
UNIT 1 SERVICE TO HUMANITY AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Contents

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the value of service to humanity
- Explain the principles of value of service to humanity
- Explain the major service areas of social work
- Enlist the importance of value of service to humanity

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The social work profession aims for the development of human potential and the fulfilment of human needs, by working with and enabling people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social well-being. It enables individuals, groups, families and communities in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic and political resources. Social work may include, but is not limited to interpersonal practice, group work, community work, social development, social action, policy development, research, social work education and supervisory and managerial functions in these fields. Being a social worker is a tremendous responsibility as it is a position in which one has power over the lives and well-being of others.

Service to humanity is the base of social work which is aimed at human welfare. Service to others is one of the core values of social work, from which all other values stem. Social work profession expects the value of service to humanity to ensure quality of services to the clients and seeks to improve accessibility, accountability and coordination among professionals and agencies in service delivery system. In the helping process, social work profession holds service to humanity as a primary value and objective. Being a practice profession, social workers acknowledge that serving others is more important than self-interest and place the needs of their clients ahead of their own personal interests.

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1.2 CONCEPT AND NATURE OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Humanity is not about maintaining a gracious relationship between one another in the society but it is about building a bond amongst the members in the society with the help of sustainable values. Humanity is not about showing passion and empathy to each other at times of need but about regarding love in high esteem and kindness in all walks of life. Humanity is not just a word for symbolizing the human compassion and civilization but it goes beyond the horizons of human nature and his creations. It is all about using hearts along with the minds in all the endeavours of human kind. Humanity, in general, is perceived as a charity. The foremost activity man should engage in, is service to the fellow human beings.

In general, the term “service” refers to the variety of programs made available by individuals, public or private agencies to individuals, families and communities who need special assistance. Every society has the social and economic insecurities that accompany old age, unemployment, disability, desertion or death of the family wage earner. Religious and fraternal organizations, along with private and public welfare organizations, provide various forms of aid to the needy. Service is not only confined to isolated deeds and words of charity towards the disabled, helpless or the poverty stricken but also to all those who are affected mentally and emotionally including those belonging to the high strata of the society. Service is a value expected from every professional. The service provided by a professional social worker aimed at helping individuals, families and groups to restore or enhance their capacity for effective functioning and work towards supporting the communities in need. The field of social work focuses on interactions between people and the societal institutions that impact a person’s ability to accomplish essential life tasks and realize goals.

Service is a broad term that refers to a variety of activities performed by different professionals. Social workers can also fall under this category in a broader sense where human services, as a field, is defined as serving communities and populations in need. But the service in social work is different. As a value of social work profession, social workers spend their time interacting directly with clients to help them function in society, irrespective of their difficulties. Social workers try to help each individual as a unique person and determine a way of smoothing their difficulties not by removing every obstacle for them but supporting them along their path. This not only demands a high degree of compassion and patience, but also a distinct knowledge of resources available in the community.

1.3 SERVICE TO HUMANITY AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a value based profession. A professional’s life is based on values. For a social worker, life is based on and directed by values which set certain standards, principles and beliefs. Values are like a road map which brings about change in one’s attitudes and direction for life (Thomas, 2016). In the field of professional ethics, ‘values’ usually take the form of general ethical principles relating to how professionals should treat the people they work with and what sorts of actions are regarded as right or wrong. Vigilante (1974) calls values the ‘fulcrum of social work practice’. When acting in a professional capacity, social workers place professional service before personal goals or advantage, and use their power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society.

Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values and skills to help people in need and to address social problems (NASW, 2008). Service before self is the goal of professional social workers as they are trained to imbibe the value of service in their hearts and make it evident in practice (Thomas, 2016).

Social workers provide their service to the needy in accordance with their professional code of ethics and by administering the professional skills, methods and techniques which are guided by the principles and values of the profession (Roy and Kurian, 2016).

