
Part 2

The Multilevel Substance Abuse Service System: A Context for Power, Policy, and Funding Decisions

This section introduces the reader to the larger context of empowerment practice and its influence on the nature and quality of substance abuse services, a topic seldom addressed by most practice texts. Three subsystems within this context, the substance abuse service system, are analyzed: the policy and funding subsystem, the community development subsystem, and the program subsystem. The goal is to highlight how factors within this multilevel environment affect direct practice at the staff and consumer level and in turn, how consumers, staff, administrators, community residents and leaders, policy analysts, researchers, and consultants can influence that larger environment. Case, organizational, and community examples illustrate how this dynamic, reciprocal process unfolds and how the empowerment concepts discussed in part 1 can be applied to enhance our understanding of this process.

Chapter 3 clarifies how aspects of the sociopolitical environment have led to substance abuse policy and funding reforms, both currently and historically, and the underlying value biases and priorities that are driving some of those reforms. Many of the consequences for clients and service providers are included in this analysis, particularly significant limitations in service accessibility imposed by managed care policies and the politicization of substance abuse issues by policy makers and the media. The consequences have been worse for consumers dependent on the inequitable public system of health care: the poor, women and children, those with physical and mental disabilities, and people of color. This chapter also summarizes emerging

funding trends that are more consistent with a humanistic and empowerment perspective, and then proposes an integrated services model with related strengths-based policy and funding supports that involve consumers actively in the planning and implementation of services.

In chapter 4, the focus is on the community's role as a second component of the substance abuse service system. Three empowerment-based roles for communities are emphasized: 1) mediation of antidrug norms; 2) broad-based community, economic, and political development; and 3) health promotion and resource development or systems change. Factors that influence those roles and community practice implications are summarized, including daily struggles that practitioners and preventionists encounter in defining and helping to mobilize communities. The specific knowledge areas and skills required for using community-oriented social work models are discussed and then applied to a community example to illustrate the underlying implications for empowerment.

In contrast, chapter 5 addresses the program subsystem, the third component of the substance abuse service system. Tools and procedures for helping consumers, staff, administrators, and communities to understand and assess the influence of both internal and external factors on empowerment and program outcomes are included. Internal factors involve structure, philosophy, and other program factors identified in chapter 1. External factors include a program's organizational auspices and the surrounding community. Chapter 5 also focuses on the process of organizational change and self-empowerment when various assessment tools are used, and includes organizational examples that clarify staff and consumer power-sharing roles and strategies for enhancing this process. Finally, addiction concepts are used to draw out the implications for organizational change based on a program's health or openness to change versus an addictive-enabling approach to managing/resisting change.