

Box 1.3 Social Worker Roles (Continued)

relapses, stabilizing housing, providing job training and employment skills, and emotional supports to draw on during difficult periods.

Clinician/Counselor: The social worker helps improve client functioning through a variety of clinical intervention approaches and by providing ongoing support. The social worker may help the client gain insights into feelings, change unhealthy behaviors, and acquire problem-solving skills.

Coordinator: The social worker helps a variety of systems to work together at fulfilling goals. For example, the social worker may coordinate community efforts to develop a drug awareness program by working with the police department, local schools, public health department, and parents.

Educator/Teacher: The social worker instructs or imparts knowledge to others at the individual, group, organizational, or community level. For example, the social worker may teach a client job search skills, teach a group of expectant mothers prenatal classes, train agency personnel on new intervention methods, or provide community education on transsexual adoption. New knowledge can be empowering to clients, groups, organizations, and communities.

Enabler: Empowers clients in finding solutions to the challenges they face. The social worker offers support and encouragement to clients so that they can more easily accomplish tasks and solve problems. For example, the social worker may help a mental health patient adjust to day treatment.

Facilitator: The social worker leads a group, such as a rape survivors' recovery group, a community group investigating gang crime, or a professional peer group implementing organizational change.

Mediator: The social worker takes a neutral stance between two systems in order to help resolve conflict and to help establish a better communication flow, such as divorce mediation or business mediation between quarreling business partners.

Planner: The social worker may work in an agency as a program planner creating new services for clients or in the community as a community planner enhancing social services and resources for the community.

Outreach Worker: The social worker works within the clients' environments to identify individuals with unmet needs and to engage them in the helping process and social service system. For example, as an outreach worker for the local homeless shelter, you may work with a team of workers who cruise or walk the neighborhood looking for homeless individuals, engage them in conversation to assess their needs, and link them to needed services.

Researcher/Program Evaluator: The social worker evaluates program effectiveness by gathering and analyzing data and interpreting the findings. For example, the social worker may be asked to assess how well the local health clinic is meeting the needs of uninsured community members.

Source: Shadish & Hogeis (2015); Zarrow & Kratz-Schuman (2013).



Engagement

Behavior: Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and communities.

Critical Thinking Question: Study the roles of the social worker in Boxes 1.3 and 1.4. Which role would you find the most challenging and why? How can you begin to prepare for these roles in your future social work practice?

Given the complexity of the social service system and the unpredictability of the human experience, social workers often have ethical and moral obligations to serve in multiple roles across multiple levels of practice in order to meet client needs. The multidimensional nature of social work makes it unlikely that a direct-practice social worker could restrict the social worker roles to one or two roles or limit his or her practice to only one level. All social worker roles serve to move us in the direction of social justice by improving quality of life and structuring supportive environments at the family, community, organizational, and institutional levels. Box 1.4 provides a summary of common social worker roles across three levels of practice.

Box 1.4 Social Work Roles and Levels of Practice

Level of Practice	Role
Micro	Case advocate, case manager, client educator, clinician/counselor, enabler, group facilitator, outreach worker
Mezzo	Agency administrator, agency staff trainer, broker, case advocate, mediator, organizational facilitator, program planner, researcher/program evaluator
Macro	Activist, broker, community advocate, community educator, community facilitator, community planner, coordinator

? Assess your understanding of social work roles by taking this brief quiz.

Policy to Practice Medicaid

Since its passage in 1965, Medicaid policy was passed to provide health coverage for low-income people and is now the nation's primary public health insurance program. Medicaid is an essential policy for ensuring child and maternal health in the country, financing 40% of all births. This important policy provides pregnant women prenatal care, labor and delivery services, and continued care to the mother for 60 days after the birth of the child. Medicaid ensures a healthy start for all babies born to

Medicaid eligible women, providing them care until the child's first birthday. How did the social worker's knowledge of Medicaid support her client Sarah in the case study in Box 1.27 in what ways was the social worker able to turn policy into essential tangible resources in her social work practice with Sarah? What roles did the social worker fill in translating policy to practice for her client?

Sources: CMS.gov; Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services; History

SUMMARY

- Social work developed along two parallel paths to helping people. Following the visions and philosophies of founders Jane Addams and Mary Richmond, social work has focused on working with individuals and families while simultaneously seeking social reform and policy change. To that end, the field has a long tradition of helping the disadvantaged and disenfranchised and influencing social policy.
- Social workers are professionally educated in degree programs and credentialled as specialists to meet the contemporary needs of families and communities and are bound by common values self-determination, respect for the individual, and helping individuals reach their potential.
- Social workers engage the "caring cycle" in each stage of the helping process—1) engagement, 2) intake and assessment, 3) planning and contracting, 4) treatment and intervention, and 5) evaluation and 6) termination—often requiring them to take on many roles across multiple levels of practice.