



Examination Preparation Booklet

Caseworker Series for Counties,
Municipalities and Non-Teaching
School District Personnel

Booklet No. 4



CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, INC.
LOCAL 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

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Booklet #4

Caseworker Series for Counties, Municipalities and Non-Teaching School District Personnel

The CSEA Examination Preparation Booklet Series is designed to help members prepare for New York State and local government civil service examinations. This booklet is designed for practice purposes only and its contents may not conform to that of any particular civil service examination.

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CASEWORKER PROMOTIONAL SERIES

This booklet is designed to assist CSEA members working in counties and municipalities who are taking promotional exams in the Caseworker Examiner series. Because these exams are decentralized, we can't know for sure which topics will be covered on the exam in your geographic area. It's important that you check your exam announcement carefully to determine which subjects are going to be included in the exam. This booklet contains review work in the areas most commonly tested:

Principles and Practices of Social Casework Interviewing Supervision

Sometimes exams in this series include sections on Preparing Written Material or understanding and Interpreting Written Material. If your exam includes one or both of these, you may want to refer to booklets of the same title available through CSEA, Inc. They contain practice questions in these areas with full explanations, and may be ordered from CSEA/LEAP (call 518-785-4669 for an order form).

It's best to spread your studying out over a fairly long period of time, if that's possible. Try to answer the questions in this booklet twice, leaving a few weeks in between each attempt. Reviewing the questions and answers carefully will help you understand why you've missed certain questions. On the following page is a checklist to help you analyze any patterns you may have that could lower your score.

Good luck!

DIAGNOSTIC WORKSHEET FOR THE CASEWORKER SERIES

For each question you answered incorrectly, go through the checklist below and place the number of the question missed next to each trait exhibited. This is designed to give you more insight into why you answered a problem incorrectly. By working to improve your abilities in these areas, you should notice an improvement in your scores.

Question Number(s)

Trait Exhibited

1. I jumped to an incorrect conclusion.
2. I misinterpreted what the question was asking.
3. I had little confidence I could solve the problem.
4. I didn't break the problem down into more easily understood parts.
5. I knew I couldn't solve the problem, so I gave up and guessed.
6. I made a careless error.
7. I "followed a hunch" without checking it through.
8. I didn't step back and evaluate the reasonableness of my solution.
9. I worked mechanically because I knew it was hopeless.
10. I didn't check my work.
11. I became bored and frustrated, and I took a guess.
12. I was inconsistent in my interpretation of parts of the question.
13. I didn't try to visualize the problem.
14. I misinterpreted part of the question.
15. I tried to answer the question without realizing that my understanding of a section of the question was vague.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF SOCIAL CASEWORK

There are usually fifteen questions on this section of the examination. We've included twenty questions, some of them former exam questions, for you to practice with. Explanations are provided in the Self Study Guide at the back of the booklet.

For each of the twenty questions listed, select the best of the four possible choices given.

1. A caseworker is faced with a large caseload. To deal with this problem when working with clients, the caseworker should:
 - a. be as brief as possible
 - b. be as empathetic as possible
 - c. be as systematic as possible
 - d. act as quickly as possible

2. With the exception of an emergency, during the first one or two interviews with a client, it is most important to:
 - a. develop the trust of the client
 - b. inform the client of all of the services available to him or her
 - c. begin developing a plan of action
 - d. assess with the client his or her problems

3. When setting goals with a client, it is important to define the goals carefully. Which of the following is not an example of a well defined goal?
 - a. John will acquire a high school diploma
 - b. John will acquire good parenting skills
 - c. John will acquire a full time job
 - d. John will earn enough money per month to not require public assistance

4. When working with clients, goals, objectives and tasks must be identified. One effective way to do this is to use a contract. Which of the following is not an essential ingredient of a contract?
 - a. a time frame for the contract
 - b. a contingency plan for the contract
 - c. a description of the responsibilities of the caseworker
 - d. the schedule for interviews

5. A client for whom you are trying to find a job placement states that he freezes up and is unable to speak at job interviews. Of the following, the most effective way of helping with this problem is to:
 - a. reassure him that many people have this problem
 - b. suggest to him what you would do in this situation
 - c. tell him what he should say
 - d. role play some job interviews with him

6. When handling large caseloads, it is important to manage time efficiently. The best way to do this is:
 - a. prioritize tasks to be done based on the amount of time necessary to do them
 - b. make a list of everything that you have to do that day
 - c. focus on knowing all the steps that need to be done to complete tasks
 - d. arrange tasks according to their level of priority

7. Of the following, which situation has been most commonly responsible for bringing cases of sexual abuse of children to light?
 - a. an older sibling reporting the abuse
 - b. a witness reporting the abuse
 - c. finding symptoms of physical force on the child
 - d. the confession of the abuser

