



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 29
Issue 2 *June*

Article 17

June 2002

Advocacy in the Human Services. Mark Ezell.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

(2002) "*Advocacy in the Human Services.* Mark Ezell.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 2 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol29/iss2/17>

This Book Note is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Mark Ezell, *Advocacy in the Human Services*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2001. \$ 43.50 paperback.

Many social work historians have stressed the contribution the profession has made to political advocacy. Some of the professions founders such as Jane Addams in the United States and Beatrice Webb in Britain were tireless in their efforts to promote positive social change through political engagement. The creation of public social services in both countries owed much to their work and to other social work advocates. In both countries, statutory child welfare, social assistance, mental health and other social programs were created, expanded and eventually regarded as the proper purview of professional social work intervention.

Today the situation has changed dramatically. Child welfare services are increasingly being assigned to law enforcement agencies, social work has little involvement in administering social assistance and even in mental health, new professions such as family therapy are playing a greater role than ever before. Although this change is the consequence of various factors, including the shortage of professionally qualified staff, budget cuts, declassification and the emergence of other professional and para-professional groups, social work's declining involvement in advocacy is a significant factor. Of course, disengagement from the political process has not only affected the profession's status but has weakened its ability to promote government programs that positively affect the welfare of clients. Although professional associations such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) do seek to lobby on social issues, their influence has been limited.

There is an urgent need for social work to revitalize its commitment to political advocacy. In addition to greater efforts by NASW and other professional social work associations, students need to be exposed to the issues. Opportunities for their involvement in political action should also be enhanced. It is this context that Mark Ezell's book should be viewed as an extremely useful tool. The book is well structured, easy to read and very informative. It will be particularly appreciated by students for setting out many different aspects of advocacy practice in a clear and succinct

way. Although the book appear to be written for students, it will also be of value to practitioners who will be interested in Ezell's argument that advocacy is a pervasive endeavor in social work and the human services. Advocacy is not, the author contends, a separate, peripheral field of social work practice for specialists who devote their professional lives to political work but an integral component of all social work practice. Edzell presents this argument in a way that will make sense to mainstream practitioners who have tended to view advocacy as a rabble rousing activity divorced from their everyday interests. His clear and eloquent presentation of the issues, and his insistence on ethical behavior will convince readers that advocacy is an integral component of all social work practice.

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with general issues of advocacy and includes a discussion of definitions, the need for advocacy and a very useful chapter on the ethics of advocacy. Part two is concerned with advocacy practice setting out the strategies and tactics that are routinely used in the field. The final section offers a discussion of the issues, dilemmas and challenges of advocacy. Part two of the book is particularly useful covering a wide range of advocacy activities. In addition to legislative advocacy, it contains chapters on legal advocacy, community advocacy and agency advocacy. Although Edzell regards political advocacy as just one of several forms of activism, his discussion is particularly appropriate to the political arena. Irrespective of the setting, the authors offers an in depth discussion of the importance of needs assessment, problem formulation, mapping decision systems and selecting strategies and tactics. These strategic issues many apply to all forms of advocacy but they are especially relevant to the social work profession which needs to engage in political action with greater force and commitment. Hopefully this excellent book will help the profession to do so in effective ways.

Chester Hartman (Ed.), *Challenges to Equality: Poverty and Race in America*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. \$ 68.95 hardcover, \$ 26.95 papercover.

Racial oppression and institutional discrimination in modern-day America is a real and all too tangible aspect of the social