# UNIT 4 : COMPONENTS OF CASE WORK

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## 4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit you have come across the principles of social case work. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the various components of social case work
- discuss the relevance of each of the components; person, problem, place and process

## 4.2 INTRODUCTION

Social case work is a complex, dynamic and evolving method of social work. It is complex because of the vast of knowledge that is needed to understand the issues as well as the ethics and conditions of its practice. Better family life, improved schools, better housing, more hospitals and medical care facilities, protected economic conditions and better relations between religious groups help the individual in his adjustment and development. Therefore, case work is distinct by its objectives its, purpose and requires specific skills. Various components are continuously in interaction which is discussed in detail in this unit.

## 4.3 COMPONENTS OF CASE WORK

We have already discussed that Social case work is a process used by certain human welfare agencies to help individuals to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning.

Case work is both social and psychological. The term "social" implies more than one person; the term "psychological" is that which takes place within an individual. Since the individual does not live in a vacum, the content of much of his inner experience is "psycho-social." In other words, there is no real dichotomy between the social and the psychological.

There is an aspect of experience, however, which belongs to and is characterized by the individual himself. The nucleus of the case work event is this: a person with a problem comes to a place where a professional representative helps him by a given process. Since this is the heart of almost any situation where a person seeks professional help, the distinctive characteristics must be delineated.

**There are four components of case work known as the 4 P's:**

1. The Person
2. The Problem
4. The Place
4. The Process

Let us examine each, one by one

### 4.3.1 THE PERSON

The person is a man, woman or child or anyone who finds himself/ herself, or is found to be, in need of help in some aspect of his social-emotional living, whether the need be for tangible provisions or counsel. As he/she begins to receive help, he/she is called a "client". A client is one who seeks professional help, one who employs the help of another or one who is served by a social agency or an institution. The client of a social agency is like all the other persons we have ever known, but he is different and unique too.

**David Landy has identified the process a person goes through in seeking help or becoming a client:**

- The person wanting help or the client must decide something is wrong.
- The person wanting help must face the probability that family, friends and neighbours will know of his problem or disability.
- The person wanting help must decide to admit that he/she is in distress and cannot deal with the issue on his own
- The person wanting help must decide to surrender himself to the helper and put himself in a dependency role.
- He must decide to direct his search for help among persons and resources known to him.
- He must decide to take time off a job or from other responsibilities to receive help.
- The person wanting help may realize that in receiving help relationship with others may be threatened.

The person's behaviour has purpose and meaning like to gain satisfactions, to avoid or remove frustration and to maintain his balance in society. Thus, ***behaviour*** is purposeful and is in response to the individual's physical and emotional needs.The person who comes as a client to a social agency is always under stress. The person wanting help or the client always has concerns, needs and problems.



**Behaviour** is purposeful and is in response to the individual's physical and emotional needs.

The client of a social agency is similar to other persons but it must be understood that each client is different in his/her own way. He may appear to be like all other human beings of his age or time or culture. But, as he/she is understood as a particular human being, one finds that, he/she is a unique personality. This is because every individual is influenced by his/her environment: both social and cultural.

The role of the client should therefore be active, that is he should actively participate in the whole process of case work. Hence, the client should provide appropriate information to enable the working of the decision making process and participate in the decision-making process to the extent of hisability and capacity. Also, he/she should carry out the required activity

and tasks.

**Clients are of several types:**

- Those who ask for appropriate help for themselves.
- Those who ask for help for another person or system.
- Those who do not seek help but are in some way blocking or threatening the social functioning of another person (e.g., the neglectful parent in a child protection case).
- Those who seek or use help as a means to reach their own goals or ends.
- Those who seek help but for inappropriate goals.

Identification of clients type is the first step in the delivery of service, for the worker-client relationship and interaction will vary depending on the type of client and the nature of help sought.

