

# Case Studies in Social Work Practice

THIRD EDITION



Edited by  
Craig W. LeCroy

WILEY



# CASE STUDIES IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE



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Third Edition

Craig Winston LeCroy

WILEY

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To Kerry B. Milligan and the social workers of the world



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# Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) and Case Studies Crosswalk

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The Council on Social Work Education's EPAS has set forth recommendations for students of social work to master 10 competencies. Within each competency are practice behaviors that further define the core competencies. *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* addresses the 10 competencies within the various case studies presented in the book. The following table lists the competencies and the case studies that reflect the competency most directly. This may be helpful to both instructor and student in relating the educational material in the book to the core competencies for effective social work practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.1: Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

Educational Policy 2.1.2: Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Educational Policy 2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Educational Policy 2.1.6: Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Educational Policy 2.1.7: Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

Educational Policy 2.1.8: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Educational Policy 2.1.9: Respond to contexts that shape practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.10: Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Professional Identity	Ethical Practice	Critical Thinking	Energy Diversity	Human Justice	Rights & Justice	Research-Informed Practice	Human Behavior	Policy Practice	Practice Context	Engage, Assess, Intervene, & Evaluate
1.1						✓	✓	✓	✓	
1.2	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.1	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2					✓					
2.3						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.4										
3.1						✓				
3.2							✓			
3.3	✓			✓						
3.4					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
4.1	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
4.2										
4.3										
5.1										
5.2										
5.3										
5.4										
5.5										✓





## Case Study Topic Areas Matrix

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Case Study	Individuals	Brief Treatment				Treatment and Managed Care				Case Management				Child and Adolescent Welfare			Community Practice			Diversity Practice			Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice		
		Treatment	Advanced Treatment	Treatment Methods	Advocacy	Managed Care	Case Care	Child Management	Adolescents Welfare	Community Practice	Diversity Practice	Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice	Community Practice	Diversity Practice	Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice	Community Practice	Diversity Practice	Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice	Community Practice	Diversity Practice	Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice	Community Practice	Diversity Practice	Ecological Model/ Generalist Practice	
1.1		✓				✓				✓				✓			✓			✓			✓		
1.2			✓				✓																	✓	
1.3				✓																				✓	
2.1		✓			✓																			✓	
2.2			✓			✓																		✓	
2.3				✓																				✓	
2.4					✓																			✓	
3.1						✓																		✓	
3.2							✓																	✓	
3.3								✓																✓	
3.4									✓															✓	
4.1										✓														✓	
4.2											✓													✓	
4.3												✓												✓	
5.1													✓											✓	
5.2														✓										✓	





# Preface

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This book provides a different format to learn about social work practice than is currently available in traditional social work textbooks. My intent is to provide students with an accordingly different educational experience, which results from reading and thinking about case studies.

Case studies are an action-oriented educational tool because they provide students with an opportunity to vicariously participate in the process of doing social work practice. It is critical to provide an interesting educational atmosphere for effective adult education.

In order to achieve this goal, I have asked many different people, primarily teachers and social workers, to write case studies that reflect their experiences. More than 45 people helped contribute to this book. The people chosen to write case studies reflect the diversity of social work practice. As a result, each case study is unique in approach, content, and writing style.

I have always told my students that doing social work is much more exciting and gratifying than reading about social work practice. Because the case study method of teaching allows students to participate in social work, there is a corresponding increase in interest and motivation for learning.

The objective of *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* is teaching students about the process of doing social work. The book is appropriate to many classes at the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, it may be used to teach students about the range and diversity of the social work profession. In this context, the emphasis is on the various fields of practice, the organizational setting, and the variety of roles that social workers embrace. At the graduate level, it may be used as the primary text or as a supplement to a more theoretical textbook, with the emphasis on understanding the complex variables involved in delivering social work services.

*Case Studies in Social Work Practice* is also designed to be useful as a textbook for field seminars. Here the focus is to help students learn to discuss cases within a social

work frame of reference. The instructor can use the case material and emphasize the practice principles relevant for the particular class and level of the student.

## FOR STUDENTS

This book was designed to make learning about social work interesting and exciting. In it you will find fascinating experiences that social work practitioners have shared about their work. The focus is on what social workers actually *do* as professionals—a picture of their day-to-day lives. As you read these case studies, think about being confronted with each situation yourself. How would you feel? What do you notice? What would you do? By doing this, you can vicariously participate in social work practice. This will give you important clues about whether this is the profession for you and where your interests are in the various fields of practice.

The purpose of this book is to help you learn to integrate theory and practice by studying how practitioners have applied general social work principles to real-world case situations. In order to facilitate learning, each case study begins with a series of questions. These questions are designed to stimulate critical thinking and promote class discussion.

Classroom discussions about the case studies will investigate judgments made by the practitioners, answer questions you have about social work practice, and reveal the limitations of textbook generalizations. In many instances, information in the case studies may be incomplete, and students' opinions may be divided about the manner in which to intervene.

## FOR INSTRUCTORS—HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book can be used in a variety of ways to teach students about social work practice. The book is designed to be used in a flexible manner, depending on your needs and the objectives of the particular course. Some suggestions for how this book might be used include:

- ◆ Having students think about what they might have done differently and why
- ◆ Having students write out treatment plans based on the information presented
- ◆ Using the case studies to discuss the range of roles and skills needed by social workers in a variety of settings
- ◆ Having students describe and analyze policies, organizational factors, and community implications inherent in the case studies
- ◆ Having students gather theoretical and empirical studies that could have been useful to the social worker in the different case situations

With this kind of book, it is important for you to decide how you can best use the case material. In my experience, I have found some of the following ways of using case studies helpful:

- ◆ *The case studies can be used to get students to think like social workers.* By reading the cases, students learn about the different environments that social workers must perform in, the decisions that social workers must make, and the importance of complex and competing

factors in making those decisions. By vicariously participating in the practice of social work, students develop an understanding of how social work is performed, the social work environment, and human behavior in the social environment.

