Chapter 4: ADVOCACY IN SOCIAL WORK

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 1. Differentiate case advocacy and cause advocacy.
- 2. Summarize the ethical issues involved in advocacy.
- 3. Explain how advocacy is a signature aspect of social work practice.
- 4. Identify costs and benefits associated with advocacy.
- 5. Describe a cycle of advocacy.
- 6. List and describe four tenets of the dynamic advocacy model.

Nancy Advocates to Professionalize Social Work in Her State

Nancy is a BSW-level social worker residing in a state that recognizes and provides licensure only for MSW-level clinical social workers who have passed a national examination and completed at least 2 years of supervised clinical experience. The license is what allows clinical social workers to enter private practice with individuals and families, obtain reimbursement through insurance companies and other third parties, and tap into public funding sources. In contrast, BSW and nonclinical MSW social workers have been limited to obtaining state certifications in social work. These certifications lack credibility with potential clients and funding sources.

In Nancy's state, human service organizations rarely require proof of certification or of a degree in social work for employment as a social worker in nonclinical settings. So by law, just about anyone with at least a bachelor's degree can choose to be called a social worker. People who have majored in psychology, sociology, criminal justice, history, and English routinely obtain employment in human service and mental health agencies in her state. They often refer to themselves as social workers, care managers, caseworkers, and intervention specialists. As a result, the general public believes that the term *social worker* can be applied to nearly anyone doing good for others.

Nancy worked hard for her BSW degree and wonders how nonprofessionals can effectively do the work without the training she has received. It seems to her that the potential for doing harm is high.

The important point here is that Nancy is thinking and acting as an advocate. To ensure that clients receive quality services from competent social workers, Nancy works with her National Association of Social Workers state chapter and local social work educators to promote state legislation that will establish licensure and title protection for all social workers. As their recommended changes in state laws are considered, social workers and some client groups have also been talking with administrators of social work agencies about how important it is to require that every "social worker" in a human service position have a social work degree and be appropriately educated.



▲ Social workers can act as advocates for their clients by promoting legislation that has a positive effect on the community.

The element of social work that greatly distinguishes it from other helping professions is advocacy. Social workers are unique in being oriented to and knowledgeable about **advocacy**—engaging in purposeful actions that will help people advance their rights, opportunities, causes, and human dignity—a hallmark of social work. Social workers believe in empowerment through advocacy to help improve people's lives, family dynamics, group processes, organizational functioning, community-based ventures and services, and policy-oriented decisions and guidelines.

Grounded in the *Code of Ethics* of the NASW (2018), one of social work's central principles is to promote social justice through work with socially and economically vulnerable groups. Populations at risk include the economically disadvantaged, members of the LBGQT community, women, older adults, children, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with mental or physical challenges. Contemporary social justice issues include unemployment, underemployment, medical insurance, technological access to information, and the elimination of discrimination. Social workers seek equality of rights and opportunities for all people in a number of realms. And, a major way of advancing social work's social justice agenda is through advocacy.

Advocacy can involve one case (many times an individual or family) requiring some kind of change, which is known as **case advocacy**. It may also take the form of a larger structural or systematic effort to change policies, common practices, procedures, and laws to advance social justice for a larger segment of society, which is known as **cause advocacy**. Cause advocacy necessitates social workers to be knowledgeable about **social action** and ways to create social change. Social workers engage in many types of cause advocacy, such as legal advocacy, legislative advocacy, self-advocacy, and system advocacy.

The goals of case advocacy are often to meet individuals' **absolute needs**, or the basic goods and services that support

human survival in the short term (water, food, shelter, sanitation, medical care). The goals of cause advocacy involve causes that impact a group of people and, like case advocacy, can encompass **relative needs**, which are the goods and services that promote human dignity and well-being over the long term: meaningful employment, equal status before the law, social justice, quality education, and equal opportunity.

THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATES

Many people are unable to provide adequately for themselves at one point or another; some people experience a lifetime of challenges from which they struggle to escape. The personal reasons vary, from physical or mental barriers to lack of proper socialization and education to lower social status through birth, custom, or misfortune. In addition, societal factors such as a lack of public resources and service, unsupportive political will, and entrenched systems of privilege and oppression impact and constrain the ability of people to move forward. Many people often struggle with the basics—food, water, shelter, health care—and human dignity.

Societies across the world have developed systems to create opportunities for people to rise above unfortunate circumstances. In Chapter 2, you read about the historical response to need, the development of social work as a profession, and the emergence of a unique system of social services in the United States. Social programs and services have helped millions of people live more fulfilling, healthier, and productive lives.

Often, however, social services are unknown or unavailable to those in need. It is difficult for people without resources to learn about sources of help and ways to challenge barriers suppressing human growth and development. Social workers have long worked to connect individuals, families, and communities with the available services in an effort to provide people with an opportunity to participate fully in society. In the process, they have become advocates, championing individuals, groups, and communities in their search for needed services. But social workers soon realized that when services were unavailable to meet serious needs within communities, they would also need to be advocates for policy and program changes with larger systems—organizations, communities, and society.

Both case and cause advocacy require knowledge, determination, and effort, many times with people consumed with just trying to survive. Social workers, on the other hand, have committed themselves to helping the needy as their life work. They have acquired education and training to develop knowledge and skills to use client strengths to challenge barriers. Social workers think in terms of a responsibility both to improve conditions for clients and to advance opportunities for other people facing similar struggles and problems.

CURRENT TRENDS

Social Change Through Boycotts

ONE way those without much individual power can effect change is to band together to refuse to buy a product, use a service, listen to a radio station, or watch a television program—in other words, to conduct a boycott. During the 1950s, civil rights leaders such as the Rev. T. J. Jemison and Dr. Martin Luther King organized bus boycotts and alternative car pools in the cause of abolishing rules forcing African American riders to the backs of buses. In 1977, a boycott began in the United States, and eventually expanded into Europe, protesting Nestlé's promotion of breast milk substitutes in less economically developed countries. A boycott of U.S. firms investing in South Africa, which included protests on American college campuses, contributed to the end of official apartheid in South Africa in the 1990s. These are just a few of the historic examples of effective boycotts.

In today's electronic world, groups such as Ethical Consumer enlist people in social change. Ethical Consumer publishes lists

of companies that it believes should be boycotted on the basis of political oppression, animal abuse, tax avoidance, environmental degradation, supply chain issues, abuse of human rights, and exploitation of workers. When organized and conducted successfully, boycotts such as these bring publicity to issues and serve as powerful forums for advocating change.

In the political realm, beginning with the election of President Trump in 2016, anti-Trump protesters began boycotting Donald Trump products (e.g., hotels, real estate, golf courses, and resorts). And, following the endorsement of the clothing line of the President's daughter, Ivanka Trump, by Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway, anti-Trump groups soon organized to boycott Ivanka's clothing as well as the stores selling her products. Would you participate in a political boycott? If so, for what political purpose and end?



▲ Advocacy can occur via organized demonstrations to challenge people in power and effect change.

POWER AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Implicit in this discussion of why professional advocates—that is, social workers—are needed is the idea of **social inequality.** Some people have more—access to society's benefits and resources, status, wealth, power—and some have less. Some inequality is part of the human condition. However, those at the top may use their advantages to organize society to suit their needs. Often they do so to the clear detriment of those below them on the social scale. Social workers are educated to understand these inequities and

their effect on clients and social systems. They are also educated to combat social inequality at all levels and in various areas of practice, as you will learn in later chapters.

