UNIT 12 : SOCIAL CASE WORK PROCESS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the different phases of social case work process and the relationship among them;
- learn the application of social study, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation process in social case work practice;
- relate to the role of the social worker in social case work process.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Social case work is a method of helping people to solve their problems. It focuses both on the person and his environment and helps to improve the balance between the person's coping efforts and the demands of the environment. It is individualized and scientific. It helps individuals with personal as well as external and environmental issues. Sometimes due to

many factors, be it external or internal, individuals are not able to solve their problems. It is in such situations that a social case worker tries to help the client in addressing his problems and issues by using various methods, techniques and skills of social case work practice. Social case work is therefore a method of helping through a relationship that taps personal and other resources for coping with problems and there are phases involved in the process.

12.3 PHASES OF SOCIAL CASE WORK PROCESS

Mary Richmond may be thought of as the conceptual founder of case work. In 1917, in her book, "Social Diagnosis", she described the three basic categories in the theory of social work practice. They are (a) Investigation or Fact finding, (b) Diagnosis, and (c) Treatment. The process, according to Richmond began with the gathering of evidence or investigation followed by a critical examination and comparison of evidence. The second category was the diagnosis, wherein an attempt was made to arrive at a definition of the social situation, knowledge of the causes and personality of a given client. Lastly it is the interpretation and arriving at a definition of the social difficulty. Richmond used the word diagnosis more frequently when describing the whole process. She felt that the word diagnosis was a better word than investigation as the former belonged to the end of the process.



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Study, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation are the main divisions of the social case work process. They are the threads of the process that will continue to be interwoven throughout the social case work process.Social workers would logically place study, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation in that order. Actually these steps are not performed in sequence, and as Gordon Hamilton said they are woven in and out, one process paralleling another. The phases may overlap and may proceed simultaneously.

Social case work is an ongoing process of exploration (study), assessment (diagnosis), formulation of goals and treatment planning, intervention (treatment), evaluation and termination (disengagement). Fern

Lowry (1936) described this process as similar in form to a rope woven of multiple strands. When one cuts the rope at any point, all the component strands are exposed.

In the same way, examination of social case work at any point of time reveals fact-finding, assessment (diagnosis) and intervention (treatment) taking place concurrently. These three phases represent simply the empirical methods of a science applied to a human problem in a social work context. This method involves seeking and ordering information and determining the nature and strength of the evidence which supports it.

12.4 SOCIAL INVESTIGATION (STUDY)

In the study phase, the client presents the problem. This phase begins with the case worker involving the client fully in the process. The essential functions of the worker are to facilitate the client to participate and interact in the process. This stage is crucial because the client makes the important decision of whether to enter into the treatment. Whether to accept or decline a service is the client's decision. The client, not the worker makes the choice. So the initial contact needs to be fruitful and constructive to encourage the client to continue in the service.

According to Richmond (1917), the case worker must secure all and every fact that taken together, through logical and inferential reasoning, would reveal the clients personality and his situation for appropriate intervention (treatment). An exhaustive collection of facts about the client and his situation is called study- the first step. .

In the course of studying the client in his situation, the case worker is able to make initial assessment for diagnosis of the client's current, relevant past and possible future modes of adaptation to stressful situations and to related normal living situations. It requires the analysis of social, psychological and biological determinants of the client's current stressful situation. Obtaining data on these determinants, the case worker develops hypothesis for understanding the client in his situation. It may seek to include historical data on related past life experiences and facts responsible.

Some of the methods of data collection for study are questionnaires, observation, interview and recording. In casework, the primary source of information is the client. One must learn when to go beyond personal report and seek data from collaterals, experts, significant others, documents, records, psychological tests and so forth. One must be careful to carry out the search acting in full respect for the client, maintaining confidentiality, and without violating the right of the client to participate in the process.

Study basically involves three main activities, which will help in understanding the client:

a) Ascertaining the facts;

b) Pondering their meaning; and

c) Deciding upon the means of help.

12.5 SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS (ASSESSMENT)

Social diagnosis or Assessment is the understanding of the psychosocial problem brought to the worker by the client. ***Assessment means*** to 'know through' or recognizing or understanding thoroughly; it attempts to answer the question 'what is the matter''. As Hamilton says 'it is a realistic, thoughtful, frank and ''scientific'' attempt to understand the client's present need. Assessment begins with a further elaboration of the problem by the client giving the worker a better perspective and understanding of the problem. As the case progresses and more information are added, the initial impressions are established, changed or even rejected.



