

INTRODUCTION TO DIRECT PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK

When you do “it” right, Social Work is a feeling that is larger than your own life.
—Ogden W. Rogers, *Beginnings, Middles, & Ends: Sideways Stories on the Art & Soul of Social Work* (2013, p. 18)

DIRECT SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Direct practice social work is an approach for helping others that emphasizes a strengths perspective and focuses on person to person contact with individuals, groups, or families (Saleebey, 1996, 2011). The primary goal of direct practice social work is to provide assistance to vulnerable populations within our society. Social workers help individuals, families, and groups navigate through life challenges and overcome the barriers with which they are confronted. These barriers can come from social and environmental impediments. The goal of direct social work practice is to augment clients’ strengths while reducing barriers in order to foster personal growth and progress throughout the life span (Walsh, 2013).

Direct practice social work is founded on a fundamental belief in the dignity of all individuals and the assumption that they can improve their lives with the support of qualified helping professionals. Direct practice social work operates in the context of the person-in-environment perspective and seeks to affect change at the micro level. However, direct practice social workers also interface with other professionals and environmental systems at the mezzo and macro levels, such as school systems, as well as local, state, and national governmental agencies. As such, social work practitioners also acknowledge an ecological/systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An overarching consideration for direct practice social workers in working with vulnerable populations is the desire for a socially just and equitable society (Walsh, 2013).

Direct practice social work employs culturally appropriate and ethical interventions that are inclusive, nonjudgmental, and that honor the uniqueness of each individual and her cultural and social background. Lum (1999) coined the term “culturally competent practice” to denote the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to effectively work with culturally diverse clients. Direct practice social workers are aware of their own cultural identity and strive to acquire the knowledge that encompasses an ever-evolving understanding

of the multicultural world in which we live. Culturally competent practice embodies the skills necessary to fully appreciate the impact of culture on a client's life experiences (Lum, 1999). There are many validated tools for determining cultural competence in practitioners. Such tools can help to evaluate strengths and opportunities for growth. One example, *Social Work Cultural Competencies Self-Assessment Pretest* (SWCCSA; Lum, 2003), is a 40-item, 4-point Likert instrument that is designed to measure self-awareness, knowledge acquisition, and skill development with excellent overall pretest scores (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) indicating excellent measure for each of the subscales' intended phenomena (Humphreys, 2011; Lum, 2011). Practitioners are encouraged to use this scale as a pre- and posttest tool to measure cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills acquisition.

Direct practice social workers are required to be licensed by the state in which they reside and are regulated by a state board. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has established standards and guidelines for conducting the services that direct practice social workers provide. These standards are intended to be benchmarks for social work interventions and represent best practices in the field. In addition, the NASW *Code of Ethics* outlines the core values that exemplify how professional social workers should conduct their behavior. Understanding these core values and the application of ethical decision making can help students prepare for confronting ethical issues and dilemmas that may occur during social work practice. This challenge is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. These principles of the profession hold social workers accountable for their work, thus safeguarding consumers from unscrupulous practitioners (NASW, n.d.-b). The NASW core values are as follows:

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

(NASW, n.d.-a).

ROLES OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

While some social workers may specialize in one area of social work, such as clinical psychotherapy, other social workers may wear many different hats. These professional roles are defined by the services that the social worker is qualified to extend to her clients (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen, 2010).

Advocate



Social workers take action on behalf of others, especially for those persons who are less able to advocate for themselves. Advocacy can be conducted at the micro, mezzo, or macro level of social work. It may be speaking

out for a particular client or it may be taking action for an entire group or community.

Carlos is a social worker at the San Rios Native American Post-Release Program. He works with clients who have recently been released from prison and are enrolled in a job skills program. He contacts potential employers, describes the job skills program, and explains the reasons that employers would benefit from hiring his clients. Clients sign up with potential employers who have agreed to interview Carlos's clients for positions. Carlos also advocates for clients with the governmental housing program and develops a collaborative agreement with the housing authorities to provide low cost housing for clients who have successfully completed the job skills program.

Broker



Social workers link clients to other necessary services. In some cases, the social worker may simply give a client referrals to agencies such as those that provide food stamps, medical services, or day care. In other cases, social workers may find community resources and directly link the client to another professional at a particular agency.

