



Evaluation

Behavior: Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes.

Critical Thinking Question: In the case study of Sarah (Box 1.2), how effective was the social worker in helping the client achieve her treatment goals? How would you account for unmet client goals?

Box 1.2 Case Study: Sarah

You are a social worker at a not-for-profit social service agency that provides support services and training to help young single mothers achieve self-sufficiency. Sarah, a 17-year-old single pregnant female, was referred to your agency by her school counselor. At intake, the social worker tries to put Sarah at ease by providing her with a comfortable chair to sit in, asking about her general well-being, and letting Sarah guide the pace of the interview. A few questions on the intake form may include an inquiry about her current life situation, identifying and contact information, current support systems in place, level of education, and so on. Using these techniques, the social worker reaches out to engage Sarah in the helping process and to build a rapport that communicates care and concern. In such an atmosphere, Sarah is able to begin to tell the story of what has led her to seek services on this day. By taking the time to make Sarah feel comfortable and cared for, the social worker has learned that Sarah's *presenting problem* is that of impending homelessness. She is four months pregnant and has been kicked out of her parents' home. When Sarah informed her boyfriend of two years, Joseph, about her pregnancy, he broke up with her, saying he had plans for college and could not take on raising a family at this point in his life. Sarah is confused and depressed and uncertain about how to handle her situation. During the assessment process, you discover that Sarah is without family support, has dropped out of school, has isolated herself from her peers, and has no money and no place to live. For the past week, Sarah has been spending the night at various classmates' homes, sometimes without the knowledge of their parents. She has worn out her welcome with her friends' families, and last night she slept under a bridge about a mile from

The helping process is a fluid and dynamic sequence of social worker–client interactions directed toward problem resolution and growth. The stages of the helping process are not discrete but rather build on one another as the helping relationship evolves. Neither are they strictly linear, as the social worker assesses the client situation, evaluates the client's progress, and introduces new interventions as the helping relationship unfolds. Box 1.2 demonstrates the dynamic and complex nature of the helping relationship.

Using the case study of Sarah in Box 1.2, consider how you might prepare her for terminating the helping relationship. Complete the exercise in Box 1.B.

her parents' home. Although fearful, confused, and uncertain, prior to her current crisis, Sarah presented herself as a responsible student and daughter. Consequently, she is motivated to establish some stability in her life and is seeking help in improving her situation. Together, you and Sarah identify problem areas that need to be addressed and accentuate her strengths in constructing a *plan of action* and a *contract*. The following treatment goals are mutually agreed on between you and Sarah:

1. Gain access to prenatal care
 2. Apply for Medicaid and TANF
 3. Explore temporary housing and apply for subsidized housing benefits
 4. Enroll in a support group for single teen parents
 5. Engage in ongoing individual counseling for dealing with issues of family disruption, self-esteem, and depression
 6. Enroll in GED classes
 7. Sign up for vocational training for job placement
 8. Begin parenting and family planning classes
 9. Pursue child support payments
- Together, you and Sarah prioritized the treatment goals and placed them within a specific time frame. During the *treatment and intervention stage*, Sarah was able to find temporary housing with a family friend until the birth of her child. Meanwhile, as her social worker, you linked her to a local public health clinic where she received prenatal care and referred her to the public aid office, where she applied for and received Medicaid and TANF benefits. Sarah attended her GED classes twice a week and planned on completing her diploma by the

Box 1.2 Case Study: Sarah (Continued)

time her child is born. You also referred her to the local housing authority, where Sarah applied for subsidized housing. At the time, she was facing a waiting list of six months. Sarah continued her weekly counseling session and was able to consider mending her broken relationships with her parents. Sarah enrolled in an early childhood development training program in preparation for employment after the birth of her child. Classes will begin when she completes her GED program. After six months of working with Sarah as her primary social worker, you evaluated her progress and assessed the extent to which Sarah had been able to attain her treatment goals. Over the five-month period, Sarah made the following progress on her treatment goals:

1. Consistently kept her prenatal care appointments, followed her physician's instructions, and gave birth to a full-term, healthy son
2. Received Medicaid and TANF benefits and maintained her eligibility
3. Moved into a one-bedroom public housing unit in a safe neighborhood

4. Attended only two sessions of her support group for single teen parents
5. Attended 90 percent of her weekly counseling sessions and was feeling more focused and less depressed
6. Reestablished communication with her family
7. Completed her GED
8. Was scheduled to begin child care development classes in six weeks
9. Had information on the local family planning clinic
10. Received in-home parenting instruction from a home interventionist working with new mothers
11. Spoke to a legal aid attorney about pursuing child support

Together, you and Sarah conclude that she has acquired a sufficient level of empowerment and determine that it is time to *evaluate and terminate* the helping relationship. You and Sarah have created an environmental structure that will support and nurture her and her son, and as her social worker, you leave the door open for future contact.

Box 1.B Now You Try It . . . Termination

Read the case study of Sarah in Box 1.2. Imagine that you have been Sarah's social worker throughout the helping relationship described above. You know that soon you and Sarah will part ways as she completes more and more of her treatment goals. What steps would you take to begin to prepare her for the termination? What type of ritual might you use on the final meeting with Sarah that would help her move forward on her own?

- Your response:
1. Write in the steps you would take to prepare Sarah for termination.
 2. Describe a ritual you might plan for Sarah's last session.

SOCIAL WORKER ROLES

As in any helping relationship, the case study of Sarah presented in Box 1.2 demonstrated the wide variety of roles that social workers need to fill in order to engage clients in the helping process, negotiate a plan of action, intervene on behalf of clients, and evaluate and terminate the relationship. Figure 1.1 graphically displays common social worker roles in the helping process. What roles can you identify that the social worker filled in her work with Sarah in the case study represented in Box 1.2?

2 Assess your understanding of the helping process by taking this brief quiz.