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After a complete and thorough study of the client and his problem, the worker then diagnoses and assesses the problem. Diagnosis is an attempt to arrive at an exact definition as possible of the social situation and personality of a client. It is a search for the causes of the problem which brings the client to the worker for help.

Diagnosis is;

i. An explanation formulated in the light of known facts

ii. An explanation made in the knowledge of other possible explanations

iii. Subject to change or revision whenever subsequent material warrants a different explanation.

Therefore diagnosis is concerned with understanding both the psychological or personality factors which bear a causal relation to the client's difficulty and the social or environmental factors which tend to sustain it.

Process of diagnosis

The diagnosis process has been broken up into number of stages known as gathering data, diagnostic study, evaluation and the diagnostic product.

- **Gathering data**

Data are gathered of the interview of the client, agency's record reports, from other members of the team, other agencies, schools, relatives, etc. Home visit is an important source of data collection. The accuracy of data depends on aspects such as effective interviewing, principles of individualization and acceptance, better communication and involvement with the client.

- **Diagnostic study**

The study attempts to identify the problem areas which are important for social case work involvement.

- **Evaluation**

This means finding the nature of the problem, its organization and extent and who is going to be affected. Factors responsible for the problem may be one or more than one of the following; Physical, Psychological and Social.

Content of the Social Diagnosis

1. The nature of the problem and the goals sought by the client,
2. The nature of the person who bears the problem and who seeks help
3. The nature and purpose of the agency and the kind of help it can offer

Process of making diagnosis

- Shifting the relevant from irrelevant data
- Organizing the facts and getting them into relatedness
- Grasping the way in which the factors fit together
- Preparing the meaning as a whole

After identification of the problem areas and the factors relating to them, attempts are made towards possible solution. But before determining the solution we need to think about the potential contribution to solutions of the client by the agency and the worker.

The client's work ability (capacity and motivation) is the base for further determining the treatment techniques and procedures. Pearlman discusses this capacity as:

- Emotional intelligence - ability to relate to others, ability to feel, experience, contain emotions, etc.
- Social intelligence - how much capacity or social support the client has to help with problem solving.

Pearlman has described three types of diagnosis that is carried on in social case work process, namely: dynamic diagnosis, clinical diagnosis and etiological diagnosis.

1. Dynamic Diagnosis

Dynamic diagnosis gives an understanding of the current problem of the client and the forces currently operating within the client, and within his social environment. It answers the questions: What is the trouble? What psychological, physical and social factors are contributing to it? What solution is sought? What are the means available within the client, his environment? What are organized service and resources by which the problem may be affected? The nature of such diagnosis is subject to changebecause it is the beginning phase of social case work practice.

2. Clinical Diagnosis

In clinical diagnosis, the case worker attempts to classify the client by the nature of his sickness/problem. He identifies certain forms of client's

personality, maladaptation and malfunction in his behavior. The clinical diagnosis describes both the nature of the problem and its relation to the client. Such type of diagnosis is useful only when it becomes apparent that a disorder of personality accompanies the social disorder, creating and complicating it.

3. Etiological Diagnosis

Etiological diagnosis *is* concerned with the explanation of the beginnings and life-history of the client's problem, basically that problem that lies in the client's personality make up or functioning. The history of his development as a problem encountering problem-solving human being may provide the case worker with an understanding of what his client suffers from and what the extent of his coping ability is likely to be. Etiological diagnosis is more useful in explaining the rigid reactions.This type of diagnosis contributes to understanding the nature of the problem to be dealt with, the person who has the problem and the ways and means that can be anticipated as helpful.

12.6 INTERVENTION (TREATMENT)

According to Hamilton, treatment is the sum total of all activities and services directed towards helping an individual with a problem. Focus is on relieving the immediate problem, and, if feasible, modifies any basic difficulty which precipitated it.

The objectives of the social case work treatment are as follows:

- To prevent social breakdown,
- To conserve client's strength,
- To restore social functioning,
- To provide happy experiences to the client,
- To create opportunities for growth and development,
- To compensate psychological damage,
- To increase capacity for self-direction,
- To increase his social contribution.