Manuela is a social worker for the Buenos Dias Foundation, a nonprofit agency located next door to the Catholic Church in a largely Hispanic neighborhood. The foundation provides information and referrals to the Hispanic community and has programs for residents new to the area. After conducting an initial needs assessment, Manuela provides resources and referrals to clients regarding housing, food vouchers, school, and medical referrals. If a client needs immediate assistance, Manuela often calls the appropriate agency and sets up an appointment for her client. She interfaces with professionals at other agencies to obtain the resources that her clients need. She may work with one individual or whole families depending on the services they require.

Case Manager



Social workers are placed in positions in which they are in charge of the overall management of client cases. Clients may require a number of services that social workers coordinate toward the ultimate goal of problem resolution.

Colleen is a social worker at Houston Kidney Dialysis Center. The center provides kidney dialysis treatment to approximately 100 patients who come to the center two or three times a week. She assists patients with all the psychosocial aspects of their care so that they can obtain maximum benefit from their medical treatment. Colleen obtains vouchers for taxi service to and from the facility. She helps clients follow their rigorous dietary regimes by explaining helpful behavioral methods of maintaining their diets. Colleen obtains housing information for clients who are having difficulty paying their rent. She refers clients to psychotherapists who can assist them with the psychological issues often experienced by dialysis patients such as anxiety and depression. Colleen connects her clients with other dialysis facilities if they go on vacation or have to travel to another state for their job. She also works with other family members so that they can provide appropriate care to their loved one who is receiving treatment.

Counselor



Social workers provide psychoeducational and emotional support through the use of clinical methods and skills.

Jason is a social worker with the New Hope Program located at the Jewish Community Center. He recently provided counseling to Luke, a 49-year-old parent of two teenage children who lost his wife in a serious car accident. His grief was accentuated by his need to cope with the grief of his children and knowing how to approach them as a single father. Jason supported him through the grief process and provided Luke with parenting tips that could ease the pain that his children were experiencing.

Educator



Social workers educate clients, groups, and communities on a wide variety of topics of importance.

Mark works with individuals with chronic mental illness. His client, Jodi, has difficulty taking her medication correctly and on a consistent basis. Mark teaches Jodi what each medication is for, when to take it, and how to take it. He teaches her how to sort her pills for the entire week and put them in pill storage containers so that she can access them easily. Mark also teaches her how to set alarms on her phone so that she will be reminded to take her medication and do her weekly sorting.

Ami is a social worker at a substance abuse treatment center. She conducts classes with the family members of the clients. Ami teaches them about the causes of addiction, the role and practice of self-care, family systems, the role of the enabler, as well as how to plan for the client's discharge from the facility.

Jackie works at a domestic violence shelter and gives presentations to school staff and administration on bullying and teaches them methods for preventing and intervening with bullying in schools.

Supporter



Social workers are often in supportive roles in which they assist clients, groups, and communities by empowering and motivating them to move toward their goals. In this role, social workers may not actually be doing the work themselves but assist others in carrying out their work thereby providing a "shoulder to lean on" when necessary.

Maple Springs is a low-income community and home to 13-year-old Devon. Devon's mother is a single mom who works three jobs to support herself, Devon, and his 14-year-old sister. Devon first met Joe at the Maple Springs Community Recreation Center where Joe works as a social worker. Devon has spent lots of time playing basketball with Joe and has developed a relationship with him. Devon talks to Joe about school and the pressure he is feeling to join a gang. Joe provides Devon with emotional support and convinces him to join the free Karate club that the rec center sponsors. Joe also helps Devon and his sister obtain free school supplies, coats in the winter, and other resources as needed.

Facilitator



Social workers organize and implement a variety of interventions on behalf of clients at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Juanita is a social worker at the Hands of Hope Cancer Care Center. She arranges transportation for patients to get to and from their treatment appointments. She also helps them apply for Medicaid and other programs that provide financial assistance with medications, food, and housing. Juanita facilitates a support group for patients who are battling cancer and for caregivers of loved ones with cancer. She also helps local businesses organize teams for the Relay for Life fundraiser, which raises money for cancer research and treatment.