During the past several decades, social workers have embraced the concept of empowerment as a key feature of practice. In the context of advocacy, empowerment refers to clients' ability to influence decisions made about themselves, determine the best outcomes for themselves, and making life-changing decisions themselves. They influence both the services they receive and the development of policies, programs, and legislation that affect the services they and others receive. Social workers are key players and leaders, but their role is to facilitate, work with, and support clients in their efforts to advance their own well-being and promote change.

Power is a factor in human services in another way. When social workers defend or represent others to secure social justice, they are challenging the people and special interest groups in power to exert their authority to assist and benefit those who are less powerful. When this type of advocacy is successful, the will and energy of clients and social workers, as well as the other advocates for change, yield desirable, measurable outcomes that produce additional opportunities, rights, and freedoms for clients.

Consider how Nancy, the social worker in our opening vignette, decides to approach those in power over licensing requirements for social workers. She realizes that her campaign may be an affront to certain groups. The likely opponents are

SOCIAL WORK IN ACTION

March 2017 Effort to Repeal and Replace the Patient Protection and Affordability Care Act (ACA)

SOCIAL workers across the nation united with various special interest groups and factions to lobby members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to thwart President Trump and Republican efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act

(ACA). Passage of ACA repeal and replace legislation held promise for eliminating health care insurance for millions of low-income and older adults across the United States.

individuals working in the field who do not have social work degrees, and budget-minded legislators and administrators. Antilicensure elements will question whether licensed social workers can do a better job than those who are already doing it without licensure. They will ask for evidence but may still dispute findings indicating that the quality of services is enhanced through the employment of professionally educated and degreed social workers.

So Nancy devises a strategy for challenging the status quo that involves empowering clients and enlisting the support of service groups. She has heard many disturbing stories of clients' receiving inappropriate or inferior services from nonprofessionals, and she believes those stories will sway decision makers. In addition, Nancy believes that clients' voices will resonate because each client brings unique passions and strengths for influencing change. Some clients are poised to step forward in the licensure debate and want to educate others to the ill effects of nonprofessional intervention. They, and the groups they form, will play a significant role in reaching out to administrators, leaders, and legislators in the state.



▲ Supporters of the Affordable Care Act participate in a "Save Obamacare" rally in Los Angeles, California on March 23, 2017.

THE ETHICS OF ADVOCACY

Underlying their involvement in advocacy (and all forms of social work intervention) is the professional call for social workers to engage in ethical behavior in practice. The *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) states that each social worker has an obligation to "advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs" (NASW, 2018, Sec. 6.01). Social workers are also instructed in the *Code of Ethics* to approach, initiate, assist, educate, and organize clients for participation in advocacy. The responsibility for advocacy is also spelled out in the International Federation of Social Workers' (2004) statement of principles for ethical social work practice.

Advocacy is thus often viewed by social workers as a professional mandate and mark of competency. Nancy's call to license social workers in her state is a function of her ethical obligation to promote the well-being of her clients via competent practice. However, social workers exert care in advocacy not to impose their own values and interests. Social workers hold positions of power in helping relationships, which can influence client perceptions and actions. Ethical advocacy, whether efforts to advance competent practice or any number of issues or causes (e.g., safe and affordable housing, child welfare, affordable health care), is foremost centered on client needs and desires.

Client Self-Determination

Advocacy in social work practice is predicated on the principle of **client self-determination**, which dictates that consumers of services make decisions and choices based on their will and value orientations. Because there is a power differential between social workers and clients, it is important for advocacy to occur in a fashion that encourages and does not distract from or violate the client's right to self-determination.

With advocacy, the social worker is by definition taking up the cause of others. To promote client self-determination, social workers are attentive to setting aside their personal values, and they attempt to examine an issue or cause from the perspective(s) and voice(s) of the client. Placing oneself in the position of the client is difficult, as it necessitates learning from the client and the ability to successfully work through unequal power dynamics in the social worker and client relationship.

Self-Interest and Advocacy

It is important for social workers to know the differences between self-interest (defined as a focus on one's own benefit), case advocacy, and cause advocacy. Social workers should enter the profession to help other people, especially members of vulnerable population groups (e.g., people who experience prejudice based on gender, sexual orientation, economic status, race, or ethnicity), and not themselves. Social workers are client centered.

To understand the difference between self-interest, case advocacy, and cause advocacy, think about what college students might do when they are unhappy about a grade they received on a group assignment. One student might argue that the instructor should have graded his or her contribution higher because the other members of the group did not do as much work to complete an assignment. Another student might tell the instructor that the group deserves a higher grade. A third student might point out some weaknesses in the assignment or the grading rubric and that all students in the course should be given a higher grade. Which of these challenges constitute advocacy? Are any of them an example of case advocacy or cause advocacy? Which are based primarily on self-interest and personal gain?

As you may already sense, the concept of advocacy in social work is multidimensional and differs from the idea of advocating for one's own personal and private needs and rights. Case advocacy is important for helping specific individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities address needs and concerns. Cause advocacy focuses on social change and enabling larger groups of people to improve their social and economic situation.

TIMF TO THINK 4.1

What motivates you to consider social work as a profession? Have you experienced a loss, difficult living circumstances, a traumatic event, or a violation of personal rights? If so, are you motivated to consider social work out of self-interest or out of a concern that others benefit from your experience?

Social workers strive for objectivity in assisting clients. Could you be objective if your advocacy involved a significant event or factor in your life?

Individual Benefit Versus Community Benefit

In the United States, people often conceptualize needs in individualistic ways—what can be done for me or this person as opposed to contextualizing them in group or community welfare and large-scale change. Although individual-level advocacy can produce needed benefits for the person, it frequently does not prompt community or institutional reform. One way to think about the difference between advocacy and self-gain is to determine whether the individual or a group of people is the primary beneficiary of the change process. The individual reigns supreme perspective equates individual gain and interest with the common good and is useful for seeing how case advocacy has limitations (McNutt, 1997). For example, advocating with a client to receive food assistance from an organization can be critical for addressing a person's immediate needs but may have little impact for subsequent people experiencing similar circumstances.

It is important to question whether promoting solely one's own rights in a single case constitutes effective advocacy and use of time. Many social workers argue that advocacy efforts should move beyond individualism and focus on efforts to promote social justice or improve social conditions or circumstances affecting other individuals or a group, community, or society. The attitude of placing self-interest in a context of promoting policies and practices for the common good aligns with the **community** reigns supreme perspective (McNutt, 1997). For example, taking the broader view of advocating with clients to promote just policies for receiving food assistance from organizations in a community can yield immediate assistance to a person in need and holds promise for benefiting other people as well.

Although social workers are encouraged to focus on others, the motivation and ability to stand up for one's own rights can be a desirable personal attribute for social workers. How can people who are unable to muster the energy and passion to help themselves effectively promote fairness and social or economic justice for others? There is something to be said for people being willing to participate actively in a case or a cause rather than just look on passively. If you are seriously considering entry into the social work profession, contemplate your abilities and potential to "stand up" and actively work with others to address clients' needs and address important issues and causes.

