



An Overview:  
**Direct  
Social Work  
Practice**

Jacob Campbell, Ph.D. LICSW at Heritage University

# Week 3 Plan

## Agenda

- How we help
- Orienting perspectives for social work practice
- Evidence-based practice
- Involuntary clients
- Ecological Systems Model
- Social work jobs and roles

## Learning Objectives

- ★ Identify and describe key roles, settings, and practice areas where social workers operate, including local examples.
- ★ Explain the purpose of social work and how the profession addresses prevention, restoration, and remediation.
- ★ Analyze the ecological systems model and orienting perspectives (e.g., strengths-based, cultural humility, trauma-informed) as frameworks for understanding client interactions.
- ★ Reflect on personal and professional alignment with the NASW Code of Ethics and its core values.
- ★ Describe strategies for building trust and promoting cooperation with mandated clients.



# Textbook Podcast

- How do you add it
- It does not replace the reading
- It can sensationalize content and misconstrue ideas





“You can close your eyes to the things you don't want to see, but you can't close your heart to the things you don't want to feel.”

—*Johnny Depp*





**Recall a time that you were experiencing an intense emotional difficulty and were comforted and supported**

- How did you "know" that person was supportive
- What behaviors and words did that person use that was helpful to you
- List these on your poster for future reference





**Prevention**

The timely provision of services to vulnerable persons, promoting social functioning before problems develop.

# The Purpose of Social Work

## Remediation

The elimination or amelioration of existing social problems.

## Restoration

Efforts to restore functioning that has been impaired by physical or mental difficulties

(Hepworth et al., 2017)



# Contemporary Influences on Social Work

- The need for self-care
- Pandemics (COVID-19, violence against Black and Brown people)
- Funding for services
- Technological advances
- Globalization
- Scientific changes
- The sociopolitical environment

(Heptworth et al., 2023)