Program Coordinator



Social workers take positions as program coordinators in agencies where there may be many programs and departments under the umbrella of one agency.

Ruben works with teenagers who will soon age out of the foster care system by coordinating the program that provides life skills training. He makes arrangements for classes to be held on cooking, money management, basic car maintenance, job training, and health education. This involves finding space to hold the classes, scheduling the classes, hiring the teachers, and approving the curriculum. He also facilitates outreach about the program to other social service providers and potential students and arranges assistance with transportation to facilitate student attendance. He monitors the budget for this program and collects data on numbers of teenagers served and the impact of the interventions. Such information is used to improve the quality of services delivered, increase program efficiency, and obtain or secure additional funding.

Outreach Worker



Social workers may provide assistance to clients in their own communities by working in the clients' environment rather than at their home agencies.

Andrea works for Lifting Up New Families, an organization that provides support to pregnant and postpartum women and their families. The perinatal nurse at the local hospital told Andrea about Liza who recently gave birth to a premature baby. Andrea visited Liza in the hospital and learned that she has two other young children and a husband who works three jobs to support the family. Andrea assessed Liza's needs and the needs of her children. She informed her of the ways Lifting Up New Families could assist her and provided information about other resources. While visiting the hospital, Andrea met a new nurse and gave her information about the agency. She also informed the hospital social worker about the additional services the agency added for children under 4 years of age with developmental delays. When Liza went home from the hospital, Andrea made home visits to provide continued support, education, and resource linkage (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011).

DIRECT PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK SETTINGS

Direct practice social workers are employed in a variety of settings. They may be the primary service providers or they may function as part of an interdisciplinary team with other service providers.

Medical settings, such as hospitals, hospices, and nursing homes, frequently use social workers to provide services to individuals while at the facility and to help prepare them for a seamless discharge back to their homes or other residential facilities. In such settings, social workers work alongside doctors, nurses, personal care attendants, and volunteers.

Some school districts employ social workers and place them on campus to provide students, families, and staff with counseling, crisis intervention services, and connections with resources. School social workers may also provide education to students, parents, and staff on issues such as social skills, teen dating violence, and/or grief.

Social workers may be present in law enforcement settings. They may be employed by local police departments to provide assistance to crime victims. They may also work with incarcerated individuals by providing mental health services and assistance as they prepare for release.

It is common to find direct practice social workers in nonprofit agencies such as safe houses for battered persons, rape crisis centers, substance addiction treatment centers, and service centers that help individuals with disabilities. Social workers can also be found in public service agencies such as child and adult protective services and governmental welfare offices.

Corporations hire social workers as counselors and executive trainers. For example, occupational social workers can be found working for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), helping to assist employees who are facing a crisis, major life change (e.g., domestic violence or military deployment), mental health, or substance abuse issues. Social workers in the corporate setting may also coach employees on working together productively and navigating changes in the work environment.

Social workers are also found in military barracks, adoption agencies, and homeless shelters. Their salaries may come from private donations, faith-based organizations, public funds, or a combination of all of these funding sources. Regardless of the setting, it is common for social workers to perform a variety of roles within their places of employment.

QUALITIES OF A PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKER

One of the most important tools used by social workers as they assist others to improve their lives is their use of self. Though social workers use numerous skills and interventions to foster clients' movement toward their goals, these skills are effective only when there is an underpinning of professionalism and integrity. The professional relationship between the social worker and the client has the potential to make a major impact on clients' lives; therefore, the qualities of a professional social worker are of paramount importance.

In the context of direct practice social work, professionalism refers to the values, conduct, and qualities that distinguish social workers from lay helpers and instill credibility and confidence among those they serve. Integrity refers to an adherence to values and ethical behaviors based on a sound moral code.

Integrity, when combined with professionalism, establishes the cornerstone on which additional knowledge and skills can be useful and effective. Without this fundamental foundation, even the most highly proven skills and interventions will fall short of their potential to positively impact clients and could even serve as a hindrance to clients' abilities to achieve their goals. Thus, a closer look at professionalism and integrity in the context of direct practice social work is worthy of further attention.