8. When interviewing a child who has been a victim of parental sexual or physical abuse, it is essential:
 - a. to interview the child without the offending parent
 - b. to not judge the child at all
 - c. to be honest with the child
 - d. all of the above

9. According to the most recent findings, which of the following is not true?
 - a. batterers were often abused children
 - b. battered women are often masochists
 - c. battered women often believe their situation is uncommon
 - d. battered women often blame themselves for the batterings

10. Of the following, which is not a potential indicator that a child is being physically abused?
 - a. bruises at different stages of resolution
 - b. ingratiating behavior around parents
 - c. a parent that will not let a child talk freely without him or her being there
 - d. siblings in the same family that care about each other very much

11. You know you will be leaving your job in three months because you have accepted a better paying position in another unit. It is best to:
 - a. not tell the client until shortly before you leave, so you won't disrupt the service plan
 - b. give the client at least several sessions advance notice and discuss the termination from time to time
 - c. tell the client about your transfer only after you know who will be picking up the case
 - d. not let the client know in advance, in case he/she becomes angry with you

12. You are interviewing a young client who seriously underestimates the amount of education and training he will require for a certain occupation. For you to tell the client that you think he is mistaken would, generally, be considered:
 - a. inadvisable, because workers should not express their opinions to clients
 - b. inadvisable, because clients have the right to self-determination
 - c. advisable, because clients should generally be alerted to their misconceptions
 - d. advisable, because workers should convince clients to adopt a proper life style

13. All definitions of social casework include certain major assumptions. Of the following, the one which is not considered a major assumption is that:
 - a. the individual and society are interdependent
 - b. social forces influence behavior and attitudes, affording opportunity for self-development and contribution to the world in which we live
 - c. reconstruction of the total personality and reorganization of the total environment are specific goals
 - d. the client is a responsible participant at every step in the solution of his or her problems

14. There is general agreement among experts in the field that, when dealing with a client or handling a case, a caseworker should:
 - a. place emphasis on the objective aspects, directing his or her work primarily to the physical factors in the client that indicate need for change
 - b. place emphasis on the environmental factors, especially those surrounding the client which have caused the client to be in his or her present state
 - c. give attention not only to the environmental factors and social experiences, but also to the client's feelings about, and reactions to, his or her experiences
 - d. consider each factor in the case as a separate unit after carefully distinguishing between the truly environmental and the truly emotional factors

15. A young woman about to be admitted to the hospital refuses to be admitted because she says there will be no one to take care of her three young children while she is hospitalized. You speak to the physician who has examined her and he declares that immediate hospitalization is an absolute necessity. The action you should take first is to:
- suggest that the patient get a neighbor to care for the children
 - suggest that the children be admitted to the hospital also
 - look for the children's father and urge him to care for the children
 - tell the patient that you will be able to arrange for the care of her children while she is hospitalized
16. The caseworker should attempt to fully prepare himself or herself before visiting a client. All of the following should be included in the caseworker's preparations except:
- obtain all relevant information from the client's medical history
 - try to perceive how the client will feel
 - own up to your own prejudices
 - decide on a solution to the client's problems
17. A caseworker makes a practice of constantly reassuring clients with serious and complex problems by making such statements as, "I'm sure you'll be well soon", or, "Everything will be all right". Of the following, the most likely result of such a practice is to:
- encourage the client and make him or her feel that the worker knows what the client is going through
 - give the client much needed confidence by the use of positive affirmations
 - confuse the client and make him or her doubt the worker's ability to help
 - help the client to be more realistic about his or her situation and the probability that it will improve
18. As a worker in a family services unit, you have been assigned to follow up a case folder recently forwarded from the protective-diagnostic unit. After making appropriate clerical notations in your records such as name of client and date of receipt, which of the following would be the most appropriate step to take?
- confer with your supervisor
 - read and review all reports included in the case folder
 - arrange to visit with the client at his home
 - confer with representatives of any other agencies that have been in contact with the client

19. During a conference with an adolescent boy at a juvenile detention center, you find out for the first time that he would prefer to be placed in foster care rather than return to his natural parents. To uncover the reasons why the boy dislikes his own home, of the following, it would be most advisable for you to:
- a. ask the boy a number of short, simple questions about his feelings
 - b. encourage the boy to talk freely and express his feelings as best he can
 - c. interview the parents and find out why the boy doesn't want to live at home
 - d. administer a battery of psychological tests in order to make an assessment of the boy's problems
20. A foster mother complains to a caseworker that a ten year old boy placed with her is over-aggressive and unmanageable. The worker, knowing that the boy has been placed unsuccessfully several times before, constantly reassures the foster mother that the boy is improving steadily. For the caseworker to do this is generally:
- a. good practice, because the foster mother may accept the professional opinion of the worker and keep the boy
 - b. poor practice, because the foster mother may be discouraged from discussing the boy's problems with the worker
 - c. good practice, because the foster mother may feel guilty if she gives up the boy when he is improving
 - d. poor practice, because the boy should not remain with a foster mother who complains about his behavior

INTERVIEWING

There are usually fifteen questions on this section of the exam. We've included twenty questions, some of them former exam questions, for you to practice with. Explanations are provided in the Self Study Guide at the back of the booklet.