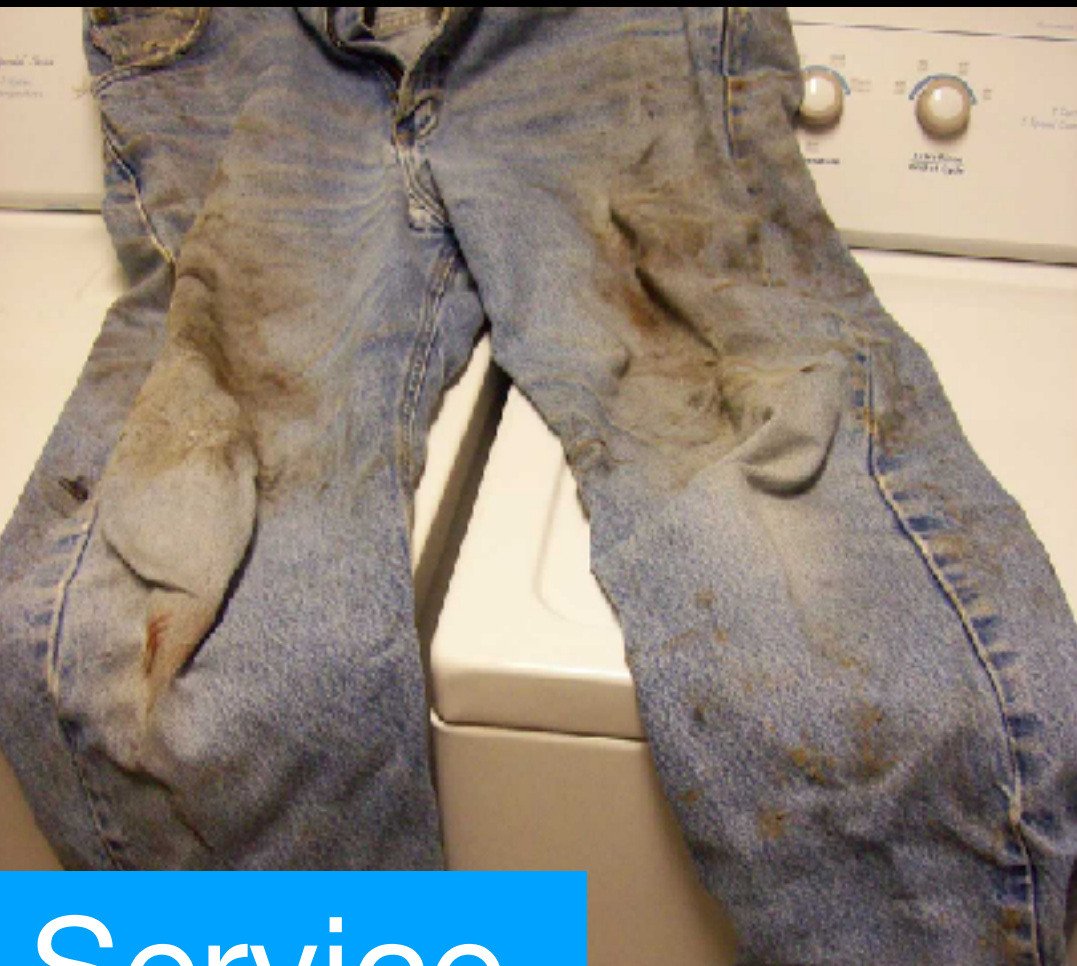


# NASW Core Values

Dignity & Worth



Competence

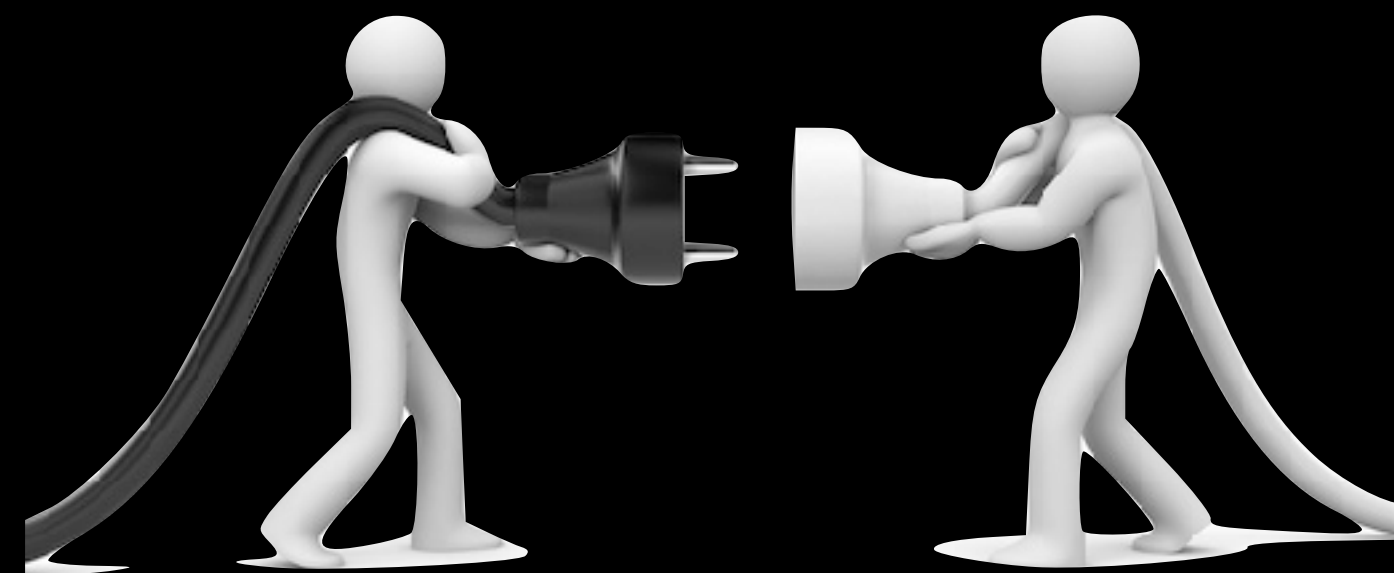


Service

Integrity



Relationships



**SOCIAL  
JUSTICE**





# NASW Core Values

(National Association of Social Workers, 2021)

## Ethical Principles

- **Service**: Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.
- **Social Justice**: Social workers challenge social injustice.
- **Dignity and Worth of the Person**: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.
- **Importance of Human Relationships**: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.
- **Integrity**: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner
- **Competence**: Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

With a partner,  
discuss these  
ethical principles  
and how they  
relate to your life or  
how you connect  
with it.