Key qualities of a professional social worker include the following:

- Reliability and dependability
- Strong work ethic
- Ability to work effectively alone and with others
- Ability to effectively prioritize a multitude of tasks
- Ability to communicate appropriately and effectively to many different kinds of people
- Flexibility to adapt to changes
- Working knowledge of diverse cultural groups and the history of oppressed and marginalized populations
- Adherence to the Social Work Code of Ethics

Social workers who embody the integrity of the profession have the following personal qualities:

- Caring and compassionate approach
- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Open to learning about new viewpoints and perspectives
- Ability to feel and express empathy
- Sensitive to and respectful of cultural differences
- Self-awareness and insight
- Strong appreciation for social justice
- Maturity
- Genuine belief in the values identified in the Social Work Code of Ethics

Beginning social workers should be deliberate about developing these qualities and incorporating them into their professional identity. Doing so effectively anchors the relationship that social workers develop with those they serve and increases the likelihood that positive outcomes will result for clients (NASW, n.d.-b).

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN SOCIAL WORK

Practicing in culturally sensitive ways is critical to professional social work practice. Social workers need to develop self-awareness and a knowledge base of cultural differences across diverse cultures. Also, practitioners must cultivate cross-cultural competence and skills in order to make culturally appropriate responses/referrals. Moreover, competent practice is best achieved when professional and personal values are congruent. Core values include

strengths-based awareness of diverse groups and cultures as well as gaps in services and an understanding of how oppression affects different cultural groups, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds (NASW, 2015). Greater detail on the importance and significance of self-awareness is provided in Chapter 10.

CASE SCENARIOS



CASE 1.1

Bridges to Hope Homeless Shelter is located in a large metropolitan area and provides a variety of services to homeless adults and children. These services include overnight shelter, access to showers, hot meals, coordination with mental health services, referrals for substance use treatment, access to literacy programs, prevention and testing for chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, and spiritual programs. They also collaborate with other agencies in the area that provide complimentary services.

Mark Robbins works at Bridges to Hope as a case manager. He has a caseload of approximately 40 clients at any given time. He works from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. and sees clients when they arrive in the evening for a hot meal and bed for the night. As Mark is chatting with some of the clients waiting to be seen by their caseworker, he notices an African American male whom he has not seen before. Mark approaches him and introduces himself.

As he extends his hand, Mark smiles and says, "Hi. I'm Mark."

The man looks to the side as he slowly shakes Mark's hand and says, "Hey."

"I don't think we've met before," Mark says. "What's your name?"

"I'm Andy," the man says.

"Nice to meet you, Andy!" Mark says with genuine enthusiasm. "Is this your first time here?"

"Hmm, mmm," Andy mumbles.

"I'm a caseworker here. Would you like to come with me so I can tell you about the services we offer?" Mark invites.

"Well, I don't want to miss dinner," Andy says.

"Oh, of course not!" Mark states understandingly. "I'll be sure to have you back when they start serving dinner."

Andy looks a bit skeptical but agrees. "OK," and sighs in resignation.

"Great. Why don't we go over here to my desk?" Mark says. As they walk to Mark's desk, Mark asks, "When was the last time you ate?"

"Been a while," Andy says in a muffled voice. "Can't remember the last time."

"Well, I'm glad you came in," Mark says supportively. "We'll make sure you get plenty to eat tonight, but they don't start serving for an hour."

Andy seems to visibly relax and says, "What's your name again?"

With a kind expression in his eyes, Mark smiles and says, "It's Mark and I'm here to help you in any way I can."

"OK," Andy says.

"Maybe you can tell me a little bit about your situation?" Mark asks.

Andy leans back in the chair and puts his hand to his forehead covering his eyes and says, "I lost my job. My wife left me. My kids won't have anything to do with me. I'm just trying to survive, man."

Mark notices the crack in Andy's voice and empathically responds, "Oh, that sounds really tough."

