UNIT 5 : TOOLS OF CASE WORK

UNIT STRUCTURE

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit you studied about the components of social case work. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the different tools used in case work process
- explain the purpose, process and skills for interviewing
- use different types of recording
- use the skills and techniques of home visiting
- understand the ethics in using these tools

5.2 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the earlier unit. social case work, a primary method of social work, is concerned with the adjustment and development of individual towards more satisfying human relations.Case work model and techniques along with the tools to be used by the case worker therapist help the client in self- analysis and therapy to be given by the case worker. The client's adjustment and development depend on the use of these resources available or sometimes to be procured sometimes due to certain

factors, internal or external, he fails to avail existing facilities. In such situations, social caseworker helps him.

Thus, social casework is one to one relationship, which works in helping the individual for his adjustment and development. Every individual reacts differently to his social, economic and physical environments and as such problems of one individual are different from those of another. The practice of casework is a humanistic attempt for helping people who have difficulty in coping with the problems of daily living. Its one of the direct methods of social work which uses the case-by-case approach for dealing with individuals or families as regards their problems of social functioning. Case work, aims at individualized services in the field of social work in order to help the client to adjust with the environments using some tools.

5.3 TOOLS OF CASE WORK

Social work is a human service that simultaneously focuses on people, their individual functioning, their family context, their relationships and interactions within family and externally with local community groups and systems (such as neighbours, schools, community groups and services). It also holds in focus the wider societal context and how this impacts on families, communities and individuals. Tools are aids to accomplish a job. Casework is a profession/ job and it need tools. Thus casework tools are those which help contact. Contact is physical psychological and social. The contact is for relationship (professional). The following are the tools of case work.

5.4 INTERVIEWING

The interview is the most important and most frequently used social work skill especially by a case worker. The casework interview refers to the meeting of the social worker and the client in a face-to-face conversation. It is not a casual conversation but a professional activity on the part of the social worker, because the conversation is geared to a specific or general purposes which may be obtaining or imparting information, giving help or

studying and assessing the client's situation.

Purpose of Social Casework Interview :

Interviewing is the basis on which the theory and the practice of social casework has been built over the years. It is the main medium of help without which the social casework process will never be possible. Interviewing is one of the important casework techniques which may serve the following purposes:

- **Obtaining and imparting information**

Interviewing is a two way process. Just as information is received by the social worker, so also information is given to the client regarding official procedures and other matters about the social worker, his/her role and about the function of the agency.

- **Study and assessment of the client's situation/ problems**

Data gathered from and about the client are sorted out and analyzed, from which relevant aspects are linked to form a picture of the problem/ situation and relationships.

- **Interview as a direct tool for giving help**

The information that the social worker receives and the social assessment that he/she makes gives a blue print based on which he/she decides suitable mode of help. The interview is a channel of direct help even at the first contact between the social worker and the client.

Types of Interview

The various types of interview patterns are discussed as below:

a) **On the basis of the manner in which they are conducted,** interviews are generally of the following types:

i) Structured Interview

It is also known as controlled, guided or directive interview. Under this a predetermined questionnaire is used. The interviewer is asked to get the answers to those questions only. He/she generally does not add anything

from his own side

ii) Unstructured Interview

It is also known as uncontrolled or non-directive interview. No direct or predetermined questions are used in this type of interview. The interviewers may develop questions as the interview proceeds. It is generally held in the form of free discussions. The basic objective of this method is to get the client express himself/herself freely.

iii) Mixed or Depth Interview

It is a combination of structured and unstructured types of interviews. Under this method the client is free to express himself/herself but at the same time structured questions provide a base of information to the interviewers.

b) **On the basis of the purposes they serve,** interviews are of following types, some are primarily directed towards obtaining information, some primarily towards giving help. Most, however involve a combination of the two.

1. **Information gathering or social study interview :** Its purpose is to obtain a focused account of the individual in terms of social functioning. The information enables the worker to understand the client in relation to the social problem or situation. Knowledge about the client and his situation is a necessary prerequisite to an understanding of the client in his situation. And understanding is a necessary prerequisite for effectively intervening to bring about change.
2. **Diagnostic / Decision-making Interview:** This type of interview is geared towards the appraisal and determination of : a) what the problem or the trouble is. b) what factors seem to be contributing to it. c) What can be changed and modified. As the caseworker listens to each interview he/she constantly tries to answer the above three questions and what he/she does in the immediate interview will be, to a large extent, dependant on this understanding. For example, in the case of a delinquent juvenile, the caseworker

has to direct the interview in answering the following questions: How the client sees himself/herself as a delinquent. What role his parents, peers, neighbourhood have played in contributing to the problem. The teacher's attitude, school curriculum and environment. other contributing factors such as current provocations, historical factors, personality makeup etc. The anxiety, anger and other such feelings experienced by the clients. what needs to be changed in the client and/or his/her environment. Diagnostic interview is therefore multifaceted and is an orderly attempt to understand the client-situation configuration.



