

Moving beyond the Social Model of Disability by Engaging in Anti- Oppressive Social Work Practice

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Abstract : Considering that disability is universal and people with disabilities are part of all societies; that there is a connection between the disabled individual and the societal; and that it is society and social arrangements that disable people with impairments, contemporary disability discourse emphasizes the social model of disability to counter medical and rehabilitative models of disability. However, the social model does not go far enough in addressing the issues of oppression and inclusion. The authors indicate that the social model does not specifically or adequately denote the oppression of persons with disabilities, which is a central component of progressive social work practice with people with disabilities. The social model of disability does not go far enough in deconstructing disability and offering social workers, as well as people with disabilities a way of moving forward in terms of practice anchored in individual, familial and societal change. The social model of disability is expanded by incorporating principles of anti-oppression social work practice. Although the contextual analysis of the social model of disability is an important component there remains a need for social workers to provide service to individuals and their families, which will be illustrated through anti-oppressive practice (AOP). By applying an anti-oppressive model of practice to the above definitions, the authors not only deconstruct disability paradigms but illustrate how AOP offers a framework for social workers to engage with people with disabilities at the individual, familial and community levels of practice, promoting an emancipatory focus in working with people with disabilities. An anti- social- oppression social work model of disability connects the day-to-day hardships of people with disabilities to the direct consequence of oppression in the form of ableism. AOP theory finds many of its basic concepts within social-oppression theory and the social model of disability. It is often the case that practitioners, including social workers and psychologists, define people with disabilities' as having or being a problem with the focus placed upon adjustment and coping. A case example will be used to illustrate how an AOP paradigm offers social work a more comprehensive and critical analysis and practice model for social work practice with and for people with disabilities than the traditional medical model, rehabilitative and social model approaches.

Keywords : anti-oppressive practice, disability, people with disabilities, social model of disability

Conference Title : ICSW 2017 : International Conference on Social Work

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : May 18-19, 2017