# Orienting Perspectives for Social Work Practice

Ecosystem Perspective

Strengths  
Perspective

Cultural  
Humility

Antioppressive  
Practice

Trauma-Informed  
Practice

Evidence-Informed  
Practice

Direct Practice

(Hepworth et al., 2023)



Embedded in  
interactions with their  
social and physical  
environments

Collaborative  
problem  
solving

Self-  
awareness

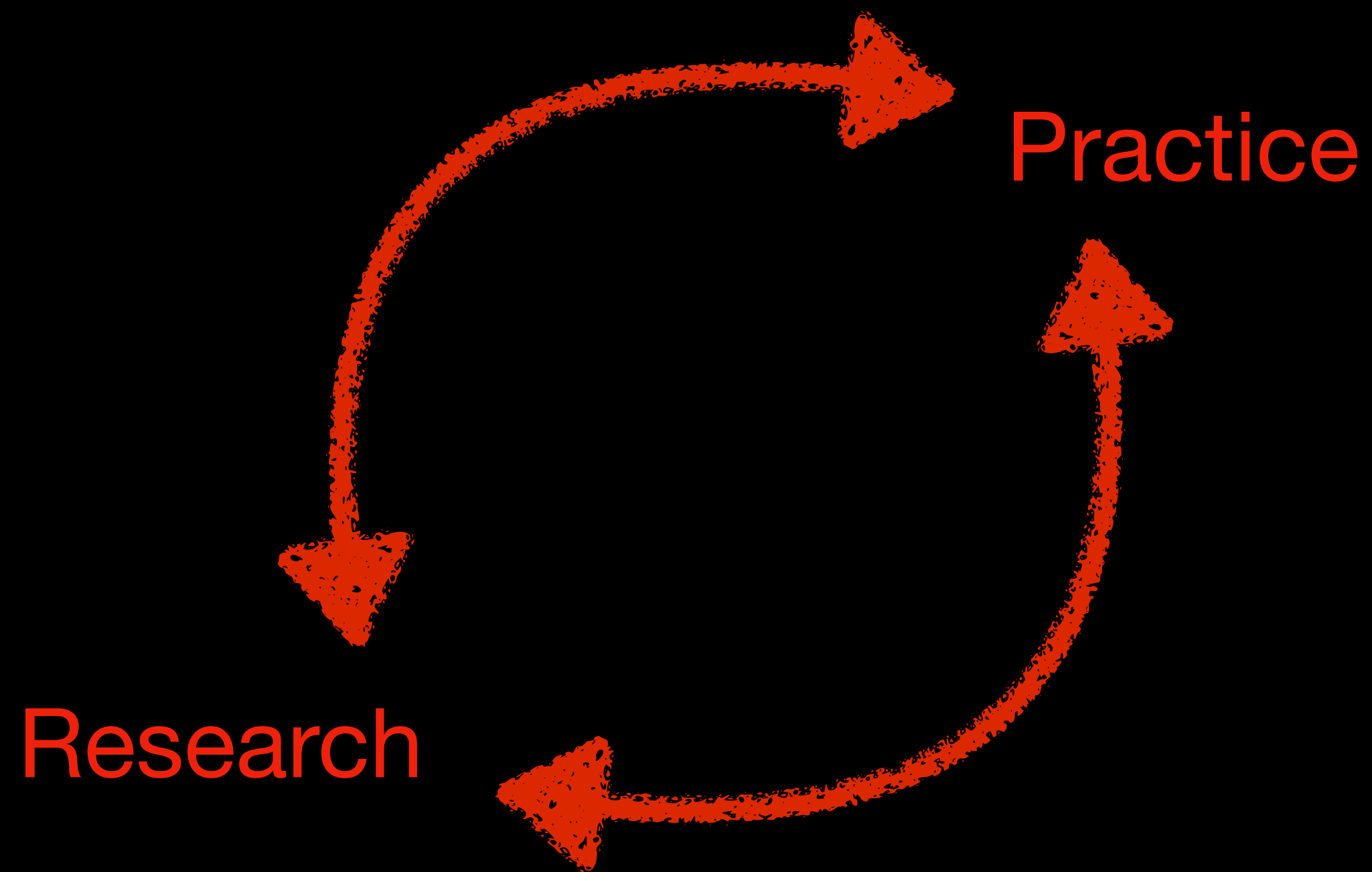
# Principles for Practice

(Hepworth et al., 2023)





# Research-Informed Practice and Practice-Informed Research



- ★ Choosing effective interventions
- ★ More effective individual practice
- ★ Development of profession

(Hepworth, et al. 2023)



# Evidence-Based Practice

“Focuses not just on knowing about the intervention but on acquiring the skills necessary to carry it out effectively”



(Hepworth, et al. 2017, p. 19)



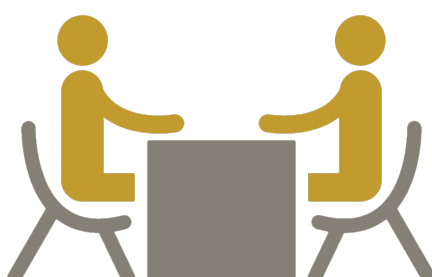


## Common Elements Approach

In evidence-based practice, examining commonalities across effective interventions.

