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QUESTION

With reference to the functions of social work, in what ways can social workers help solve social problems in your society.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of social work

The NASW (1973) defines social work as "The professional activity of helping individuals, families, groups or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning or creating societal conditions favourable to that goal.(quizlet.com)

Social work is a practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Social work is an academic discipline and profession that concerns itself with individuals, families, groups and communities in an effort to enhance social functioning and overall well-being. It is a systematic way of heling individuals and groups toward better adaption to society. The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Social work intervenes at the point where people interact with their environments, with the use of theories of human behaviour and social systems. (naswassurance.org)

Social workers help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives, they help with a wide range of situations such as adopting or being diagnosed with a terminal illness. They may work with children, people with disabilities and people with serious illnesses and addictions. Their work varies based on the type of client they are working with. Some examples of social workers are:

1. Child and family social workers:

 They protect vulnerable children and help families in need of assistance. They intervene when children are in danger of neglect or abuse. Some help arrange adoptions, locate foster families or work to get families back together. Clinical social workers provide mental health care to help children and families cope with changes in their lives such as divorce or other family problems

1. Clinical social workers:

They diagnose and treat mental, behavioural and emotional disorders including anxiety and depression. They provide individual, group, family, and couples therapy. They can develop treatment plans with the client, doctors’ and other healthcare professionals and may adjust the treatment plan if necessary based on their clients progress. Many clinical social workers work in private practice and some work in group practice with other social workers or mental health proffessionals.

1. School social workers:

They work with teachers, parents and school administrators to develop plans and strategies to improve students academic performance and social development. Students and their parents are often referred to social workers to deal with problems such as aggressive behaviour, bullying or frequent absences from school.

1. Healthcare social workers:

They help patients understand their diagnosis and make the necessary adjustments to their life style, housing, or healthcare. For example, a healthcare social worker may help patients make the transition from hospitals back to their homes and communities. Social workers help doctors and other healthcare professionals understand the effects that diseases and illnesses have on patients’ mental and emotional health.

Some healthcare social workers specialize in geriatric social work, hospice and palliative care, or medical social work.

1. Mental health and substance abuse social workers:

They help clients with mental illnesses or addictions. They provide information on services, such as support groups, to help clients cope with their illness. Many clinical social workers function in these roles as well.

FUNCTIONS OF A SOCIAL WORKER

Nigeria suffers from many social problems like poverty, unemployment, unequal opportunity, racism, malnutrition, substandard housing, employment discrimination, child abuse, substance abuse and high crime rate. These are the functions of social workers and how they will help to solve Nigeria’s social problems.

1. **Help Children**

There are social workers whose job it is to protect and help children. Sometimes, social workers help children find good foster homes. Social workers can also help remove children from destructive homes for example, where they are facing issues like child abuse, a social worker will pull out such child and place the child in another home where they can be cared for, through adoption or foster care. Social workers also evaluate foster parents to try to ensure that children are truly in a better environment.

Social workers don’t just help children in difficult family situations, though. They are also responsible for helping children overcome bullying, as well as deal with shyness, and work on strategies for improving concentration in school.

1. Help Parents

Child and family social workers don’t just help children; they can also help parents. Sometimes, parents just need help with their parenting styles, or with finding strategies to deal with difficult children. Some social workers are trained to help with better parenting. This can include the development of emotional skills, as well as more physical skills, such as diapering, providing proper nutrition and other items of care. This allows the parents to better take care of their children, a family that takes good care of their children produces good well trained children who can add to the work force positively. If such parents do not get help from the social workers, they might end up abusing the child in trying to train them or ignoring the child which will only promote deviant behaviour.

1. Help Teachers and School Administrators

Social workers also help in the education sector. Sometimes, it can be difficult to handle disruptive students, or know how to serve students with learning disabilities. Social workers can help teachers and administrators learn techniques and strategies to better understand and work with certain students. This not only helps teachers and administrators, but it also helps the students as well. Once teachers and administrators, with help from social workers, learn how to better serve their students, things can move more smoothly.

1. Help the Elderly and their Caregivers

Social workers also provide support to the elderly. A social worker can provide references to different organizations and services, as well as help senior citizens navigate Medicare. Additionally, social workers can provide emotional support to caregivers. Many caregivers occasionally need relief and help, and social workers can help ease the burdens, as well as point caregivers to resources that can help them get the support they need.

Social workers can also visit the elderly, and make sure that they aren’t being abused, and evaluate their living conditions. This includes nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.

1. Teach Life Skills

Another function of some professional social workers is to teach life skills. Social workers teach nutrition information as well as budgeting. They can also help teach household management skills, and provide references for career services. Many social workers are able to help impart skills and knowledge to clients who need help. Whether they are teenagers, immigrants new to the country, victims of car accidents or head injury, or those with learning disabilities.