For each of the twenty questions listed below, select the best of the four possible choices given.

1. You have suspected that one of your clients is a victim of domestic violence. During an interview she tells you that her husband has been battering her. She begins to cry and explains that she has fought back at times. Of the following, which would be the best response?
 - a. "You must feel ashamed, but there is no need to feel that way."
 - b. "Do you feel ashamed about fighting back?"
 - c. "When you mentioned fighting back, you seemed to get upset."
 - d. either choice a or choice b

2. Which of the following behaviors would be the worst to display during an interview?
 - a. being unfocused
 - b. displaying uncertainty of department regulations
 - c. being judgmental
 - d. acting like you are overloaded with work

3. While interviewing, it is most important to:
 - a. ignore your own values and past experiences
 - b. utilize your own values and past experiences in recording information
 - c. explain your own values to the clients
 - d. be aware of your own values and experiences and how they might influence the interview

4. There are four stages during an interview: preparation, opening, conducting and closing. All but one of the following are steps included in the closing stages of an interview:
 - a. verifying information
 - b. stating the continuing responsibilities of the client and the worker
 - c. summarizing
 - d. describing any additional steps that may need to be taken

5. Two important skills sometimes used during an interview are giving behavioral feedback and confronting. What is the key difference between the two?
- they are actually two different names for the same process
 - confronting is done aggressively while giving behavioral feedback is not
 - behavioral feedback merely describes action, while confronting evaluates the consequences of behavior
 - behavioral feedback requires equipment in order to test the response of the client
6. All of the following are examples of flight defenses except:
- rationalization
 - talking about problems excessively
 - using threatening language
 - withdrawing
7. Which of the following are effective techniques for handling difficult behaviors during an interview?
- Focusing on non-defensive behaviors.
 - Respecting silence; letting yourself and the client get emotions under control.
 - Giving advice.
 - Avoiding upsetting issues.
- Which of the following is true?
- only I, II and III
 - only choice III
 - only choices I and II
 - all of the choices
8. Of the following, the most important characteristic for an interviewer to have is:
- a probing intellect
 - sincerity
 - conversational skills
 - a sense of humor
9. The information sought in an interview is sometimes fixed in advance by a printed form or specific instructions from an interviewer's supervisor. Because of this it is important to:
- use your own judgement as to whether or not these questions should be used in the interview
 - have these questions in front of you so you can read them and not miss any important points when interviewing

- c. make a copy of the form and give it to the client to complete
 - d. be thoroughly acquainted with the purpose behind each question and understand its significance
10. Congruence in effective communication refers to:
- a. the speaker and the listener having the same opinion
 - b. the speaker being able to express exactly how he or she feels inside
 - c. agreement between the communicator and the agency he or she works for
 - d. the listener's ability to understand what is being said
11. When an initial interview is being conducted, one way of starting is to explain the purpose of the interview to the client. The practice of starting the interview with such an explanation is generally:
- a. desirable because the client can then understand why the interview is necessary and what will be accomplished by it
 - b. desirable because it creates the rapport which is necessary to successful interviewing
 - c. undesirable because time will be saved by starting off directly with the questions which must be asked
 - d. undesirable because the interviewer should have the choice of starting an interview in any manner he or she prefers
12. A caseworker is interviewing a client who has just had a severe emotional shock because of an assault on her by a mugger. Of the following, the approach which would generally be most helpful to the client is for the worker to:
- a. comfort the client and encourage her to talk about the assault
 - b. sympathize with the client but refuse to discuss the assault with her
 - c. tell the client to control her emotions and think positively about the future
 - d. proceed with the interview in an impersonal and unemotional manner
13. You have been assigned to interview the mother of a five-year old son in her home to get information useful in locating the child's absent father. During the interview, you notice many serious bruises on the child's arms and legs, which the mother explains are due to the child's clumsiness. Of the following, your best course of action is to:
- a. accept the mother's explanation and concentrate on getting information which will help you to locate the father
 - b. advise the mother to have the child examined for a medical condition that may be causing his clumsiness
 - c. make a surprise visit to the mother later, to see whether someone is beating the child
 - d. complete your interview with the mother and report the case to your supervisor for investigation of possible child abuse

