

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Work with communities has had an interesting place in social work practice. The approach to community work has been described as the process of assisting ordinary people to improve their own communities by collective action (Mayo, 2002). In doing this community workers attempt to understand situations in terms of not only who holds the power, but also whose interests are served by particular policies and practices. Although focusing on the community rather than the individual was seen to be positive move away from casework approaches which had been criticized, there was a danger that a community could be pathologies and experienced as the problem (Loney, 1983). This study aims to give an overview of different approaches to working with communities and the relationship of this to social work practice. By acknowledging different definitions it has highlighted that policies for working with communities can involve top-down approaches that seek to placate and pacify individuals and groups. This study concludes that community development approach seeks to engage with communities to ensure that needs are identified and that resources are demanded.

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