conducive environment for the interview; euphemism; prejudice; lack of skills and experiences on the part of the social worker; lack of knowledge of other relevant professions on the part of the social worker; lack of information and lack of motivation.

### **Post-Test**

1. What is the professional social work interview?
2. List the purposes of a professional social work interview.
3. List obstacles in a professional social work interview.
4. Discuss how these obstacles can affect social work intervention.



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## LECTURE SIX

# Interview and Counselling

### Introduction

Interviewing and counselling are concerned with client stories. Social workers will hear many different story-lines such as procrastination and the inability to take action, tales of depression and abuse, and perhaps most important, narratives of strength and courage. The first task of the social worker is to listen carefully to these stories and learn how clients come to think, feel, and act as they do. At times, simply listening carefully and empathetically is enough to produce meaningful change.

The social worker will want to help the client think through new ways of approaching their stories. Through the conversation generated by interviewing and counselling, it is possible to rewrite and rethink old stories in new, more positive and proactive narratives.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. explain intentional interviewing and counselling.
2. discuss stages in intentional interviewing and counselling.

### Pre-Test

1. Explain intentional interviewing and counselling
2. What are the stages in intentional interviewing and counselling?

### CONTENT

The narrative model of intentional interviewing and counselling may be described as: the need to hear client stories, the need to listen so as to hear and identify strengths and assets. With an understanding of client issues and personal power, we have base for change.

Restoring is about developing client stories in new directions. The new story often makes action and change possible.

- a. **Story:** Learning how clients make sense of their world – the stories clients tell us about their lives, their problems, challenges, and issues. Social workers must help them tell their stories in their own way.
- b. **Positive asset:** It is not enough to listen; it is vital that positive strengths and assets be discovered as part of clients' stories. At times, counselling and interviewing can degenerate into a depressing repetition of negative stories even whining and complaining.  
Unless you help develop respect for and empower your clients, moving in positive directions becomes most difficult. Therefore, positive asset simply implies ways social workers can build on client strengths. A positive base often helps clients deal with more challenging and complex issues in the interview.
- c. **Restoring:** If social workers understand client stories and strengths, then, they are prepared to help clients restore and generate new ways to talk about themselves.

### **Instructional Reading: Getting specific About Listening**

A frequent tendency of the beginning social worker or counsellor or interviewer is to try to solve the client's difficulties in the first 5 minutes! Think about it – the client most likely developed his/her concern over a period of time.

It is, therefore, critical that you slow down, relax, and attend to client narratives. Listen before you leap!

Give the clients talk-time. This demonstrates that you truly want to hear their story and major concerns.

### **The Principle of 3Vs + B in Interviewing:**

The 3Vs + B are: visuals, vocals, verbal, and body language.

#### **1. Visual/Eye Contact**

Cultural differences in eye contact abound. Direct eye contact is considered a sign of interest in European – North American middle-class

culture. Even in this culture, one may maintain more eye contact while listening, and less while talking.

Research indicates that Africans have reverse patterns, that is, they may look more when talking and less when listening. Some Africans culturally avoid eye contact. But social workers need to look at clients to notice breaks in eye contact. Clients often tend to look away when thinking carefully or discussing topics that particularly distress them.

You know that the topic being discussed is especially interesting, when the clients' pupils tend to dilate.

## **2. Vocal Qualities:**

The Social worker's voice is an instrument that communicates much of the feeling towards the client or situation. Changes in its pitch, volume, or speech rate conveys the same things that changes in eye contact or body language does.

Keep in mind the principle of individuality – different people are likely to respond to your voice differently. People differ in their reactions to the same stimulus.

## **3. Verbal Tracking:**

Staying with your client's topic is critical in verbal tracking. Encourage the full elaboration of the narrative. Just as people make sudden shifts in nonverbal communication, they change topics when they aren't comfortable. Cultural differences may also appear as well.

Selective attention is a type of verbal tracking that social workers need to be especially aware of. We tend to listen to some things and ignore others. The discussion may bring up so many issues but you need to set priorities. You may reflect on the main theme of the client's story. Relax! Build on whatever you have been able to gather from the interview.

## **4. Attentive and Authentic Body Language:**

Just as cultural difference in eye contact exists, body language patterns differ. Even the slightly forward leaning recommended for attending behaviour may not be appropriate all the time because of cultural differences. Social workers should be able to adapt and flex according to

individual client and the situation. Body language tells more about the comfort or discomfort of clients about the issues being discussed.

### **General Instruction**

Authenticity is vital to the way you communicate whether you use visual, vocal, or verbal tracking or attentive body language, it is vital that you be a real person in a real relationship. Social workers should not only take on the skills, but should be aware and respectful of cultural differences, and also make sure that they are themselves – for the authenticity of the personhood is a vital presence in the helping relationship.

### **The value of Non-attention**

There are times when it is inappropriate to attend to client settlements. For example, a client may want to give the most complete description of how and why the world is wrong. Many clients only want to talk about negative things. In such cases, intentional non-attending may be useful.

Social workers can achieve this through failure to maintain eye contact subtle shifts in body posture, vocal tone and deliberate jumps to more positive topics, you can facilitate the interview process.

### **The five stages of the well-formed Interview:**

Basic Listening skills cut across different areas of interpersonal relationships and professions; and may be used for effective, well-formed interview.

All social workers and interviewers use micro skills and strategies and they often follow a sequence of stages from the beginning to the end:

1. Initiating the session – Rapport and structuring
2. Gathering data – Drawing out stories, concerns, problems or issues.
3. Mutual goal setting - What does the client want to happen?
4. Working – Exploring, attending, confronting client incongruities and conflict, restoring.
5. Terminating – Generalizing and acting on new stories.



**Fig.1: The circle of decision-making in Social Casework Interviewing and Counselling**

Listening is the foundation of counselling and interviewing. The social workers seek to enable the clients to tell the stories. The social workers notes the important and necessary aspects of the stories and helps the clients to rewrite and act on their stories in new ways.

Social workers are expected to make a difference in client's life for the better.

Cultural Intentionality: is when you are able to have many possible responses to any client issue. You are able to build on these by expanding your alternatives for responses.

Lack of intentionality is usually manifested by inflexibility, which may result in your using only one or two styles to help clients.

Cultural intentionality requires you to engage in constant growth and change, the learning of new skills and strategies, and flexibility with ever-changing clients who may come from widely varying contexts.

These cultural contexts may include age, ethnicity/race, gender, geographical location or community, language, sexual orientation, spiritual/religious beliefs, socio-economic situation and trauma.

Language such as diversity, cross-cultural, and multi-cultural refer to these dimensions and may be used interchangeably.

Interviewing and counselling are concerned with client stories. E.g. Stories containing procrastination and the inability to take action, tales of depression and abuse, narratives of strength and courage.

Your first task is to listen carefully to these stories and how clients come to think, feel and act as they do. Your empathetical listening is enough to produce meaningful change.

