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## ❖ PREFACE

The *Handbook of Social Work Practice with Vulnerable Populations* was first published in 1991. The first edition focused on the debilitating life circumstances, events, and conditions faced by large sectors of the client population served by social workers. The associated life stressors are either chronic or persistent, or they are acute and unexpected. An individual's impaired internal resources and/or external supports exacerbate these stressors. When these factors are present, social workers help people at risk of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social deterioration.

Historically, the profession of social work has been assigned the task of providing social services to populations with problems that impede their ability to become fully functioning and respected members of society, including homelessness, family and community violence, or mental illness. The societal response to the needs of these populations has become increasingly punitive and rejecting. While providing general knowledge and skills, most social work practice texts did not sufficiently examine the specialized knowledge base and the different assessment and intervention skills required to effectively help people with diverse life conditions, circumstances, and events.

To this end, the *Handbook* met a significant need. The book was adopted by advanced clinical and generalist programs. Moreover, the text received very positive reviews. A common chapter outline integrated the chapters. After the book's publication, I had a significant concern. The *Handbook* had not described how people survive and cope with such debilitating problems as hunger, homelessness, AIDS, family and community violence, and traumatic losses or vulnerabilities such as the consequences of mental illness, developmental difficulties, imprisonment, or job loss. By limiting