

Absolute poverty

The lack of income and/or assets which prevents one from obtaining a subsistence level of functioning.

Accessibility

The opportunity to obtain or receive services

Active listening

The process of attending to a client through the use of clinical skills in order to understand the client's concerns

Activist

A social worker or other person whose goal is to achieve social change

Activities of daily living

Basic self-care activities that allow an individual to live independently, including bathing, eating, and toileting

Adult Protective Services (APS)

The system of services provided to adults vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, or neglect

Advance directives

Written guidelines regarding end-of-life care developed by a client while competent. This term can include living wills and the designation of a health care representative to make medical decisions for the client if needed.

Advocacy

Representing others individually or in groups in order to protect them or advance their cause

Agency policies and procedures

The written guidelines of an agency that describe the ways in which services will be provided, and which provides guidelines that dictate certain processes that will be used.

Assessment

It is the process of examining a problem to determine its cause, severity and course which is necessary to design an effective intervention plan. Assessment is done at all levels of practice.

Attachment disorder

It is the inability to form emotional bonds with caretakers, often the results of negative early childhood experiences.

Behavioral model

The practice theory / model based on learning theory which focuses on the process of shaping and changing behavior through the use of rewards and reinforcement

Behavioral rehearsal

Demonstration of a desired behavior by a social worker or therapist, followed by role play and rehearsal of the behavior which can then be employed in real life settings and situations

Behavioral theory

Orienting / explanatory theory in which human behavior and development are seen as responses to antecedent stimuli and consequences, both positive and negative

Benchmark

A standard of performance against which to measure

Beneficence

The desire to act for the benefit and welfare of others

Benign neglect

Withholding help based on a belief that harm may be caused by providing such help

Bias

Negative attitudes or beliefs about individuals or groups

Bio-psycho-social theory

Orienting / explanatory theory about how holistic theory of human development that attempts to explain the ways in which biological, psychological, and social development are interactive in terms of influencing development

Block grant

A practice of allowing a community or state to determine how best to use a block of funding

Board of directors

The policy-making committee that is responsible for the operation of an organization in terms of funding, staff, mission, and programs.

Brawner Rule

The standard by which a person is deemed to be not guilty by reason of insanity, including the inability to behave in accordance with law or understand that his/her conduct is wrong

Brief therapy

Psychotherapy practiced for a limited number of sessions and with clear goals and objectives

Broker

A professional role played by a social worker by which clients, families, groups or organizations are linked in order to receive services or support each other

Capacity building

Process of developing the abilities, attributes, resources and will to set and reach goals by a client, group, organization, or community

Case finding

Process of seeking out persons eligible to receive services provided by an agency, often done through outreach activities

Case management

Securing, implementing, and monitoring services needed by a client

Case manager

Social worker whose role is to oversee and coordinate a client's services in keeping with the client's goals and needs

Caseload

The group of clients or client systems for which a social worker is responsible to serve

Centralization

The consolidation of power in an organization that has administrative responsibility for its operation

Change agent

A social worker working toward change at the micro, mezzo or macro level of practice

Chaos theory

Orienting / explanatory theory that describes how rapid and sudden changes may occur in social systems, may appear to be chaotic and random, but may be the result of positive feedback loops (both positive and negative) and change efforts that suddenly impact the entire social system and creative change

Child Protective Services (CPS)

The system of services provided to children and youth vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation or neglect

Child welfare

The field of practice responsible for monitoring and promoting the rights and welfare of children and youth

Civil rights

Rights of citizens given by a government that protect them from abuse by individuals, organizations, social policies, or governments

Classism

Negative stereotyping about people based on their socioeconomic status

Client

(i) Micro Individual or family which is seeking or being provided social services (ii) Mezzo Group, organization or community that is seeking or being provided social services (iii) Macro Society, social policy, social change, or research as the entity being served or targeted

Client system

The client and the facets of the client's social environment which impact the client and which are the target of social work intervention

Client centered model

The model of social work practice that assumes clients are capable of dealing with their problems in social functioning, and in which the social worker partners with the client to encourage him/her to take the lead in devising interventions

Closed system

A social system that is not open to feedback or input from other sources, has rigid boundaries, is self-contained, and tends to resist change

Code of ethics

A written set of ethical and value-based principles for a profession, providing guidance in ethical decision-making. The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics guides the social work profession in terms of ethics.