Development is the aim of counseling and interviewing:

- expect your clients to have enormous capacity for growth,
- search for strengths, positives and power in the clients in the middle of negative and deeply troubling stories. By this, you and the client are rewriting the client stories.
- As you listen, be careful not to minimize the story. Behind the negative story or tears, there may be a history of abuse or other serious concerns.

What to do as social workers:

1. Expand your skills repertoire so that you will be able to generate an increased variety of responses to any client statement.
2. Examine your own interviewing style and its influence on clients as you enlarge your knowledge, you are improving on your competences.
3. At ensure that your personal theory about the helping process is constant. As you encounter client uniqueness and cultural complexity, anticipate that your story and theory will be of constant change, growth and development.

**Definitions:**

**Interviewing:** basic process used for information gathering, problem solving and advice giving.

**Counselling:** concerns with helping people cope with normal problems and opportunities.

Counselling is often associated with professional fields of social work, guidance, psychology and to a limited extent, psychiatry.

Many people interview but few counsel!

**Summary**

Interviewing and counselling may be said to be the need to hear client stories and identify, with adequate understanding, the client issues and personal power for change. It is not enough to listen, it is vital to identify positive strengths and assets in the clients' stories. Counselling and interviewing can degenerate into depression, repetition of negative stories and even whining and complaining. Positive asset simply implies ways social workers can build on client strengths.

A frequent tendency of the beginning social worker is to try to solve client's difficulties in a very short time. It is therefore, critical that you slow down, relax and attend to client narratives. A Social worker should give the clients talk-time. This demonstrates that the social worker truly wants to hear the client's story and major concerns. Social workers must also recognize the cultural differences that exist in eye contact. Direct eye contact is considered a sign of interest among middle class culture in Europe and North American culture. In fact, in some African societies, it is considered a sign of disrespect. Clients also tend to look away when thinking carefully or discussing topics that particularly distress them. Finally, interviewing and counselling are concerned with client stories; and the first task is to listen carefully to these and how clients come to think, feel and act as they do. The social worker's empathetical listening is enough to produce meaningful change. In every situation, the social worker should expect clients to have enormous capacity for growth.



**Post-Test**

1. What are intentional interviewing and counseling?
2. Explain stages in intentional interviewing and counselling.

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## LECTURE SEVEN

# Entry in Social Casework

### Introduction

Social casework is an important aspect of social work practice and must be critically treated for understanding. Therefore, initial steps in casework process is a key to a successful treatment of social problems.

There are two ways of approaching a social casework practice:

1. Using REDI approach; and
2. Using GATHER approach.

These are acronyms and shall be discussed in detail.

In the first part of entry in social casework, REDI was discussed. And, in this second part another approach called GATHER will be discussed. Importance of good entry in social casework cannot be over-emphasised. Approach in entry can make or mar any case the social worker is to handle.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. identify the REDI approach of entry in social casework, and
2. explain the importance of this approach to social work practice.
3. list what GATHER stands for in social casework; and
4. explain the importance of GATHER to social work practice.

### Pre-Test

1. What are REDI and GATHER Approaches?
2. Why do we apply these approaches in social casework?

3. What is GATHER in social casework?
4. Why is GATHER important to social casework?

## **CONTENT**

### **Definition**

REDI is an acronym for **R**apport-building, **E**xploration, **D**ecision-making and **I**mplementing the decision. Also, GATHER is yet another acronym for **G**reet, **A**sk, **T**ell, **H**elp, **E**xplain and **R**eturn visit.

These two approaches in entry are alike and have just simplified the subject matter in the way of easy understanding. However, the peculiarity of each of these methods of approach must be understood by all social workers.

### **REDI Approach**

#### **R = Rapport – building**

The first step in social casework is to welcome the client warmly to the Agency and to your office. This will build a positive confidence into the client. You introduce yourself and the Agency to your client. Explain those services that are available at the Agency or being rendered by the Agency. Assure the client of absolute confidentiality in your dealings together.

#### **E = Exploration**

Find out the client's needs or problems, risks, social context and circumstances. Assess the client's knowledge and give information as needed. This is the investigation stage. The social worker must explore all issues related to client's problems to be able to arrive at a proper diagnosis of the case. Exploration, which is investigation, is the key in social casework to arriving at a diagnosis of the problem. This stage requires a skilled social worker. In every step taken as a professional social worker, the client must be assisted in his/her self-determination. The client has right to self-determination. In investigating or exploring the case, the knowledge base of the social worker must come to play. The knowledge of social work theories that are related to the case will help to arrive at a proper diagnosis of the problems thus making the kind of help or treatment to be rendered feasible.

### **D = Decision-making**

This stage requires a collaborative effort of the client and the social worker. The social worker, having arrived at a diagnosis, must identify the client's decision about the diagnosis. The first question to ask the client is his/her opinion about the diagnosis of his/her problem. Is the client's decision in conformity with the diagnosis?

The social worker must also identify the client's options for each decision. These are options that the client and social worker must jointly examine without any prejudice. They will weigh the benefits, disadvantages, and consequences of each decision.

The social worker will, at this stage, exhibit his/her professional ability by assisting the client to make a realistic decision. The word "assist" is deliberately used as no social worker can impose his/her own decision on any client. It is this "realistic decision" both the client and social worker will work on.

### **I = Implementing the decision**

A professional social worker shall make a concrete, specific professional plan for carrying out the decision arrived at with the client. The social worker shall identify skills that will help the client in carrying out his/her decision.

The social worker must think about resources needed for the treatment of the diagnosis of the social problems, and make such resources available to the client. Sometimes, the resources may be outside the Agency function, adequate action by social worker is therefore required to link the client up with these resources.

The social worker must make a plan for a follow-up or referral where necessary. There are cases that may be multi-dimensional such as marital dispute and illness. A multi-approach is expected in this case. That is, the social worker looking into, and finding solution to the marital dispute while the medical aspect is being treated by a medical team. Therefore, a professional social worker recognizes the importance of professional collaboration with other professions.

GATHER, an acronym, means **G**reet; **A**sk, **T**ell; **H**elp; **E**xplain and **R**eturn visit/Refer.

This acronym, GATHER, will be systematically discussed.

**G = Greet.**

The social worker is expected to welcome the client by greeting warmly. This is an important stage in social casework. It is a beginning of relationship building without which no meaningful achievement can be made. First impression matters most in every relationship. Therefore, the social worker must cultivate a culture of warm approach in all his/her dealings with the clients. Warm greetings can draw the clients out to present his/her social problems.

**A = Ask**

The social worker is expected to ask the client about his/her welfare, the family, especially the spouse and children. This should be conducted familiarly as further step to relationship building. Ask about the work or employment of the client. Do the best to identify with the client and his/her social problem (empathy).

**T = Tell**

The social worker should explain the services available at the Agency to the client. Ascertain that the client is in the right Agency. If not, refer the client to the appropriate Agency. The social worker must also tell of the Agency's limitations to avoid disappointing the client from his/her "high" expectations of the Agency.

**H = Help**

No help can be rendered without the support of the client. In other words, the principle of self-determination must come to play. The client has a major role to play in finding solution to her/her social problems. The social worker must have a direct discussion with the client on every service available to the client from the Agency. Also, tell clients about resources available outside your own Agency. For example; a Family Welfare Officer may have to refer a client with medical problem to medical experts like doctors, nurses. A medical social worker may facilitate this process.