Therapeutic Interviewinvolve the use of special remedial measure to effect changes in the feelings, attitudes and behaviour on the part of the client in response to the social situation.

3. **Therapeutic Interview-** The purpose of this interview is to effect change in the client, in his/her social situation, or in both. The goal is more effective in improving the social functioning on the part of the client as a consequence of the therapeutic changes. Such interviews involve the use of special remedial measure to effect changes in the feelings, attitudes and behaviour on the part of the client in response to the social situation.

Interviewing Skills- The interviewing process comprises a series of interviews which deal with the basic steps in the problem-solving process---Study, Diagnosis and Treatment. These three phases of social work are nothing but the process of data collection, data assessment and intervention pertaining to the client in his problem solving process. The interviewing process in Social Casework, thus, follows a consciously dynamic movement through these various stages to accomplish the purpose of casework. Each single interview is only a part of the sequence of the whole process.

The whole interviewing process can be divided into three important/ basic phases which we can be termed as:

I. Initial/Introductory phase

II. Developmental phase

III. Final/Concluding phase

Though in actual practice, it may not be possible to keep the phases in watertight compartments, but for our conceptual understanding we need to demarcate and separate the various steps in the process and dwell on

each one of them separately. Thus, the interviewing process is viewed here as a unit of series of steps embodying a process of three successive phases. As these phases have already been discussed in detail in the previous unit only the generic skills and the specific skills relevant to each phase will be analyzed in this unit. Interviewing in social casework is not a routine procedure of asking certain set questions and recording their answers. It is an art, a skilled technique which the social caseworker can improve and gradually perfect through practice. The requisite skills however have to be tempered with adequate scientific knowledge. Knowledge of the theory underlying interviewing gives you the required framework within which one can critically examine the skills used and the ways to improve.

5.5 RECORDING

The purpose of case recording is to maintain a record of contact with children, their families and other professionals. Case recording provides the basis for an analysis of needs or risk and for decision making and planning.

"Recording is a key social work task and its centrality to the protection of children cannot be over-estimated. Getting effective recording systems in place to support practice is critical." (The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report - A Child-Centred System 2011).

It helps the case worker in learning and re-learning, to organize and interweave his/ her information, observations, thinking and verbal interactions with the client in a meaningful whole. In this process, the worker develops conceptual clarity and absorbs the knowledge received from interviews, observations, verbal and non-verbal communications and literature. Apart from this recording serves administrative and research purposes also. Anyone can work on these records to see how different approaches used are helpful to serve the clientele and what modifications are required in the approaches to achieve the desired results. Records serve teaching purposes also as they can be used to discuss methods, skills, techniques, etc., in practice.

Records are also used to evaluate appropriateness of the process used and the work done. It provides an opportunity to offer constructive criticism to the student/worker to take care of his deficiencies, and improve his performance. Recording, by itself, provides an opportunity to the caseworker to develop insight into his own personality and social functioning leading to a desirable change in him or her.



In Narrative Recording everything that has happened is recorded as it has happened in order.

Records can be written in different ways. The most effective way is the process recording. Other ways (types) of recording are narrative, role recording, summary recording and abstract. Narrative, process and role recording form a continuum. A beginner in social work should start with narrative recording. **In narrative recording** everything that has happened is recorded as it has happened in order.

The attempts are to reproduce the situation. It consists of all the statements, observations and comments of the worker. It is narration of the happenings, a detailed account of the events which go in the narrative recording. A recording that is of inestimable value to the learners of social work methods is process recording. Process is a continuing development involving many changes. It is a series of actions, changes or functions that bring about an end or result.

Process recording tries to record these developments and actions. These developments are directly and meaningfully related to understanding of the person-in-situation and the intervention process. It is selective in its recording. Interactions, which have direct bearing or meaning for intervention, are recorded and the rest of the details of interactions are discarded.

The focus is not on the development of the events as such but on the developments relevant to understanding of, and intervening in the persons psycho-social life. In process recording the process of helping is recorded which includes the relevant conversations, observations and reactions of the worker in the developmental sequence.

It gives an idea to the supervisor if the therapist (caseworker) has used his knowledge of human behaviour and social situations, if his reactions to the client's verbal and non-verbal communications are appropriate, and if planning for future is consistent with the presenting situation. Role recording,

a refined -version of process recording, is highly selective in its approach and focuses on the role of the worker in his interaction with the client. Summary recording tries to summarize the interactions with focus on main events. It avoids detail of any event. It is useful for keeping the records of the work carried out. This is used in the regular practice when the therapist is hard-pressed for time. Summary recording saves time and labour when process recording comparatively is very time-consuming. Abstract, a condensed form of summary recording, presents the basic idea or action taken.

