

NEED AND INTERVENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The past 25 years have witnessed considerable developments in Public health in India. There are number of catalyzing forces behind the significant developments facilitating Public Health. National Health Policies and strategies for Health for All were formulated and implemented within the context of National Health and Socio-economic Development. For this vast number of health workers have been trained and developed. They have proven to be acceptable to the community and serving as a bridge between the community and health care programmes. The co-operation of human resources is required for health programmes and its utilization. Social workers play an important role in Community organization, awareness building and mobilization. They are actively engaged in examining social factors that contribute in promoting good health and control of diseases by giving social dimension of Health and well-being. They are making persistent efforts to understand health from social perspective in addressing health care and social development. Their works provide a comprehensive understanding of health issues from a social – cultural perspective.

This paper emphasizes the role, need and intervention of social Workers in building the bridges between communities and government agencies working in this direction. It analyses the contribution of Social Science, which provide a comprehensive understanding of health issues from socio-cultural perspective. Further, the study finds and suggests the ways to integrate social and culture aspects for efficient Public health care planning and development.

KEYWORDS: Social Workers, Public Health, Social Development, Intervention Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Social Work describes the roles and functions of social workers. According to Farley and Smith (2006:7), “social work is an art, a science, a profession that helps people to solve personal, group (especially family), and community problems and to attain satisfying personal, group, and community relationships through social work practice”. It is “a profession which promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being.

All nations need both social and economic resources to achieve national development. In this regard, social work can generally mediate the process of development through enabling individuals and the society to reach out for each other through a mutual need for self-fulfilment. social workers are mandated to mobilize and deliver a wide range of services to their clients. Social Workers are expected to assist in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the social functioning of individuals and the society; this responsibility entails the development, procurement and/or delivery of resources and services to meet the many and varied needs of their clients. In this sense, social work can be seen to be playing a major role in national development through empowerment of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people in many

countries, both developed and less developed.

The social workers are involved in the process of making referrals to link a family or person to needed resources do not simply provide information. They follow up to be sure the needed resources are attained. Currently, health care social workers provide services across the continuum of care in various settings. They are present in public health, acute and chronic care settings providing a range of services including health education, crisis intervention, supportive counselling, and case management. In response to critical incidents that are both global and national, health care social workers are increasingly trained to provide interventions to prepare for and respond to traumatic events and disasters.

The major characteristic of public health social work is an epidemiological approach to identifying social problems affecting the health status and social functioning of all population groups with an emphasis on intervention at the primary prevention level. Public health social workers focus on the promotion of positive health behaviours in the development of lifestyles by individuals, families and groups; enhancement by the environment; and avoidance of risks. They assess the health needs of the target population and determine the association between social factors and the incidence of health problems. They plan and implement intervention strategies based on the five levels of prevention. They emphasize reducing the social stress associated with health problems and determining the social supports that promote well-being and provide protection against ill health and minimize disability and institutionalization. The practice of public health social work is usually conducted within the context of a multi-disciplinary setting where social workers participate with other health and human service professionals in assuring all persons in the target population have access to health care and social services. Public health social work is a blending of roles: provider of direct services, researcher, consultant, administrator, program planner, evaluator and policymaker. Each function is dependent upon the other in assuring the health and social needs of the total population.

Key foci of public health social work include HIV/AIDS disease and transmission prevention, child and elder maltreatment prevention and intervention, acute and chronic health care services, services to persons with disabilities, mental health and substance abuse prevention and interventions, services to older persons, disaster preparedness and response, and maternal and child health.

Recent political changes expected to affect healthcare delivery and emphasize prevention and integrated health and wellness services could increase the demand for public health social workers. Interest in the collaboration of public health and social work has emerged as evidenced by the growing number of schools offering dual-degree programs, a master's degree in social work and public health by realizing the value of public health training and skills. Public health research incorporates a broad array of studies that address systems, policies, and personnel that work to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote better health care. Within the broad array of public health research are studies specific to *public* health social work practice, an area of practice that has strong historical roots in the social work profession. *Public health social work practice* uses a research-based epidemiologic approach to identify and address social problems that affect the health status and social functioning of population groups. It emphasizes interventions that address primary prevention and includes practice at multiple levels including individuals, groups, communities, and populations.

Professional social workers are well equipped to practice in the health care field, because of their broad perspective on the range of physical, emotional, and environmental factors that have an effect on the well-being of individuals and communities. Certain Professional standards are developed to meet the needs of social workers in multiple health care practice settings and to help the public understand the role of the professional social worker.

Public Health Social Workers Will Demonstrate Knowledge and Adhere To

- The principles of social epidemiology.
- The principles and theories of population-based health promotion and empowerment.
- The characteristics of health systems, including the dimensions of, use of and access to health care. .
- Macro-level public health social work practice methods in the promotion and enforcement of regulations (policies and legislation) formulated to protect the health and safety of at-risk populations.
- Organizational culture and change.
- Social work community organization and coalition building to address the issues of social and health disparities
- Commit to individuals, families and communities and the diverse cultural values they hold.
- Applying management and organizational theories and practices to the development, planning, budgeting, staffing, administration and evaluation of public health programs including the implementation of strategies promoting integrated service systems, especially for vulnerable populations.