Co-dependency

A relationship between people that is generally considered an unhealthy way of meeting the individual emotional and social needs of those in the relationship

Cognition

The intellectual process of dealing with information, including understanding, processing, remembering, and evaluating

Cognitive behavioral model

The practice theory / model based on behaviourism and social learning theory that helps clients recognize the impact of self-defeating or erroneous cognitive beliefs or perceptions on their behavior

Cognitive dissonance

The simultaneous existence of contradictory beliefs and actions which can cause discomfort and lead the individual to change either the behavior or the belief

Cognitive restructuring

The therapeutic process of assisting an individual to see cognitive errors and self-defeating beliefs and develops more positive thoughts and beliefs

Cohort

A group of people who were born at approximately the same time and/or who share a certain characteristic or experience

Community

A group of individuals, families, or groups that share geographic location, identity, values, experiences or interests

Community organization

An area of social work which focuses on social change within a community based on an identified need

Competency

Possession of the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for social work practice, as measured against the University of Montana School of Social Work Competency Catalogue,

NASW standards for practice, and the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policies and Academic Standards core competencies.

Conceptual framework

A way of organizing ideas, concepts, and theories of social work practice. Includes perspectives, orienting / explanatory theories, and practice theories / models

Conduct disorder

A disorder usually found in children and youth in which there is repetitive and consistent behavior that violates the behavioral norms and values for that age group

Confidentiality

The ethical stance that a professional can only release or share information about a client with their consent

Conflict of interest

A conflict between a professional's personal and private interests that may impact practice

Conflict theory

Orienting / explanatory theory which states that individuals and social systems are often in conflict, and this conflict between and within families, groups, communities and other social systems impacts human behavior and development

Consensus approach

The process of coming to agreement about issues and approaches for dealing with them. Arising from the feminist perspective on social work practice, consensus organizations are those which commit to consensus, in at least a general sense, in order to share power and commit to a course of action as a group.

Conservatism

The political belief in traditional values, societal structures and mores that commonly lead to a commitment to decreasing governmental influence in and funding for public issues and programs

Constituency

A group of people, including clients, customers, or citizens who are represented or served by a social program or an elected official

Continuing education units

The requirement by professions that licensed professionals continue to receive training and education to further their professional knowledge and skills, described in written guidelines that vary by state. In Montana, licensed social workers must complete 20 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) every year.

Continuum of care

The spectrum of services available to clients which should ideally fill all gaps and minimize duplication

Co-payment

The amount a client needs to pay for a service covered by insurance, sometimes a percentage of the total cost and sometimes a specified dollar amount

Cost benefit analysis

The weighing of the costs and resources associated with providing a service against the benefits or providing that service

Cost sharing

The division of financial responsibility for a program between two or more organizations or entities

Counter-transference

Emotional reactions by a professional toward a client that originate in the professional's personal experience and which may be projected onto a client

Crisis intervention model

The practice theory / model which focuses on helping clients deal with overwhelming crisis situations by drawing upon their strengths and resources to get them through the crisis and return to a normal level of functioning, and in which a professional may take a more directive role because of the client's inability to proceed

Crisis theory

Orienting / explanatory theory about how individuals and families who experience significant crises may exhibit fairly predictable behaviors, responses and patterns of recovery

Critical incident stress debriefing

The process of debriefing with those who have experienced a crisis, conducted with the goal of allowing individuals and groups to express their feelings, gain support, and use coping skills to deal with the crisis. Often done with professionals who have experienced a trauma or crisis in their work.