With gentle encouragement from Mark, Andy continues to tell Mark about himself. He says he quit school in eighth grade and started working. He has worked in a variety of places, mostly restaurants, and has had difficulty keeping a job. Andy says he has been homeless for the last 5 months and doesn't know where to turn. As Andy talks, it becomes clear that his time on the streets has taken a big toll on his health and outlook on life. Mark listens to Andy, makes eye contact, nods to indicate he is listening and appropriately responds with small "hms" to communicate that he understands how hard this has been for him.

In the middle of their conversation, Steve, another caseworker, rushes over and interrupts to ask Mark about his plans after work. "I'll talk to you about it later," Mark says to Steve. "I'm with someone right now."

Turning back to Andy, Mark says, "Sorry about that, Andy. You were telling me about your last job..."

Andy continues telling Mark about how he lost his last job because his boss just didn't understand why he needed time off. "It was all just piling up. I needed time off."

"That must have felt pretty discouraging," Mark says.

"Yes. Very discouraging." Andy shakes his head and looks at the ground. "Very discouraging."

After a short pause, Mark asks, "How did you find out about Bridges to Hope?"

Their conversation continues and Andy begins to visibly relax. He begins asking questions about the services as Mark offers more details about the agency and his role as a caseworker. Mark slips in a joke about the local football team to which Andy laughs and jokes back.

Mark says, "There's more I want to tell you about the agency, Andy, but it's almost time to line up for dinner and I know you don't want to miss that. Would you like to talk more after you eat?"

Andy replies, "Yea, sure. It sounds like you might be able to help me."

"Great!" Mark explains to Andy where to line up for dinner and how to find him when he is done eating. Mark shakes Andy's hand as he says, "I'm really glad you came in today, Andy, and I'm looking forward to seeing how we can work together to get you in a better place."

"OK, sounds good," Andy says. "See you after dinner."

After dinner, Mark and Andy meet again. Mark explains how the shelter works for taking showers and securing a place to sleep. "I went ahead and put you on the list so you can stay here tonight. Is that OK?"

Andy nods, "Yes, that'd be great."

"Just so you know, even if your name is on the list, you have to be in the shelter by 9 p.m. or you lose your spot. Rarely do we have enough beds for everyone who wants them so you'll want to be sure you make that deadline."

Andy nods in understanding.

Mark also tells Andy about the churches in the area that serve breakfast. "I'm also thinking you might want to check out the jobs program at Goodwill..." Mark explains the job services that Goodwill provides and writes down the name of Claudia Green, one of the social workers in the jobs program. "You can just show

up if you want, but it's better if you make an appointment. They are closed right now, but if you want, you can use our phones here to call them in the morning."

"Um, ok." Andy seems interested but also a little hesitant.

"Claudia is a really nice lady," Mark assures him. "I think you'll like her. She's helped a lot of people here. You can tell her I gave you her name."

As Mark and Andy continue talking, Andy becomes teary eyed as he describes how discouraged he has felt. Mark empathizes with Andy's feelings. He praises Andy for getting help ("I know that can be a hard thing to do"), expresses his support and says he feels hopeful that things can get better for Andy. "Just don't try to do this alone, Andy. I know that you are pretty good at surviving. You've been doing that for a while now. Just remember that we're here to help." Andy nods. Mark tells him his office hours and says, "Why don't we check in again in a couple of days and see how things are going for you?"

"OK," Andy says. "Thank you. I appreciate your help."

- 1.1-1. Give three examples of professional behaviors on the part of the social worker.
- 1.1-2. Describe three ways the social worker displays integrity in his work with the client.
- 1.1-3. Identify the roles that the social worker performs with the client.



CASE 1.2

Steve also works as a case manager at the Bridges to Hope Homeless Shelter. He was at his desk checking his social media when his supervisor, Nina, approached him.

"Steve, we've got some new faces here tonight. I need you to connect with some of them and do their needs assessments," Nina says.

"Huh? OK," Steve sends one more post and takes his time getting up from his desk. As he walks toward where the clients are gathered, he thinks to himself, "I've already got a ton of cases! Why is she making me take on more? I bet Mark doesn't have as many people on his caseload as I do."

Steve hovers on the edge of where the clients are gathered, sizing them up in his mind before choosing one to approach. Before he makes a decision, a man who looks to be in his early 20s, approaches Steve, "Hey, do you work here?"

"Yea," Steve responds.