Public Health Social Workers Should Demonstrate the Following Skills

- Recognize various strengths, needs, values and practices of diverse cultural, racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups to determine .how these factors affect health status, health behaviours and program design.
- Application of primary, secondary and tertiary strategies to address the health, social and economic issues of individuals, families and communities.
- Utilize practice and epidemiologic theories to substantiate interventions and programming designed to promote health and behavioural change.
- The use of data to illuminate ethical, political, scientific, economic, social and overall public health issues.
- Principles and key features of community needs assessment, program design, Implementation and evaluations.
- Collection and interpretation of data from vital statistics, censuses, surveys, service utilization and other relevant reports on social and health status for all, especially vulnerable and underserved populations.
- Detection of meaningful inferences from data and translation of data into information for community assessment (gaps, barriers and strengths analysis), program planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Formulation of hypotheses or research questions in collaboration with internal or external resources for the development and implementation of an analytical strategy to Influence health and social planned change.
- Synthesizing of contemporary and alternative health and social policies.
- Identifying essential gaps in the delivery system of health and social services.
- Identifying public health laws, regulations and policies related to specific programs.

Public Health Social Workers address health from a broad perspective that includes physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being throughout the continuum of the life cycle. They address health issues by identifying and implementing strategies/interventions through pivotal times of transition from one phase of individual development to another. Public Health Social Work assures the competency of its practice to address the issues of public health effectively through a core body of social work knowledge, philosophy, code of ethics and standards. These standards address multiple areas related to care coordination, including ethical concerns, comprehensive assessment, individualized intervention and treatment planning,

Social workers are trained to facilitate improvements that alter the processes in which health care is delivered. They are ethically charged to promote process improvements that will enhance patient or consumer safety, satisfaction, efficient and effective care, and identify and promote best practices and equitable care on a multidisciplinary basis. Social workers play an integral role in care coordination for older adults, especially those living with advanced illness or multiple chronic conditions, by facilitating access to health and psychosocial services that improve health outcomes and support aging. The Social workers demonstrated expertise in navigating complex health and social service systems, combined with their unique psychosocial perspective, illustrates the profession's critical role in care coordination for older adults. In filling this role, social workers continue to realize the profession's mission of helping individuals and families access resources to maximize their independence, health, and well-being.

Public Health Social Work uses social planning, community organizational development, and social marketing principles to inform and educate individuals, families and communities about public health issues. It uses social planning, community organizational development and social marketing principles to empower and mobilize individuals, families - and communities to become active participants in identifying and addressing public health concerns to improve individual, family and societal wellbeing. Public Health Social Work provides leadership and advocacy to assure and promote policy development for providing quality and comprehensive public health services within a cultural, community and family context. It develops and promotes public health and social policy that assures the health and safety of all, especially for vulnerable and underserved populations. It develops public health and social policy that assures vulnerable and underserved populations have access to needed health and social services. It collaborates with social service organizations, educational institutions and related health professional organizations to support policy development and legislative action that promotes the optimal health of a community. It develops public health and social policies to assure provision of quality services, which are responsive to individual, family, community and cultural needs.

Interaction of social work provides an access point to services needed to remove blocks to outcomes keeps people safe from harm and danger within statutory powers builds on the capacity of people using services to take as much control over their lives as possible and to manage long term social and health conditions. This contributes through a range of organisations within and outside social care to policies and practice that promote well-being. The social work intervention is most often put in terms of benefits to an individual, family or group. It reduces community tensions through promoting mutual understanding.

Social workers can provide their clients with practical support, counselling, information and emotional support. They can suggest different ways of looking at the problem and will be able to give their client the information they need in order to make a difference to their life.

CONCLUSIONS

The contributions social work makes to development are many and varied. Studies on public health social work are increasing in social work awareness of the dedicated field still needs to increase in both public health and social work circles. The Group for Public Health Social Work Initiatives hopes to promote many programs, initiate a national dialogue on public health social work, and conduct and disseminate research. Social Work can rise to the challenges faced by the public health field in the near future. Training in both public health and social work becomes more important and relevant to solving the ongoing interrelated problems in health and human services. At Boston University's conference, "Public Health Social Work in the 21st Century," Betsy Clark, PhD, MSW, MPH, executive director of the National Association of Social Workers, suggested that public health social work may be the future of social work. Recent political changes are expected to affect the future delivery of healthcare, possibly leading to more emphasis on preventive healthcare and integrated healthcare and wellness services. The ability of the public health social worker to bridge prevention and intervention, individual and community, and practice and policy will be increasingly valued by our changing society.

Social workers have the responsibilities of implement intervention and treatment plans that promote client well-being and ensure a continuum of care. Planning shall be based on a comprehensive, culturally competent assessment with interdisciplinary input. Interpretation Intervention and treatment plans are steps identified by the health social worker, in collaboration with the client and with other members of the team, to achieve objectives identified during assessment. Social workers shall be able to adapt practice techniques to best meet client needs within their health care setting to work effectively with individuals across the life-span, with different ethnicities, cultures, religions, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. the Public health demands the collaboration of social workers, who can effectively deal with the society and health activities.

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