14. You are interviewing an elderly woman who lives alone to determine her eligibility for homemaker service at public expense. Though obviously frail and in need of this service, the woman is not completely cooperative, and, during the interview, is often silent for a considerable period of time. Of the following, the best way for you to deal with these periods of silence is to:
- realize that she may be embarrassed to have to apply for homemaker service at public expense, and emphasize her right to this service
 - postpone the interview and make an appointment with her for a later date, when she may be better able to cooperate
 - explain to the woman that you have many clients to interview and need her cooperation to complete the interview quickly
 - recognize that she is probably hiding something and begin to ask questions to draw her out
15. In interviewing, the practice of verbally anticipating a client's answers to questions is generally:
- desirable because it is effective and economical when it is necessary to interview large numbers of clients
 - desirable because many clients have language difficulties
 - undesirable because it is the right of every client to answer however he or she wishes
 - undesirable because clients may tend to agree with the answer proposed by the interviewer even when the answer is not entirely correct
16. "Being a good listener" is an interviewing technique which, if applied properly, is desirable primarily because it:
- catches the client more easily in misrepresentations and lies
 - conserves the energies of the interviewer
 - encourages the client to talk about his or her personal affairs without restraint
 - encourages the giving of information which is generally more reliable and complete
17. Assume that you have been assigned to conduct a follow-up interview with a primary witness. The one of the following which is most important in arranging such an interview is to:
- keep the witness cooperative
 - conduct the matter in secret
 - allow the witness to determine where and when the interview takes place
 - conduct the interview as soon as possible to insure a strong case

18. In order to get the maximum amount of information from a client during an interview, of the following, it is most important for the caseworker to communicate to the client the feeling that the caseworker is:
- interested in the client
 - a figure of authority
 - efficient in his work habits
 - sympathetic to the client's life style
19. You find that many of the clients you interview are verbally abusive and unusually hostile to you. Of the following, the most appropriate action for you to take first is to:
- review your interviewing techniques and consider whether you may be provoking these clients
 - act in a more authoritative manner when interviewing troublesome clients
 - tell these clients that you will not be able to help them unless their troublesome behavior ceases
 - disregard the clients' troublesome behavior during the interview
20. Casework interviewing is always directed to the client and his or her situation. The one of the following which is the most accurate statement with respect to the proper focus of an interview is that the:
- caseworker limits the client to concentration on objective data
 - client is generally permitted to talk about facts and feelings with no direction from the caseworker
 - main focus in casework interviews is on feelings rather than facts
 - caseworker is responsible for helping the client focus on any material which seems to be related to his or her problems or difficulties

SUPERVISION

This is an area often tested on the caseworker series. There are usually fifteen questions on this section. We've included twenty questions, some of them former exam questions, for you to practice with. An answer key and explanations are provided in the Self Study Guide at the back of the booklet. Before you begin, we suggest you read the following section on "Points to Keep In Mind When Answering Supervisory Exam Questions"

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ANSWERING SUPERVISORY EXAM QUESTIONS

1. Avoid inconsistency
2. Always give employees a chance to explain their actions before taking disciplinary action. Don't allow too much time for a "cooling off" period before disciplining an employee
3. Be specific in your criticisms
4. Delegate responsibility wisely
5. Do not argue or lose your temper, and avoid being impatient
6. Promote mutual respect and be fair, impartial and open-minded
7. Keep in mind that asking for employees' advice and input can be helpful in decision making
8. If you make promises, keep them
9. Always keep the feelings, abilities, dignity and motives of your staff in mind
10. Remain loyal to your employees' interests
11. Never criticize employees in front of others
12. Admit mistakes. Don't place blame on your employees, or make excuses
13. Be reasonable in your expectations, give complete instructions, and establish well planned goals
14. Be knowledgeable about work details and procedures, but avoid becoming bogged down in detail
15. Avoid supervising too closely or too loosely. Employees should also view you as an approachable supervisor
16. Remember that employees' personal problems may affect job performance, but become involved only when appropriate
17. Work to develop workers, and to instill a feeling of cooperation while working toward mutual goals

18. Do not overpraise or underpraise, be properly appreciative
19. Never ask an employee to discipline someone for you
20. A complaint, even if unjustified, should be taken seriously

Good luck!

1. Which of the following is not considered good supervisory practice?
 - a. to be accessible to staff you supervise at all times
 - b. to be firm and positive when taking disciplinary action
 - c. to help workers set professional goals
 - d. all of the above choices are good supervisory practices

2. When planning the activities of his or her unit, a supervisor should:
 - I. always work on the planning alone or with a supervisor
 - II. assign more difficult tasks to workers who have been in the unit longer
 - III. involve the employees in the planning as much as possible
 - IV. decide in advance how instructions are to be given to staff

Which of the following is correct?

