



Editor's Introduction

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Author(s):	<i>Seymour J. Rosenthal</i>
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Editor's Introduction

Seymour J. Rosenthal, MSSW

Get Ready, Get Set... Go!

The inaugural issue of PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT featured a commissioned article by Ronald Green and Richard Edwards entitled, "Welfare Reform: Implications for Professional Development in Social Work." This carefully researched and prophetic article laid the basis for understanding, in theory, the consequences of the new reform legislation. We return to the same topic in our commissioned paper series less than a year later because the ramifications of the welfare reform policy are no longer theory. They have become the stuff from which the most significant social work practice changes have emerged in decades. We will, no doubt, return to this topic as the consequences of reform become clearer to politicians, policy makers, practitioners, and the public.

Ready or not, welfare recipients have been told to go!

While there is unanimity that the welfare system has indeed changed, there is no such agreement that things have changed for the better; and no agreement on what the response strategy ought to be: "fight 'em or join 'em" or just wait until the smoke clears.

Should the profession assist in urging recipients to find work or join in organized protests against the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or should the profession seek to sharpen skills to assist clients to seriously become "job seekers"? And what about managing and planning programs to help implement the reform policy? And what about the ethical and moral issues that seem to many so evident.

The dye has been cast, so that no matter what position is held on the validity of the reform policy, the profession will need to assess its own policy and practice standards. It is a time for serious and clear assessment of the implications of reform. It is also time to consider the opportunity for assuring the relevancy of the current skill capacity of our colleagues in the field as that skill is measured against the emerging practice needs.

The three parts of the commissioned article in this issue will present differing perspectives on the matter of reform. Each author was requested to present their understanding of the impact of the legislation and program on social work practice and to suggest ways in which the

practice could become more relevant in meeting the needs of reform.

They are:

1) David C. Florey, a highly regarded Public Welfare Administrator, Office of Income Maintenance, shares his views as Director, Bureau of Employment and Training Programs, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Harrisburg. Among his suggestions is a dialog between social workers and public administrators, which he believes would bring light to policy for administrators and realistic options to recipients. All readers may not agree with all of Mr. Florey's perspectives.

2) Constance Goldman Beresin, Associate Executive Director, Jewish Employment and Vocational Service, Philadelphia, is long-term manager of this nationally recognized provider of employment and training services to a wide range of individuals seeking employment. She is recognized as expert on the issues of management of employment and training programs and feels keenly that for social works to be significantly involved in the issues of job training under TANF, social work skills in management and administration need to be upgraded. All readers may not agree with all of Ms. Beresin's perspectives.

3) Roberta Iversen, Beth Lewis, and Lina Hartocollis are prolific researchers and faculty at the School of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania. They present a strong argument for the development of an occupational social work curriculum in professional development programs targeting workers in the field. They are optimistic that social work will play an important role in the years ahead. All readers may not agree with their perspectives.

Clearly, there are other perspectives on the issue of Welfare Reform. They include those of legislators, elected officials, citizen advocacy groups, and, importantly, clients. We are concerned about this issue from the perspective of its impact on the profession as a whole but our journalistic concern has its roots in our mission: to impact and enhance the professional development of practitioners. In that regard, I call your attention to other articles in this issue. They are current, on target, and informative!

Regarding all the articles presented in this issue, let us know what your perspectives are. Let us hear from you.

Seymour J. Rosenthal is Director of the Center for Social Policy and Community Development, Associate Dean for Research and Community Development, and Professor, School of Social Administration, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122.