There are many overlaps between the steps of REDI and GATHER.

Rapport-building corresponds to Greet, with elements of Ask/Assess. Exploration incorporates Ask/Assess and Tell. Decision-making includes the Help step and also elements of Ask/Assess and Tell.

Implementing the decision includes Help, Explain and Return visit. These overlaps are continuous.

### **Summary**

Entry in social casework using REDI approach is a tool used by professional social worker to reach a client and begin a worker-client relationship. REDI is a diagnostic tool in social casework. Four issues are involved in REDI namely: Rapport – building; Exploration; Decision-making and Implementing the decision.

A professional social worker is expected to warmly welcome the client, make adequate introduction of self and agency with services being rendered and assure the client of absolute confidentiality. The social worker must explore or investigate the client's needs, risks and circumstances; assess the client's knowledge and give information to assist the client in his/her self-determination.

The social worker should identify the client's decisions and options to each decision; weigh the benefits, disadvantages and consequences of each to assist the client to make a realistic decisions. Finally, the social worker must make a concrete, specific professional plan for carrying out the decision jointly made by the worker and the client.

The acronym called 'GATHER' is an approach for entry in social casework. The first step in social casework is the entry, which is a stage in relationship building without which no worker – client relationship can be established. GATHER simply means Greet; Ask; Tell; Help; Explain and Return visit or Refer.

The social worker must welcome and greet the client warmly. First impression gives direction to what may be expected as result. Ask of the Client's welfare including the spouse's and children's.

Tell the client about services available at your Agency and elsewhere. Tell the client if he/she has come to the right Agency.

In whatever form of help the social worker is going to render, the client must be carried along in the spirit of self-determination. No meaningful help can be rendered without the support of the client. The social worker must explain every aspect of treatment and methods to be rendered to the

client. Other relevant issues related to the client's treatment must be properly explained only to the client in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

Return visits – social worker must make it a rule to make visits to the client as may be required. And, where necessary, clients are referred to appropriate Agencies by professional social worker.

Finally, a full understanding of GATHER as an entry in social casework is required of every professional social worker.

### **Post-Test**

1. What is REDI approach in social casework entry?
2. Discuss the importance of REDI approach of entry in social casework.
3. Explain GATHER as an approach of entry in social casework.
4. Why is GATHER approach important to entry in social casework?

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## LECTURE EIGHT

# Middle Phase or Working Section in Social Casework

### Introduction

Professionally, there are three stages in social casework and each of these stages leads to the other. There is the beginning stage or phase part of which we have discussed in lecture seven. There is a middle stage or phase also known as working section which this lecture is going to address, and the ending phase or stage which comes after this lecture. The middle phase is as important as the other two phases, if not more. But the three phases are treated as equally important.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to explain processes involved in middle phase of casework practice.

### Pre-Test

1. What is middle phase in social casework?
2. How important is middle phase in social casework to general social work practice?

### CONTENT

Middle phase in social casework is a stage in the planned intervention whereby the social worker is rigorously digging into the client's problem with the sole aim of finding solution to it.

This is a phase of data gathering and assessment of the client and the problem. Some steps are taken in this respect. These steps are:

1. Engagement
2. Assessment
3. Planning
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation
6. Termination; and
7. Follow-up

### 1. **Engagement**

Engagement is the initial period the social worker orients himself or herself to the problem of the client and builds or establishes a worker – client relationship through adequate communication. The most important activity here is the establishment of relationship without which no result would be achieved.

Your words (verbal communication) and your action (non-verbal communication) can act to engage the clients and other stakeholders in the helping process. Non verbal communication includes “gestures”, facial expressions, posture, tone of voice, and vocal sounds other than words”. The Social worker’s ability to convey warmth, empathy, and genuineness will enhance engagement. Likewise, how the social worker introduces himself or herself and arranges an initial meeting’s setting affects the engagement process.

Other engagement skills include alleviating initial client anxiety and introducing social worker’s purpose and role.

### 2. **Assessment**

Assessment in social work is the differential, individualized, and evaluation of problems, people and situations and of their interrelations, to serve as a sound basis for differential helping intervention (Siporin, 1975). Assessment is also defined as knowing, understanding, evaluating, individualizing, or figuring out (Meyer, 1995).

Therefore, assessment is the investigation and determination of variables affecting an identified problem or issue as viewed from different perspectives.

In the first place, assessment refers to gathering relevant information about a problem so that decision can be made about what to do to solve it. Secondly, assessment can involve preparation for intervention at any level of practice.

There are four sub-steps in assessment.

- a. Identify your client
- b. Assess the client-in-situation
- c. Cite information about client problems and needs
- d. Identify client strengths

a. ***Identify your client:***

The social worker must determine who the client is. The social worker must know the client and determine if the client is the only one who needs help or the entire family. The social worker must know whether the client is voluntary or involuntary.

b. ***Assess the client-in-situation:***

The social worker must be able to identify the pertinent issues, and problems. How the social worker intervenes is based on the information he or she has and on the judgments made from information gathered.

c. ***Cite information about client's problems and needs:***

The social worker is expected to professionally put all information about the client's problems and needs together and begin help. Help could be in form of referral where need be. For instance, a client with social and medical problems and needs will have to visit both the social welfare office and the hospital. Such a case could be a teenage pregnancy with truncation of educational career of the teenager. The case is both social and medical - the medical aspect is the care of the pregnancy.

d. ***Identify client strengths:***

The professional social worker should identify those strengths in the client or within the client that could enhance early and positive recovery. Such strengths could be the emotional stability of the client which is a strong point in social work intervention. Every client has some measure of strengths in him or her, and it is left for the social worker to identify and utilize it for the sole purpose of restoration to social functioning of the client.

Once the client strengths are identified, the social worker follows-up with plans for intervention

### 3. **Planning**

Planning follows assessment in problem-solving process. While assessment sets the stage for the intervention, planning specifies what should be done.

Planning in social casework involves eight sub-steps:

- a. Work with the client
- b. Prioritize problems
- c. Translate problems into needs
- d. Evaluate levels of intervention for each need
- e. Establish goals
- f. Specify objectives
- g. Specify action steps
- h. Formalize a contract

#### **a. *Work with the client***

The client must be involved in problem definition and must agree as to which problems merit attention. The social worker must take advantage of the client's strengths.

#### **b. *Prioritize problems***

Both the client and the social worker must agree on what or which problems are most significant that requires help. The social worker must be able to analyse the problems critically in a professional manner.

#### **c. *Translate problems into needs***

The clients come to social workers because they are suffering from problems, the social workers must, therefore, establish what the clients need to solve the problems. The Social worker's approach to the situation will determine the type of solution to the problem. The focus should be on restoring the client to social functioning.

#### **d. *Evaluate levels of intervention***

The social worker and the client must look at the problem together with the proposed or suggested solutions so as to the problem to jointly determine which of these solutions would best address the problem. Also,

the social worker should be able to segment this intervention into levels that are easily followed up and easily evaluated.