Pathways to Community Benefit

To promote social change, social workers advocate for pathways that will give groups of people access to resources, rights, and opportunities, and allow them to improve their life circumstances. The role of the social worker, therefore, involves "building avenues for clients to access power resources within themselves, their families, and their contexts . . . creating opportunities for significant participation in community and thereby freeing clients to experience themselves differently and act in new ways" (O'Melia, 2002, p. 3).



A Rallies and protests are one way clients can be empowered to participate in their community.

Using the example of requesting a grade change, consider the possibility that a number of students were adversely affected as a result of an unfair grading practice. The correction of a single grade would not facilitate grade changes for others also affected by that unfair or unjust grading practice. Possibly, if the course had large enrollments, the grading of essays was relegated to teaching assistants (TAs). If so, did the TAs receive proper training and clear instructions and grading rubrics to facilitate reliable and valid grading practices? One might question if scoring of essay answers varied appreciably among TAs. Or was there any political pressure from the professor, department, or university administration to keep grades low to combat grade inflation? Were environmental factors or conditions, such as assigning the group work during local fires and power outages, involved?

Identifying and asking important questions opens up pathways for possible resolution of the grading problem. For example, when prompted, the professor might review the grading practices of the TAs for consistency and fairness, and consider any necessary grade changes. The professor could also examine best practices of other professors and incorporate their perspectives concerning grading into a training program for TAs, to minimize bias and error. Or the professor might have been unaware of the impact of local fires on the group assignment. In the process of examining grading policies, the professor might have identified discriminatory differences among grades from the TAs based on gender, race, or age of the students. Once again, advocacy

involves a broad and dynamic assessment and understanding of political, economic, social, and environmental factors that can influence decision making affecting a number of people.

HUMAN ASPECTS OF HELPING

Social workers often work with clients and constituents who are under stress and feel desperate and powerless. When considering advocacy as a means of creating change, it is essential to keep the human aspect of helping in mind. People are susceptible to pain and permanent damage and can perish when critical needs go unmet. All people should be treated as human beings with dignity, not as problems, objects, or cases (Reynolds, 1951).

The human nature of advocacy involves both emotional and rational aspects. Passion to confront issues can be a powerful asset in promoting change, but it can also blur many of the realities associated with a situation or issue. Hence, objectivity is an important aspect of advocacy and a quality that social workers can contribute to the process. Social workers need to be able to put clients' values and interests first while providing professional insight concerning the realities, good and bad, associated with proposed change.

ME TO THINK 4.2

As a social worker, you would want to see, appreciate, and respect the unique qualities of each person and group you encounter. You might think of social interaction as one big museum for discovering the commonalities and differences among people. In the context of advocacy, are you or could you be capable of viewing and appreciating the strengths and vulnerabilities of a variety of people-including those who think and behave quite differently than you do?

SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Social work pioneers became aware of the need for cause advocacy when they recognized that addressing clients' immediate needs from a charitable perspective held little promise for creating substantial and sustainable change in people's lives. Temporary and survival-oriented efforts were analogous to using adhesive bandages for large, contagious sores. Although it was important to address individuals' needs for shelter, food, water, and sanitation, and to alleviate other forms of human suffering, it became apparent that collective and political action was also necessary. Confronting mechanisms of social control (such as policies, practices, and laws) and people in positions of power was necessary to promote human well-being and social justice.

Dorothy Height, Florence Kelley, and Whitney Young are important historical civil rights leaders who dedicated their lives to social reform and the expansion of social welfare and policies in the United States. For example, Dorothy Height was an African American woman admitted to Barnard College in 1929 but denied entrance to the school as a result of a racial quota—a practice Barnard College later discontinued and officially denounced. She earned her undergraduate degree (1932) and master's degree in educational psychology (1933) from New York University, later completing postgraduate education at Columbia University and the New York School of Social Work (now known as the Columbia University School of Social Work). Dorothy began her career as a caseworker with the New York City welfare department and was a prominent leader during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In addition to serving in a considerable number of national leadership positions, Dorothy served for four decades (1957–1997) as the president of the National Council of Negro Women. She is remembered nationally for promoting understanding of and rights for African American women, and she was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994 and Congressional Gold Medal in 2004.

Dorothy Height was one of the first civil rights leaders to conceptualize and advocate for social justice and equality for women and African Americans in a unified, holistic fashion. She was a proponent of social programs benefiting African American females, black families, and strong, healthy community life. In the 1980s, Dorothy was known and honored for promoting and helping to sponsor "black family reunions," designed to celebrate the history and traditions of African Americans. Unfortunately, despite her many accomplishments, Dorothy Height's tireless work has often received far less attention and accolades than her male civil rights counterparts.

CAUSE AND FUNCTION

The idea that cause advocacy is a key component of social work got a significant boost from a 1937 book, Social Work as Cause and Function, by social work educator Porter R. Lee. This was a question he addressed in the book:

Are social workers merely part of a function, helping people adapt to the environment into which they are thrust, or do social workers intend to act in promotion of a cause, altering the social context to allow for higherlevel changes in social problems? (Stotzer & Alvarez, 2009, p. 324)

Lee viewed social workers as professionals with responsibilities involving community practice, social action, and leadership. His vision of social work expertise went beyond helping skills and focused specifically on the ability to create



Dorothy Height was a prominent advocate for the rights of African Americans

social change and lead social movements. He considered social workers to be uniquely equipped to advance the interests of those with absolute and relative needs. As experts in social action and as professionals, they could make social action more effective than could those taking the "emotional role" of a person not trained in social work (Stotzer & Alvarez, 2009, p. 325).

Lee's writings shaped the social work profession in a number of ways:

- Advancing the value of professional education and training in social work
- Moving the identity of social workers away from simple helper toward agent for systemic change
- Emphasizing objectivity (as opposed to emotion) in providing services and promoting social change

Lee's thoughts from the 1930s concerning the role of social workers in social action carry weight today. Whether the issue is inadequate health care; a faltering economy; oppression of women; challenges for older adults; oppression of racial/ethnic groups and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community; or the plight of veterans, social workers are challenged to be resolute in their commitment to partner with vulnerable and disenfranchised groups.

RESPONSES TO HARD TIMES

A notable turning point for social welfare and cause advocacy in U.S. history occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when social and economic conditions challenged prevailing assumptions about public assistance and the belief in individual responsibility. For the first time in their lives, many Americans were confronted with the reality that social and economic forces beyond one's control can have harsh consequences for individuals and families. Threats to average Americans' absolute needs produced a pervasive sense of desperation and helplessness. Many Americans began to see the wisdom of collective action to inform leaders about their common plight and to argue for social and economic relief programs.

Social and economic turmoil often serve as the stimulus for change in communities or societies. Change was also in the air from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s. Many people protested the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War, riots occurred in urban ghettos, civil rights protests abounded, and women sought relief from oppressive policies, practices, and laws.

Many social workers supported President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 declaration of a War on Poverty and advocated for the creation of programs and services to improve Americans' general welfare. "These initiatives included Volunteers in Service to American (VISTA), a domestic version of the Peace Corps; the Job Corps, an employment training program for school dropouts; and Head Start, a preschool educational program" (Long, Tice, & Morrison, 2006, p. 12).

During the politically conservative 1980s, social workers exposed the consequences of President Ronald Reagan's attack on social welfare programs for the poor and the windfall benefits for the rich of Reaganomics' tax reforms (Piven & Cloward, 1982). Social workers also brought new issues—problems of drug use, homelessness, and sexually transmitted diseases, among others—to the attention of the public and decision makers.