Thus the objective of social case work treatment is to alleviate the client's distress and decrease the malfunctioning in the person-situation. It is to enhance the client's comfort, satisfaction, and self-realization. This may require enhancing the adaptive skills of his ego and the functioning of the person

Social Case Work Treatment Process

Social case work treatment process begins with the initial contact with the client. The process of treatment passes through many phases, i.e, (i) initial phase, (ii) motivation and role induction, (iii) primary contact, (iv) diagnosis and assessment, (v) establishing treatment goods, (vi) developing treatment plan, (vii) preparation for actual treatment, (viii) treatment in practice, (ix) monitoring and evaluating the effects of treatment, and (x) planning of follow-up termination of therapeutic relationship

I. Initial Phase

The main task of social case worker in the initial phase is to examine how the problem was brought to his attention. He would attempt to focus on various aspects of the problem that seem fit to case work treatment. Here the decisions of the worker are tentative. The initial phase of social case work treatment needs to meet the following conditions:

1. The issues have been sufficiently identified so as to substantiate that they are appropriate to the purpose and goals of the service.
2. The participants understand the nature and meaning of the problem well enough with explicitness to permit engagement and participation.
3. The problem is appropriate to the program, resources and services of the agency.
4. The problem fits the practitioner's skill and capabilities.

II. Motivation

One of the most important tasks of social case worker at the beginning of the treatment process is to build and develop the therapeutic relationship with the client. Worker's empathy, warmth and genuine feelings are highly

motivating force for the client to take part in the treatment process. At this phase, the case worker explores client's perception of why he is involved in the treatment and how he feels about being in the agency. He also encourages the client to specify his expectations of treatment and feelings about seeking help. He attempts to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both himself and the client.

III. Primary Contract

The objective of this phase is to develop a preliminary contact with the client. By making psychological contract or relationship, the case worker sets the stage to move towards more formal assessment.



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IV. Diagnosis and Assessment

Diagnosis and Assessment process are ongoing throughout the entire treatment. Social case worker provides detailed information about the problem situation that will help in establishing the treatment goal and strategy of treatment. The case worker assesses the client's ego, strength, skillfulness, capabilities and capacities in relation to his problem. He assessess whether the client needs advise, counseling, behavior modification, crisis intervention or consultancy services like teaching, consultation, interpretation, supervision or provision of material help, etc.

V. Establishing treatment goals

After diagnosis, the social case worker establishes goals for the solution of the problem. Though the client has the major say in deciding on goals, the case worker plays an important role by clarifying a variety of alternative goals for his consideration.

VI. Developing Treatment Plan

Treatment planning involves three major dimensions such as:

- Formulating of a strategy
- Selection of specific treatment procedures
- Developing a method for evaluating the impact of the treatment program.

VII. Preparation for Actual treatment

This phase involves specific steps such as:

- Collecting all possible information, formation of action system, preparation of mediators
- If needed, change of significant elements in the client's environment to increase the probability of getting desired result.

VIII. Application of Treatment Methods

The following methods of social treatment are followed in order to achieve the goals set by the case worker.

1. Administration of practical services.
2. Indirect treatment
3. Direct treatment

Administration of practical services means to help the client in such a way that he could use and select the resources available in the community. Social case worker helps the client for an adequate knowledge of available resources through the techniques of discussion, information, clarification and direction. The use of services is essential to solve any kind of problem. Money, medical care, nursery schools, scholarship, legal aid etc are such type of services that any person may need in order to resolve a given problem in his daily living.

Indirect treatment is also called environmental manipulation which means to change the social condition of the client so that he may be relieved from excessive stress. The case worker plans with the client as to his emotional, professional and recreational activities. Home services, camps, group activities, training and livelihood employment are such types of programmes. The purpose of such activities is always to minimize the tension of the client.

Direct treatment is given through counseling, therapeutic interviewing, clarification and interpretation to develop an insight of the problem. Counseling is a personal help directed towards the solution of the problem which a person finds that he cannot solve it himself and therefore seeks the help of a skilled person whose knowledge, experience and general



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orientation can be brought into play in an attempt to solve the problem. It is a psychological help in which information and clarification are used for making the client aware about the problem.

12.7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring provides crucial feedback to case worker and the client regarding:

- Whether the treatment program is succeeding as desired,
- Whether established goals have been achieved,
- Whether modifications in the program are necessary and
- Whether the client is being helped in real sense.

Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

- The purpose of evaluation is to see if the efforts of the case worker are yielding any result or not.
- If the techniques used are serving the purpose, and if the goals are being achieved.
- Evaluation is the process of attaching a value to the social work practice. It is the method of knowing what the outcomes are. It is a continuous process.
- Evaluation of the approach used and result should be taken up with the client so that the efforts are meaningfully utilized.
- Evaluation will further strengthen the relationship between the case worker and client and motivate the client to work towards his goal.
- Case work practices need to be evaluated from time to time. The subject needs to be tested and researched and most importantly needs ongoing validation. They need to be proved to the public that they are effective and beneficial to the clients.
- Case work practice should be subjected to critical review. Workers need to be held accountable for what they do and for their social work competence. Workers need to win approval for their programs.
- They may sometimes have to be told that their services are

overlapping and ineffective.

- Workers have to enhance their own image and also of the agency to develop public relations. The clients need to give a feedback on the effectiveness of the services.

12.8 FOLLOW UP AND TERMINATION

At the end, during termination, the worker should discuss the original as well as revised goals and objectives, achievements during the helping period, factors helpful or obstructive in achieving the objectives, and the efforts needed to maintain the level of achievement and the feelings aroused by disengagement.

- It is neither wise nor necessary for the termination to be an abrupt one.
- It is best to discuss termination and its ramifications (implications) several times before the final interview.
- The frequency and amount of contacts should be gradually decreased.
- Termination of the helping process brings up in both the case worker and client(s) many feelings - both positive and negative - which must be verbalized and discussed.
- Follow-up is done to help client maintain the improvement.
- During follow-up, the client is helped to discuss the problems he faces in maintaining the improvement.
- Work is done with the people significant for his improved social functioning.
- If required, he is referred to the proper source for needed services and help.
- The follow-up should be planned on a diminishing basis - after two weeks, then a month, then three months, six months and a year following the termination of the formal program.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Fill in the Blanks

(i) _____ described the social case work process as similar in form to a rope woven of multiple strands.

(ii) The book written by Mary Richmond in 1917 is _____ _____.

(iii) Three basic categories of social work practice given by Mary Richmond are _____, _____ and _____.

(iv) The client's _____ is the base for determining the treatment techniques and procedures.

(v) The three types of diagnosis described by Pearlman are: _____, _____ and _____.



12.9 LET US SUM UP

- The unit examined the various phases of the social case work process. Case work is one of the primary methods of social work which aims to help individuals solve their problems and improve their functioning in the society.
- Social case work is an ongoing process of exploration (study), assessment (diagnosis), formulation of goals and treatment planning, intervention (treatment), evaluation and termination (disengagement).
- In the study phase, the client presents the problem. This phase begins with the caseworker involving the client fully in the process. Social diagnosis or Assessment is the understanding of the

psychosocial problems brought to the worker by the client. The objective of social case work treatment is to alleviate the client's distress and decrease the malfunctioning in the person-situation system. It is to enhance the client's comfort, satisfaction, and self-realization.

- The purpose of Evaluation is to see if the efforts of the case worker are yielding any result or not. Evaluation of the approach used and result should be taken up with the client so that the efforts are meaningfully utilized. Evaluation will further strengthen the relationship between the caseworker and client and motivate the client to work towards his goal.
- At the end (termination), the worker should discuss the original as well as revised goals and objectives, achievements during the helping period, factors helpful or obstructive in achieving the objectives.
- Follow-up is done to help client maintain the improvement. During follow-up, the client is helped to discuss the problems he faces in maintaining the improvement.



12.10 FURTHER READING

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12.11 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

(i) Fern Lowry
(ii) Social Diagnosis
(iii) Investigation or Fact finding, Diagnosis, and Treatment.
(iv) Work ability
(v) Dynamic diagnosis, clinical diagnosis and etiological diagnosis.

12.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: What do you mean by social investigation in social case work process? Briefly discuss its importance.

Q.2: Define the term diagnosis (assessment) and discuss its types.

Q.3: Discuss the various steps in diagnosis

Q.4: What do you understand by intervention? Outline its various methods.

Q.5: Briefly discuss the role of the social worker in the intervention process with suitable examples

Q.6: "Monitoring and Evaluation are significant in the successful operation of the case work process" Elucidate the statement.

Q.7: Write a short note on (a) termination and (b) follow-up activities in case work.