- a. only choices I and III
 - b. only choice IV
 - c. only choices I, II and IV
 - d. only choices III and IV

3. You have been carefully observing one of the workers under your supervision. You notice she is losing weight and becoming increasingly irritable. She shows little interest in the job and seems to have difficulty concentrating after lunch. When given assignments she complains of being very tired. It is reasonable to assume that:
 - a. she is overwhelmed by her job
 - b. she is having difficult emotional problems
 - c. she is probably having problems with substance abuse
 - d. none of the above

4. One of the caseworkers in your unit comes to you with a complaint about a form. You feel the complaint is inconsequential and petty. Of the following, you should:
 - a. point out that the worker is complaining about an insignificant matter
 - b. ask if the worker would like a counseling session
 - c. tell the worker to discuss the problem with your supervisor
 - d. take the complaint seriously

5. During a private discussion with a caseworker you stress that you are unhappy with her attitude. This action was:
 - a. correct because some disciplinary measure needed to be taken
 - b. incorrect because you most likely have hurt her feelings
 - c. incorrect because you were not specific enough in your criticism
 - d. correct because the only way to solve problems is to confront them

6. The administrator of your unit unnecessarily procrastinates on many items that need to be completed. The result is that the six caseworkers that you supervise are constantly flooded with a great deal of last minute work and very tight deadlines. Without consulting you, one of the caseworkers approaches the administrator and explains that the caseworkers are under a great deal of pressure because of these management methods. The action of the caseworker was:
- correct because you weren't aware of the situation
 - incorrect because it would make the administrator angry
 - incorrect because the caseworker should have first discussed the situation with you, instead of ignoring the chain of command
 - correct because someone had to do something about the situation
7. Lax supervision has been blamed on the unwillingness of many supervisors to be critical of their employees when it is warranted. The main reason for this unwillingness is:
- ignorance of new management and supervisory techniques
 - the desire to avoid unpleasant situations and the wish to be liked by employees
 - incompetence on the job
 - inability of supervisors to catch mistakes that are made
8. A caseworker you supervise made an error in judgement that resulted in additional inconvenience to one of her clients and to one of the other caseworkers. Although the incident occurred several weeks ago, she is still depressed about it and mentions it regularly. As her supervisor, it would be best for you to:
- ignore the matter
 - let her know that everyone makes mistakes
 - encourage her to get psychiatric help
 - praise her work
9. Caseworkers are sometimes faced with working conditions that can negatively affect the delivery of services. As a supervisor, which of the following conditions could you most directly influence to alleviate pressure on your workers?
- conflicts between caseworkers
 - large caseloads
 - frequently changing procedures and regulations
 - deadlines

10. One of the caseworkers you supervise comes to you and complains of sexual harassment by your supervisor. The caseworker has frequently complained about minor issues in the six months she's been with your unit. You've known your supervisor for thirteen years, and respect him a great deal. Of the following, it would be best to:
- firmly let the caseworker know what a serious allegation she is bringing against your supervisor
 - let the caseworker know you will take her concerns seriously
 - call your supervisor and give him a chance to prepare a defense
 - inform the caseworker that she'd better have concrete proof for a charge of this nature
11. One of the caseworkers you supervise complains to you that his caseload is heavier than the other caseworkers'. You should first:
- ask him if he has been having problems of a personal nature recently
 - calmly state that the caseloads are divided fairly
 - calmly ask him for proof
 - review the caseloads to see if he is correct
12. During lunch you overhear two of the caseworkers you supervise arguing about a minor detail concerning one of their clients. It would be best for you to:
- do nothing
 - privately call in the caseworker who handles the case and ask him to discuss the matter with you
 - stop at their table and ask if they mind if you join the discussion
 - call a staff meeting and mention that you would be happy to resolve any disputes that may exist among the staff
13. Your supervisor has issued orders changing working procedures that the seven caseworkers you supervise disagree with. It would be best for you to tell them that:
- you don't like the changes either, but your supervisor wouldn't listen to you
 - they should write a memo detailing their complaints to your supervisor
 - nothing can be done, even though you feel that they are correct
 - you will discuss their objections with your supervisor