▲ Participants, some carrying American flags, marching in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965.

CAUSE ADVOCACY TODAY

As a result of the many progressive policies and initiatives supported and advanced by former President Barack Obama, many social workers became inspired about the impact of advocacy for creating social change. Social workers actively partnered with client groups to advocate for federal funding to support those suffering from a failing economy and to identify and advance the rights of a variety of vulnerable populations. These are some of the issues that social workers actively advanced:

- Health care reform (including national health insurance and parity laws to cover mental health services)
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights
- Services for veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Fair and just treatment of all immigrants in the United States, including those who are undocumented
- Affordable housing
- · Independence and dignity for older adults
- Fair treatment of those infected with HIV/AIDS
- Quality delivery of social services based on practiceinformed research and research-informed practice
- Substance use and mental health programs
- Environmental and climate change

With the 2016 election of President Trump and Republican majorities in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, the national political climate with respect to advocacy shifted for many social workers toward protection and retention of policy and program advancements with the issues listed above. For example, early in his presidency, Donald Trump proposed federal budget reductions drastically reducing funding and support for programs related to health and human services, housing, environmental protection, and education. Reductions in federal funding serve to undermine advancements in areas noted above and necessitate advocacy efforts for funding and support of initiatives at the state and local levels.

The majority of social workers see cause advocacy as part of their professional identity. For example, in one survey of social workers, "more than half" agreed that political action is relevant to their jobs and that they are obliged to "stay informed, educate others, and advocate for constructive policies" (Rome, 2010, p. 115). Additionally, 78% reported being educationally prepared for political participation and civic engagement (Rome, 2010, pp. 116–117).

THE COST OF ADVOCACY

Although advocacy is a core function in social work practice, it should not be undertaken without an understanding of the **cost of advocacy**—all the real, intangible, and unintended ways that

Chapter 4

TIME TO THINK 4.3

Have you participated in an advocacy event or movement? How comfortable were you, on a social-emotional level, with that involvement?

Social workers network and align themselves with diverse types of people to advocate for social change. Would you be able and willing to advocate for rights and opportunities for people whose gender identity, social class, race or ethnicity, age, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation is different from yours? If not, why? Do you think you might change your attitude to become a social worker?

undertaking advocacy can deplete resources and potentially work against the cause. For instance, bad publicity, loss of social capital (e.g., pushback and alienation from allies), and false hope can be just as detrimental as the loss of funds and other resources (e.g., the time of advocates) dedicated to the cause. Often the costs of advocacy are considerable (McNutt, 2011). However, comprehensive cost-benefit analyses of advocacy efforts take into account the costs, the prospects of attaining the goal, and the extent of the good to be derived from advocacy.

Assessment of the costs associated with any advocacy initiative, whether case or cause oriented, is likely to be multidimensional and can be time-consuming. Each agency or organization involved may incur expenses. In addition, the cost of advocacy includes determining the value of each person's time to engage in research, analyze and draft policies, attend meetings, develop media strategies, lobby, organize communities, and campaign. Communication itself—with constituent groups, leaders, politicians, and decision makers—requires a great deal of time, as well as expertise in various modes of communication, from the telephone and print media to text messages, websites, e-mails, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites.

Potential financial cost is not always an argument for abandoning or retreating from advocacy. A long-standing adage in business is, "You need to spend money to make money." For advocacy, this adage can be altered to, "You need to commit resources to effectively create change." The key in social work is to be mindful, intentional, and informed about the types of costs associated with planned changed.

Of course, on the other side of the ledger, advocacy has benefits. To evaluate the benefits of advocacy, those involved need to clearly define the criteria for success and ongoing means for evaluating whether advocacy outcomes are being reached. Once again, professional social workers can lend their expertise to the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions and programs.

For example, Nancy has begun to consider benchmarks for success in reforming social work licensure requirements

in her state. From the outset, she and the client groups and advocacy partners with whom she is working will need to identify the goals and benefits of licensure reform, consider the associated costs, and develop mechanisms to monitor their progress toward achieving it.

A MODEL FOR **DYNAMIC ADVOCACY**

Chapter 3 introduces a model for generalist social work practice, along with the theoretical foundations for that practice. This chapter introduces a similar model for advocacy, the advocacy practice and policy model (APPM). Exhibit 4.1 on page 67 depicts the theoretical foundations of the APPM:

- Systems theory: Although much of social work involves practice with individuals and families, advocacy takes place with systems of all sizes—including groups, organizations, communities, and societies—as both clients and targets for change. A community could be the client for case advocacy, where a social worker advocates for a particular community seeking funding for a new social work agency. An example of cause advocacy is when a social worker partners with organizations to change a county or state policy or law restricting their ability to provide needed services (e.g., family planning and contraception education).
- Empowerment theory: Both case and cause advocacy involve social workers' building relationships with clients of various system sizes to participate in and impact decisionmaking processes. Empowerment-based case advocacy promotes the voice, perception, and ability of clients to influence a particular issue of importance to the client. Similarly, empowerment-based cause advocacy emphasizes the perspectives and abilities of clients to advance issues affecting them as well as others.
- Strengths perspective: In advocacy, it is important that social workers give appropriate attention to both the problems confronting client issues and the various strengths available to create needed change. Whether case or cause advocacy, clients of all sizes (e.g., individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and societies) bring to the advocacy process a variety of strengths, including resources, abilities, important relationships, knowledge, skills, insight, perspective, energy, and passion. For example, you may think that economically poor clients have limited strengths to advocate for change; yet their voices, knowledge, and perspectives are unique, and the very emotion and passion they bring to any situation can be especially convincing, powerful, and impactful in advocacy.

In-Home Services for Older Adults

Joan is a social worker employed by her county's council on aging in a special extended stay program (ESP).

Her primary responsibilities are to identify services and programs to allow seniors to reside in their homes. Several years ago, county officials and local social service leaders listened to the voices of older adults and decided to find ways for them to maintain their independence. A new county property tax levy allows Joan and her colleagues to fund in-home services for low-income clients, services such as "life lines" (medical alert systems), personal care, housekeeping, medical transportation, adult day care,



home-delivered meals, and assistance with bill paying. Through an effective educational campaign, taxpayers learned that it is more economical to provide services for low-income older adults in their homes than to rely on residential care (assisted living, nursing homes) and emergency hospital services.

Joan advocates for seniors to address their needs and rights for care. She visits senior centers and forums to promote and explain the importance and virtues of the ESP. She works with provider agencies to ensure quality of care. At election time, Joan has used her personal time to hang posters in the community and at polling sites to promote funding for the ESP.

The vast majority of Joan's professional career has been dedicated to working with older adults. Providing support to older adults for independent living is her passion. Ask yourself, do you have a passion for a population group or problem area? Would you be willing to devote time, even if it involved your personal time, to political advocacy and action to promote your passion?

• Ecological perspective: When advocating for change, assessment of the total environment, not just people and social systems, is vital. Physical and natural resources such as technology, buildings, transportation, water, soil, air, plants, and animals can be assets as well as challenges for case and cause advocacy. For example, consider the value of phone and Internet access for both case and cause advocacy. The poor are especially challenged in advocating for themselves and others without technological means (e.g., public access to the Internet and e-mail and to low-cost public transportation) to network and communicate with others to create change.

