

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **DEFINING SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY**

### **Chapter Overview**

- Explains the multiple meanings associated with social policy and how social welfare policy has a more limited meaning within the broader understanding of social policy.
- Describes the factors complicating the meaning of social welfare policy and the skills required for effective policy practice.
- Explains the multiple organizational contexts (government, private nonprofit, and private for profit sectors) in which social welfare policy is encountered.
- Explains the multiple levels (macro, mezzo, and micro) at which social welfare policy needs to be understood by social work practitioners.

### **Key Concepts**

Macrolevel

Mezzolevel

Microlevel

Nonprofit sector

Policy

Policy analysis

Policy practice

Profit-making sector

Public policy

Rugged individualism

Social philosophy

Social work curriculum

Social welfare

Social welfare policy

Street-level bureaucrats

Well-being

### **Chapter Outline**

## **I. Social Welfare Policy - Basic Definition**

- A. Social welfare is the institution in society that deals with the problem of dependency.
- B. Policy is a loose and imprecise term, here meaning the principles, guidelines, or procedures that serve the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making.
- C. Social welfare policy is the principles, guidelines, or procedures that serve the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making regarding the problem of dependency in our society.

## **II. Factors Complicating the Definition of Social Welfare Policy**

### **A. Social Welfare Policy and Social Policy**

1. Although often used synonymously, social policy is the more general term that includes social welfare policy.
2. Social policy has been described as overall quality of life in a society, the rules and regulations that affect people's social well-being, the social purposes and consequences of social welfare policies, and philosophically to the collective struggle to seek enduring social solutions to social problems or to increase government involvement in social life in the pursuit of greater equality, equity, and social justice. In this last sense, social policy is the opposite of *rugged individualism*.
3. In comparison, social welfare policy is more narrowly understood as societal responses to specific needs or problems, those social policies that affect the distribution of resources, and those policies that affect the problem of dependency or to specific categorical purposes.

### **B. Social Welfare Policy as an Academic Discipline and a Social Work Curriculum Area**

1. As an area of academic inquiry, social welfare policy refers to a subfield in sociology, political science, economics, history, and social work. This subfield focuses on the activities of government with the understanding that public policy is the domain of government activity. Social welfare policy in this sense deals with governmental activity or inactivity related to quality of life.
2. In the social work curriculum, social welfare policy has a broader meaning that is not restricted to governmental activity. In this sense, social welfare policy is inclusive of the variety of nonprofit and for profit organizations that provide social welfare services, the history of and current structures within which social services are delivered, and the role of social work practice in advocacy, policy action, and policy development.
3. As a practice method, social welfare policy includes policy analysis and the development of four policy practice skills that include the analytical, political, interactional, and value-clarification.

### **C. Social Workers are Interested in Social Welfare Policy in All Sectors of the Economy**

1. Historically, private social welfare services predated governmental assumption of responsibility.
2. Although public expenditures for social welfare exceeds private expenditures, in 1995 private expenditures comprised a significant proportion of services, approximately 38 percent.
3. For profit social welfare enterprises are becoming increasingly important.
4. Social workers must understand the policies of all three sectors of the social welfare system to understand how policy impacts their practice.

### **D. The Multiple Levels of Social Welfare Policy**

1. **Macrolevel Policy** - The broad laws, regulations, or guidelines that provide the basic framework for the provision of social services. Macro level policy tends to be established by government regulation or private nonprofit policy statements. The private for profit sector is more reactive than generative on the macro level.
2. **Mezzolevel Policy** - Mid-level administrative policy that organizations generate to

direct and regulate their operations. Mezzolevel policy is often the direct response to macrolevel policy decisions.

3. **Microlevel Policy** - The translation of macrolevel and mezzolevel policy into actual service to clients that occurs on an individual level. Microlevel policy is heavily influenced by the autonomy and discretion of individual social workers. Microlevel policy can preempt the intentions of macrolevel and mezzolevel policies if implementation is constricted by social workers acting as street-level bureaucrats who implement policies in accord with their personal values and ethics.

