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UNIT 1

SOCIAL CASE WORK, MEANING, PURPOSE, COMPONENTS, PRINCIPLES

Core course-CC5- Social case work
1.Learning Outcome
2.Introduction
3.Social case work Meaning, Purpose, Components and Principles
4.Summary

1. Learning Outcome

After completing this unit student will be able to

- Understand Meaning of Social case work
- Define social case work
- Understand various component and principles of social case work

2.Introduction:

Social case work, a primary method of social work, is concerned with the adjustment and development of the individual towards more satisfying human relations. Better family life, improved schools, better housing, more hospitals and medical care facilities, protected economic conditions and better relations between religious groups help the individual in his adjustment and development.

But his/her adjustment and development depend on the use of these resources by him/her. Sometimes due to certain factors internal or external, he/she fails to avail existing facilities. In such situation, social case work helps the individual. Social case work as a method of social work has emerged from the time of industrialization and its concomitant urbanization. It is the offspring of charity organization societies movement which was introduced in late 1870s

3. Social case work Meaning, purpose, Components, Principles

3.1 Meaning:

Social case work is art of bringing about better adjustment in the social relationship of individual men or women or children.

Social case work means that process which develops personality through adjustment, consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment.

Social Case Work is concerned with enhancing an individual's capacity for appropriate adjustment to attain more satisfying human relationships. It is a primary method of social work that involves a process of one-to-one relationship that helps the individual in effecting better adjustment in his/her family and social milieu.

As every person is unique, he/she develops a specific pattern of behavior in his/her socio-economic cultural dimensions. Hence, the problems of one individual differ from those of another. Social Case Work is seen as a

humanistic attempt to help persons who have difficulties in coping with the problems of daily living.

Conceptual Understanding of Social Case Work

A definition of social case work is not easily grasped until one has a picture of social work as a whole. The following definitions give an insight into the meaning of Social Case Work practice.

Definitions of Social Case Work

Social Case Work is not only a tool but also an area of work that consists of processes that help to develop personality of individuals through meaningful adjustment between themselves as well as their social environment.

□ The main function of Social Case Work is to enable an individual in solving a problem through self-efforts. The role of Case Worker is to provide adequate support and guidance.

□ *“Social Case Work is a process used by certain social welfare agencies to help individuals to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning”.* Perlman, 1954

3.2 Purpose

One group of social case work thinker believes that purpose of social case work is to help individual to make adjustment with their social environment. The other group believes that the purpose of social case work is to give solution to social and physical problems as a process of treatment and third group expects the purpose of social case work in the form of giving solution to the problems to personality and behavior.

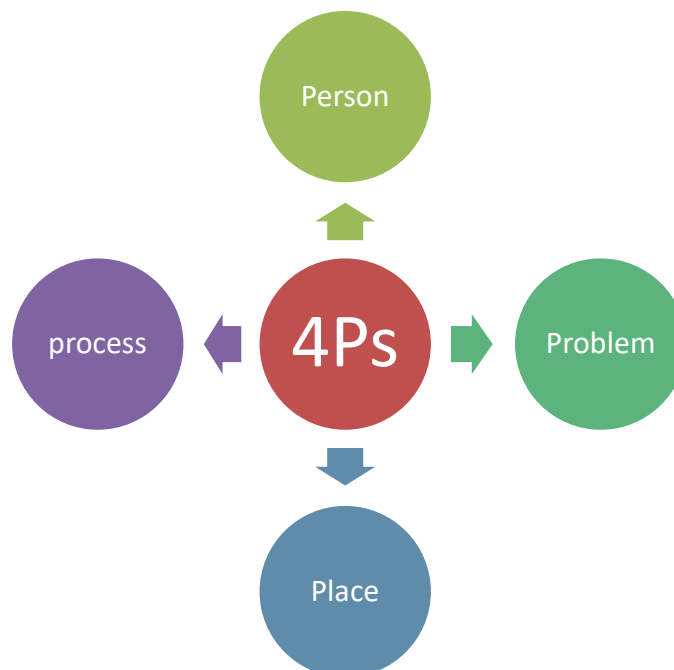
The main purposes of case work are listed below:

- a) To establish a rapport with the person who needs guidance and support
- b) To assess the problems that hinders the growth of the person and to enable the individual to resolve the immediate problem
- c) To strengthen the individual's ego in terms of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-direction and build up his/her capacity

- d) To eliminate maladaptive behaviour and prevent family or social breakdown
- e) To develop the resources for self-enhancement and empowerment
- f) To restore the individual's social functioning through appropriate adjustment mechanisms
- g) To plan the prevention of the occurrence of similar problems through environment modification
- h) To create opportunities for self-development and increase in social contribution

3.3 Component:

The components of social case work emerged from the work of Helen Perlman, who incorporates them in her definition of case work and portrays them as active elements in her problem-solving model of case work practice: a person weighed down by a problem seeks help for it from a place (either a social agency or some social institution) and is offered such help by a professional social worker who uses a process which simultaneously engages and enhances the persons own problem-solving resources. They are also known as the 4 Ps of social case work:



3.3.1 Person

Person is an individual who has tried all methods to resolve the problem but has found no respite, and finally has come to the case worker for some direction. The person has exhausted all his resources and is determined to seek professional help. This person, called the client, comes with certain expectations from the case worker/ agency.