Several other features of generalist social work education and practice also are key to the APPM. The model assumes that advocacy activities, whether for client access to services or promotion of policies and programs, are conducted in an ethical manner. The APPM supports ethical behavior in assessing problems and strengths, planning strategies for change, and addressing dilemmas.

Social workers are also assumed to be critical thinkers with the ability to communicate effectively through oral and written means. In other words, social workers engaged in advocacy must be able to integrate multiple sources of information into a clear and coherent action plan. Furthermore, that action plan must reflect the interest of clients and connect individual needs to systematic change.

Recognizing the effect of diversity and culture in shaping life conditions is a particularly critical element in the APPM. Specifically, social workers engaged in advocacy must recognize their own values and biases and not let them influence their work. The APPM advances human rights by underscoring the need for social workers to understand various forms of oppression and discrimination, including their own prejudices.

As in generalist practice, the APPM uses concepts and insights from the person-in-environment approach to design research methodologies and program evaluations. The findings from the research inform practice and policy initiatives. This research also ensures that clients and the broader society will be exposed to scientifically tested intervention strategies throughout the change process.

SOCIAL WORK IN ACTION

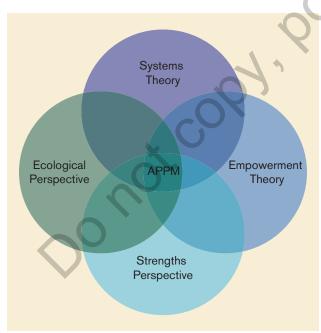
Competing Values and Goals in Advocacy

THOMAS is a social worker with an adoption agency. Today's court appearance is to advocate for the adoption of Jimmy, a 2-year-old boy, by Jill, a 30-year-old lesbian foster care mother. Jill has raised and cared for Jimmy for more than a year and lives in a discreet, committed relationship with her female partner.

Jimmy's birth mother is a crack addict, and her whereabouts have not been known for well over a year. In the past, this adoption judge has shown reluctance to approve adoptions without a biological parent's written consent and for gay or lesbian parents. Thomas's assessment and adoption study clearly indicate that Jill will be an excellent mother and that it is in the best interest of Jimmy (the client) for his adoption by Jill to be approved.

Although Thomas believes in the rights and merits of gays and lesbians' adopting children, in this example of case advocacy, his focus is on Jimmy's best interests, not on promoting or advocating for gay and lesbian adoption. Thomas is prepared to present the judge with all relevant information that will support Jill as an adoptive parent and, if necessary, debunk myths associated with gay and lesbian adoption. However, for Jimmy's interest and welfare, Thomas does not see this court appearance as an opportunity for larger-scale advocacy to advance (beyond Jimmy's adoption decision) the judge's views about gay and lesbian adoption. Indeed, Thomas has determined that dwelling on the sexual orientation of the adoptive mother in this instance would be inappropriate and potentially jeopardize Jimmy's adoption.

EXHIBIT 4.1 Theoretical Framework for the Advocacy Practice and Policy Model



THE CYCLE OF ADVOCACY

The change process for generalist practice, introduced in Chapter 3, can readily be adapted to guide social work advocacy and link practice goals and outcomes. Exhibit 4.2 illustrates the five steps in the intervention process in terms of the APPM. As in

generalist practice, intervention is a dynamic process. The exhibit highlights the importance of considering both problems and strengths, and the encompassing nature of people and systems involved in advocacy—individuals (the micro level), families and groups (the mezzo level), and organizations, communities, and societies (the macro level).

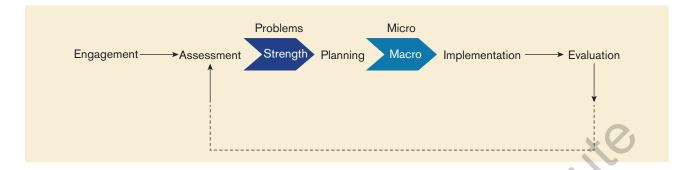
The feedback loop (in Exhibit 4.2, the dotted line that links evaluation and assessment) is very important in advocacy as in generalist practice. The greater the number of people collaborating in the change process, the more likely that adjustment and compromise will be necessary (Brydon, 2010).

In many ways, the cycle of advocacy describes a framework for guiding behaviors conducted by clients or collaborators in conjunction with a social worker. The success of the planned action is judged by the answers to such questions as, "Did the strategies work?" "Have life conditions improved?" and "Did systematic changes occur?"

One social work researcher and educator (Brydon, 2010, p. 129) suggests that practitioners follow these guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of the advocacy cycle:

- Begin collaboration. Think about the *big picture* and what might be different.
- Use your management and program planning skills to implement change. Ensure that there are review and evaluation criteria.
- Reflect on theory and practice. Apply critical and reflective approaches to review your practice experience.

EXHIBIT 4.2 The Intervention Process and the Advocacy Practice and Policy Model



- Collect and analyze evidence. Use your micro skills and research skills to gather evidence.
- Begin advocacy. Use your engagement skills to begin to persuade decision makers.

Nancy, in her advocacy regarding the licensure of social workers, followed most of Brydon's suggestions. She began by collecting relevant information and collaborating with key stakeholders. Both activities are labor-intensive. She became especially aware that building relationships with key stakeholders can be a challenge. In Nancy's state, politicians and decision makers are aware of their power and often guarded about forming new relationships or being courted by people aligned with special interest groups. Indeed, many legislators employ a chief of staff who serves as an official gatekeeper and controls contact with them. Nancy was aware of these challenges, however, and spent extra time figuring out how to link her cause to the legislators' interests.

Although many social workers enter the profession to help others, producing and consuming research are integral functions in contemporary social work practice and advocacy efforts. Do you possess an interest and aptitude for research and statistics, or the willingness to produce and adopt research in practice?

THE ADVOCACY MODEL IN ACTION

Ask your family members, friends, and acquaintances about their perceptions of social workers and social work activities. They are likely to affirm that social workers are problem solvers, helpers for people trying to address daily needs, therapists, caseworkers, group workers, community organizers, and advocates for change to better people's lives and promote and advance human rights. Even relatively uninformed members of the general public will acknowledge that social workers are professionals willing to stand up and advocate with and for oppressed and disadvantaged groups.

It is far less clear to most people, including many helping professionals, how advocacy is integrated into social work practice. In this book, advocacy is broadly defined as actions taken to defend or represent others to advance a cause that will promote social justice (Hoefer, 2012, p. 3). More specifically, social workers promote fairness, secure needed resources, and empower people (especially members of disadvantaged groups) to take an active role in decision making. Some of the specific advocacy activities that social workers pursue in everyday practice, as well as in their efforts to advance policy development, are captured in Exhibit 4.3.

Although this list of advocacy activities looks straightforward, it is important to realize that conflicting goals and values often complicate advocacy. Social workers live and work in their own social worlds, which are frequently distinct from the social and economic realities of their clients. To support client self-determination, social workers must often ignore their own interpretations of the environment and commit to advocating for change based on the hopes, ambitions, desires, and interests of their clients. The social worker (or the agency) and the client may have "competing and sometimes contradictory values" (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2011, p. 20). When the values of clients conflict with professional values and ethics, social workers typically seek guidance from supervisors, professional ethics panels, and legal staff.