**e. *Establish goals***

The Social worker must know what is expected from a social problem brought to him or her. The goal of social casework is to restore clients back to social functioning. Every efforts must be made to achieve this.

**f. *Specify objectives***

The social workers and the client must agree on specific objectives to be made or achieved from whatever levels of intervention being addressed. These objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. It helps the service.

**g. *Specify action steps***

These steps are verifiable and must determine that the need exists in the first place. The social worker now seeks support for the intervention usually from stakeholders and starts to intervene.

**h. *Formalize a contract***

It is pertinent that relationship contract must be built to allow for any meaningful social work intervention in clients' issues.

Contracts are used to solidify the agreements. Social casework contract is, between the social worker and the client and it is only meant for relationship building to solve the client's problems and needs.

**Summary**

There are major stages or phases in social casework that are important to practice, and these are: the beginning stage or phase, the middle stage or phase and the ending stage or phase. These phases are all important to social casework practice.

The middle phase has been treated here. This phase is more or less the activity or implementation stage where the client receives help from the social worker.

In this phase, the social worker engages the client in a worker – client relationships. The social worker assesses the client's problems and needs, and plans on how to begin social work help. The main goal of social casework process is the restoration to social functioning of the client.

**Post-Test**

1. What do you understand by the words “middle phase” in social casework?
2. State the importance of middle phase in social casework to general social work practice?

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## LECTURE NINE

# Middle Phase or Working Section in Social Casework II

### Introduction

There are basic issues that must be addressed while interviewing a client or clients. As we have discussed in lecture eight of this course, implementation deals with carrying out the intervention plan after initial engagement, assessment, and planning. This is the actual doing in social work. This involves a process of monitoring progress, revising as necessary, and completing the established plan.

The basic outcome of an implementation is in the use of thoughtful and planned efforts to bring about specific change (Bheafor, *et al.*, 2000).

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture you should be able to explain the middle phase in casework practice and all activities involved in it.

### Pre-Test

1. List activities involved in middle phase of social casework.
2. What are the significance of these activities to social work practice?

### CONTENT

The main activities of social workers are geared towards solving or preventing problems and, to assist the clients in achieving social betterment. Social casework believes that the philosophy behind social

work practice involves the concepts and principles about how the world should, or actually does, function. This philosophy provides values and guidelines for what is considered important in the intervention process. It emphasizes the aspects of a problem situation and the helping process that should be the focus of attention. The focus is on “fixing” the individual. In the case of child abuse, intervention or treatment would be directed at the abuser. A philosophy based on family systems, on the other hand, would emphasize the importance of the entire family’s interaction with each other and the environment. This would guide intervention to involve all family members.

One major warning is that, whatever intervention the social worker intends to apply, should not interfere with the family dynamics and ongoing activity any more than is absolutely necessary. The family should be helped to improve its functioning on a day-to-day basis together.

Whenever there is difficulty in the approach, review alternatives for helping the family until you find some that work (LeVine and Salle, 2000). Respect is shown for each family’s strengths, potential, natural striving toward growth, and capacity for change. Therefore, each family is individualized in social work practice, and its unique strengths and capacities are identified, and emphasized in the change process.

### **Date gathering and Assessment**

In the course of your interview with the client for a sole purpose of helping, the social worker must act these processes:

1. **Attending behaviour:** the social worker must have an eye contact with the client; sometimes, the social worker leans forward towards the client as if he/she wants to hear the client better. Doing this would encourage the client to speak up.
2. **Minimal encouragements:** the social worker should occasionally ‘nod’, or say ‘Yes’, ‘so’; ‘I see’ to encourage and draw the client out.
3. **Reflecting:** reflecting is repeating what the client has said as a stimulus to continue. The social worker may also use reflecting to confirm statements coming from client.
4. **Paraphrasing:** the paraphrase invites the client’s feedback for confirmation or correction. The social worker, therefore, paraphrases for this purpose.



5. **Silence**: the judicious and appropriate use of silence encourages the interviewee to share and to give him or her the opportunity to do so.

### **Questioning in Middle Phase**

There are special questions and approaches required in the middle phase. Some of the questions generally posed to the clients may be open-ended questions, close-ended questions and probe-questions.

Examples of open-ended questions are: what, when, how or who.

“What happened? When did it happen? How did it happen? Who caused it or who were involved?”

Examples of close-ended questions are: “Did you do it? Will you say it? Should you allow him/her? Can you encourage him/her? Are you going? Close-ended questions usually require one word answers such ‘Yes’, ‘No’, ‘Never’, ‘of-course’.

Probe questions are a series of related questions designed to explain in greater detail in a narrowly defined content area. Examples of probe questions are “What did the doctor tell you about the result of the test?” “How did you feel about the result?”

The professional social worker must understand these procedures fully. Further steps after questioning by the social worker:

The social worker must clarify, confront, interpret, inform, suggest and advise the client as appropriate.

#### **a. Clarification**

The social worker helps the client to get a more specific and objective perception of his/her problem. This is necessary to be able to move forward.

#### **b. Confrontation**

The social worker calls the client’s attention to discrepancies between what he/she says and associated nonverbal behaviour, between verbalized plans and subsequent actions; between expressed values and conduct.

**c. Interpretation**

Whereas confrontation deals with data that need explanation, interpretation offers possible suggestions for the interviewee's consideration.

The worker analyses the information the client has shared; reframes the data in terms of related theory, professional experience, and general knowledge about the client's problem; and then formulates a hypothesis about the situation that might suggest another way of approaching it. The social worker may offer a tentative interpretation such as "I wonder if ...", "Could it be that..." giving the client the freedom to accept, reject or modify the interpretation.

**d. Information, suggestion and advice**

Providing necessary information to clients in doses they can manage, and language they can understand and absorb helps the client to deal with the situation. Suggestions do not imply social worker's preferred approach but merely raise a possibility for the client to consider.

Finally, the social worker must always remember to leave every client with a positive mark i.e. positive position about the client's problems and needs. Leave the client with good, positive memory at the end of every contact.

**Summary**

Implementation in the middle phase is part of the elaborate intervention, plan for the client and client's problems and needs. The expected outcome of an implementation is in the use of thoughtful and planned efforts to bring about specific change. In the middle phase of social casework intervention process, the family is individualized and treated thus. In other words, the principle of individualization is observed very seriously in the middle phase of treatment. Steps in middle phase include data gathering and assessment where the social worker exhibits attending behaviour where he makes an eye contact with the client; minimal encouragements to the clients; reflecting, which is repeating what the client has said to serve as a stimulus; paraphrasing which serves as feedback to the client and silence, to encourage the client to share his/her information with the social worker.

Basic questions frequently used in the middle phase of casework are open-ended questions such as 'what', 'when', 'how' and 'who'; close-ended question include "did you do it?" "Will you say it?" These require usually a work-response like "yes", "No". Furthermore, probe questions are such like "how did you feel about the result?" "what did the doctor tell you about the result of the test?"