**Felix Biestik has identified seven needs of clients as they come to the helping situation:**

1. To be dealt with as an individual rather than a type or category.
2. To express feelings both positive and negative.
3. To be accepted as a person of worth, a person with innate dignity.
4. Sympathetic understanding of and response to feelings expressed.
5. To be neither judged nor condemned for the difficulty in which the clients finds himself.
6. To make own choices and decisions concerning one's own life.
7. To help keep confidential information about self as secret as possible.

The client is a person with both needs and a problem(s). The problem may be related to a client.

He operates as a physical, psychological and social entity. To understand a person, it is important to know his parts of personality that is Id (life forces of the individual), Ego (conscious, drivers gliding our personality forces) and Superego (unconscious, ethical values and principles) which have an important role in governing his/her behaviour.

Whether a person's behaviour is or is not effective in promoting his

well-being depends in large part upon the functioning of his personality structure.

A person at any stage of his life is not only "a product" of nature but is also and always "in process" of being in the present and becoming in the future. What happens to the individual today may be as vital to him/her as what happened yesterday. Those physical, social and interpersonal situations he encounters in his operations today as worker, parent, spouse, student or client will have an impact upon him and will affect his development .

Client has perceptions of self and the situations and patterns of coping with stress and patterns of interpersonal relationships. One of the major tasks of the worker is to understand the client as a unique person in a unique situation. There can never be total knowledge about a client; that is impossible. The worker seeks knowledge about the client that is needed for giving the service to be delivered. The client is the major source of the facts used to develop the understanding of the person in the situation. Before a person seeks help from a social agency, he or she has usually attempted to deal with a problem in a way that has worked with previous problems commonly known as "coping". Coping results not only in solving problems but in the reduction of tension and anxiety. If the coping is not successful, a person may then turn to his or her natural support system, that is, friends, relatives, associates etc. Thus, individuals often come to the agency after a period of unsuccessful attempts to deal with their problems.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - I**

**1. Fill in the Blanks :**

(a) The first step in the delivery of service is _____.

(b) Felix Biestik has identified _____needs of clients.

**State True or False :**

(c) Before a person seeks help from a social agency, he or she has usually attempted to deal with a problem in a way that has worked with previous problems commonly known as "coping".

.....

(d) One of the major tasks of the worker is to understand the client as a unique person in a unique situation.

.....

### 4.3.2 THE PROBLEM

The problem is a situation, event or anything which impairs the normal functioning of the individual and makes him handicapped. Problems arise from some needs or accumulation of frustration or maladjustment, and sometimes all of these together. Paul B. Horton says that a problem is a situation which exists anywhere, any time and affects any person. When these hurdles are there, the individuals are become conscious of it and try to find out a solution. Sometimes the problems are solved by one's own efforts but sometime he/she needs external help. That external help is given by social worker at individual, group and community level.

**As students of social work, we need to question:**

1) When does a situation become problematic?
2) When does a problematic situation become appropriate for social work concern?

The term 'problem' becomes clear when one looks at it in terms of both need and social

functioning. The response of social work is based on the concern for and need of human systems. When the need is seen as obstructing social functioning, a problem of concern to social work is said to exist.

The problems are of two kinds: Intra personal and Inter personal.

**Intrapersonal**

Intrapersonal problems relate to problems in mind or relating to internal

aspects of a person, especially the emotions. It is the problem which does not affect other people but the concerned person himself alone. For example, if a client has one kidney, she is blind from single eye etc, or if she is depressed and this depression is disturbing her, she is having an intra personal problem.

**Interpersonal**

***Interpersonal problem*** is between persons or something concerned or involving the relationship between people. Interpersonal is that problem which affects more than one person. It affects others as well. For example, if a person is addicted to drugs, it not only affects him but other people around him as well. Crime, theft, burglary, delinquency are few examples of interpersonal problems. Jealousy is an intrapersonal problem but it is responded it becomes interpersonal problems.



***Interpersonal problem*** is between persons or something concerned or involving the relationship between people. Interpersonal is that problem which affects more than one person.