Keep in mind that advocacy typically occurs with clients and not simply for them. Although there are exceptions to this premise (e.g., mentally challenged clients and very young children), social workers make a special effort to ensure that client selfdetermination and the will of the client remain at the forefront of all forms of intervention, including advocacy. A social worker whose activities to advance the interests and rights of a client or population group have become misaligned with the desire and will of clients often ends up in a lonely place.

EXHIBIT 4.3 Advocacy Activities in Social Work



- · Supporting clients in court and in front of appeal committees
- Promoting human rights and dignity in everyday life
- Educating clients to advocate on their own behalf
- Working to change policies, practices, and personnel in an organization (including one's own social service agency)
- Making organizations accountable for the welfare of people being served
- Improving service delivery systems
- Creating new functions within organizations and communities so they can better address human needs
- Educating people about important social issues
- Conducting research to document the needs and the plight of disadvantaged population groups
- Campaigning for a new law or for politicians who support socially beneficial legislative initiatives
- · Advancing projects and programs in communities and nationally
- Combating discrimination and oppression
- · Educating communities to advocate on their own behalf

Hoefer (2012) suggests that advocacy takes place through education, negotiation, and persuasion. Common techniques used by social workers to influence others concerning client causes include documentation of issues, provision of expert testimony, letter writing, use of social media, telephoning, promotion of voter registration, face-to-face lobbying (e.g., individually and at hearings), economic and social support of politicians, becoming an elected official, and involvement in political parties and functions. As with much of social work practice, strong interpersonal skills are vital. Social workers need to be able to listen to others, form relationships, capture thoughts, and communicate in clear, concise, and convincing ways via written word and oral presentation. Advocacy often involves calculated decisions as to whom should be contacted, how, when, where, and for what purpose(s).

TENETS OF ADVOCACY PRACTICE AND POLICY MODEL

One of the signature themes of this book is the special place advocacy holds within social work practice. In each of the chapters that follow, you will find a section that examines a particular practice population, need, or setting in terms of four basic philosophical principles, or tenets, that many social workers embrace. The diagram in Exhibit 4.4 depicts the **dynamic advocacy model**, a way of conceptualizing advocacy, and its four interlocking tenets—economic and social justice, a

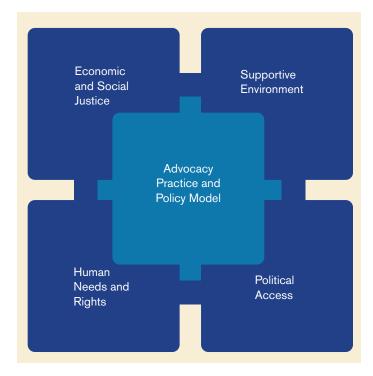
supportive environment, human needs and rights, and political access—to ensure ethical and effective practice. We say that these tenets are dynamic because they tend to shift constantly; we say that they are interlocking because it is hard to draw clear boundaries between, for instance, political access and economic and social justice.

We have identified tenets of advocacy that social workers often routinely use as a score sheet for their endeavors on behalf of a case or a cause. For instance, "Does my work promote economic and social justice? Does it promote a supportive environment, human rights and basic needs, political access?" There are other tenets that can motivate and guide advocacy, but this model helps aspiring social workers understand some of the most important elements associated with advocacy and policy practice.

It is important to point out that the four tenets identified in our dynamic advocacy model are not purely distinctive or independent. Instead, in social work practice with real people and situations, these tenets have considerable overlap with and influence on one another. For example, one's political perspective and involvement influence the definition of and thinking about economic and social justice. And environmental factors and context impact the conceptualization of economic and social justice in a specific time and place. The intent of the dynamic advocacy model presented throughout this book is to prompt critical and multidimensional thought and discussion about advocacy in social work practice.

EXHIBIT 4.4

Dynamic, Interlocking Tenets of Advocacy Practice and Policy Model



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is a core value of social work, as expressed in the Code of Ethics of the NASW (2018):

These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people. ("Ethical Principles")

In the APPM, the tenet of economic and social justice is closely related to the NASW definition of social justice. It involves "promoting and establishing equal liberties, rights, duties, and opportunities in the social institutions (economy, polity, family religion, education, etc.) of a society for all [people]" (Long et al., 2006, p. 208). Justice includes relational justice, which is people's ability to exert influence over decision-making processes and in relationships with dominant groups. Economic justice is captured in the concept of distributive justice, which is the ability to allocate or spread resources, income, and wealth in a manner that ensures people's basic material needs are met.

When social workers advocate for social change with clients, these activities should be justice centered. However, what does "justice centered" really mean for advocacy practice? Because there are a multitude of issues associated with economic and social

justice, this is often a challenging question for practitioners. We can say that just practice involves equality, tolerance, and the promotion of human rights, as well as an active attempt to overcome social and economic inequalities (Finn & Jacobson, 2008).

Social work scholars have proposed a number of schemes for determining the degree to which advocacy is justice oriented. One of them (Hoefer, 2012, p. 80) emphasizes these four key aspects of social justice: respect for basic human rights, promotion of social responsibility, commitment to individual freedom, and support for self-determination. Scoring systems have also been devised for monitoring advocacy practice based on the type of justice being pursued (economic justice, distributive justice, relational justice, and so on), the strategy employed, or the underlying principles (Reisch, 2002, p. 350). Whichever scoring system is used, the point is that professional social workers need a way to determine whether advocacy has lived up to the tenets they espouse. The social and economic checklist might include the following:

- Am I sensitive to my client's right to think and act independently?
- Am I supporting equality of opportunity for my client?
- Am I encouraging my client's meaningful participation in decision making?
- Am I helping my client unearth opportunities for economic and social justice?
- Am I helping my client secure needed resources?
- Am I ensuring that all parties' rights are being respected?
- Am I advancing thought about the need for social responsibility?

Let's return to Nancy's advocacy for improving the licensure law in her state. Her motivation is firmly rooted in the tenet of economic and social justice and her desire to promote just practice. Many of her clients have received inferior services and experienced limited opportunities. She is dedicated to people's receiving effective, high-quality services from professional social workers who have earned appropriate degrees and credentials. Nancy also believes the meaningful participation of clients in decision making about the implementation of programs and services can best be accomplished by properly educated and trained social workers. Clients deserve and have a right to receive as high a quality of service as possible.

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The term *environment* is abstract, expansive, and loosely defined; yet the concept pervades social work theory and practice. Dominant theoretical approaches for intervention include the ecological perspective and the person-in-environment perspective (see Chapter 3). The underlying idea is that social work involves not just a client but a client system—all the people and social systems surrounding that client (e.g., significant others, friends,

CURRENT TRENDS

Natural Disasters

SEVERE natural and weather-related circumstances-floods, tornados, earthquakes, wildfires, hurricanes, typhoons, blizzards—are often catastrophic environmental phenomena. People who are affected need immediate emergency services, water, food, shelter, clothing, medical assistance, and mental health services. Organizations such as the American Red Cross and World Food Programme provide aid to communities devastated by these crises. Many social workers receive advanced training for responding to crises and implementing crisis intervention services.