## Common Factors Approach

In evidence-based practice, emphasizing broad factors shared by different intervention approaches, such as strength of relationship or alliance.



# Deciding when and how to intervene with clients in social work practice

- Increase decision-making
- Assess environment
- Sensitive to diversity
- Evidence-based practices
- Critical thinking

(Hepworth et al., 2017)





# Define Critical Thinking Skills and Apply Them to Practice

## Universal Intellectual Standards

(Paul & Elder, 2014)

- ★ **Purpose**: The reason or goal behind the thinking should be clearly stated, relevant, and justifiable.
- ★ **Question**: The central issue or problem being addressed should be clear, unbiased, and framed to capture the complexity of the matter.
- ★ **Information**: The data, evidence, or experiences used should be accurate, relevant, sufficient, and address the complexities of the issue.
- ★ **Concepts**: The ideas, theories, or principles used should be clearly defined, well-explained, and applied appropriately.
- ★ **Assumptions**: The beliefs or ideas taken for granted should be identified, examined for validity, and not left unquestioned.
- ★ **Inferences**: The reasoning that connects evidence to conclusions should be logical, coherent, and clearly explained.
- ★ **Point of View**: The perspective from which the issue is considered should recognize alternative viewpoints and engage with relevant objections.
- ★ **Implications**: The consequences and outcomes of the reasoning should include awareness of the potential effects, both intended and unintended.



# Types of Clients

legally  
mandated

voluntary

non voluntary





# Involuntary Clients

- Acknowledge to yourself that the client is indeed voluntary.
- Try to put yourself in the clients shoes.
- Label and help the clients express their negative feelings.
- Clarify your role for the client.
- Know the limits of your authority, and in effect power over the client.

10 Tips for  
Working with  
Mandated Clients

(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)



# Involuntary Clients

- Give them as many choices as possible including minor options.
- Figure out what you can do for the client that he or she wants.
- Use pro-social modeling and reinforcement in order to encourage and promote client pro-social values and behaviors.
- Allow the client to gain trust in you and in the intervention process.
- Accept the fact that, ultimately the client has the right to choose whether or not to cooperate with you.

10 Tips for  
Working with  
Mandated Clients

(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)



# Applying a Ecological Systems Framework

## The Ramirez Case

In small groups, work through the Ramirez case twice. First pass: what in her environment is working against this family? Second pass: what is working for them?

Marta Ramirez was referred to child welfare services because her two elementary school-age children had more than seven days of unexcused absences from school during the semester, the standard for educational neglect in her state. When Tobias, a child welfare social worker, met with Mrs. Ramirez, he found that the children had missed a similar amount of time when they had previously lived in another state, as well as earlier, before they had emigrated without documents from Mexico. There had not been any earlier investigations, however, as the legal standard for educational neglect was different in the previous state. Mrs. Ramirez noted that her children had been frequently ill with “flu and asthma.” She said that the children did not feel comfortable at the school. They felt that the teachers were mean to them because they were Hispanic. In addition, Mrs. Ramirez had sustained a back injury on her job that limited her ability to get out of bed some mornings. As an immigrant without documents, Mrs. Ramirez was ineligible for the surgery that she needed to alleviate her condition. She also expressed fears related to her undocumented immigrant status. Finally, she acknowledged experiencing depression and anxiety.

Tobias shared with Mrs. Ramirez the reason for the referral under statute and asked for her perspective on school attendance. He explained that child welfare workers are called on to assist families in having their children educated. He also asked about how things were going for Mrs. Ramirez and her family in their community. In so doing, Tobias explained his dual roles of responding to the law violation and helping families address issues of concern to them.

