

## **Case Application-The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work**

Using the following case, please provide thoughtful, comprehensive, and concise answers to the following four questions. Please limit your response to **two typed pages and make sure your EID is on the document**. The case and questions have been adapted from Haulotte, S.M., & Kretzschmar, J.A. (Eds.). (2001). *Case Scenarios for Teaching and Learning Social Work Practice*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

1. Discuss ways to recognize cultural clues in this scenario and use them for more effective intervention with Mrs. Fernandez.
2. Discuss how the principles of individualization, inclusion, and empowerment can be incorporated in work with this family.
3. Discuss practitioner's responsibilities, self-determination of the client, and any ethical dilemmas that may emerge.
4. Discuss additional levels of intervention that could benefit this family and/ or similar families. Then, identify the respective roles and functions social workers can use within the various levels of intervention in this situation.

### **THE AGENCY**

You are a social worker in a private, non-profit organization designed to address the needs of immigrants. Most of the clientele is from Mexico and Central America. The staff includes two social workers, the director and other office personnel, and three part-time volunteers who are bilingual. A retired attorney helps with referrals to lawyers who can do pro bono work when immigrants need assistance with matters such as the legal immigration process or claims for injuries on the job. There is also a very well liked receptionist who has been with the agency for the last nine years. The latter speaks enough Spanish to communicate basic greetings and agency information sought by new clientele.

### **THE CLIENT SYSTEM**

Mrs. Fernandez (age 35), a frequent service recipient, arrives to ask for assistance with her two daughters: (Oralia, age 13, and Mari, age 14). Oralia was escorted home by a police officer after she was found violating curfew hours at a nearby park last night. Mrs. Fernandez complained rather strongly that it is hard enough to be adapting to life without her husband without having the constant bickering between her two daughters. Oralia was alone at the park following a heated argument with her sister. Mrs. Fernandez fortunately had just arrived home from her second job when the officer arrived with Oralia; otherwise, she stated, "no telling what might have happened." Both girls attend the same intermediate school and do fairly well. Mrs. Fernandez just accepted a second job (janitorial work in an office building) and is, therefore, out of the house from 6:30AM to 11:00PM. By the time she returns from work, she expects the girls to have fed themselves, prepared school work and clothes for the next day and run any errands necessary for the upkeep of their home. Mrs. Fernandez and the girls ride buses to work and school respectively.

The Fernandez family has experienced financial difficulties before, but their situation worsened after Mr. Fernandez was deported to Mexico some three months ago. He was picked up by "La Migra" (Immigration and Naturalization Service officers) while working at a nearby construction site. Now, not only are they having to support themselves, they want to save a little each month to help him try to get back to the United States. He has found some part-time employment in a border town and is also trying to save enough money to get home. An additional challenge they face is that of sending a few dollars for the upkeep of their older daughters who stayed in Mexico.

As you gather information about the family, you learn that they have no other relatives in the community. Two older daughters, ages 15 and 16, remained behind with their maternal grandmother in the southwestern region of Mexico. There are no immediate plans for them to join the rest of the family. Mrs. Fernandez and the younger girls moved north seven years ago, to join Mr. Fernandez. The couple is very proud of the progress of all four girls, and their dream is that each two sets of daughters can prosper in their respective living sites. Both Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez finished primary school (6th grade) prior to getting married. They were both attending an English class prior to his deportation. The family has visited a Pentecostal church in the neighborhood but is undecided about joining. It was the church pastor who suggested that Mrs. Fernandez take her daughters for counseling. Mrs. Fernandez first confirmed that the agency would not inquire about her immigration status or that of the girls.

Mrs. Fernandez agreed to obtain outside help because she feels unable to control the situation. Also, she has begun to get severe headaches, to the point of asking around to see if there is a *senora* (folk healer also known as *curandera*). Meanwhile, she is drinking *manzanilla* (Chamomile) as an herbal medication.