Middle phase in social casework is an important process in social work practice and it is an area that exposes the social workers in clinical practice.

**Post-Test**

1. What are the activities involved in middle phase of social casework?
2. What are the importance of these activities to social work practice?

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## LECTURE TEN

# Termination or Ending Phase

### Introduction

Social work relationship with the client must come to an end time in line with any or most prevailing factors. As the saying goes, anything that has a beginning must have an end. This lecture will discuss the termination or ending phase of a case.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to state the meaning of termination; and, the importance of termination in social casework.

### Pre-Test

1. Define termination or ending phase in social casework.
2. List the importance of termination in social casework?
3. State how to end a case.

### CONTENT

Termination or ending phase: Social work relationship as a worker-client contact must end or terminate, usually, but not always, at the point when the client has been restored fully to social functioning.

Termination in social casework involves specific skills and techniques. Termination is possible in social work at any level of intervention.

Appropriate timing of the termination is important. Also, the most effective terminations follow a process of disengagement and stabilization.

Social workers need to acknowledge that endings are near before they abruptly occur. They must encourage clients to share feelings about the termination and in turn share their own. Social workers must clearly identify whatever progress has been made. This process increases the chance that the client will use what has been learned during this intervention to help solve other problems in the future. Termination may be with the individual, group or community. Regardless, each needs help in the transition from dependence on the social worker for support or guidance to making decisions and functioning independently.

For organizational neatness, the need for good ending cannot be over emphasized. Prolonging intervention may not allow for natural growth potential present in all human beings.

The client must constantly be reminded of how much time there is left, reviewing progress and planning for the future to prevent dependency. However, premature termination could worsen the case.

#### **Reasons for ending or terminating a case:**

There are several reasons for terminating a case. Some of the reasons for the termination of a case are:

1. Agreed goals being achieved within a pre-set time.
2. Clients deciding they have been helped enough
3. Social workers leaving or clients moving from the area
4. The end of statutory requirements
5. Agency policy on time limits
6. Workload management and priority systems
7. Resource limitations
8. Lack of time and pressure of work,
9. Advice from supervisor
10. Influence of other agencies, and
11. Death of the client

However, a good model of ending could incorporate the following:

1. A discussion in the first meeting that help will not go on for ever. But help will not suddenly be withdrawn.
2. Using the experience of termination or transfer as a learning experience for client rather than a painful, separating one.

3. Where possible, employing a fixed time limit purposefully, using time itself as a therapeutic agent.
4. Giving the client certain objectives to achieve in the ending phase.
5. Before hand, exploring a person's feeling about the end of the relationship i.e. gradual withdrawal.
6. Introduce the new worker if there is to be one.
7. Help the client to construct a natural helping network in the community, mobilizing practical resources if need be. Then, do a follow-up visit.
8. Explore your own feelings, show the clients that you will remember them, have confidence in their ability to manage without you but express the goodwill of the agency whose door is left open should they need to return for further help.
9. In some contexts, a ritual or ceremonial ending with photograph, a party and a small photograph, a party and a small farewell gift could mark the occasion. This is common in group and community work.
10. Write a closing report together, if appropriate.

### **Summary**

Termination or ending phase of a case involves specific skills and techniques on the part of the social workers. Termination may occur at the end of a planned, time-limited service since the clients themselves have ideas on how long their contact will last with social workers. Termination may occur by mutual agreement either by achieving the goals set or the client feels he has achieved his objective. Termination may be that social worker was leaving the agency or there are changes in the client's schedule. Client's lack of interest in pursuance of the case may also lead to termination of a case. However, for a good ending of any case, social worker must set a target with the client on how long the case would last from the onset; stating objectives to be achieved and set in motion a process of gradual withdrawal.

### **Post-Test**

1. What is termination or ending phase in social casework?
2. List the importance of termination in social casework.
3. State how to terminate a case.

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## LECTURE ELEVEN

# Who are The Social Caseworkers?

### Introduction

This lecture deals with different types of social caseworkers. Social caseworkers are in different areas of specialization and their names depict their functions. Therefore, you will know every caseworker by his/her name and areas of functions.

### Objectives

By the end of this lecture you should be able to identify areas of functions of caseworkers, and; state their functions in the society.

### Pre-Test

1. Identify main types of social caseworkers.
2. State the functions of different types of social caseworkers

### CONTENT

Like in every profession that is highly specialized, the social worker profession is not an exemption in this regard. Social casework as the pivot of social work practice has different areas of specialty. The five main types of social caseworkers according to current usage will be examined in this lecture.

The five main types of caseworkers are:

- a. Medical social workers
- b. Family caseworkers
- c. Probation officers
- d. Psychiatric social workers
- e. Child care officers



It must however, be noted that names given to these categories of social caseworkers may vary from state to state, and country to country. For instance, in Nigeria, Family caseworkers, child care officers and probation officers are simply called social welfare officers, a generic name given by government to all those in its employment at Federal, State and Local Governments' levels.

**a. Medical Social Workers**

Medical social workers (or almoners as they were called until fairly recently) have their origins in the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the first "almoner" was appointed to the Royal Free Hospital. Her duties reflected the thinking of that time.

Initially, they were to be concerned with the protection of hospital funds from abuse, and subsequently with patients' materials and financial needs – the inference being that help should be given to those who really needed it.

Over the years, as a result of a growing recognition that social and emotional factors were of great importance to physical and other types of illness, the medical social worker has become an important member of the medical team in all types of hospitals. The medication model views clients as patients. The medical social worker's first task is seen as making a diagnosis as to the causes of a patient's problems and then providing treatment.

The patient's problems are viewed as being inside the patient. Again, medical social workers assess problems by viewing clients in their situations instead of focusing only on the clients.

The basic functions of a medical social worker include:

1. To help patients understand and interpret technical jargon.
2. To offer emotional support.
3. To help terminally-ill people deal with their feelings and make end-of-life plans.
4. To help patients adjust their lives and lifestyles to accommodate to new conditions.
5. To help parents of children with serious illnesses or disabilities cope with these conditions and respond to children's needs.

6. To serve as brokers who link patients with necessary supportive resources and services.
7. To help patients make financial arrangements to pay hospital bills.
8. To provide health education aimed at establishing a healthy lifestyle and preventing illness.

**b. Family Caseworkers**

Family casework has its origins in the Charity Organization Society (COS) established in 1869 to cater for the poor generally and children and the aged specifically.

Family caseworkers are the most comprehensive and least specialized firms of social casework. Most family caseworkers are employed today by the governments in Nigeria, and work in the Ministries of Women Affairs and social welfare. Their functions majorly are among women and children on issues affecting their well-being i.e. marital disputes, paternity rejection, paternity dispute, women and children trafficking, abandoned children, homeless, the aged and so on. All these functions confirm why family caseworkers are the most comprehensive and why they are more of generalists than specialists.

They also attend to both social and emotional problems of these segments of society: Women and children. They work among the youth, and in the justice system with an emphasis on the welfare of those standing trial (the accused) and the convicted.