- ◆ *Use the case studies to help students develop a social work frame of reference.* Each chapter is an opportunity for students to explore the various aspects and roles of social work: advocacy, case management, community organization, clinical counseling, referral, resource development, mediation, evaluation, and so on. As a result of reading the case studies, students will develop skills in approaching various social work problems and an understanding of the function social workers perform.
- ◆ *In order to stimulate student thinking and class discussions, each case study is preceded with a series of questions.* The questions are designed to promote critical thinking and act as a catalyst for class discussion.
- ◆ *The case studies can be used for class discussion with many positive benefits.* With a group of students, many perspectives about the case will develop. Within this context, the instructor can examine with students their underlying theories and assumptions about human behavior and social work practice. The natural interaction and exchange of ideas and information will promote an atmosphere for critical discussion. Too often, students accept any approach to a case without critique and analysis. Group discussion of the cases can be a safe environment to teach students more critical problem-solving skills.
- ◆ *Teach students to examine the facts and opinions in a case.* Encourage students to take on the case situation and decide what they would do in some of the practice situations. Stimulate students to develop alternatives and choose the most effective course of action. Although each case contains its own particular approach to resolving a practice problem, each case also contains new problems to be addressed and new decision points that can be brought out in a class discussion.
- ◆ *You may also wish to use the case material to conduct role-plays with the students.* Students can be selected to act out the characters involved in the case study. As they take turns playing the social work practitioner, they will grapple with the real situations that social workers face in a variety of circumstances. You can provide students with feedback on skills and alternative courses of action. With experimentation you will find *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* to be an effective format for teaching social work practice.
- ◆ *The case studies will stimulate students to think critically, analytically, and objectively about social work practice.* Clear thinking skills are a necessity in social work, and the cases should be used to promote such skills. As students move from one case to the next, they will begin to develop an accumulation of experience in thinking and reasoning as applied to the very different problem configurations presented.

## THE THIRD EDITION

It is very exciting to have a third edition of the *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* book! The overall organization of the text remains consistent with the first edition. The major changes include updating the case material and adding new cases. In particular, new material has been added that reflects newer changes in the field. For example, case studies have been added in areas such as mindfulness treatment, family systems approach, family drug courts, the use of supervision, multisensory interventions, geriatric depression, and the use of evidence-based practice. These changes, in addition to

changes from the second edition, should have a broader appeal to social work students: undergraduates, foundation MSW students, and advanced MSW students. The book still maintains case material that represents both generalist practice and more specialized practice, both of which are needed in social work education. The goal of *Case Studies in Social Work Practice* continues to be the provision of case study material that is interesting and enlightening about the day-to-day practice of social work—material that is too often ignored in social work textbooks.

## Acknowledgments

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This book is the result of the many authors who agreed to graciously contribute a case study. Without them there would be no book, and I sincerely appreciate their efforts. Many people helped to make this a successful project. Emily Furrier and Molly Madeline Gebler were my research assistants, and they provided critical support in organizing and managing this project. Arizona State University, School of Social Work, provided the needed institutional support. The staff and editors at Wiley are to be thanked for their persistence in helping me get this material into the format of a publishable book. My longtime association with Peggy Alexander provided the impetus for this project, Rachel Livsey worked with me as the acquisition editor for this book, and Amanda Orenstein made sure the project was brought to completion. Lisa Gebo, now deceased, was responsible for making the second edition become a reality. Her vision and confidence in the case study approach to teaching social work is greatly appreciated.



## About the Editor

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**CRAIG WINSTON LECROY** is a professor in the School of Social Work at Arizona State University. He also holds appointments at the University of Arizona in the John & Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, Family Studies and Human Development division, and the University of Arizona College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand; the Zellerbach Visiting Professor at the University of California at Berkeley; and a senior Fulbright specialist.

Professor LeCroy has published 10 books previously, including *Parenting Mentally Ill Children: Faith, Hope, Support, and Surviving the System; First Person Accounts of Mental Illness and Recovery; Handbook of Evidence-Based Treatment Manuals for Children and Adolescents; Handbook of Prevention and Intervention Program for Adolescent Girls; The Call to Social Work: Life Stories, Case Studies in Child, Adolescent, and Family Treatment; Case Studies in Social Work Practice; Empowering Adolescent Girls: Examining the Present and Building Skills for the Future with the “Go Grrrls” Program; Go Grrrls Workbook; Human Behavior and the Social Environment; and Social Skills Training for Children and Adolescents.*

Professor LeCroy has published more than 100 articles and book chapters on a wide range of topics, including mental health, the social work profession, home visitation, and research methodology. He is the recipient of numerous grants, including (as principal investigator or co-principal investigator) interventions for risk reduction and avoidance in youth (NIH), Go Grrrls Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, evaluation of Healthy Families (a child abuse prevention program), a mental health training grant for improving service delivery to severely emotionally disturbed children and adolescents (NIMH), and Youth Plus: Positive Socialization for Youth (CSAP).



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