Importance of Recording in Social Work

1. By maintaining records, a worker can improve his professional skills and techniques, can learn by his own errors and can thus make his help more effective and systematic.
2. Records not only help a worker to evaluate his own work, but he can also improve upon his own methods.
3. Records can create interest not only in the worker but also in the client and help in building worker-client relationship.
4. Records add to the body of knowledge of social work and also make this knowledge communicable.
5. Records make supervision and teaching easier and effective.
6. Records can be used for social research and planning.
7. Record is a proof of the work executed by the worker.
8. Records ensure continuity of work, if there is a replacement of the worker.
9. Records are useful for future references.
10. Records help in providing service on a systematic basis.

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Principles of Case Records

No hard and fast rules can be laid down for preparing records but the following are some of the most important points, which should be borne in mind:

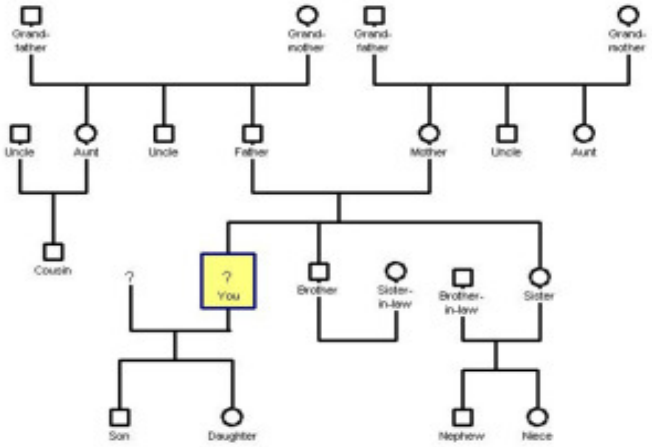
1. The contents of the records should be kept confidential.
2. Objectivity, accuracy, simplicity and brevity should be the guiding factors in preparing records.
3. Records should be written in very simple language and a simple style.
4. Reaction of the client/group should be recorded beginning and / or ending in his/their own words
5. Abbreviations should be avoided in records
6. Summary is a good device for organizing and analyzing facts.
7. Narrative is a good style for reporting facts.
8. If possible, notes should be noted down not before the client but after the interview is over.
9. Client's emotions- anger, happiness, irritability, etc, should be suitably recorded.
10. Records should be supplemented with letters, etc.

Qualities of a good case work record:

1. Reliable and visible.
2. Clarity, accuracy and objectivity.
3. Uniformity and standardization in recording.

Genogram

A family genogram is the graphic representation of one's family tree. It gives a pictorial representation of the members beside with a chronological statement of important events. It helps in assessing a person's psychosocial features or the interactional patterns of the family. The caseworker organizing the information can make it brief or extensive depending on the purpose it is to serve.



Eco-map

Though family experiences are important, people are also greatly affected through the social context in which they live. Our record will not be complete if we do not depict this social context. An eco-map is an effective tool for this purpose. According to Hartman (1978) an ecomap is an very useful tool for portraying the social context, because it provides a diagrammatic representation of a person‘s social world. In addition to presenting an overview of a person, family or household in context, the eco-map readily identifies the energy-enhancing and energy depleting relationships flanked by members of a primary social system (e.g. family or household) and the outside world. The graphic nature of the eco-map highlights social strengths and social deficiencies and helps to identify areas of disagreement and compatibility. It often designates areas where change may be needed. The ecomap is a natural adjunct to the genogram.





CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State some of the important principles of case recording.

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Q 2: What are the phases of interviewing in case work?

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5.6 HOME VISIT

Home visit signifies provision of family social work services predominantly carried out in the client family's by visiting his house. Home visiting social work focuses on the family and on the safety and wellbeing of the children and other vulnerable members. According to Munford & Sanders (1998), a definition of home-based services can be wide enough to include:

- visits to the client's home
- attending meetings with other professionals with the client
- taking the client to providers of other services
- assisting clients with shopping, recreation and other activities that make up the daily lives of families.

Sheafor and Horejsi (2006) states that home visiting is "an essential component of all outreach services and is of critical importance with the hard-to-reach client".

Every home visit should have a clear purpose. A case worker should be able to identify the purpose and be prepared to articulate that to the family. Preparing for the visit includes planning how to accomplish the purpose, including who needs to be there, topics to discuss, and issues that may arise. Preparation also includes planning for worker safety, making decisions whether someone should accompany the worker, or deciding if

the visit should occur elsewhere. Providing social work services for clients in their homes is often a distinguishing feature of social work practice. The home environment affects the intervention process at each stage of contact with a family. Home-based practice requires specific skills to deal with clients' presenting concerns as well as safety, boundary, confidentiality, and ethical challenges.