14. The appraisal of employees and their performance is an integral part of the supervisory job. There is wide agreement that several basic principles must be taken into account by supervisors involved in the appraisal process in order to perform this function correctly. The one of the following statements that least represents a basic principle of the appraisal process is:
- appraisals should be based more on performance of definite tasks than on personality considerations
 - appraisal by long-term potential should rely heavily on subjective judgement of that potential
 - appraisal involves the use of value judgements by the supervisor and does, therefore, require reference to pre-established standards
 - appraisal should aim at emphasizing employees' strengths rather than weaknesses
15. You have found it necessary to return a report completed by one of the caseworkers you supervise so that several changes can be made. The caseworker objects to making these changes. The most appropriate action for you to take first is to:
- inform the caseworker that he or she is free to object to your supervisor
 - ask if the caseworker has carefully read your proposed changes
 - calmly state that your decision is final, and further discussion will most likely be useless
 - allow the caseworker to present his or her objections against making the changes
16. You work in a small, narrow office. Two factions are developing in your office over the issue of smoking versus nonsmoking. There is no official policy in your department. There are disagreements over seating arrangements and how often windows should be opened. The bad feelings are beginning to affect the work of the office. Of the following, it would be best to:
- study the situation and then make a decision on your own
 - speak to each employee privately first, and then make a decision
 - call a meeting, allow each person to present their point of view, and then put each issue to a vote
 - call a meeting to attempt to first work out a compromise that everyone can live with
17. Suppose that you are requested to transmit to the caseworkers in your bureau an order curtailing certain privileges that they have been enjoying. You anticipate that your staff may resent curtailment of such privileges. Of the following, the best action for you to take is to:
- impress upon your staff that an order is an order and must be obeyed or else
 - attempt to explain to your staff the probable reasons for curtailing their privileges
 - excuse the curtailment of privileges by saying that the welfare of your staff was evidently not considered
 - warn your staff that violation of an order may be considered sufficient cause for immediate dismissal

18. One of the eleven caseworkers you supervise has been occasionally smoking legal herbal cigarettes at her desk. One employee, who smokes regular cigarettes, complains to you about it. You personally don't mind the smell, which is mild, and there is no policy in your office about smoking, as long as the substance is legal. Of the following, it would be best to:
- a. assure the employee who complained that you will stop the herbal cigarette smoking at once
 - b. call in the employee who is smoking the herbal cigarettes and ask her to stop smoking herbal cigarettes immediately
 - c. explain to the employee who complained that you have received complaints from others about her own smoking habits
 - d. wait a few days to see if anyone else complains to you about the smoking before making a decision about what to do
19. I. Good supervisors should always be able to resolve conflicts among the people they supervise.
II. Routine procedures can often relieve the supervisor of the need to check the accuracy of the work done in his or her unit.
III. Good supervision allows for different treatment of different workers.
IV. "Crisis Management" is considered one of the most effective management practices today.

Which of the following is correct?

- a. only choices I, III and IV are correct
 - b. only choice I is correct
 - c. only choices III and IV are correct
 - d. only choice III is correct
20. Suppose a new caseworker, still on probation, is placed under your supervision and refuses to do a job you ask her to do. What is the first thing you should do?
- a. explain that you are the supervisor and she must follow your instructions
 - b. tell her she may be suspended if she refuses
 - c. ask someone else to do the job, and rate her accordingly
 - d. ask for her reason for objecting to the request

SELF-STUDY GUIDE
FOR
CASEWORKER PROMOTIONAL SERIES

SELF-STUDY GUIDE

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF SOCIAL CASEWORK

As you answered these questions, it's very likely that you noticed that the questions often had a "textbook style" that may have not related much to your actual experiences on the job. This is, for better or worse, the way the exams in this field are currently structured. By practicing with the questions, and reading the explanations thoroughly, you should be able to answer most of these questions correctly on the actual exam. If you find you are still having trouble, we suggest you consult basic college textbooks in the subject areas that will be covered on your exam. (Fortunately, many of the questions require primarily common sense and good interpersonal skills.) We hope that you will be able to obtain from this booklet more of a sense of what they're looking for, and an improvement in your ability to approach and analyze exam questions.

1. The answer is c. It's critical to remember when answering exam questions that you must pick the best of the four choices you've been given. This means that sometimes the answer you'd most like won't even be one of the choices, so you'll have to pick the "least rotten" choice. At other times, like in this case, you may be forced to select between several choices that seem reasonable. Here, there is one answer that would be considered the best of the four. It doesn't matter that the other choices are also true. You're looking for the best answer. This can be a frustrating aspect of taking exams, and it's good to get used to looking for the best choice. In this case, it's true that it's good to not waste time when you have a large caseload, but clients should be given enough time to understand the objectives of the interview, and it's not clear if that is what is meant here, so choice a is not a good choice. It's important to be empathetic, choice b, but this does not directly address the issue of handling a large caseload, which is raised in the question. Choice c, the ability to act quickly, is a possible choice, but if a caseworker is not systematic, acting quickly will not be highly beneficial. One could counter that if one is not quick, being systematic will not do much good either. This is true. But this is the world of exams, and you need to choose between being systematic and being quick. Being systematic is interpreted as being a more positive attribute in this case, as "acting as quickly as possible" could also imply a hurried or rushed attitude on the part of the caseworker. If you missed this question, don't worry, you'll have plenty of practice before you've finished this booklet.

