

SOCIAL WORK IN SCHOOLS: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

By Linda Openshaw
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The book is published within the Guilford series: Social Work Practice with Children and Families and is devoted to professional social work in educational settings. Dr. Openshaw has practiced as a school social worker for fourteen years in Utah and Texas. *Social work in schools* contains a wealth of information regarding the comprehensive role of the school social worker across the entire span of school years. It contains practical information aimed at developing knowledge and skills for evaluating and managing the multiple psychological and social barriers that may affect school performance.

After an introductory chapter, *The Role and Function of the School Social Worker*, presenting the basic tasks, skills and knowledge requirements of the social worker, the importance of the interdisciplinary team, his/hers multifaceted roles, chapter II presents an *Ecological-Developmental Framework for Practice in the Schools*. It presents the social work assessment tools, such as social history, relationship building, culturagram, genogram, collateral information. Chapter III, *Uncovering Problems and Working within the System*, outlines the United States legal framework of the social work, focusing on the students with special needs or disorders. Chapters IV to VIII detail the school social work in various age groups, from preschool to grade 12. Chapter IX, *Group Work in the School Settings*, examines in detail the process of assessing, establishing and conducting groups of students for various social purposes. Chapters X to XIII deal with various situations that adversely affect students: violence and trauma, parental absence, alcohol and drug abuse, death and loss. Chapter XIV, written by Joyce Kelen, is dedicated to working with non citizen populations in the United States social work system. Mental health services in schools and their interaction with the social worker are the subject of chapter XV. The final chapter, by Rosemarie Hunter and Rocio Paredes-Mora, *Linking Community, Home and Schools*, presents case studies with innovative models of collaboration, supporting families at risk, special education, the need for a school social worker, higher education as a school, home and community partner.

The author outlines with mastery the range of services that school social workers can provide. The extensive knowledge of the practice of school social work is reflected in each chapter, where wide-ranging information is presented in a

form that is attractive to those interested in the practical aspects of social work. The most important influence in the children's life, after the family, should be the school, the environment where they spend many hours. The book is built around specific strategies and worker skills verified in the work with children and adolescents at different developmental stages. Every chapter becomes a practical guide for the practice with step-by step instructions and case studies.

The uses of main social work modalities (individual, group, and family interventions) are explored. The author presents an Ecological-Developmental Framework for practice in the school which includes guidelines for effective treatment plans, such as student goal setting, charts and behavior management plans. The school social worker must understand the child within the overlapping contexts of community, school and family and evaluate various problems, such as poverty, change, violence, trauma, parental absence, drug use, and mental health problems. The culturagram is a useful helpful tool for the school social workers' understanding of the children in their environmental context and assess the meaning and impact of culture on their clients. It can be used with children who are immigrants, are new to the community, have unique religion/spiritual practice or are from a minority population. The culturagram assesses 10 important factors concerning culture, including family values regarding education and work, time in the community, reason for immigration, age at the time of immigration, legal or undocumented status, languages spoken in the home, health beliefs, holidays and special events, contact with cultural institutions, and impact of crisis events created by the family's uniqueness.

The book offers a practical guide in school social work. The author thinks that is a "how-to" book on school social worker, about how to practice this profession in schools. A school social worker should not practice alone, without the support of other social workers. Specific guidelines for implementing interventions, including group work, are provided. Many concrete examples, study and discussion questions, letters, forms, and checklists are included. Children and youth can experience upsetting events, including situations like trauma, violence and death. The author dedicated a special chapter to the situations that discuss how children who have been exposed to that kind of situation either in school or in home, in the community, must be helped. Children bring with them the problems from home to school. Children need to be successful in school for having a positive course for the rest of their lives. That reflects the importance of the profession of the school social worker. He or she must develop and apply a wide range of skills and knowledge to provide appropriate and competent assistance to students.

This excellent introduction to a wide array of topics related to professional social work in educational settings will help practitioners and social work students preparing to practice in school settings to develop knowledge and skills for assessing and tackling the psychosocial barriers that may impede a child's school performance.