Principles of Home-Visiting

In conducting home visits five principles have to be kept in mind:

i) Family support should increase the ability to work towards their own goals and deal with their own problems in an effective way

ii) Home based intervention should be individualized and based upon assessment of the social, psychological,cultural,educational and other characteristics of the family

iii) A home visitor should be responsive to the immediate needs of the families

iv) A helping relation should be collaboration between the home visitor and the family members

v) The family should be recognized as a social system and intervention efforts directed at one individual within the family, which can influence the overall functioning of the family.

5.7 SUPERVISION

Social work supervision plays an important role in determining the quality of service delivered to clients and in also helping the efficient social workers achieve both job satisfaction and professional development. Supervision has been a part of the profession of social work since the Charity Organization Society movement started in the 19th century.

A social work supervisor is an administrative staff member of the agency who has been given the authority to perform certain roles. By the authority given to him a supervisor can direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate the performance of the people over whom he has been given supervision rights. In performing his duty, the supervisor performs administrative, educational

and supportive functions. The basic purpose of supervision is to make sure that the service given by the professional and others in the agency are the best, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Supervisors do not directly offer service to the client but indirectly affect the level of service offered by the agency through their impact on the service providers that is the professionals of the agency.



The basic purpose of supervision is to make sure that the service given by the professional and others in the agency are the best, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The Objectives of Supervision

- Short-Term Objectives: The short-term objectives of supervision are to: a. provide workers with the work structure and agency resources that enable them to do their jobs effectively (administrative supervision); b. increase workers' knowledge and skills and ability to do their jobs effectively and help workers develop professionally so that one day they can function without supervision (educational supervision); c. sustain workers emotionally in the performance of their jobs (supportive supervision).
- Long-Term Objective: The long-term objective of supervision is to provide clients the most efficient and effective service possible, consistent with agency policies and procedures. The short-term objectives contribute to achieving this long-term objective.

Functions of Supervision

- The three basic functions of supervision - administrative, educational and supportive - reflect the three short-term objectives of supervision and their ultimate purpose is to enable workers to provide clients with the best possible service.

(i) Administrative Function : The administrative tasks of supervision require managerial skills. The supervisor is responsible for providing workers with the work structure and access to agency resources that allow them to do their jobs well. He is concerned with such issues as the workers' productivity, progress on cases, and workload, and whether they are following the agency's procedures. Most supervisors focus heavily on administrative tasks because these tasks play an important role in fulfilling the accountability demands faced by their agency. Additionally, improving worker productivity and efficiency has become increasingly important as a

result of reductions in funding for social service programs and changes in social welfare policy (e.g., fewer available resources, reduced staff).

(ii) Educational Function: The educational tasks of supervision require teaching and imparting technical skills. The supervisor is charged with providing the training that allows workers to achieve their objectives and the skills that prepare them to do their jobs more effectively and independently. a. A tutorial or teaching model is commonly used with workers who have little professional experience; more experienced workers may also receive training through case consultation, peer-group interactions, and service delivery teams. b. A supervisor may switch between the role of educator and the role of consultant, based on a worker's needs - i.e., with an experienced worker, the supervisor may set aside his educational role and serve more as a consultant on a challenging case. c. Staff Development, In-Service Training, and Educational Supervision (1) Staff development encompasses all of the procedures an agency uses to improve the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of its staff, including in-service training and educational supervision. Examples of staff development activities include training sessions, lectures, workshops, reading material, and discussion groups. (2) In-service training is formal training that is planned in advance and provided to a circumscribed group of personnel at an agency who have the same job responsibilities or same job classification. The content taught at an in-service training applies to all members of the group but is specifically relevant to none of them. (3) Educational supervision refers to training that is tailored to the needs of a specific worker who has a specific caseload and is dealing with specific problems - i.e., the program of education is individualized to meet the needs of this worker. Through educational supervision, the supervisor helps the worker apply the generic training offered by in-service training.

(iii) Supportive Function: The supportive tasks of supervision call for interpersonal skills. The supervisor is responsible for making sure workers have the psychological and interpersonal resources needed to operate effectively on an emotional level. This allows workers to do their job

more effectively and derive satisfaction from their work.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Why is recording important in case work?

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Q 4: What is the purpose of supervision?

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5.8 LET US SUM UP

Social case work involves helping individuals with their problems in social functioning through a systematic approach. Knowledge of human behavior and social situation and skills in human relationship is basic to its practice. It is an art when it uses various ways to effect change in human behavior and a science when it uses knowledge of human behavior and social situations. Social case work can thus be said to be scientific art to help an individual to live a socially productive and individually satisfying life limited by his capacities and social realities. Thus interviewing, recording, home visits and supervision are important tools of social case work method.



5.9 FURTHER READING

1. Richmond, Mary. (1930). The Long View. New York: Russel Stage Foundation
2. Perlman, Harris, Helen. (1957). Social Case Work: A Problem Solving Process. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press