"Oh good! Can you help me? I just got into town from my uncle's house and I'm trying to get some help. I've never been here before and I don't know how it works."

"Follow me," Steve says in a monotone voice. As they walk to Steve's desk, the talkative young man tells Steve about his long and uncomfortable bus ride. He notices that the man has several large and colorful tattoos and a cell phone in

his front shirt pocket. After they sit down at his desk, Steve hands him a sheet of paper and says, "Here is the list of services we offer."

The man holds the paper close to his face as he tries to read it.

"Is there something wrong? Why are you holding that so close to your face?" Steve asks.

"Oh, my glasses broke the other night at the bus station," the man explains. "I'm pretty blind without them."

Steve sighs audibly. He then pulls out a stack of papers and asks, "What's your name?"

"Brandon," the man says. "Is that something you could help me with? The glasses?" Brandon asks.

Steve says nothing but points to a section of the paper Brandon is holding that gives information about medical services. "Just be sure you keep up with your stuff and are responsible for it. There are a lot of people who need help and the city just cut our budget by 25%. We can't afford to waste our resources."

Brandon nods silently.

Brandon asks more questions about the services the agency provides and Steve answers, but with little elaboration. In the middle of their conversation, Steve pulls out his phone to read and respond to a text message while Brandon continues talking. Steve had just given Brandon some paperwork to complete, when a voice over the loudspeaker announces that dinner is being served.

"Oh man, I am so hungry! Can I catch you later to get this done?" Brandon asks.

"Look, Brandon," Steve says. "If you want me to help you, I have to get this paperwork filled out. It's required as part of a grant we have."

Brandon glances toward the dining hall and back at the stack of papers in Steve's hand. He seems torn about what to do.

"You know, if you don't need our help," Steve adds, "that's fine, but you should have thought about that before you left your uncle's house. When you're on your own, it's not all fun and games. You have to learn to deal with some discomfort and take responsibility for yourself."

Brandon throws the papers in Steve's direction and stomps off cursing. Steve thinks to himself, "How does Nina expect me to help these people when they just take advantage of us like that! They just want everything handed to them. That guy had money, I could tell. He even had a place to stay but he threw that all away and now he wants me to take him in." Steve sighs in resignation, "Well, you can't save everyone."

- 1.2-1. Give three examples of unprofessional behaviors on the part of the social worker.
 - 1.2-2. Describe three ways the social worker displays a lack of integrity in his work with the client.
 - 1.2-3. Identify the roles that the social worker performs with the client. What other roles could the social worker have performed that would have benefited the client?
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CASE 1.3

Name: Ana Alvarez

Age: 8 years old

Occupation: Elementary second-grade student at Rolling Hills Elementary

Ethnicity: Hispanic

Melody is a social worker for Big Brothers/Big Sisters School Mentorship Program. She matches “Little Brothers/Sisters” with volunteers who assist the elementary school students at the school with their homework and provide guidance in social skills and good behavior. The volunteers may also tutor students for whom English is a second language in conversational skills. Melody also works with parents who have newly immigrated to the United States and are having transitional challenges that could impact their children. She met the Alvarez family at a local health fair where Big Brothers/Big Sisters had a booth and provided information about the program to health fair participants.

Melody calls Elena, a 21-year-old volunteer from the local university, to discuss a potential match for her.

“Hi Elena. It’s Melody from Big Brothers/Big Sisters. I was wondering if you’d be interested in working with an 8-year-old, second grader at Rolling Hills Elementary? Her family has just moved from El Salvador and Elena has been experiencing challenges with the transition to a new country and a new school. She knows some English but could use some help with homework assignments, making friends, and her English conversational skills. She’s a very bright and sweet child but a little on the shy side and could really use a Big Sister right now.”

Elena responds without hesitation, “Sure, it sounds like a potentially good match. I’d love to help out any way I can. What do I need to do?”

“Wonderful,” Melody exclaims. “I’ll set up a time at the school where you can meet her and see if you think it’s a good match. I’ve got her parents’ permission and I’ll fill you in on some of the details after I talk to the school liaison about the time and place for you all to meet.”