1.4 PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

The ethical principles of service to humanity highlighted in code of ethics for social workers (Thomas, 2015) are:

1. Social workers ought to render their service on the ideal of brotherhood of man with an element of self-sacrifice.
2. Social workers must acknowledge that servicing others is more important than self-interest and therefore place the needs of others ahead of their own personal interests.
3. Social workers must provide remedial, preventive, developmental, emotional and supportive services to their clients-individuals, individuals in groups, groups, families and communities.
4. Keeping in view the duty towards the nation, social workers must extend every possible service to the country and its policy makers for formulating people oriented welfare policies.
5. Social workers must provide services to humanity based on the profession's theoretical base which includes all the twelve values and the principles, the twelve methods and techniques, specifically identified and promoted by the profession.
6. Social workers must connect clients with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities to humanity across the board.

Social workers provide their service to the needy in accordance with their professional code of ethics and by administering the professional skills, methods and techniques which are guided by the principles and values of the profession.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Elucidate service as a value of social work.

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2) What are the principles of value of service?

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1.5 MAJOR SERVICE AREAS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work professionals provide remedial, preventive, developmental and supportive services to individuals, groups, families and communities. These services are being provided to them keeping in view the values of social work profession. Social workers assist a diverse population of clients, who are of every age and have a broad range of issues.

Social Workers perform a broad spectrum of duties, ranging from providing support to those faced with difficult situations, emotional stress or significant change in their lives to clinically diagnosing emotional, behavioral or mental health disorders in individuals. Not only do they help the individuals cope with the situation at hand, professional social workers advocate for them and seek out valuable resources and other means of support for the affected person(s). Some of the major services provided by professional social workers are:

Child and Family Services

Child and family welfare is considered a special area of practice within the profession of social work and the principles and values of the social work profession generally fit with policies that guide modern child welfare organizations. Social workers offer assistance to children as well as to their parents and guardians. Social workers provide information about resources for children and families, coordinate services and facilitate contact with local and state agencies and community organizations. Child and family social workers also provide supportive casework with parents and offer advice about positive parenting skills.

Social workers also provide support and therapy to children who have experienced traumas, losses or extra-familial abuse. Social workers in child and family welfare agencies are involved with the planning and delivery of a variety of services for children and families, such as family support, residential care, advocacy and adoptions and foster care programs, as well as child protection. Social workers ensure that children live in safe homes and have their basic needs met in a healthy family atmosphere. The value of service ensures that these services are delivered in an effective and professional way.

School Social Work

School social workers specialize in helping students with school-related issues and personal problems that affect their lives at school and at home. Professional social workers engaged in school social work mediate between community resources and students who need special services. School social work is considered as an intricate part of student support services.

The goal of school social workers is to enhance the overall functioning and academic

performance of students. School social workers work as a part of school teams in helping students to attain their academic potential.

Geriatric Social Worker

Geriatric social workers provide services for elderly people and support them in various aspects. Social workers who assist aged clients help them to live healthy and happily in the society. The value of service enables social workers to understand the felt need of the elders and to show adequate empathy while providing the services. Whether at home or in an old age home, the elderly require the services of social workers. The nature of problems confronted by the elders in urban and rural family differ to some extent. It is the social worker, having imbibed the value of service, who can meaningfully bring the much needed service to the elderly through a variety of programmes and services.

Mental Health Services

Mental health social workers work with clients who have mental conditions and/or addictions. Social workers, with their knowledge of humans systems, can be especially effective at addressing co-occurring disorders of persons with mental health issues. Social workers in mental health are involved in the planning and delivery of a variety of services, such as building partnerships among professionals, caregivers and families; collaborating with the community, usually with the goal of creating supportive environments for clients; advocating adequate service, treatment models and resources; challenging and changing social policy to address issues of poverty, employment, housing, and social justice; and supporting the development of preventive programs. Mental health settings usually encompass services in three broad areas of health care: prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The value of service urges the professional social workers practise exclusively within one area or cross the boundaries of all three in response to diverse client, family and community needs in the best possible manner to ensure the maximum benefits to the service seekers.

Medical and Public Health services

Medical social workers help people who have serious or chronic health problems. They advise individuals and families about methods to deal with illness. They also find services, such as nursing care, nutrition classes and therapies that are available to help sick individuals and their families. Medical conditions affect far more than the body. They can result in an onslaught of emotional, financial and social needs. Social workers are adept at helping people meet these sorts of needs – and so we find social workers in many locations where health services are delivered. They are known as medical and health care social workers.