**Other Types of Problem**

There is probably no problem in human living that has not been brought to the social workers in agencies. Problem for hunger for food and hunger for love, seeking shelter and of wanting to run away, getting married or not staying with the married, wanting to live, wanting to die etc are many problems

**Physiological Problem**

This problem is related to physique of the person. All the physical disabilities of the body such as blindness, hearing impairment, speech impairment, organically handicapped, both internal and external are such kinds of problem.

**Economic Problem**

Most of the individual in this earth face facing economic problem. Economically the society is divided into three class. lower,middle and upper. But we divide as "Haves and Have not" . Have means those people who have chances for development or get opportunities to be developed. Have not means those people who are deprived from having the chances to

develop themselves. Economic problem relate to the management of needs and resources a person has. If a person has managed his needs to his resources then he will be facing no economic problem.

**Psychological Problem**

Psychology is the study of mind and behavior. It is the study of what we think and what we do. Psychological problem occurs when a person is disturbed by some external circumstances. Anxiety, Schizophrenia, depression, anger is some of the examples of psychological problem.

**Relationship problem**

As we all know, man is a social animal and he is engaged in different interpersonal relationship with his family, neighbors, colleagues etc. sometimes there arise certain problem in maintaining these relations. Divorce, family disturbances are the outcomes of all these problems. When a person is unable to solve this problem by his own he comes to the social worker in an agency and get helped by the [professionals.

According to Perlman, the social functioning focus of social work began to emerge when problems were seen not as pathological but as part of life. Problems are frequent and unexpected in the human situation, and solutions are usually found without professional help.

The concern of social work narrowed to those problems in which persons cannot readily unblock the fulfillment of need with their own resources. Problem in social work usage refers to a social-functioning situation in which need fulfillment of any of the persons or systems involved is blocked or has a significant potential of blockage, and in which the person involved cannot by themselves remove the block to fulfillment of need.

**Characteristics of a client's problem:**

1. The problems within the purview of social case work are those which vitally affect or are affected by a person’s social functioning. The problem may be some unmet needs-economic, medical, educational, recreational-which hampers or undermines a person's adequate living.

2. The multifaceted and dynamic nature of the client's problem determines the unit of work for both the client and the case worker. Three main considerations enter into the choice of problem: a) What the client wants; b)What the case worker's professional Judgement points to as possible and desirable solutions and c) What the agency is for and can offer.
3. Problems in any part of a human beings living tend to have "chain reaction." This is because while in the studying a person he may be compartmentalized and analyzed as a biological or psychological or social entity, a person lives a dynamic interrelated whole, reacting to and upon the dynamic whole of his/her environment. Whatever hurts one parts of his living will have its impact on other parts.
4. Any problem which a person encounters has both an objective and a subjective significance. A problem may be seen and understood by an onlooker; it is felt by its carrier, and it is experienced with the particularity of individual difference.
5. Not only do the external (objective) and internal (subjective) aspects of the problem co-exist, but either one may be the cause of the other.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - II**

**Q 1:** Outline the three main considerations that enable a case worker to choose the problem of a client.

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**Q 2:** What are the two types of problems?

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### 4.3.3 THE PLACE

The place is a social service agency or a social service department or another kind of human welfare agency. The place to which the person comes for help with his/ her problem is known as a social agency.

Each social agency develops a program by which to meet the particular areas of need with which it sets to put to deal with the person's problems. The social agency has a structure by which it organizes and delegates its responsibilities and tasks, and governing policies and procedures by which it stabilizes and systematizes its operations. Every staff members in the agency speaks and act for some part of the agency's function, and the case worker represents the agency in its individualized problem solving help. The case worker while representing the agency is first and foremost representative of his profession.

***There are three kinds of agencies:***

**a) Governmental agency**

It is fully financially supported by the government. It does not take any aid from any other sources. Its source of funds is the government itself. Its programmes and plannings are implemented by the professionals of social services who are government experts. Government agencies are accountable for their expenditure. The staffs are totally paid and professionally skilled persons.

**b) Non-governmental agency**

Non-governmental organizations are fully supported by the public donation. The programme are planned and implemented by the people who have formed the NGO. Its staffs include more volunteers and less paid employees. Volunteers are the main force of NGOs.