**III. Social Welfare Policy - A Working Definition** - Social welfare policy concerns those interrelated, but not necessarily logically consistent, principles, guidelines, and procedures designed to deal with the problem of dependency in our society. Policies may be laws, public or private regulations, formal procedures, or simply normatively sanctioned patterns of behavior. Social welfare policy is a subset of social policy. Social welfare policy as an academic discipline is less concerned with specific policies than it is with the process by which those policies came into being, the societal base and effects of those policies, and the relationship between policies. Those studying social welfare policy as an area of the professional social work curriculum share the concerns of the traditional academic disciplines but have as primary concerns the relationship of policy to social work practice and the ways that social workers both as individuals and as members of an organized profession can influence the policy process.

**IV. Conclusion** - The major goal of this book is to help direct service social work practitioners develop skills of policy analysis in order to understand and affect the policy context of their practice.

## Learning Activities

I. Describe in your own words the difference between *social policy* and *social welfare policy*. Give examples of each.

*Competency:* Policy Practice

II. A. Why do you believe that the authors use the phrase "maximizing uniformity of decision making" in their definitions of social policy and social welfare policy?

*Competency:* Policy Practice

II.B. Do you agree or disagree with the assertion that social policy is the opposite of rugged individualism? Why?

*Competency:* Policy Practice

II.C. Do you think the term "well-being" should be substituted for "welfare"? Why or why not?

II. C.2 Provide examples from your personal experience that illustrate how organizational decisions of government, private nonprofits, and private for profit have had a direct influence on your personal quality of life.

*Competency:* Practice Contexts

II.C.3. Provide three reasons why private for profit organizations are growing in importance in the social welfare system; from your perspective, is this a good or bad trend? Why?

*Competency:* Practice Contexts

III. Provide three possible explanations for the more minor role of the private for profit sector in the development of macrolevel policy.

*Competency:* Practice Contexts

III. Describe how social workers can influence each level of social welfare policy? In which do social workers have the most influence? The least? What steps could be taken to enhance the influence of the profession at this level?

*Competency:* Policy Practice

## **Exercises in Understanding Analysis**

- Exercise 2.1            Why is it important to maximize uniformity of decision making in relation to problems of dependency in our society?
- Exercise 2.2            Why is the private for profit sector growing so quickly in America? How is this likely to change the delivery of social services?
- Exercise 2.3            Why do social workers need to understand all three sectors of the social welfare system?
- Exercise 2.4            Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each sector of the social welfare system.
- Exercise 2.5            From the perspective of a potential client, describe the advantages and disadvantages associated with each sector of the social welfare system with reference to how each sector performs as a delivery channel for social services.

## Assessing Your Competency

Use the scale below to rate your current level of achievement on the following concepts or skills associated with each competency presented in the chapter:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I can accurately describe the concept or skill		I can consistently identify the concept or skill when observing and analyzing practice activities		I can competently implement the concept or skill in my own practice

- Can articulate the differences between policy, social policy, public policy, and social welfare policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Is able to define policy.
- Is able to define social policy.
- Is able to define public policy.
- Is able to define social welfare policy.

- Understands the factors complicating the meaning of social welfare policy.
  - Is able to explain the meaning of social welfare policy from a philosophical perspective.
  - Is able to describe social welfare policy as an academic discipline.
  - Is able to describe social welfare policy as a curriculum of study.
  - Is able to describe the multiple sectors in which social welfare policy is implemented.
  - Is able to explain the multiple levels of social welfare policy