1. Talk Therapy

Sometimes, social workers can help with clinical functions. Indeed, social workers are often involved in talk therapy. This can be a way for those who are disturbed by upset feelings, or who have been through a traumatic experience, work through their worries. Social workers are often trained to listen and provide help. Those suffering from anxiety, depression and anger issues can sometimes benefit from talk therapy with a social worker. Social workers can also facilitate group therapy sessions, and provide support for those going through a difficult time.

1. Provide Referrals and Access to Community Resources

There are usually plenty of referrals and community resources that can help you, no matter what you are going through. Whether you are going through a divorce, fleeing an abusive relationship, or just trying to find a job, social workers can provide you with referrals for community resources. Social workers are plugged in to different options, and may even have relationships with various professionals in the community. Additionally, there might be some community resources that you can’t get access to without a referral from a social worker. Meeting with a social worker can help you get access to what you need.

1. Substance Abuse Counselling

In some cases, a social worker can help with substance abuse counselling. One of the functions of a social worker is to help those with addictions work through them. There are different techniques that can be used by social workers to help control addictions — or just provide support. Also, social workers can counsel with the family members of those with substance abuse problems, and help them resolve some of their own problems and issues. Social workers can also help family and friends learn to provide support to those working through addictions, providing a support system as need.

1. Research and Starting Programs

Some social workers are involved in research. They look for information about people in the community as well as look for patterns in data about different populations. They may also research different conditions, and strive to learn more about the newest techniques for counselling and helping people. Other social workers may put that research to use, starting programs meant to help different populations, and be of benefit to the community. After school programs, education programs and other social benefit programs may be started and overseen by social workers.

1. Community Education

A social worker might also be involved in community education. In fact, many of them are involved in such efforts. Community education efforts might include visiting schools to speak at assemblies about the dangers of substance abuse, or how to stand up to bullies. Social workers might also be involved at health clinics, providing educational services and resources to patients as part of treatment. They can be part of community outreach programs, as well as take the lead in a number of other education efforts in schools, community centres, business centres and other organizations. (mastersinsocialwork.com)

1. End homelessness:

Homelessness can negatively impact individuals’ health in multiple ways and the effects can last. By developing new service innovations and technologies and creating new policies to ensure affordable housing, the rate of homeless individuals can drop significantly

1. Stop family violence:

This violence is not only harmful toward affected individual but also costs billions in spending for criminal justice. Social, family focused interventions can help individuals Identify abuse early and prevent it from happening in the future.

 SOME CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Job Description

Social workers conduct intake interviews with individuals and families to identify their needs and strengths for resolving issues of concern. Often social workers collaborate with doctors, schools, law enforcement and social service agencies to intervene in high-risk situations. When a problem is ongoing, social workers develop a case management plan that outlines goals and lists resources available to the client. Keeping up-to-date case management notes is very important for tracking and evaluating clients’ progress. The job of a social worker is challenging due to the competing demands of the position. Typically, social workers manage a heavy caseload, which means keeping up with dozens of emails, phone calls and appointments.

Social workers must be prepared to handle tough issues. For example, clients may have few resources to escape poverty, gang life or an abusive home environment. A social worker may need to drop everything to handle an emergency, such as investigating a report of child endangerment. Clients may resist the idea of treatment even if substance abuse is ruining their life. Social workers benefit from leading a balanced life that includes eating healthy, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep to avoid fatigue and professional burn-out.( work.chron.com)

1. Cooperation:

In the social work business, social works are able to transfer people in bad conditions to better ones. In the case of a third world country like Nigeria, social worker do their best to make better conditions for their victims, but might not be able to do very much. For example a trafficked individual is saved and given a tailors shop to work in a make money to provide basic amenities for themselves, such person can feel that where they were when they were being trafficked is better than where they are now and so they go back to where they can be trafficked again. This can also be a problem of illiteracy and their inability to know what is truly better for themselves.

1. Funding:

Social work institutions are not well funded in Nigeria. This results in them not being able to do very much for their victim. Although they have the intention of doing mire their hands are tied back by their shortage of funds.

The government should make social work one of their priorities because they can help with the present case of the society

CONCLUSION

Social workers will be able to impact the Nigerian society largely. Social workers can help in the sector of child abuse, malnourishment and malnutrition social workers can uproot the affected children and adult and place them in better institutions where they can be well taken care of, for example: in the case that a child is being abused, a social worker can take the child to a better foster home while working of the Childs parents. Other cases like prostitution, substance abuse and trafficked people in Nigeria can also be handled by the social worker, they are tasked with taking such people of the road and saving them from their traffickers and giving them a better means of making money, for example, a trafficked individual is saved from their traffickers, the social worker can help them to get on their feet like getting them a minor business which they can gain money from. This business will be funded by the social work organisation for a period of time till the individual is able to fund it themselves. This action alone can alleviate poverty, the case of unemployment, malnutrition and the possibility of substance abuse as a result of depression, in Nigerians.

In Nigeria today, employment of more social worker can be a bold step in the right direction, and a beginning to a greater Nigeria.

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