Characteristic of persons:

- The behaviour of an individual has an inherent and explicit meaning- it may be to gain satisfaction, to prevent frustration or to maintain balance-in-movement. Whether behaviours promote well-being depends largely on the functioning of the personality of the individual
- The client's personality is partially genetically inherited and partially shaped up because of the interaction with the environment. Every client is a product of nature and nurture.
- Clients are in a process of being in the present and becoming in the future.
- Clients are always under stress during the process- being a client itself is a stress. (S. Rengasamy, Social Case Work, Pg. 20) To understand human behavior and individual differences, Grace Mathew (1992) gives the following propositions:
 - An individual's behaviour is conditioned by his/her environment and his/her experiences. Behaviour includes thoughts, feelings, reactions etc. The conditions and influences surrounding the person constitute the environment.
 - For human growth and development it is important that certain basic needs should be met (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).
 - Emotional needs are genuine and they cannot be met or removed through intellectual reasoning.
 - Behaviour of any individual is purposeful and is in response to the individual's physical and emotional needs.

- Other people's behaviour can be understood only in terms of one's own emotional and intellectual comprehension.

3.3.2 Problem

Problems include those factors that affect the person's social functioning. Problems are multifaceted and can be at various levels such as: -individual problems -group problems -community problems

Problems can be categorized as internal psychological and external social problems. Problems have a chain reaction. The core problem initiates a chain reaction:

For Example: failure in exams ◇ poor self-confidence ◇ loss of status ◇ relationship problem ◇ inability to get job.....etc.

Being a client itself is a problem. Problems are an outcome of the cause-effect process. That is, a problem can be a result of an unfavorable situation (cause-failure in exams) and the result is an unfavorable situation (effect- poor self-confidence). The client may not be aware of the core of the problem. The client may experience the problem for the first time or might have experienced it earlier. The problem can be of various natures- adjustment, stress, frustration, lack of resources, and additional member in the family or ill health

3.3.3 Place

It is an agency/organisation that renders professional help/service to the client. It is a place where an umbrella of care is available to the client. The agency develops programs to cater to the needs of the client /community. A social agency is an organisation which expresses the will of the society. The agency has an administrative structure, which fulfills the task of providing professional help. The agency should be flexible enough to reach out to the client. The community should be aware of the agency's existence and functioning.

3.3.4 Process

It is defined as the procedural path adopted to find a solution to the client's problem situation. Study, Assessment, Intervention, Termination and Evaluation are the main phases of the social case work process. They are the threads of the process that will continue to be inter-woven throughout the social case work process. Though these steps may be perceived in order, they are actually not

performed in sequence. Eminent authors on social case work like Gordon Hamilton and Skidmore have pointed out that these steps are woven in and out, one process paralleling another. Though a temporary or tentative assessment of the person and his/her problem is made in the beginning with a planned intervention strategy, still the case worker draws inferences and continues to study and understand the client better. Intervention and treatment begins with the first contact - the study process itself is treatment - as it helps the client to clarify the problem for himself, and to make changes in his life situation resulting from this understanding. Assessment is on persons and not on problems and while trying to understand the nature of the problem, we try to understand what sort of person has the problem. Thus, understanding is a continuous process. As long as assessment continues, the phases of study, intervention, termination and evaluation continue to recur. The phases may overlap and may proceed simultaneously. However there would be an emphasis on one phase at a time.

3.4 Social Case Work Principles

There is a set of commitments emerging from the philosophical assumptions and the idea of individualized help. These include maintaining confidentiality of persons who come with their problems, accepting them as they are, dealing with them in a non-condemning attitude, having a controlled emotional involvement, respecting each person's potential for self-determination, and ability to identify and network with resources. Though these concepts originally developed from the values of social work, they got further shaped by the experience and expertise of case workers with the result that they subsequently became case work principles or rules of action.

3.4.1. Principle of individualization

The principle of individualization is the ability on the part of the case worker to perceive the individual client as a unique person beyond comparison. Every individual is unique in their own way; even twins are not alike. The ways in which individuals react to problems are also of varied nature. Therefore the need to understand every person in his/her own way is of prime importance in working with individuals. The case worker should focus on the uniqueness of the client rather than disparity. This principle argues that individuals should not be discriminated on any basis. The case worker's approach should be fresh towards each new person, respecting the worth and dignity of the client.

3.4.2. Purposeful expression of feelings

The principle of purposeful expression of feelings recognizes the needs of the individuals to express their feelings. Persons may express positive emotions (laugh, smile) or negative emotions (anger, tears, silence) during their interactions with the case worker. The expressions of these feelings/ emotions are channels through which the individual articulates his/her problems. No expressed emotion is meaningless and therefore an understanding that there is a purpose for expressing such feelings is important. The case worker should understand the emotions of the individual client and stimulate him/her to express these freely.