Identify a recent natural or weather-related catastrophe that concerned you, and identify the organizations, professionals, and

other people who responded to the needs of the people affected by this natural disaster. As an example, with Hurricane Sandy-a powerful storm that hit the northeast coast and New Jersey and New York shorelines in 2012-social workers partnered with the Red Cross and numerous crisis relief agencies to address the basic needs of people affected and to provide counseling. Social workers also advocated for the immediate availability and implementation of state and federal relief services and funds.

Note, advocating for resources to assist victims of natural and weather-related trauma is a year-round activity. Is this an area of interest for you in social work practice?

families, groups, churches, companies, associations, organizations, communities, societies), as well as natural and tangible resources (e.g., funds, land, buildings, time, computers, goods, water, food, housing, clothing). A thorough assessment and holistic awareness of the environment is essential for contemplating and enacting change.

For social workers engaged in advocacy and policy practice, an environmental perspective leads to the premise that clients need a supportive environment. Any key part of a client's environment that is not supportive needs to be considered. Social workers must be in tune with the social and physical conditions, human relationships, and interaction patterns involved in any aspect of social work practice, including advocacy. Ask yourself:

- Has a determination been made in collaboration with the client about which elements of the environment are currently supportive and which are detrimental or not as supportive as possible?
- Are existing resources available to advocate successfully?
- Is collaboration occurring to generate ideas for solutions and to make reasonable and effective choices about courses of action?
- Am I examining with the client ways to work with people and organizations to create a more supportive environment?

Nancy is encouraged that her social work colleagues, the state NASW chapter, a handful of elected state officials, and a couple of consumer groups want to pursue licensure reform for social workers in her state. However, she is cautious about and sensitive to the timing of a legislative initiative. She is undertaking this advocacy effort during a period of restricted funding for social services. Nancy sees social workers and clients who are overwhelmed by day-to-day operations and struggling to provide effective services in their agencies. Additionally, fiscally and socially conservative politicians are reluctant to advance legislation that would contribute to additional spending, or the expansion of regulatory bodies and the state bureaucracy. She and her colleagues must

TIME TO THINK 4.5

Social workers are often thought of as people willing to do good for others, which often means that others expect them to be willing to do good 24/7/365. Professional social workers must learn to maintain boundaries for relationships with clients and use of personal time. Contemplate your use of time, especially in relationship to potentially laborintensive activities such as advocacy. Are you able to effectively set boundaries between personal and work time? For example, do you currently text message or e-mail family and friends during class time or at work? During personal time, are you tethered to work, answering workrelated text messages and e-mails at all hours? If you were passionate about a cause, as Nancy is about licensure for social workers, would you be texting and e-mailing people all the time? What are the possible consequences of these kinds of behaviors?

formulate a strategy for not only strengthening ties with allies but also approaching the skeptics and persuading them to change their minds. She knows how important creating a supportive environment will be for the success of her initiative.

HUMAN NEEDS AND RIGHTS

Human history is full of instances in which well-intentioned people (often white men) from dominant classes established programs and services for people they determined to be in need. People in positions of power and policymakers often decide who has needs, what is needed, and how programs and services should be implemented and evaluated. These top-down decision-making processes yield disconnects between how clients view their own needs and what others believe they deserve.

In contrast, the perception and reality of human need from the client's point of view is the primary concern of social workers. Need is to be framed in the spirit of what the person in need requires, not what others believe that person deserves or should receive. Social workers contemplating human need would ask these questions:

- Who is defining the need and for whose benefit?
- What are the consequences for the client of such a definition of need?
- Are consumers of services being included or consulted when defining what is needed?

As important as it is to address the immediate human needs of clients in social work practice, doing so can often overshadow the relevance and importance of human rights and liberties (Murdach, 2011). It may appear that social work's dual obligations to address human needs and advance human rights are consistent and complementary, but in practice advancing human rights can too easily become secondary to the quest to address the immediate needs of clients.

Basic human rights can be thought of in a number of realms, such as personal, civil, and political rights. Generally, however, humans should be able to live free of persecution, discrimination, and oppression, and have access to important societal resources, which often include work, education, health care, and equality before the law. For many people and professions around the globe, an important source for defining and advancing human rights is the United Nations and the UN Human Rights Council, which disseminates up-to-date information and news about basic human rights. From a social work practice perspective, a key to promoting basic human rights is the ability for people to have meaningful participation in decision-making processes, which typically includes freedom of thought and expression.

The integration of human rights into the activities of social work practice has not been easy, especially in the United States (Witkin, 1998). In an individualistic and capitalistic society such as the United States, the general public and social workers tend to conceptualize human pain and suffering as the result of the individual's psychological makeup and choices in life rather than as the result of an unjust society (Witkin, 1998). Nancy, this chapter's featured social worker, believes that clients are people deserving of dignity. Clients have the right to receive high-quality services from competent and effective helping professionals. Advocating for the licensure of social workers in her state is one way of promoting professional services that recognize and support client respect, understanding, self-determination, and rights.

POLITICAL ACCESS

The crass reality of macro-level decision making in much of the contemporary United States is that relatively few people have sufficient power to dictate policies, laws, and administrative orders. This situation exists in city, county, state, and federal governments as well as many private organizations and entities. Unfortunately, the primary interest of politicians (and CEOs and board members, in the case of private organizations) may not be what is best for the general welfare or for your clients. Instead, self-preservation, public perception and opinion, and reelectability (especially for politicians) or profitability (for CEOs) are often powerful concerns.

Politicians are elected because of their ability to acquire support and funding from others; CEOs are typically chosen because of their ability to focus on profits. Especially in the case of politics, being a candidate generally requires a considerable amount of funding and support from "heavy hitters" willing to donate appreciable money and time to the campaign. Of course, politicians are inclined to lend their ear and afford influence to major contributors. Politicians often feel beholden to longtime friends, loyal allies, dedicated supporters, and leaders of special interest groups and political action committees who have worked on their behalf. Often, key decision makers and policymakers meet with their allies and contributors to discuss "what ought to be" prior to asking for general input and taking a formal vote or action during a public forum or meeting—a practice sometimes referred to as "the meeting before the meeting." In such circumstances, newcomers and people outside of a politician's inner circle find it difficult to exert influence and sometimes even to provide information. Exhibit 4.5 describes the basic process for creating federal legislation. Consider where and how in this legislative process U.S. Senators and Members of the House Representatives are influenced by "heavy hitters" and financial supporters.

Chapter 4

As a student considering the profession of social work, you might be asking yourself, "So what can I do to effect political change? Wouldn't it be a better use of my time to focus just on helping clients access existing services?" But consider that not becoming politically involved or active—through apathy, ignorance, or cynicism—can also be viewed as a political act. Effective social workers identify ways to become politically involved and develop political access for their clients as a means for "creating a dialogue and solution that view societal and structural inequities as the fault needing the fixing, not the people" (Haynes & Mickelson, 2006, p. 4).

Mary Richmond, one of the founders of social work, was impatient with "do-gooders" who gave little thought to the causes of their clients' troubles (Haynes & Mickelson, 2006, p. 5). Today, social workers are enjoined to care for their clients while advocating for clients' access to, and influence within, the political process. A scorecard for this kind of intervention might ask the following:

- Am I assisting clients to understand the bigger, fuller context of their problems?
- Am I facilitating the collaboration of others who have similar challenges or who work to overcome these kinds of challenges?
- Am I assisting clients with communicating their predicaments to politicians and policymakers?
- Am I enabling politicians and policymakers to look beyond these clients' situation to assess the structural and systemic issues contributing to the creation of private troubles?