**c. Probation Officers**

The probation service received statutory recognition in 1907. By the middle 1920s, it was mandatory for probation officers to be appointed to all courts in Britain, and today, they are well-established body of men and women who act as advisers to the courts on most social welfare matters. Probation officers supervise, advise; assist and befriend men, women and children (over the age of criminal responsibility) arrested for all kinds of offences – from the most serious to most trivial.

Probation takes place when a person is convicted but the judge determines that confinement is not warranted. Instead, that person is placed on probation and is allowed to live in society but under the court's supervision.

Probation officers conduct assessments prior to when clients begin probation in order to provide recommendations to the courts.

**d. Psychiatric Social Worker**

Psychiatric social workers developed out of the growing concern about the problems of the adult mentally-ill and of delinquent children.

Psychiatric social workers work in the psychiatric hospitals, adult psychiatric units of general hospitals, in community care of the mentally-ill and in child guidance clinics. They also engage directly or in association with other stakeholders in psychosocial research. Psychiatric social workers are also called clinical social workers. Major functions of psychiatric social workers are:

1. Case management: They collaborate with other stakeholders in the care of mentally-ill in the management.
2. They are involved in information dissemination and education programmes about mental illness to the community.
3. They are involved in the long-term community care programmes.
4. They are involved in the monitoring of daily treatment programmes.
5. They work towards having adequate family and social support for the mentally-ill.

**e. Child Care Officers**

Childcare in social work practice is an evolving branch of the practice. They work with mostly deprived and abused children i.e. the abandoned, the orphaned, the motherless, the sexually abused, the physically abused, the mentally abused: (i.e. all forms of child maltreatment).

They also work in Adoption and Child Welfare Units, Day Care, Protective Services and Criminal Justice Section with emphasis on child welfare.

**Summary**

Different types of social caseworkers are in different areas of specialization and their names depict their functions. The major types of caseworkers are medical social workers, family caseworkers, probation officers, psychiatric social workers and childcare officers. The medical social workers deal with the social and emotional factors that are of great importance in both the assessment and treatment of physical and psychological types of illness.

Family caseworkers work in social welfare offices of federal, states and local governments' ministries of women affairs and social welfare. They attend to social, economic, material, financial, emotional or relationships problems.

Probation officers act as advisers to the courts on most social welfare matters. Probation officers supervise, advise, assist and befriend men, women and children arrested for all kinds of offences. Psychiatric social workers work with mentally-ill adults and delinquent children. They are involved in the monitoring of day treatment programmes and sufficiently involved in the long-term community care programmes for the mentally-ill.

Furthermore, childcare officers work with mostly deprived children i.e. motherless children and; orphanages, and they enforce laws governing the well being and care of the children.

**Post-Test**

1. List the main types of social caseworkers.
2. What are the functions of different types of social caseworkers.

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## LECTURE TWELVE

# Process Recording and Case Studies

### Introduction

One of the major components of casework service is process recording. Work done without documentation is like an undone work. In most cases, recording serves as evidence of a case being treated or that has been treated. This lecture, therefore, discusses process recording and case studies in social casework.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to explain what process recording entails, and should be able to list importance of process recording.

### Pre-Test

1. What is process recording in social casework?
2. List the importance of process recording in social casework.

### CONTENT

One of the most intricate aspects of casework is the procedure to be taken in an attempt to seek solution to problems.

Casework process, if properly followed, will give expected results. The process will enable social caseworker to know the causation of problems, source of problems, the real problem(s), what should be applied to treat the problems, who and who should be brought in to find solutions to the problems; and, services and resources required in the treatment.

Process recording in social casework is a systematic approach and documentation of events and methods of happenings from the time a client comes to the agency to seek help and to the time the help sought is received and the case terminated.

This is where professional method of attending to clients' problems with all steps is followed.

### **STEP 1: The Meeting**

Introducing change is one thing and accepting that change is another. A client may have personal, social or psychological problem and may be unable to solve this problem unaided, he may also be unsure of where and when to seek help. He may not also be sure of who the "helpers" (Social workers) would be.

If eventually he decides to come to the agency to meet the social worker for help, his first meeting which is the first contact with the social worker, is very important to the client and his case.

The social worker should know that first impression matters most. The social worker must be a source of hope and succor to the client, and not of despair and hopelessness. Document all proceedings.

### **STEP 2: Information**

Every client in the agency requires adequate information about the agency to convince him/her that he/she has come to the right agency and that help would be received from the agency. Therefore, the social worker must be patient, knowledgeable and skilled in casework practice.

Information collected from clients should be confidentially treated and used only for the purpose of helping the client.

### **STEP 3: Social History**

This is one of the most important aspects of casework process. The social worker must document the social history of the client as this is the technique through which the client is known in the professional sense of it. The social history is not collected for its sake but to form an essential basis for constructive help.

The client's problem must be critically examined before any form of help can be rendered except in medical crisis or life-threatening situations where investigation and help go almost hand-in-hand.

#### **STEP 4: Analysis or Diagnosis**

After all information had been gathered, personal and social history of the client has been known, the caseworker is equipped with enough material to proceed in handling the next. Information is clarified to know what the need is. Substantiating data can also be used to prove that the need is significant enough to merit intervention. Through diagnosis, the caseworker is able to ascertain what the client actually said to be his problem or if some other problems were the real problems or issues to be quickly tackled.

The social caseworker should identify what resources the client would require and the means of accessing such resources by the client. Whatever help the caseworker intends to offer must be discussed with the client and jointly agreed before any help. The client has a major role to play in finding solution to his/her problems.

However, in all these, the caseworker must not breach any of the seven principles of social work practice. Caseworkers should know that problems of life are not easily solved and it takes time for solutions to start to come in.

#### **STEP 5: Treatment**

Social caseworkers start treatment after the diagnoses of social problems have been made.

The caseworker helps the client to look at the crisis situation more objectively. People in crisis are in turmoil, when you are in emotional turmoil, it is difficult to think clearly and objectively. The Caseworker's task is to help clients assess their situation rationally and begin to cut through the cloud of emotion that biases their rational thinking.

The caseworker helps the client to express hidden feelings. The caseworker critically explores the clients' emotional state and the blockages that are preventing them from returning to his/her pre-crisis level of functioning.

The client is advised to use past coping methods in resolving the crisis.

In summary, treatment in social casework must be rooted in social support. Every process in treatment requires family and social support.

### **Summary**

Social casework has specific procedure to be taken in an attempt to seek solution to problems. Process recording in a social casework is a systematic approach and it includes the documentation of events and methods of happenings from the time the help sought is received and the case terminated. In process recording, some steps must be followed. These are steps 1-5 namely:

The meeting; Information; Social history; Analysis or diagnosis and treatment.

The meeting is the first contact with the client and the caseworker should approach this first contact with all knowledge, methods and skills required. This first contact can make or mar the contact which must be attended to professionally. Worker-client relationship must be established.

Also, adequate information must be systematically collected to be able to render needed help to the client. Proper social history taking will afford the caseworker the opportunity to arrive at social diagnosis of the clients' problems.