“Great!” Elena enthusiastically responds. “I’m so glad you called me. I think it’s just what I need right now since I’m not taking as many courses as usual this semester and have been a little bored.”

“Okay,” Melody confirms. “I’ll give you a call in the next day or two. Are their days and times that are best for you?”

“Let’s see,” Elena ponders for a moment. “Yes, I am in classes on Mondays and Wednesdays, so Tuesdays or Thursdays would be best.”

“Okay, I’ve got that down and will call you back soon. Thanks, Elena. You always make things easy for me.”

Melody then calls the Big Brothers/Big Sisters coordinator at Rolling Hills Elementary. “Hi, Eli,” Melody says. “I’ve got a potential match for Ana Alvarez. Her name is Elena Martinez and she’s a bilingual college student who has been a Big Sister for the past 3 years. We need to find a time when she can meet Ana for an introductory session.”

“Okay, let me check her schedule,” Eli responds. He pulls her file up on the computer and finds three times during the day that Ana and Elena could meet.

"Melody, Ana has lunch at 11 a.m. or they could meet in the library after school," Eli suggests. Melody schedules a lunchtime appointment the following Tuesday for Ana and Elena to meet, calls Elena back and puts the appointment on her schedule.

Next, Melody calls Mrs. Alvarez to inform her of the potential match for Ana. Mrs. Alvarez thanks her and explains that her husband is still looking for work and they need some help with food. Melody gives her the name of a local church that has a food pantry and emergency funds for new immigrants. She also provides her with the phone number and address for the local food bank. Finally, she tells Mrs. Alvarez about three restaurants that are hiring cooks and other staff that are located on the bus route near her brother's home where the Alvarez family is staying until they can find their own place to live.

The following Tuesday, Melody meets Elena and Ana at Rolling Hills Elementary at lunch time and facilitates the match. She introduces Ana and Elena and explains Elena's role to Ana. The three of them spend some time playing a game designed to help them get to know each other. Melody pays close attention to the interaction between Elena and Ana and determines that they will work well together. After the introductory session, Melody and Elena consult with Ana's teachers who provide her with some information about Ana's academic needs. Elena indicates to Melody that she is pleased with the match and feels that it will be helpful for Ana. Elena completes the paperwork committing her to the match for the school year. Melody also tells Elena that she is invited to participate in a volunteer support group specifically for volunteers who work with new immigrant children and their families. She explains that the group has helped volunteers better understand the obstacles these families face. Melody states she leads the group on Wednesday evenings once a month at the Big Brothers/Big Sisters offices. Melody thanks Elena on behalf of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, provides her with her professional card and tells her to call if she has any questions or needs assistance.

- 1.3-1. Identify the roles that the social worker performs within the agency.
- 1.3-2. Identify the roles that the social worker performs with the client and her family.
- 1.3-3. Identify the roles that the social worker performs with the volunteer.
- 1.3-4. Describe how the social worker conducts her work with integrity and professionalism.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

- 1.4 Divide into small groups and find a web-based video that you can share with the class of a person or family who would benefit from social work services. What roles would you perform in order to assist this individual or family?

- 1.5 Divide into groups with other students. Locate on the web the NASW Practice Standards and Guidelines for Case Management and Child Welfare. Discuss the roles of a case manager and child welfare worker. What are the similarities and differences in these roles? What are the professional qualities that a social worker would need to fulfill these roles?

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- 1.6 Choose a direct practice work setting and research the roles social workers perform in that particular setting. What roles can you identify and how do these functions assist the clients served?
- 1.7 Choose a role model in your life and describe the qualities this person possesses. How are they similar or dissimilar to the qualities of a professional social worker? In what ways would you like to emulate this person's strengths?
- 1.8 As a student in social work, how would you describe your best qualities as well as areas in which you would like to improve? How could these qualities be put to good use in your future work as a social worker?
- 1.9 Find a TedTalk that discusses the qualities exemplified by a professional social worker. Talk about your personal reactions to this talk.
- 1.10 Write a five-paragraph essay in which you identify your own cultural identity/ies and biases toward individuals from different cultures. Identify at least three concrete things you can do to work through these biases. How will doing so enhance your work as a social work practitioner?

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