3.4.3. Controlled emotional involvement

The principle of controlled emotional involvement implies the case worker's ability to maintain emotional sensitivity and balance towards the individual client and the problem. It is impossible to work with persons without being sensitive and understanding. However, too much of an involvement leads to inappropriate reactions that cloud effective practice. The case worker should listen to the individual client's words and pay attention to his/ her feelings. He/ she should not only understand the meaning and purpose of expression of feelings and to respond to the client appropriately, but also be conscious of not being carried away by the client's emotions.

3.4.4. Acceptance

The principle of acceptance is an attitude of the case worker, wherein he/ she respect the dignity of the person who is also known as client. The case worker deals with the client as he/she is, including his/her strengths and weaknesses, his/her positive and negative feelings. In case work setting, the worker approaches the client with a genuinely warm interest and accepts him/her as a person, who is in trouble. Acceptance is the opposite of denial or refusal. The caseworker looks at the client not as a problematic person but as a person with problem. He/she has an open mind to listen to what the person says about him/her and others with undivided interest, and understand the person and the relevant forces behind his/her behavior in his/her particular context. The purpose of acceptance is therapeutic in nature and acceptance improves the dignity of the client. It builds the relationship between the client and the case worker. Acceptance is expressed through warmth, courtesy, interest and compassion for the client and it is the internal disposition of the case worker. It

is a two way approach of acceptance between the person and the social caseworker and characterized by a positive professional relationship.

Worker----- Acceptance-----client

3.4.5. Non-judgmental attitude

Being judgmental is the worst form of humiliating a person. Judgment is always associated with punishment, rightness or wrongness. Non-judgmental attitude is the outlook on the part of the case worker that does not label a person and box a person. There might be failures and weakness in the client, the worker has no right to judge them. When you do not judge a person, the tendency to accept the person increases and it improves the quality of relationship between the case worker and the client. It excludes assigning guilt or innocence or degree of client's responsibility for causation of the problems or needs. It also avoids making judgments both in thoughts and feelings about the attitude, standards, or actions of the client.

3.4.6. Self-determination

The concept of self-determination means the practical determination of the client and his/her need for freedom in making his/her own choice and decision in the case work process. The principle of self determination believes that every human being has a right to his/her existence and therefore the client must actively participate in the case work process. The concept of democratic view holds that individuals are born free and the client should also be free to choose his/her options. This principle emphasizes on helping the client to make more informal choices. The case worker has a corresponding duty to recognize the need, stimulate the client to see and use the appropriate resources of the community and of his/her own personality.

3.4.7. Confidentiality

The literary meaning of the word „confidentiality“ is “keeping secret”. It is an ethical norm in many professional practices. In social work practice it is one of the most important and ethical principles. This principle underlines the worker's obligation not to disclose to anyone confidential information given by the client but to preserve it within him/her. This confidentiality is the client's basic right. In the process of casework that is characterized by a professional relationship, the person who shares his/her inner most feelings should be protected.

Hence it's the utmost duty of the social caseworker to practice the principle of confidentiality. This practice increases competence of the worker as a trust worthy person. The principle of confidentiality holds that information regarding the client has to be preserved and maintained by the case worker with due respect. The case worker should not disclose the details about the client to anybody else who is not related to the agency. The client entrusts the case worker with his past and present, and confidentiality is a basic right of the client. It is also the ethical obligation of the case worker. Maintaining confidentiality is necessary for effective case work practice. However when situations demand breach of information for reasons directed towards the welfare of the client served, caseworkers can share information pertaining to the client. This is known as „shared confidentiality“ in the best interest of the client and others. The decision to share the information for this purpose lies with the discretion of the case worker.

3.4.8. Developing and utilizing resources

This principle of developing and utilizing resources is based on the premise that services are not charity but entitlements of the client. The principle explains the ability on the part of the case worker to explore the internal resources (ego strengths) and the external resources (family, friends, community) and make it available to the client to solve his/her problems. The client may not be aware of the availability of these resources; the case worker should provide information regarding them and should enable the client to utilize the resources effectively.

3.4.9 Principle of communication

In the context of social casework, communication means interaction between the worker and the client. It is not necessary that both should agree on every issue that they discuss but each can understand what the other person means, if they really communicate with each other.

Communication takes place in two ways in the process of an interaction:

1. Through words- relating in words or discussion
2. Through feelings and expressions in non-verbal manner

The social workers should be capable of co-relating the words and the expressions of the client to know the real situation of the client. In the early phase of the process of intervention, the person speaks out the difficulties in

his/her current situation. The conditions associated with the problem of the person may not be as clearly explained as perceived by him/her. Hence the caseworker needs to understand not only what the person says verbally but also non-verbally through his/her body language. The worker must come across as a receptive person, an empathetic and non-blaming listener before he/she begins his/her session with the person who needs help in coping with his/her problem. It is to be kept in mind that the worker has to work within the framework of the agency and so no unnecessary promises should be made.

4. Summary

- Gives brief meaning of social case work
- Components of social case works are known as 4Ps
- Brief outlines on the principles are also highlighted in this module. These principles of case work provide an effective way of achieving the goals of case work and develop its practice as human nature is bound to change with time.

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