Critical theory

The orienting / explanatory theory that critiques positivism as the only accepted way of knowing, questions underlying assumptions of individual, theoretical and scientific understandings, recognizes structural and political contributors to social problems and oppression, and suggests that personal choice and power can transform the social environment

Cross cultural competence

The ability to be knowledgeable about, accepting of, and empathetic with diverse clients and populations, resulting in culturally appropriate and effective assessment and interventions.

Culture

Customs, beliefs, ideology, world-view, and values common to a group of people and which guide their individual and social behavior.

Cultural theory

Orienting / explanatory theory about how individuals and groups which experience oppression or discrimination will be impacted in their development by these experiences, both positively and negatively

Culture of poverty

The belief that poverty is perpetuated because poor people's values, experiences, and motivations prevent them from becoming financially independent.

Custody

The legal right to protect, make decisions for, and be a guardian for an individual who is deemed incapable of living independently.

Cycle of change theory (Prochaska and DiClemente)

The orienting / explanatory theory on individual change which posits that people change in a cyclical way rather than a linear one, that the stages of change are distinct from each other, and that relapse is common. The Motivational Interviewing practice theory / model is built upon the cycle of change theory.

Decentralization

The practice of distributing power to those who are closely involved with the issue at hand rather than delegating power to the upper levels of an organization

Decision tree

A process of using yes and no questions to make a decision, whereby a yes answer leads the respondent to a different series of questions than does a no answer.

Decompensation

The gradual or rapid decline in the level of an individual's mental functioning and cognitive processing

Deconstruction

Analysis of theories and models that involves examining and questioning the beliefs, values, and assumptions of those theories or models, allowing for critique, clarification, and revision

Deductible

The amount an individual is required to pay for a health or other insurance claim before the insurer pays their share of the claim.

Defense mechanism

Thought processes, often considered to be unconscious and which serve to shield individuals from powerful negative emotions, including denial, rationalization, projection, minimization, and intellectualization

Deinstitutionalization

The practice of returning institutionalized individuals to the community to receive services or to function on their own.

Delphi method

A method of research for social planning that uses a survey / questionnaire with a group of experts in order to determine the feasibility and potential impact of a proposed intervention

Delusion

An erroneous belief that persists despite evidence to the contrary. Examples include delusions of grandeur and persecution.

Desensitization

A systematic process of exposing an individual to stimuli or experiences that cause anxiety, with the idea that exposure will lessen anxiety and fear.

Developmental disability

A condition that is congenital or that is exhibited before adulthood that limits an individual's ability to function independently. This condition may be genetic or a result of disease or other causation.

Developmental theory

The orienting / explanatory theories at the micro, mezzo and macro level of practice that suggest that individuals, families, groups, communities, societies, and social policies proceed through somewhat predictable stages in their ongoing development

Diagnosis

The process of identifying a condition and assessing the causes and contributors to that condition, based on symptoms and course, and allowing for a plan of care.

Diagnosis of convenience

The process of assigning an inaccurate or minimally accurate diagnosis to a client in order to receive insurance payments because insurance companies may pay only for certain diagnosed conditions.

Differential diagnosis

Diagnosis of disorders or social issues by analysing and comparing the characteristics of similar conditions.

Discharge planning

Process of planning for the discharge and placement of an individual following hospitalization or residential care that allows for a smooth transition and whatever supports will be needed to maintain the client's level of functioning.

Discouraged worker

An unemployed individual who has ceased seeking employment following unsuccessful attempts to find employment, and who is not usually counted in Labor statistics related to unemployment.

Discrimination

The practice of treating people differently and negatively based on a difference such as gender, age, religion, political orientation, sexual orientation, or ability.

Disease theory / medical theory of human development

Orienting / explanatory theory which focuses on human development as primarily a result of internal factors, including genetics, personality traits, biological conditions, and other individual factors. It also posits that there is a set of symptoms for conditions, a predictable course for the disease, and a generally agreed-upon protocol for treatment

Disenfranchisement

The real or felt experience of not having the power or ability to exercise one's rights

Disregards

The process used by a funding source to not count certain income or assets when determining eligibility for services or benefits

Disposable income

Available funds after all expenses are paid