



SWK456/556 GENERALIST
PRACTICE WITH GROUPS,
ORGANIZATIONS, AND
COMMUNITIES

Chapter 12: Understanding Organizations

- Social workers address individual, family, group, and community needs through organizations.
- We can use theories, models, and perspectives to help us better understand social service agencies and social justice organizations.
- General systems theory posits that an organization is a system that is composed of intersecting components that are part of larger systems, such as communities and societies at large.
- Organizations, therefore, acquire resources from their environments and return products or services to their environment. In the engagement, assessment, and planning processes, social workers can examine the extent to which subsystems, such as funders, divisions or departments, or referring agencies, meet the needs of the organization.
- The organization can use this information to advocate for a higher level of functioning of a subsystem, which ultimately benefits the organization and those being served.
- The NASW Code of Ethics (2017) provides direction to both generalist and specialist social workers to improve services, to carry out their ethical obligations in the workplace, and to act to eliminate discrimination in organizations.

Chapter 12: Understanding Organizations

- In learning to understand organizations, it is important to pay attention to several factors including:
 - the role of culture in helping to understand how organizations define and pursue collective goals;
 - the idea of quality as the benchmark in organizational structures, processes, and evaluation;
 - respect for how tasks are accomplished as a factor as important as the outcomes of programs and services;
 - and recognition that there is no one correct approach to structuring organizations.
- The characteristics and qualities that exist within social service organizations affect both service delivery to clients and the employee experience. The three most important dimensions of these differences are:
 - the purpose of the organization: Public mandate? Particular service? Social change? Public or private? For-profit or non-profit?
 - the structures of governance: bureaucracies; project team structure; functional structures.
 - the internal power relations: who has the power and based on what?
- Social work practice in host settings: what is a host setting? Has anyone practiced in such a setting? What are the pros and cons?

Chapter 12: Engaging Organizations

- Engagement of an organization first involves the perception of the organization as a client system.
- An organization is comprised of many individuals and systems, yet social workers must view the entire organization as a client system to facilitate a change process with an organization.
- This first step in the change process uses many of the skills needed for engagement with individuals, families, groups, and communities—namely, active listening, reflection of feeling, summarization of process, research, evaluation, and analytical skills.

Chapter 12: Assessing Organizations

Assessment Framework

Internal Assessment

- Legal basis, mission, bylaws, and history
- Administrative structure and management style
- Program structure, programs, and services
- Organizational culture (i.e., physical surroundings, public relations, language, procedures, social justice/diversity)
- Personnel policies and procedures
- Resources (i.e., financial, technological, personnel)

External Assessment

- Relationship with funders and potential funders
- Relationship with clients
- Relationship with organizations in network (i.e., referrals and coalitions)
- Relationships with political figures
- Relationships with others (regulatory bodies, professional associations, etc.)

Chapter 12: Assessment and Planning in Organizations

1

Remember, assessment ultimately leads to intervention, so using a few planning tools can help in this process.

2

SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Strengths (both internal and external)

3

Force Field Analysis (FFA): Supporting Forces, Neutral Forces, Opposing Forces