To accomplish their goal of instituting a licensure requirement for social workers in their state, Nancy and her colleagues need to influence key political decision makers. Nancy has already completed a considerable amount of research to identify state legislators aligned with policies that are consistent with a new and improved licensure law for social workers. The voting patterns for state legislators are very clear and consistent. Proponents and supporters of social legislation aimed at protecting and advancing rights and opportunities for consumers of social services and programs come from progressive urban areas. Opponents of social legislation are elected in affluent, conservative, suburban and rural areas and frequently vote against government intervention.

Personally, Nancy has been considering the actions she is willing to take to achieve her goals. She is prepared to give expert testimony before legislative bodies or committees interested in examining the licensure issue. She is brushing up on the skills she needs to lobby legislators, being especially attentive to innovative forms of communication involving new technology and media. To learn more about the use of technology for lobbying, she plans to enroll in two new continuing education workshops examining the effectiveness of social media. Nancy has begun to assess the political action groups and special interest committees that might be good allies in the licensure cause. She has also considered running for the state legislature herself, or encouraging or supporting someone with similar views to do so. She knows that her willingness to participate in the political process is necessary.

EXHIBIT 4.5 A Basic Overview as to How Federal Legislative Bills Become Laws

- 1. Laws are initiated by people with ideas about needed change. These thoughts become formalized by constructing and writing a bill for consideration by U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives for sponsorship of a bill.
- 2. Representatives or senators meet in small groups to discuss, collect research, and make changes to the bill. Congressional members will typically make an initial determination on whether to advance the bill prior to moving it to a subcommittee for further research or directly to the House or Senate floor for debate.
- 3. Members of the House or Senate debate the bill and offer changes or amendments. The bill can originate in either the House or Senate chamber. If either chamber approves the bill, it moves to the other chamber and experiences a similar process of committee consideration, debate, and voting
- 4. Both the House and Senate must agree on the same version of the final bill before it is sent to the president of the United States. Agreement on House and Senate versions of the bill is often relegated to a joint subcommittee.
- 5. If the president signs the bill, it becomes law. The president can also veto the bill. Or, the president can take no action.
- 6. If the president vetoes the bill, it requires a 2/3 vote of those present in both the House and Senate to become law and "override" the presidential veto. If the president takes no action and Congress is in session, after 10 days of no answer from the president, the bill becomes law.

SUMMARY

The next time you hear someone suggest that social work sounds like an easy major, explain that the actions of social workers significantly impact lives and that the professional accreditation requirements by the Council on Social Work Education are high. Social work students are required to demonstrate their ability to perform specific practice behaviors, among them advocating for their clients and for communities. Social workers do not just match their clients with available resources; they actively attempt to change "the way things are" to improve their clients' lives and communities.

Advocacy requires value orientation, ethics, knowledge, skill, and passion. This chapter provides only a sprinkling of what is expected of social work students in terms of advocacy. As a beginning, however, the advocacy practice and policy model and the dynamic advocacy model derived from it provide conceptual orientations for entertaining the value and effectiveness of a social worker's advocacy efforts on a client's behalf. In the following chapters, these models are adapted to guide social workers through advocacy activities in relationship to particular social welfare issues. Regardless of the issue, advocacy should be collaborative, client centered, and ethical, and should act to help people in need.

TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

absolute needs advocacy basic human rights case advocacy cause advocacy

cost of advocacy dynamic advocacy model economic and social justice relative needs social action

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Identify the causes for which you feel particular passion (e.g., feminism, gay rights, gun rights, benefits for veterans, racial discrimination). Why do these causes seem particularly relevant to you? Consider your geographical location, current social conditions, and aspects of your own identity.
- 2. Is it possible to separate personal from professional values in practice, especially when engaged in advocacy? Identify a couple of personal values that would challenge your ability to advocate for a client population.
- 3. Can you hold conservative political views and be an effective social worker? How about an extreme or radical perspective?
- 4. Does the current "safety net" of services in the United States address the absolute needs of people in our society? If not, which groups of people are falling through the safety net? To what degree are people's relative needs being met?
- 5. Should everyone holding the title of social worker be professionally educated in a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education? Should government agencies and social welfare organizations reimburse only licensed professionals (e.g., social workers, counselors, psychologists, nurses) for services?
- Would you ever consider running for a political office or becoming a volunteer for a political party? How might your sentiment affect your ability to be an effective social worker and advocate for causes?
- 7. On the website for your school, closely examine the research requirements for a BSW or MSW degree. Is this coursework congruent with your passion for helping others?

EXERCISES

- 1. Consider attending a rally or some form of public advocacy event. Can you identify the objectives and desired outcomes of the gathering? Are social workers involved in the demonstration? How do you explain their presence or absence?
- 2. Contemplate attending a political fund-raiser or rally for a candidate. Be attentive to the seating arrangements and interaction patterns of participants. Is there an "inner circle" of confidants surrounding the politician? How are those in attendance given opportunities to ask questions or enter meaningful dialogue with the candidate?
- 3. Many schools offer a legislative day in the state capitol. Sessions allow students to listen to legislators and their legislative
- aides describe how the business of state government and the legislative branch takes place. Attend and ask questions about effective ways to become involved in political processes. How challenging do you think it would be to get involved? What seems to be the secret to accessing decision makers and policymakers?
- Select a human service organization in which to serve as a volunteer. Observe social workers at the agency and inquire about their typical workday and workweek. What kinds of activities do they perform? Use the chart in Exhibit 4.6 to record information about their time spent in activities such as advocacy and policy practice. Ask them directly, if necessary. In summary, how much of their work is related to advocacy?

75

5. Attend a service learning immersion class, such as an "urban plunge" or trip abroad, that will expose you to people who have serious unmet absolute needs. As an alternative, talk with

someone who has already had this type of experience. How does it challenge your thinking about the need to advocate for human needs and rights?

EXHIBIT 4.6 Time and Advocacy Activities of a Social Worker

| Ask a Social Worker the Following Questions | Collect This Data |
|---|---|
| In a typical workweek, how many hours on average do you spend engaged in advocating for clients and causes? | Average number of hours per week |
| What are some of the more common advocacy activities included in your job? | List the advocacy activities. |
| Do your advocacy activities take place during your paid or personal time? | Check the appropriate response: ——Paid ——Personal ——Both |
| What is your employer's level of commitment to advocacy? | Check the appropriate response: Just right Not enough Too much |
| On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being lowest and 10 being highest), rank how important it is to you and your satisfaction as a social worker to be able to engage in advocacy activities during work time. | Provide a score of 1 to 10. |

ONLINE RESOURCES

- The Advocate, a national gay and lesbian magazine (www.advocate.com): Exemplifies the use of technology to promote awareness and advocate for rights
- Council on Social Work Education (www.cswe.org/ Accreditation): Provides background about social work accreditation and links describing the criteria and expectations for the accreditation of educational programs in its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, including the competencies and practice behaviors required in social work curricula
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy): Promotes social justice and advocates for ideals and values aligned with faith
- National Association of Social Workers (www.naswdc.org/ advocacy/default.asp): Recommends ways to become involved in advocacy as a social worker
- Political Action for Candidate Election (www.naswdc.org/ pace/default.asp): Provides information about social work participation in political processes and recommends action to elect candidates

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