

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Social WorkOut Book*. Whether you are committed to a social welfare major, undecided about your future career goals, or enrolled in this course simply to satisfy your curiosity, I think you will enjoy and learn a great deal from these “workouts” about social welfare and the profession charged with carrying out its mission, social work.

Although each workout is designed to meet a specific purpose, taken together they meet several overarching goals:

- To provide you with “hands-on” experience in the application of knowledge and skills central to basic social work and social policy practice.
- To help you increase your understanding of the context in which services are provided.
- To assist you in articulating your own personal value system and helping you to develop a framework for examining human problems that integrates both your personal values and the values of the profession.

In other words, I want you to develop and use your social work “muscles” so that by the end of this course you will have even greater enthusiasm for this profession and greater certainty about your own future as a social worker. Conversely, should you decide as a result of this course that social work and you are not as good a match as you might have hoped, that too, is a positive outcome as you can then focus your energies on other potential career paths. For those who fall into this latter category, this book should nevertheless help build your respect for the widely varied and often very difficult work that social workers do.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is intended for use in any pre-professional introductory class in baccalaureate programs in social work and social welfare. But it is not written specifically for any one of these, and so the order of the Workouts may not necessarily follow the presentation of content in the primary textbook you use. I expect and hope that you and your instructor will skip around, using the Workouts to illuminate content as it is covered.

Each workout begins with a **prologue** that provides a context for the work you are about to begin and gives you any conceptual information you might need. The workout then articulates the **location** where the exercise is to be done (in class, outside class, or a combination, for those workouts that require outside preparation for presentation to the class). This “where” information is followed by a brief description of the **purpose(s)** of the workout, the background, and the directions for successfully completing it. Read the **directions**

through carefully before proceeding with the full workout. Ask your instructor for assistance if there is anything you do not understand. The workout concludes with templates that are, in effect, your **workspace**. The perforations along the sides of the pages allow you to easily tear those pages out and hand them in.

Of course, your instructor may wish to modify an assignment. In addition, some of the workouts may require some preparatory work on the part of your instructor. Thus, you would be well advised to wait until a particular Workout has been assigned and discussed by your instructor before undertaking the effort.

Why do people work out? They usually want to build muscles, get rid of fat, and lose weight. But there is also considerable evidence that working out improves general health, reduces stress, and gives people a greater sense of their endurance potential and, in doing so, fosters a sense of well-being. By the end of this semester, after using this book, you should be able to reduce any stress and uncertainty you may have about entering this profession and should begin to develop strong “social work” muscles.

Have a great workout!