Community Social Workers

Social workers in the field of community development can be found in many areas of practice and a variety of settings. Social workers who practise from a community development or community organizing perspective attempt to address the systemic issues that create social problems. In many cases, they may also be engaged in the kinds of individual problem-solving practices embodied in many social work positions.

Community social work involves understanding the power dynamics and social relations that govern the relationships between various structures and diverse communities and working to achieve social justice through structural change.

Community social workers help communities function in the best manner. Some work directly with individuals, conducting needs assessments and making referrals to resources within the community.

Migrant population and refugees

Migrants often need help in adjusting to life in a new situation. Social workers help them find housing, jobs, and other resources. The homeless in various urban centres, night shelters and refugee camps across the country require the intervention of service minded and professionally qualified social workers. Majority of the workforces in India are in unorganized sector, almost forty percent belong to migrant labour population. Rapid industrialization and urbanization scenario in India are also changing the migration pattern. Social workers facilitate and provide services to the migrant and refugees keeping in view the value of service and social justice.

Industrial setting

The services of a professional social worker who could be solely engaged in helping the employees overcome their problems and enable them to continue to function as usual productive human beings are sought in industrial settings. Workers of various cadres in industrial settings, including corporate sector and their offices, face various types of human problems. Apart from stress related to the work, one has to confront problems from one's own family including the care of children, aged parents, problems associated with education, marriage and health related issue of kith and kin, employees staying in industrial centers away from one's own family, and so on. Apart from these, one may also face problems pertaining to promotions, not receiving salary on time and personal issues including alcoholism, drug abuse and absenteeism. The professional social workers in the industrial settings provide the services like; helping the employees to develop their inner resources and if necessary to mobilize other services within the enterprise to bring about changes in the work environment; helping in their personal and family difficulties to act as a resource person to community services; act as liaison between the workers and the welfare services; helping the management in evolving suitable working conditions and policies, and so on. For all such professionals, the value of service to humanity is of great importance which enables them to bring in the human and welfare aspects in the industries.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) List out the major service areas of social work profession.

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- 2) What are the major roles of social worker in the child and family welfare services?

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

Social workers help individuals, families and members of groups and communities to restore their capabilities to function in society. Professional social workers provide manifold services in the areas of community development programmes, rural development, issues and concerns of children, women, education, health and hygiene, self help groups, tribal development, resettlement of the displaced, emergency services for those affected by natural and manmade calamities, care of the aged, palliative care, rescue and rehabilitation of child labours, care of the orphans and widow and similar issues. For the professionals to work in these service sectors, the value of service to humanity is very essential. Only with dedication, commitment and patriotism social workers can involve themselves for the service of humanity especially in developing countries.

Social workers connect people with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities for individuals and families. All these supports provided by the social workers are based on the value of service. When social work is practiced with the value of service, the mind and heart of the worker will be fully involved for the best interest of their clients. In technical terms, it is called ‘the professional service’ by the social worker who provides services to the clients taking into account all the values of the social work profession. In short, social work practice begins with the value of service to humanity (Roy and Kurian, 2016).

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Service to humanity is the base of social work which is aimed at human welfare. Service to others is one of the core values of social work, from which all other values stem. Social work profession expects the value of service to humanity to ensure quality of services to the clients and seeks to improve accessibility, accountability and coordination among professional and agencies in service delivery system.
- 2) Principles of value of service to humanity are:
 - Social workers ought to render their service on the ideal brotherhood of man with an element of self-sacrifice.
 - Social worker must acknowledge that servicing others is more important than self-interest and therefore, place the needs of others ahead of their own personal interests.
 - Social workers must provide remedial, preventive, developmental, emotional and supportive services to their clients-individuals in groups, groups, families and communities.
 - Keeping in view the duty towards nation, social workers must extend every possible service to the country and its policy makers for formulating people oriented welfare policies.
 - Social workers must provide service to humanity based on the profession's theoretical base which includes all the twelve values and the principles, the

twelve methods and techniques, specifically identified and promoted by profession.

**Service to
Humanity as a Value
of Social Work**

- Social workers must connect clients with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities to humanity across the board.

Check Your Progress II

1) Major service areas of social work profession are:

- Child and family services.
- School social work.
- Geriatric social work.
- Mental health services.