**c) Semi-governmental agency**

Semi governmental organisations are those which are started by the people. The people realize a need for an orgnisational effort to lead a campaign agianst a social problem. The government gives them a littile

financial support in the shape of grants. 40% by the government and 70% by the people. It has an accountability system. It is accountable to government. Its staff include more paid employee and less volunteers.

Present day usage of the word agency(place) refers to the institution within which the case worker practices;sometimes it is the larger institution that is intended (e.g. the local authority) and at other times it is the smaller social work microcosm (e.g. the psychiatric social work department in a mental hospital). The institutions in which case workers practice (schools, child guidance clinics, children's departments of the hospitals and courts and so on) have all been established to achieve certain broad social purposes and case workers have a part to play in achieving them. Its purpose is to help individuals with the particular social handicaps which hampers good personal or family living and with the problems created by faulty person-to-person, person to-group or person-to-situation relationships. This agency's purpose and functions come to life in the person and professional performance of the case worker.

**Perlman has described some of the characteristics of Agency:**

1. The social agency is an organization fashioned to express the will of a society or of some group in that society. An agency embodies a society's decision to protect its members against social breakdowns, to prevent their maladjustments and/or to promote the development of better or higher levels of humans functioning.
2. Each social agency develops a programme by which to meet the particular areas of need with which it sets out to deal-The agency programme consists of the aids and activities by which its intent is translated into provisions of help. The ways and means which an agency programme provides will convey its function effectively or not, depending on a number of factors: money, the knowledge and competency of the agency staff; the interest, resources and support of the community; the consistency between ascertained needs and the proffered means.

3. The social agency has a structure by which it organizes and delegates its responsibilities and tasks, and governing policies and procedures by which it stabilizes and systematizes its operations structure, as it may be depicted on an organizational chart, is the agency's anatomy. The agency's body is made up of many members with different purposes and powers, all dependent upon one another in the body's total working. The **structure** of an agency identifies and assigns separate and joint responsibilities, authorities and tasks to each personnel and demarcates the relationship among various functions in the total agency body.
4. The social agency is a living, adaptable organism susceptible to being understood and changed, much as other living organisms- If agency structure may be seen as its anatomy, its operations may represent its physiology, and the purposes, attitudes, and goal directions of its personnel and board are its psychology. The circumstance of its inception, the person's who nurtured it and the social situations it encountered will have affected the agency's present behaviour.
5. Every staff member in an agency speaks and acts for some part of the agency's function, and the case worker represents the agency in its individualized problem-solving help-What a case worker can do with and for his client derives both from his professional commitment and skill and from the agency which hires him/her. In order to represent the agency, he/she must be psychologically identified with the purpose and the policies of his/her agencies. Every social agency banks a fund of knowledge about the experience with the particular problems it has set out to solve.
6. The case worker, while representing his/her agency, is first and foremost a representative of his/her profession-The social case worker practices in the conviction that individual human welfare is the purpose and the test of social policy; that his/her attitude combine open enquiry with dedication to the people and the person



The **structure** of an agency identifies and assigns separate and joint responsibilities, authorities and tasks to each personnel and demarcates the relationship among various functions in the total agency body.

he/she serves; that he/ she maintains "social-conscience" and that he/she conducts himself ethically in all his/her professional transactions.

Social work is an agency-based profession. The agency is the immediate environment of the worker-client interaction. This interaction often takes place in an office or building identified as the "agency". The influence of the agency is strong even when the interaction takes place elsewhere in the community. As an employee, the worker is a part of the agency system, and because of this the worker is accountable to the agency. The form and content of the service offered must be within the agency's purview and guidelines. The manner in which the agency is structured as well as its functions greatly influence the nature of the worker-client interaction. The agency also provides resources for both the worker and the client.