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Understands the knowledge and skills required for effective policy practice.
  - Is able to explain the knowledge base for policy practice in EPAS.
  - Is able to explain the work of policy practice in EPAS.
  - Is able to describe the four basic policy skills.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Understands the organizational contexts in which social welfare policy is encountered in practice.
  - Is able to describe the three organizational contexts for practice.
  - Is able to sketch the history of each sector.
  - Is able to compare the contemporary role and current trends related to each sector.
  - Is able to contrast the strengths and weaknesses of each sector.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Can articulate the different levels in which social welfare policy needs to be understood.
  - Is able to describe the macrolevel of social welfare policy and provide examples.
  - Is able to describe the mezzolevel of social welfare policy and provide examples.
  - Is able to describe the microlevel of social welfare policy and provide examples.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## TEST QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 2

### Multiple Choice

- 2-1 What is the best way to understand the relationship between social policy and social welfare policy?
- Social policy is a subcategory of social welfare policy.
  - Social welfare policy is a subcategory of social policy.
  - Social policy and social welfare policy are correctly used interchangeably.
  - None of the above
- 2-2 In a philosophical sense, *social policy* may mean:
- the opposite of *rugged individualism*.
  - increasing government involvement in social life and the pursuit of greater equality, equity, and social justice.
  - both a and b.
  - neither a nor b
- 2-3 The continuing struggle of humanity for equality is best described as an example of:
- social policy.
  - social welfare policy.
  - public policy.
  - none of the above
- 2-4 Libraries, parks and recreation, tax codes, and family law are examples of:
- social policy, but not social welfare policy.
  - social welfare policy, but not social policy.
  - both social policy and social welfare policy.
  - none of the above
- 2-5 The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education understand the knowledge base of policy practice to include:
- the history and current structures of social policies and services.
  - the role of policy in service delivery.
  - the role of practice in policy development.
  - All of the above
- 2-6 The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards understand the work of policy practice to include:
- analyzing, formulating, and advocating for policies.
  - collaborating with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.
  - Neither of the above
  - Both of the above
- 2-7 The four basic policy practice skills are:
- critical thinking, active listening, empathy, and acceptance.
  - analytic skills, political skills, interactional skills, and value-clarifying skills.
  - problem definition, compromise, negotiation, and debate.
  - None of the above

- 2-8 What helps explain the significant role of the private sector in American social welfare policy?
- Social welfare services grew out of the activities of the private sector.
  - Government was reluctant to assume responsibility for social welfare.
  - The social work profession resulted from the policies of the private sector.
  - All of the above
- 2-9 Which best describes the contemporary opinion of for-profit organizations in social welfare service delivery?
- They are frowned upon as unfit partners for government.
  - They are disparaged as unfair competition for scarce resources.
  - They are seen as business role models
  - None of the above
- 2-10 Which most accurately describes the evolving roles of public and private sectors in the delivery of social welfare services?
- The majority of the funds for social services is private.
  - The majority of the funds for social services is public.
  - The majority of the funds for social services are paid by clients as fee-for-service.
  - None of the above
- 2-11 Which sectors provide the most macrolevel polices?
- Public and private nonprofit.
  - Private nonprofit and private for profit.
  - Public and private for profit.
  - None of the above
- 2-12 Which level of policy is most likely to be described as "administrative?"
- Macrolevel.
  - Mezzolevel.
  - Microlevel.
  - All three levels are equally administrative.
- 2-13 Which level of policy is most likely to be described as a "basic framework" for the provision of services?
- Macrolevel.
  - Mezzolevel.
  - Microlevel.
  - None of the above. The basic framework is a public policy concept.
- 2-14. Which level of policy is most likely to be described as "actual service" to clients?
- Macrolevel.
  - Mezzolevel.
  - Microlevel.
  - All of the above because they all involve a client focus.
- 2-15 When a social work practitioner exercises a high degree of discretion in the provision of social services, this is most likely to be an example of what level of practice?
- Macrolevel.
  - Mezzolevel.
  - Microlevel.
  - All of the above because they all involve a client focus.
- M  
a  
c  
r  
o  
l  
e  
v  
e  
l

