

choose from a variety of skills and techniques to find the intervention that best fits the person in his or her environment.

This chapter highlights a number of the most frequently used interventions. Although intervention happens at many levels, in order to best identify the various approaches, they are divided according to three general practice levels: individuals and families, groups, and communities. Social work practice often involves working on two or all three levels, and generalist practitioners need to be comfortable working with people on all levels. We begin our discussion with an overview of the theoretical framework utilized by most generalist practice social workers.

A Theoretical Framework for Generalist Social Work Practice

According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE),

generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice. (CSWE, 2015, p. 11)



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In Chapter 1, we discussed social work's conceptual framework, which includes the ecological systems view, the strengths and diversity perspectives, and other theories of human behavior. This framework informs and guides generalist social work practice. In other words, social workers are not just well-intentioned people trying to help others. Social workers are well-trained professionals who use a core set of values and ethics, theoretical knowledge, and critical thinking skills to make decisions about how to effectively intervene with any given client. Over the last three decades, social work has become more of a science than an art. We use interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness, which we refer to as evidence-based practice.



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Ecological Systems Framework

The ecological systems framework requires social workers to understand their clients in the context of the social systems and people that they interact with. In Chapter 1, we used the example of Jane to illustrate the person-in-environment aspect of the ecological systems perspective. Shortly, we discuss the case of Michael, a client with AIDS. Our discussion focuses on individual interventions with Michael. However, in the context of the ecological systems framework, it is critical for Michael's social worker to understand every system

Michael interacts with and the impact each system has on him. Michael is affected by the medical system, the employment system, his family system, and many other systems.

Let's use the medical system as an example. It is a large and complicated system in which even people with excellent private medical insurance can be devastated by the costs of a catastrophic and chronic illness like Michael's. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 20 percent of people with health insurance have problems paying their medical bills. Many people had to use all of their savings or declare bankruptcy after a serious illness (Hamel et al., 2016).

Michael's social worker has an obligation to help him understand and navigate the medical system. It may not be part of the social worker's job description (primarily because of time constraints) to lobby or advocate for changes in the medical system, but at the very least, he or she should be well informed about the system. In addition, the social worker has an ethical obligation to be an educated voter and vote for those public officials who are invested in making the medical system more efficient and effective.

The Strengths and Diversity Perspectives

Along with the person-in-environment context, the strengths and diversity perspectives are at the heart of social work practice, particularly generalist practice. Following are the assumptions underlying the strengths perspective:

- Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths.
- Trauma and abuse, illness, and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity.
- Every environment is full of resources (Saleebey, 2012).

Working from a diversity perspective means being aware of and sensitive to human diversity. Social workers must know about the ways that people differ based on race, ethnic background, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, class, and age. It also means **understanding and actively confronting our personal biases and developing a sense of cultural humility**. Cultural humility means being aware that we see the world through our own particular lens and engaging in ongoing self-reflection and self-critique. It also means approaching people as individuals and taking the time to learn about how they are unique and what is important to them.

The strengths and diversity perspectives can be used to guide social work practice at all levels. Take the example of Ashley, who works for a hospice program. Hospice programs serve people who have a limited time left to live. Hospice offers patients and their families support and comfort, helps patients manage their pain, and strives to improve the quality of patients' lives at the end of their lives. Ashley is working with the Swanson family. Alvin Swanson is 82 years old, has lung cancer, and has been told he has less than six months to live. Both the strengths and the diversity perspectives require that rather than making any assumptions about the family, Ashley spend time getting to know the Swansons and learn what resources they have available to them;



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