Proper diagnosis will lead to correct treatment. Therefore, the caseworker should bring his/her knowledge and skills to bear so as to arrive at correct social diagnosis. Finally, treatment or help should start as soon as the cause of the problem is known. The client must be carried along by the caseworker in all plans for treatment and even in its implementation. The success of every treatment depends on the client himself/herself.

Every step taken should be documented for record purpose.

### **Post-Test**

1. What is process recording in social casework?
2. List the importance of process recording in social casework.



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## LECTURE THIRTEEN

# Preparation and Keeping of Records

### Introduction

Preparation and keeping of casework records are essential in social work practice. Some steps must be taken in preparing for social work practice as regards keeping of records. Any process in social casework that is not recorded is akin to not to have taken place. Documentation guides the work, the process, the social worker and the agency.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to list all the items needed for record keeping and state the importance of record keeping in social casework.

### Pre-Test

1. List items needed for keeping of records in social casework.
2. What is the importance of record keeping in social casework?

### CONTENT

#### Preparing for record keeping:

Recording is a documentation on proper or on special forms designed for use in a particular agency to show what has taken place between a client and social caseworker. It is a detailed account of all the relevant and vital issues that had taken place.

According to Olowa (1987), a worker, no matter how articulate may not be able to retain all what has happened between him and the client in

memory. He needs a systematic approach to put down information and all steps taken to help the client.

The caseworkers needs the following proper record-keeping:

1. Writing materials i.e. papers, pens, pencils, eraser, ruler, ink, files.
2. Conducive office with Chairs and a table.
3. Agency's form or format for case recording.
4. For safety and confidentiality, a lock-up file cabinet.

In modern practice, a computer is used for case recording and this makes case recording a lot easier. Again, it has been said that the weakest ink is stronger than the strongest memory. A busy caseworker cannot remember exact details of each case he/she handles even though he may think he does.

However, in keeping with the ethics of profession, some rules must be kept. These are:

1. Keep files and sources of information physically safe-guarded from unwarranted access.
2. Consider what information should and should not be kept.
3. Information should be released only with prior, informed, written consent of the client or the client's guardian.
4. Make sure that client rights are not violated, and report breaches when they occur.

It must be noted that in most cases, caseworkers don't inform their clients that they are taking notes at interviewing. Caseworkers must explain to the clients that they are taking notes during interviews so as to remember all the discussions.

There must be proper keeping of case files – reporting the actual events and making the caseworker's personal comments on the interview. Also, seek your superior officer's view/comment on all issues that have to do with record keeping.

Importance of case recording:

1. The caseworker keeps record to remember details about their worker-client relationship.
2. The caseworker who starts a case may not be available to finish it, hence the need for proper record keeping to afford the new caseworker adequate access to client's records for continuity.

3. Clients may change statements as the case goes on because they may be out to give the caseworker a chance to check and countercheck statements.
4. A case may be closed but re-opened after a period of several years e.g. in cases of paternity dispute or rejection.
5. A case may be referred to court or to another station one can never know which case will prove complicated.
6. Recording your work with a client simply provides proof that such work has been done. It serves as evidence of doing something about the client.
7. Recording information about client allows for many professionals to share this data.
8. Recording helps to organize your thinking about how to proceed with the client. Comparing past records with present ones allows you to measure how much progress has been made.

### **Summary**

Preparation and keeping of records in social casework are an important aspect as a job done without record is like it has never been done since there is no evidence to show for such deed. Therefore, writing items, chairs and table, conducive office room, agency forms and format and, in line with modern development, a computer set, should be made readily available for every transaction in social casework.

The importance of record keeping includes keeping records to remember details of discussion with clients; for case continuity; proof that work is done on the client; and organization of thoughts on all discussions with the client. Therefore, record keeping allows for information about a case to out-last the case.

### **Post-Test**

1. What are the items needed for record-keeping in social casework?
2. List the importance of record-keeping in social casework?

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## LECTURE FOURTEEN

# The Psychosocial Approach to The Practice of Social Casework

### Introduction

When we think of fundamental concepts in social casework, we are inclined to imagine a static practice. But the truth is that casework concepts are dynamic. They change, grow and develop as they are shaped by new experience and knowledge. The psychosocial view is essentially a system theory approach to social casework. This is a major system that the person-in-situation with diagnosis and treatment.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to state two major ways to psychosocial approach; and the importance of psychosocial approach to social casework.

### Pre-Test

1. List the procedures to follow in psychosocial approach of social casework.
2. What is the importance of psychosocial approach to social case work?

### CONTENT

Psychosocial approach is a method through which social dysfunctions are solved or at the worse, alleviated in order to restore the clients back to social functioning and the ability to solve such or any other social problems should they re-emerge in whatever form.

Everyone, including social workers, has vulnerabilities, we sometimes do not know why certain events upset us or remind us of a part of the past which we would have rather forgotten.

Also, as social workers, we show compassion on some segment of the society than others i.e. children than adults. Therefore, social workers must understand others so that they can understand the “person as well as the problem”.

Psychosocial approach teaches that the social worker should learn to understand that presenting problem may not be the real problem, hence, the need for skilled investigation.

Psychosocial approach helps us to develop a healthy questioning of the obvious. This places an emphasis on proper investigation of all cases without which no solution or treatment will suffice.

This approach is one of the oldest approaches in social work practice dating back to Mary Richmond in 1922. The approach has been adapted to meet the contemporary challenges.

Aims of psychosocial approach in social casework practice: The main aim of psychosocial approach is to assist the client, the situation or both by reducing internal, and/or external conflict. Therefore, while the forms may be on the behaviour, some attempt is made to understand and resolve inner conflicts.

In pursuance of this major aim, some procedures must be followed; these are towards offering support or building a relationship. They include:

1. Ventilation: This unburdening of feelings and thoughts allows the overwhelmed ego to concentrate on problem-solving.
2. Realistic reassurance: by keeping the client in touch with actuality, not promising what cannot be done.
3. Acceptance in relationship doesn't allow for self-criticism, rigidity: The social worker accepts the client the way he/she is with no conditionality.
4. Logical discussion affords the social worker to assess the client's problems and coping ability.
5. Giving information affords the client to present the facts of what is inside of the client, and what is outside in relation to facts and resources, and prevents magical expectations.

6. Offering advice and guidance, in psychosocial terms, enlarges understanding, sustaining the client's own efforts to keep control; reducing doubt and fear of the unknown; introduce hope and assist the client's capacity for reflection, adaptation and readiness to cope.
7. Environmental manipulation: the social worker searches for resources and shares the burden of handling practical problems; thereby reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence.
8. Reflective communications to enlarge clients' self-understanding. This has to do with relationship existing between the social worker and the client.
9. Confrontation techniques include pointing out patterns of thinking, feeling and doing.
10. Clarification techniques include the use of interpretations to point out when a client's use of defence mechanisms is getting in the way of change, making them resistant.
11. Interpretation comprises an observation which helps the person to link their present circumstances in their lives "out there" to the feelings that they have "in here". That is the relationship with the social worker to what went on "back there", i.e. the past.