2. The answer is d. Again, it's necessary to pick the best of the four choices. It's important to read all of the choices given. However, the question is asking for the most important choice during the first one or two interviews. It's so important to read the questions carefully. Choice a, which is certainly important, often takes more than one or two sessions, and is not the most important of the choices given. Choice b, informing the client of all available services, may be distracting and may not be possible until exactly what the problem is can be determined. Choice c, developing a plan of action, sounds very good, but a plan cannot be developed without first assessing the client's problems, choice d. This is a tricky question, so don't feel badly if you missed it.
3. The answer is b. Occasionally there will be a question like this on the exam. For questions like this, you need to have a measurable criteria for the goal. One can measure whether John has acquired a high school diploma, a full-time job, or has earned enough money to not require public assistance. It is not as easy to measure whether John will have acquired "good parenting skills". As the textbooks would say, "the goal definition in this instance is too diffuse." Sometimes people miss exam questions because they don't read the wording of the question carefully enough. In this case, they were looking for which choice was not an example of a well defined goal.
4. The answer is b. In order for a contract to work well, a time frame, schedule, and description of the responsibilities of the caseworker are essential. Choice b, a contingency plan, is not a recommended ingredient of a contract. Inclusion of a contingency plan would convey the message that the contract may fail.
5. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because reassuring the client may make him feel more at ease, but will not provide the skills necessary to overcome the situation. Choice b is incorrect because your actions in an interview might be very different from how your client might need to act, because of personality differences. Choice c is incorrect because it is inappropriate to "tell a client what to say". Choice d is the best of the four possible choices. Role playing provides and reinforces specific behavioral skills a client can use in a situation.
6. The answer is d. This question can be easily missed if it is answered without reading all of the choices carefully. Choice a, while it may sound good if read quickly, is incorrect because prioritizing according to the amount of time necessary to complete a task may have little to do with the importance of the task. Choice b is incorrect because people may not complete the tasks on the lists they create, and merely making lists does not include prioritizing tasks. Choice c is incorrect because focusing on breaking down tasks into smaller steps would be done after prioritizing. Choice d is correct because arranging tasks according to their level of priority is good time management and will help keep critical tasks under control.

7. The answer is a. statistically, it has been shown that it is most commonly older siblings who are responsible for reporting cases of sexual abuse. The other choices are also incorrect because sexual abuse usually happens in seclusion with no witnesses, physical force is evident in only about 10% of the cases, and abusers almost never voluntarily confess.
8. The answer is d. All of the choices are important when interviewing a child who has been sexually or physically abused by a parent.
9. The answer is b. It is true that batterers were often abused children, that battered women often believe their situation is uncommon, and that battered women often blame themselves for the battering. It is not true that battered women are often masochists.
10. The answer is d. Bruises at different stages of resolution, ingratiating behavior around parents, and a parent that will not let a child talk freely without him or her being there would all be potential indicators of a child being physically abused. Once again, this is an exam question, so you have to get a feel for what they're looking for. It also may very well be true that siblings in families where physical abuse is taking place care about each other very much. You probably know of such instances. Here, however, you are looking for the one of the four choices that would least likely be an indicator of physical abuse. Of the four you were given, choice d is the best choice.

It is sometimes true that some exam questions are flawed and not very well written. If you find this to be the case, the NYS Department of Civil Service provides you with an opportunity to appeal those questions you found unfair. The opportunity to appeal questions is usually given the week after the exam has been given. In order to appeal, you must submit a request as soon as possible after the exam. The exam proctor should have this information, and it's best to ask him or her right after you've taken the exam. He or she often will have a written request form you can take with you and mail to the Department in order to "register" for reviewing the exam questions.

11. The answer is b. It's best to give the client at least several sessions notice. Sometimes much of the work a caseworker accomplishes with a client is undone by poor termination of the relationship. By giving the client notice and discussing the termination, the caseworker shows respect for the client's feelings. Choices a and d are incorrect for these reasons. It is true that it would be beneficial to know who would be picking up the client's case before you inform him or her of the change (choice c), but giving a client adequate notice of the upcoming change should be the most important consideration. Since you can only pick one of the four choices, choice b is the best choice.
12. The answer is c. Of the four choices, it would be best to let the client know he is underestimating the amount of education and training required for the job he would like. Again, you may not like the wording of the choices, but choice c is correct because it is the best of the four choices you've been given.

