

Introduction to Social Work

Introduction to Social Work – Study Notes

1. What Is Social Work?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A professional discipline that promotes social change, development, cohesion, and the empowerment of individuals, families, groups, and communities.
Core Goal	Enhance well-being and improve quality of life, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations.
Key Values	Service, social justice, dignity & worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence.
Primary Settings	Hospitals, schools, child-welfare agencies, mental-health clinics, correctional facilities, community organizations, private practice.

2. Historical Development

Period	Milestones
Late 19th?–?early 20th?c.	Settlement house movement (e.g., Jane Addams, Hull House); roots in charity work.
1910s?1930s	Formal training programs appear; first baccalaureate degree in social work (1919, University of Chicago).
1930s?1940s	New Deal ? expansion of public welfare programs; emergence of “casework” model.
1960s?1970s	Community organization, anti?poverty activism; rise of macro?social work and advocacy.
1980s?1990s	Professionalization: licensure, ethics codes, evidence?based practice.
2000s?present	Focus on trauma?informed care, cultural competence, interdisciplinary collaboration, and technology?enhanced services.

3. Levels of Social Work Practice

Level	Focus	Typical Activities
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Micro	Individual, family, or small group	Assessment, counseling, crisis intervention, case management.
Mezzo	Small groups, neighborhoods, institutions	Program development, group facilitation, community outreach, school-based services.
Macro	Larger systems, policy, societal change	Advocacy, policy analysis, research, administration, community organizing.

4. The Helping Process (Generalist Model)

1. **Engagement** – Build rapport; establish trust and a collaborative relationship.
2. **Assessment** – Gather data (biopsychosocial, ecological); identify strengths and needs.
3. **Planning** – Set measurable goals; develop an intervention plan with the client.
4. **Implementation** – Deliver services (counseling, referrals, advocacy).
5. **Evaluation** – Review outcomes; modify the plan as needed.
6. **Termination** – Conclude services ethically; ensure continuity of support.

Note: The steps are iterative; practitioners often cycle back to earlier phases.

5. Core Competencies (per NASW & CSWE)

Domain	Competency Highlights
Professionalism	Ethical decision-making, self-care, lifelong learning.
Engagement & Relationship	Culturally responsive communication, empowerment, boundary setting.
Assessment & Intervention	Evidence-based techniques, strengths-based perspective, trauma-informed care.
Evaluation & Research	Data collection, outcome measurement, use of research to inform practice.
Advocacy & Policy	Knowledge of legislation, lobbying skills, community organizing.

6. Ethical Foundations

Principle	Application Example
Service	Prioritize client needs over personal gain.

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Principle

Application Example

Social Justice Work to eliminate discrimination and promote equal access to resources.