The most important aspect of agency function is that it constitutes the meeting point of social worker and the client, it is what brings them together and gives meaning and sustenance to their continued contact. The community provides financial and other support and sanction for the agency;community attitudes impact the agency and its capacity to deliver services. It also has expectations for the nature and outcome of services. There are two kinds of expectations: the professional and the bureaucratic. The greater the organizations, the larger the differences. Bureaucratic expectations call for loyalty to the organization; acceptance of authority from achievement of goals, on specialization and on efficiency. Professional expectations call for commitment to professional values and to the service of clients.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - III**

**Q 1:** Outline the main considerations that enable a case worker to choose the problem of a client.

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**Q 2:** What are the three types of agencies?

.....

.....

### 4.3.4 THE PROCESS

The case work process is essentially one of problem solving. The process, is a progressive transaction between the professional helper (the case worker) and the client. When persons encounter a problem that defies their copying efforts or that requires for its solution, some means that they cannot command then they turn to persons whose perspectives, expertise or resources may be of help. It consists of a series of problem solving operations carried out within a meaningful relationship.

In order to understand what the case work process must include in the problem-solving help it is necessary to take stock first of the kinds of blockings which occur in peoples normal problem solving efforts. These would be:

i) Lack of material provision for it.

ii) Ignorance or misapprehension.

iii) When the person with problem is depleted or drained of emotional or physical energy.

iv) Some problems arouse high feelings in a person- emotions are so strong that they overpower his reason and defy his conscious controls. Sometimes these feelings are realistically called for as in the case of death of a dear one.

v) The problem may lie within the person, i.e, he may have become subject to, or victim of, emotions that chronically over a long time, have governed his thinking and action.

vi) Some people find problems difficult of solution because they have never developed systematic habits or orderly methods of thinking and planning. The intent of the case work process is to engage the person himself, both in working on and in coping with the one or several problems that confront him and to do so by such means as may stand him in good stead as he goes forward in living.

The end of this process is contained in its means: to influence the client/person that he/she develops effectiveness in coping with his/her problem and /or to so influence the problem as to resolve it or reduce its effects. As the social worker develops skill in the problem-solving process, thinking about the phenomena being confronted will begin to take place in orderly steps. These steps appear to be simple but are quite complex in application.

Sal Hofstein states: "**Process** refers to the recurrent patterning of a sequence of change over time and in a particular direction."



"**Process** refers to the recurrent patterning of a sequence of change over time and in a particular direction."

**Stages of Problem-solving Process**

**1) Preliminary statement of the problem**

A clear statement of the problem is necessary before processing to subsequent steps. Often, problem statement tends to be vague, global, and lacking in precision.

**2) Statement of preliminary assumptions about the nature of the problem-**

As the problem is stated, implicit assumptions are made about its nature and cause, which provide indications as to the need in the situation and as to the block to need fulfillment.

**3) Selection and collection of information**

Sources for information should include a variety of perspectives that may be chosen from historical, social-psychological, biological, economic, political, religious, and ethical understandings.

**4) Analysis of information available**

Analysis of information is influenced and directed by the purpose for which the analysis is to be used. Other purposes include determination of feasible goals and possible outcomes and of possible plans of action, interpretation of the meaning of the information gathered, and evaluation.

**5) Development of a plan**

A social worker uses assessment in developing a plan of action. Plans develop from a consideration of a variety of possible strategies and techniques. As a plan becomes more specific, the social worker will return to early steps in the process to gather and analyze new information needed for the specifics of planning.

**6) Implementation of the plan**

In social work, implementation involves interaction between people and it is interventive in nature. It is action based on thinking that has its source in feelings about concern or need. In addition, it is action based on substantial knowledge from many sources that explain and predict behaviour of persons in the situation.

**7) Evaluation of the plan**

This step may result in redefinition of the problem, expanded information gathering and analysis, of reformulation of the plan. If the goal has been reached, evaluation is an appropriate and necessary climax to the process. Regardless of the outcome of the plan, evaluation of what happened can lead to an understanding that can be transferred to other situations and to more effective problem solving in those situations. The intent of the case work process is to engage the person himself/herself both in working on and in coping with the one or several problems that confront him/her and to do so by such means as may stand him/her in good stead as he/she goes forward in living.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - IV**

Q 1: State True or False

(a) The case work process is essentially one of problem solving.

