

Emma is the school social worker in a rural school district. Many of the youth in rural areas leave home because of their parent's substance abuse, only to become vulnerable to predators who eventually engage them in substance abuse. Emma helps these youth by facilitating a support and counseling group once a week.

Landon is a civilian social worker who serves military families. He helps families adjust to transition—in particular, to the long periods of separation that are followed by the challenges of reintegration when a service member comes home. He also helps military families cope with domestic violence and substance abuse issues.

Chikwa trains groups of adults who are interested in becoming foster parents. The curriculum she teaches covers basic parenting skills, information about the child welfare system, insights into the perspectives and experiences of children entering the foster care system, and content on child development, including the impact of neglect and sexual and physical abuse on child development.

Marco is the chief administrator for a private, not-for-profit substance abuse organization in an urban area on the East Coast. His agency provides outpatient treatment services, **case management** services, transitional housing, and life skills and job search programs for addicts.

Dyani works for Tribal Social Services in the Southwest. Her primary responsibility is to design and evaluate community **intervention** and education programs that improve the quality of life in indigenous communities. She also facilitates the coordination of all community agencies and resources, including prevention services for substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout, early intervention, foster care and adoption, and juvenile justice.

Tamiko is a policy expert for a social work advocacy organization. She writes policies and lobbies Congress to incorporate social work policy positions into legislation. Her main areas of focus are health care reform and aging.

As the examples demonstrate, social workers have different targets of attention (individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, society) and numerous fields of practice (e.g., child welfare, health care, housing, substance abuse), and they serve a variety of populations (e.g., children, elderly people, rural, and urban communities). The techniques we use can be general or highly specialized. Some interventions require additional training beyond the baccalaureate social work (BSW) degree, and others require training beyond the master of social work (MSW) degree. A major task of social work training is teaching practitioners to assess what services are needed and appropriate and then either provide those services or refer clients to practitioners who can provide specialized interventions.

**LO 1** Undergraduate social work education and the first or foundation year of graduate education are designed to transfer the knowledge, values, and skills required for generalist social work practice. Generalist social workers can intervene on a variety of practice levels, in many practice settings for a wide range of social problems (see Box 6.1). The second year of graduate education is intended to transfer advanced or specialized knowledge and skills. Keep in mind that social work education and training is a continuing, lifelong process that does not end after the completion of a degree. Social workers must be dedicated to ongoing personal reflection and self-correction and actively engage in career-long learning.

**LO 2** Within the generalist framework, social work can be divided into micro and macro practice. In micro practice, social workers help individuals, families, and small

groups function better within the larger environment. Emma, Landon, and Chikwa are all practicing at the micro level. Macro practice means working to change the larger environment in ways that benefit individuals and families. When engaged in macro practice, social workers serve as administrators and/or intervene in communities, organizations, and the legislative arena to effect social change. Marco, Dyani, and Tamiko are involved in macro practice activities.

For purposes of explanation, it is helpful to distinguish between generalist micro and macro practice. However, the distinction between the two levels of practice is often a false one, and the boundaries between them are blurred. To be effective, social workers must be able to use both micro and macro interventions to address the needs and concerns of their clients. Few problems have only individual solutions. Social workers usually work on an individual and family level while also addressing structural concerns. For example, helping people who live in a rural community to improve their job skills will not change the fact that there are few jobs available in their area. If there are no jobs nearby and no transportation to take him or her to a job, even strong job skills will not ensure that your client can get a job. Effective social work involves helping clients improve their employability as an individual and also helping change the environment so that there will be jobs available.

**Generalist social work practice** can include a wide array of approaches with different theories and emphases (see Box 6.2). Some approaches are more commonly used than others, and new ones emerge over time. Students may be trained to use one or several approaches, depending on the perspectives of their instructors, their schools, and later their supervisors. The varied approaches allow social work practitioners to

### Box 6.1 More About... Generalist Social Work Practice

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person and environment construct. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice. Generalist practitioners

incorporate 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 (SWE, 2015, pp. 7–8; The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards section B2.2).

### Box 6.2 More About... Levels of Practice

In the text, we discuss micro and macro levels of practice. Some in the field add a third level, mezzo practice. Micro means “small,” referring to work with individuals or families. Macro means “large,” referring to work with larger systems, usually communities or organizations. Mezzo refers to a middle level of practice, which for many in the field means work with small groups. One way of understanding mezzo practice is as a method that can

be used at either the micro or macro level, using small groups to create change. If the focus of our change is individuals or families, we might use a support group to help the individuals in the group learn to function better. To create macro level change, we often use task groups as a method of creating change in communities or organizations. In this text, small-group practice is included as a part of micro practice.