(Hepworth et al., 2023, p. 14)



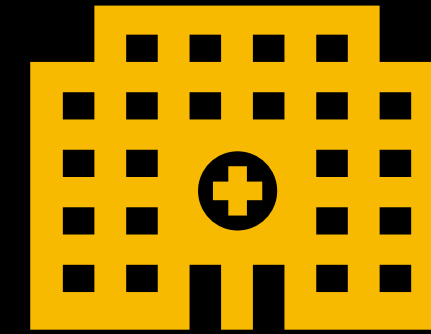




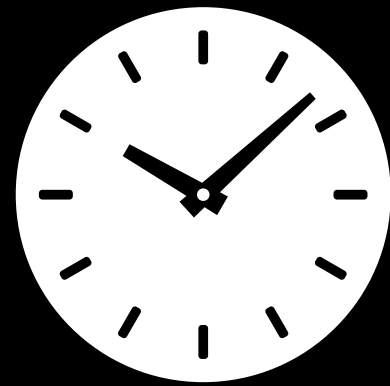
Work with Immigrants



Housing or  
Financial Services



Hospital and Health  
Services



Working with  
Aging Clients



School Social  
Work



Child Welfare



Child, Youth, and  
Family Services



Chemical and Substance  
Abuse Services



Mental Health Services

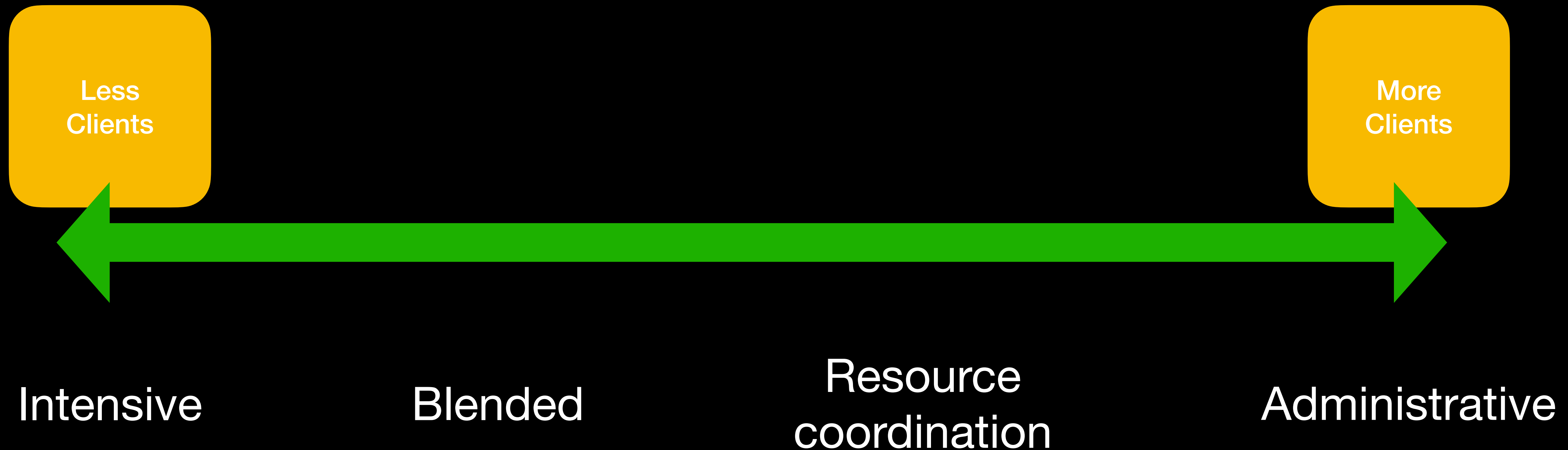


Disability  
Services

# Direct Social Work Practice



# Levels of Case Management



(Summers, 2015)



# Social Worker Roles and Functions

## Direct Service Provider

- ★ Individual casework or counseling
- ★ Couples or family therapy
- ★ Group work services
- ★ Educator, disseminator of information

## System Developer

- ★ Program developer
- ★ Planner
- ★ Policy and procedure developer
- ★ Advocate

## System Linkage Roles

- ★ Broker
- ★ Case manager, coordinator
- ★ Mediator, arbitrator, advocate

## System Maintenance Roles

- ★ Organizational analyst
- ★ Facilitator, expediter
- ★ Team member
- ★ Consultant / consultee
- ★ Supervisor

## Researcher & Research Consumer

(Hepworth, et al., 2017)