.....

(b) Some people find problems difficult to solve because they have never developed systematic habits or orderly methods of thinking and planning. .....

2. Name three qualities of the problem solving process

.....



## 4.4 LET US SUM UP

- The case worker must not only be a keen listener but also an active agent in helping the client to communicate about his/her problem and focus his/her attention and expand his/her understanding of the client. He/she must also focus on the purpose of the agency and ability to help.
- Problem solving implies that both the case worker and his/her client are simultaneously and consciously, though differently, engaged in problem-solving from the beginning. The clients sharing and working-through his feelings, and the impetus and help given to him/her to know and think about his/her attitudes, behaviour, needs and goals are in themselves an experience and experience of adaptation. The by-product of both these ongoing activities yields the case worker a large part of what becomes his/her diagnosis. And the taking of next steps out of considered choice, the planning of action or the internal settlement arrived at involves the executive and integrative functions of the ego.
- Three interrelated guides have been set down to achieve and hold focus on dealing with helping the client who comes to the agency: the selection 1) of that problem or aspect of which the client himself feels is most important; of that part of his total problem which falls within the helping function of the agency; and 4) of that problem which in the worker's judgment most need and can yield to help.
- The content of case work diagnosis falls into the triangular pattern as that of other professional design for action. It consist of: 1) The nature of the problem brought and the goals sought by the client, in their relationship to 2) the nature of the person who bears the problem (his social and psychological situation and functioning)

and who seeks (or needs) help with his problem, in relation to 4) the nature of the purpose of the agency and the kind of help it can offer and /or make available. The content of the case work diagnosis, then, is focused, weighted and bounded by the purpose and means of the client and the agency.



## 4.5 FURTHER READING


1. M. Richmond, Social Diagnosis, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1917.
2. The short history of American Casework presented here is based on an article by H.H. Perlman. M.H. Perlman, "Social Casework" in H.K. Lurie (ed), Encyclopedia of Social Work, National Association of Social Workers, New York, 1965.
3. H. H. Perlman, Social Casework: A Problem-solving Process, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957.
4. J. Fischer, Effective Casework Practice, an eclectic approach, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1978.
5. Francis Turner, "Some Considerations on the Place of Theory" in Turner Francis (ed.), Social Work Treatment, The Free Press, New York, 1974.
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## 4.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

**Check Your Progress - I**

**Answer** (a) Identification of the Client

(b) Seven

(c) True

(d) True

**Check Your Progress-II**

1. Three main considerations enter into the choice of problem: a) what the client wants; b)what the case worker's professional judgment's points to as possible and desirable solutions and c) What the agency is for and can offer.
2. The two kinds of problems are : Intra personal and Inter personal.

**Check Your Progress-III**

1. Their source of support, source of professional authority and special function and area of concern.
2. The three types of agencies are :governmental, non-governmental and semi-governmental

**Check Your Progress-IV**

1. (a)True
   (b) True
2. i) recurrent patterning or stages
   ii) takes place over time
   iii) in a particular direction



## 4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

**Q.1:** Discuss the different kinds of problems that a client may face in his/her life. Illustrate some examples from your experience.

**Q.2:** Discuss the needs of clients. Elucidate how a case worker can help the clients with different needs. Use suitable examples.

**Q.3:** Elaborate the dimensions of how a problem arises. Use examples from the field.

**Q.4:** Briefly discuss the characteristics of a client's problem.

**Q.5:** Illustrate the different types of problems faced by an individual in society. Give examples.

**Q.6:** What are the characteristics of agencies as described by Perlman? Discuss them briefly.

**Q.7:** Write a short note on the importance of 'Place' as a component of Case Work.

**Q.8:** Outline the stages of the problem solving process as you understand it from your study.

**Q.9:** Do you think that there can be several blockages to the problem solving ability of individuals? Elucidate.

**Q.10:** Briefly discuss the components of case work and its significance in the larger context of social work.

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