### **Summary**

In psychosocial approach to social casework practice, problems are either emotional, interpersonal, or environmental ones. They relate to meeting basic needs, such as love, trust, dependence, separateness and autonomy. In any case, the cause of a problem is important. The main goals of psychosocial approach are to understand and change the client, the situation or both, that is through direct and indirect intervention.

Therefore, the social worker is to study, diagnose and treat the client. In this regard, the social worker may or may not share the assessment with the client. Sharing this information with the client depends strongly on the emotional stability of the client. Treatment processes include establishment of a relationship, building up emotional support, helping the client to grow in terms of self-awareness and identity, and working through previously unsettled inner conflicts.

A major contribution is obtaining needed practical resources to sustain the clients.



### **Post-Test**

1. What are the procedures to follow in psychosocial approach to social casework?
2. List the importance of psychosocial approach in social casework.

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## LECTURE FIFTEEN

# Communication Theory in Social Casework

### Introduction

Communication is an important instrument in social casework and a major facilitator of result in social casework practice. Communication lies at the core of casework as a helping process.

Despite this fact, inadequacies in communication skills continue to plague caseworkers, presenting obstacles to the attainment of their problem-solving goals. Therefore, good communication can make a casework to be successful whereas bad communication will mar a case.

### Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. List conditions for success in communication.
2. Discuss the importance of effective communication.
3. Identify obstacles to effective communication.

### Pre-Test

1. What are the conditions for success in communication?
2. What is the importance of effective communication?
3. List obstacles to effective communication.

## CONTENT

### Definition

Communication theory in social casework posits an open-ended system through which “messages”, “receptions” and “responses” constantly flow from sender to receiver and back. Therefore, communication is an

exchange of thoughts and opinions by words, letters, or messages. Messages are made up of signs, and a sign is a signal that stands for something in experience.

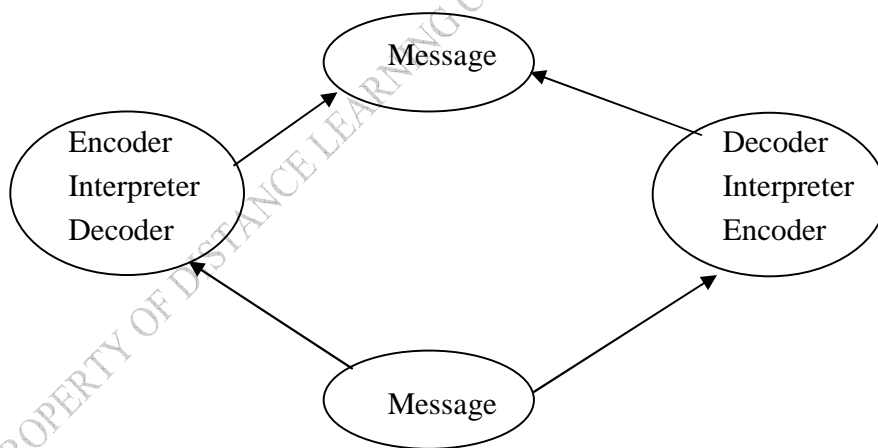
**Process of Communication:**

The process of communication deals with “Who says what to whom, how, with what effect”. In other words, the communication process requires at least three elements.

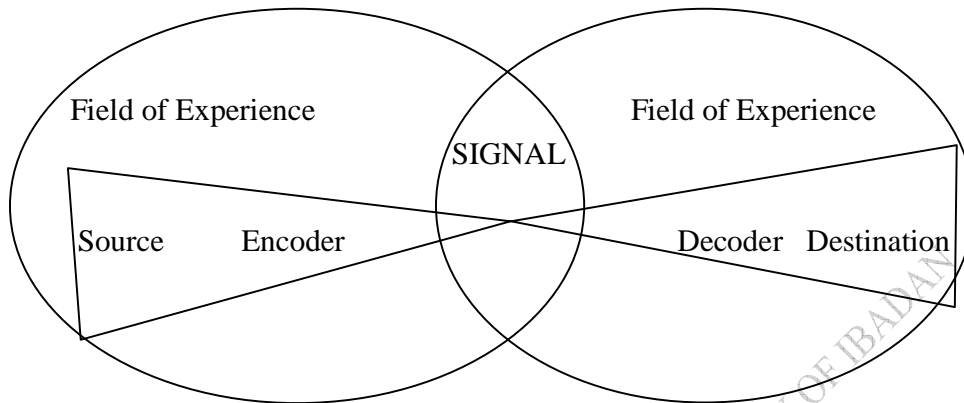
1. A source
2. A message, and
3. A destination

Each person in the communication is both an encoder. He receives and transmits. He must be able to write readable shorthand, and be able to read other people’s shorthand.

Feedback in communication refers to both the manifest and latent responses to the signal received.



**Figure 2: Communication cycle**



**Figure 3: The communication system**

Both figures 1 and 2 emphasised the position of a person as both the sender and receiver of a message with input, output, encoding, decoding, interpretation, feedback and signal as key words.

Encoding means activities employed by the communicator to formulate the message or signal that is to be transmitted.

Interpretation and decoding are activities required to make sense out of the message on the part of the recipient.

**Conditions for success in communication:**

1. The message must be so designed and delivered as to gain the attention of the intended destination.
2. The message must employ signs, which refer to experience common to source, and destination, so as to 'get the meaning across'.
3. The message must arouse personality needs in the destination and suggest some way to meet those needs.
4. The message must suggest a way to meet those needs which is appropriate to the group situation in which the destination finds himself at the time when he is moved to make the desired response.

### **Importance of communication to social casework**

A significant aspect of interaction is communication - the extent to which two people are able to convey their feelings and opinions to each other either verbally or nonverbally. Such defenses as repression, suppression and inhibition may interfere with communication. Attitudes expressed verbally may be contradicted by non-verbal behaviour.

Words, tone of voice, gestures and bodily behaviour may be misinterpreted. Even differences in the literal meanings of words exchanged between individuals using the same basic language. This is not peculiar only to different classes and geographical regions but even individual families give special meaning to words.

### **Obstacles to effective communication**

A number of factors can operate to hamper, blur or prohibit communication. These may be:

1. Cultural barriers
2. Differences in language system
3. Marked differences in role and status
4. Defensiveness or resistance
5. Rigidity and more guided interview on the part of the social caseworker may inhibit client production.

#### **Summary**

Communication is the word that sums up an entire process that is fundamental in the practice of social casework. The process has two aspects, neither of which can be separated from the other: first, the rapport between social caseworker and client which can occur without any words being spoken and which is a matter of feeling.

Second, an ordering, structuring process that must operate at some level if the experience of one person is to be conveyed to another in words. Language is social and serves to communicate needs, it is also symbolic and has an organizing function.

In the casework process, it is anticipated that the social caseworker's input to the communication process is conditioned and controlled by the development of self-awareness which enables the social caseworker to view objectively the verbal and behavioural productions of both participants.

**Post-Test**

1. List conditions for success in communication.
2. What is the importance of effective communication?
3. What are the obstacles to effective communication?

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