- b) Mezzolevel.
  - c) Microlevel.
  - d) None of the above
- 2-16 The term “policy” is:
- a) Used with precision by economists but not by social workers
  - b) A term with a definition everyone agrees on
  - c) A concept of so little use that it has been abandoned by most scholars
  - d) A rather loose and imprecise term for which there is no generally accepted definition in the academic literature.
- 2-17 Policy has been defined as:
- a) Statements of what ought to happen
  - b) A purposive course of action followed by people dealing with a problem
  - c) The pattern of action that resolves conflicting claims or provides incentives for cooperation
  - d) All of the above
- 2-18 Activities that would be included under the term social policy, but not social welfare policy are:
- a) Food stamps and Medicaid
  - b) Adult and child protective services
  - c) Libraries, parks, and recreation
  - d) Senior citizens centers
- 2-19 Which of the following statements about the role of government in social welfare is not true:
- a) Most social services began in the private sector
  - b) The government gladly took over responsibility for social welfare
  - c) The role of government in social welfare has greatly increased in the last century
  - d) The private sector still provides a significant proportion of social welfare services
- 2-20 Which of the following is a macro level policy:
- a) The number of sick days allowed by an agency
  - b) Eligibility worker consensus that college students should not get food stamps
  - c) Title XX of the Social Security Act
  - d) Criteria for membership in a PTA chapter
- 2-21 Mezzo level policy is:
- a) Rules guiding behavior on the mezzanine
  - b) Agency level policy
  - c) Largely a response to macro-level policy
  - d) b and c
- 2-22 Micro level policy is
- a) The policy in very small organizations
  - b) What happens when individuals such as social workers translate macro and mezzo level policy into actual service to clients
  - c) A professionals personal code of behavior
  - d) Appendices to policy statements, called micro level because of the very small print
- 2-23 The private sector provides:
- a) Over 90% of social welfare services
  - b) About three quarters of social welfare services
  - c) Less than one tenth of social welfare services
  - d) Approximately 39% of social welfare services
- 2-24 The organization that sets the standards for the curriculum content in BSW programs is:
- a) The National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
  - b) The National Association of Social Service Administrators (NOSSA)
  - c) The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
  - d) The Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

- 2-25 The study of social welfare policy:
- a) Concerns principles and guidelines for the purpose of dealing with the problem of dependency in society
  - b) Is concerned with how policies come into being and the effects of those policies
  - c) Is concerned with how policy affects social work practice
  - d) All of the above

## True or False

- 2-26. The term *social welfare policy* sometimes refers to broad social philosophy, sometimes to the narrowest administrative rule.
- 2-27. Social welfare policy is only concerned with the actions of government.
- 2-28. *Policy* means principles, guidelines, or procedures that serve the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making.
- 2-29. *Social welfare policy* serves the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making regarding the problem of dependency in our society.
- 2-30. In academic departments focusing on the study of policy, *social welfare policy* refers nearly exclusively to the activities of government.

## Essay Questions

- 2-31. Explain in your own words how the terms *social policy*, *social welfare policy*, and *public policy* are used differently.
- 2-32. Define *policy practice* in your own words. In what ways can you imagine policy practice as a part of your future employment as a social worker?
- 2-33. Describe the differences between the understanding of social welfare policy as an academic discipline and social welfare policy as a part of the social work curriculum.
- 2-34. Which segment of the social welfare system do you think is the most important? Why?
- 2-35. Which level of social welfare policy is the most important to you? To your future clients? Why?

## Chapter 2

- 2-1 B
- 2-2 C
- 2-3 A
- 2-4 A
- 2-5 D
- 2-6 D
- 2-7 B
- 2-8 D
- 2-9 C
- 2-10 B
- 2-11 A
- 2-12 B
- 2-13 A
- 2-14 C

2-15 C  
2-16 D  
2-17 D  
2-18 C  
2-19 B  
2-20 C  
2-21 D  
2-22 B  
2-23 C  
2-24 C  
2-25 D  
2-26 True  
2-27 False  
2-28 True  
2-29 True  
2-30 True