

must know about the breadth of services available in the community, have advocacy skills, and be able to assess problems and needs.

In Michael's case, Gwen made several referrals in addition to providing information. She referred Michael to his local public assistance office so that he could apply for financial aid, and she made a preliminary determination of whether he was eligible for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act and for disability services. On the basis of his employment history, she referred him to the local Social Security office to apply for disability insurance coverage. She directed him to a group home where he could pay much lower rent and receive support with daily living. All these efforts are examples of *link*.

Network Linkages Knowledge about the breadth of services is a critical component of providing network linkages. People may receive services from multiple social service systems. The social worker can act as the link between the systems.

For example, children's problems often require the involvement of many social service systems. Consider a child who is caught vandalizing school property by security personnel. A police officer may be called, possibly leading to involvement of the juvenile justice system. The child may be assessed as having severe emotional disturbances, and then the community mental health agency becomes involved. A school social worker may also be involved, as the child is a student at the school. In this case, three systems—juvenile justice, school, and mental health—are all involved with one child. Social workers are trained to work in and with multiple systems. This training helps them ensure that there is neither a duplication of services nor a gap in service.

Gwen began the process of network linkage for Michael. She called a staff person at one of the agencies to which she referred him; she recommended that he see a social worker with specialized skills in treating depression. The network linkages will continue as Michael progresses in the social service system at the HIV/AIDS Social Service Center. The final stage of the intervention process is for Gwen to help Michael transition to the services he needs and eventually end the services he is receiving from Gwen. This will occur only after Gwen has helped Michael resolve his problems or concerns, and he can return for services in the future if his circumstances change.

Monitoring and Evaluation It is critical for Gwen to monitor and analyze her interventions with Michael. According to the **NASW Code of Ethics (2008) Ethical Standard 5.02**, Gwen has an ethical responsibility to evaluate her own practice, determine the effectiveness of her interventions, and use her findings to improve her practice. In Michael's case, Gwen completed an interview before the end of service. They discussed each goal and whether Michael thought the goal had been accomplished.



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Family Intervention

Generalist family social workers typically intervene with families in their homes or communities and focus their interventions on concrete needs and improving daily living. Social workers generally come into contact with

families in one of two ways. Often, families become involved in treatment as an outgrowth of an individual's course of intervention. For example, Michael's sister became involved in his treatment plan and was a key factor in helping him develop a wider network of social support. She also began to attend a support group for families who have members with a chronic illness. This helped her to cope with Michael's situation by setting appropriate boundaries and preventing caregiver burnout. In another example, a woman who is seeing a social worker to help address an alcohol abuse problem may agree with the worker that including her family would be beneficial.

Social workers also become engaged with families as the primary focus of their intervention. Many aspects of society can have a negative impact on families. This can mean that the family unit needs assistance. Homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, child abuse and neglect, as well as the general stresses of daily life, can put a lot of pressure on families. Social workers can provide family therapy, teach parenting skills, assist families in finding housing, and help family members find job. All of these interventions support families and help them stay together. Family intervention may also be needed for families of our military personnel. Landon, our civilian "military" social worker, helps families adjust when service members are absent and when they return home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Family roles often change when one member is away for an extended period of time, and families need a safe environment to discuss individual change and growth and how that impacts the family.

To effectively work with a family, a social work practitioner needs knowledge and skills drawn from individual and group interventions (see Box 6.4). Unlike formal groups, which are discussed in the next section, families are natural groups with lifetime relationships that are structured through legal, biological, or intimate bonds. The purpose of family social work is to focus on the family as the unit of service in order to help improve the health and well-being of all family members.

Ethical Challenges in Working with Individuals and Families

In working with individuals and families, the social work practitioner is faced with numerous ethical challenges. The NASW Code of Ethics requires social workers to follow procedures to guarantee confidentiality, ensure informed consent, and provide services that are helpful and do no harm. Sometimes those requirements are difficult to meet. For example, what if a client confides that she is planning to commit suicide? Do you keep that between you and the client and not warn others? Or what if a client confides that he is aware of a child who has been physically abused? If you are confident of the veracity, you are required to report such knowledge to protect the child.

When social workers guarantee confidentiality, they do so with some limits, and those limits are to safeguard the client and other people. A social worker is required by legal decree to divulge information in a court of law. Although confidentiality is part of social workers' conduct, it has limits, and clients need to understand these limits.