13. The answer is c. It is true that the individual and society are interdependent, that social forces influence behavior and attitudes, and that the client is a responsible participant at every step in the solution of his or her problems. It is not true that a major assumption of social casework is to reconstruct the total personality and reorganize the total environment.
14. The answer is c. Sometimes all of the choices start sounding like gibberish, fatigue sets in, and you wonder what you're doing taking this exam in the first place. Choice a is incorrect because it would not be considered good practice to direct work primarily at "physical factors in the client that indicate need for change" (whatever that means). That leaves three choices. All of them sound somewhat vague and theoretical. Of the remaining choices, choice c is the best, however, because it includes not only environmental factors and social experiences, but also the client's feelings and reactions to his or her experiences. Of the last three choices, choice c is the most complete and thorough. Choice d does not make much sense, and can be quickly eliminated as a best choice. Choice b is incorrect because it is too narrow.
15. The answer is d. The clue here is the phrase "immediate hospitalization is an absolute necessity." Because the situation is so critical, it is important that she be hospitalized as quickly as possible. Choice d is the response most likely to result in the woman going for treatment as quickly as possible. Choice a is incorrect because it is not going to alleviate her concern for the care of her children, her main reason for refusing hospitalization, as well as choice d will. It's important to remember that "real life" conditions, situations or restraints will not always be relevant when answering exam questions. Exam questions, by their very nature, create an artificial environment, and can't always be answered by directly applying situations from real life.
16. The answer is d. Before seeing a client, it is good practice to obtain a relevant medical history, attempt to perceive how the client will feel, and own up to your own prejudices. It is not good practice to decide on a solution to the client's problems beforehand.
17. The answer is c. Even though choice c may seem like it is not particularly well written, it is the answer because it is the best of the four choices. The other choices all imply that the caseworker's practice of overly reassuring clients is a good one. Choice c is the only choice that criticizes this practice, so it is the best answer.
18. The answer is b. Of the choices given, the best step for you to take next would be to read and review the reports included in the folder. All of the other choices would be premature actions.
19. The answer is b. Choices c and d are incorrect because it is unlikely these actions would give you the information you need. Choice b is a better choice than choice a because it is the less intimidating method of the two. Choice a may be putting him "on the spot," and it would be best to start off being less direct in your questioning.

20. The answer is b. Choices a and c are incorrect because it is inappropriate for the caseworker to overly reassure the foster mother. Choice d is incorrect because it is a generalization and doesn't make much sense. Choice b is the best of the four choices, even if it is not the reason you would have given, because it is possible that this practice would discourage the foster mother from discussing the boy's problems with the caseworker.

INTERVIEWING

1. The answer is c. Choice a is incorrect because this statement assumes she feels ashamed, but she may not. If she does feel ashamed, this statement may make her feel even more upset, as she may feel you are disappointed that she is expressing feelings of shame. Choice b is incorrect because if you're asking if she feels ashamed the client might feel that she should be feeling ashamed, and that she has reason to feel badly. Since choice d states "either choice a or b", choice c is the correct answer by the process of elimination. In this case, it really didn't matter what you thought of choice c, it was the best of the choices given.
2. The answer is c. Of the four choices given, it would be least desirable to be judgmental.
3. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is impossible to ignore your own values and past experiences. Choice c is incorrect because it is poor practice to explain your own values to clients. Choice b is incorrect because it is not best to utilize your own values and past experiences in recording information. This would allow your own judgements to more easily influence what you were recording. Choice d, being aware of your own values and experiences and how they might influence the interview, is the best of the four choices because it is the best practice.
4. The answer is a. Stating the continuing responsibilities of the client and the worker, summarizing and describing any additional steps that may need to be taken are all part of the closing stages of an interview. Verifying information, choice a, is not part of that process. It would be considered part of the "conducting" stage of an interview.
5. The answer is c. Choice a is incorrect because they are not two names for the same process. Choice b is incorrect because confronting does not have to be done aggressively. Choice d is incorrect because the test writer is hoping you'll confuse behavioral feedback with biofeedback. Choice c is correct because, while not a great definition of both, it does define both behavioral feedback and confronting more accurately than any of the other choices.
6. The answer is c. Rationalizing, talking about problems and withdrawing would all be considered more of "flight" responses than using threatening language, which is of the "fight" variety. Even if you weren't initially sure what they were talking about, common sense would help you figure this question out.
7. The answer is c. Focusing on non-defensive behaviors and respecting silence are effective interviewing techniques. Giving advice is not appropriate in a difficult situation. Avoiding upsetting issues may sound good, but is not useful if it means avoiding dealing with the underlying problem.

8. The answer is b. Sincerity is more important for an interviewer than conversational skills, a sense of humor and a probing intellect. Another way to approach questions like this is to think of the consequences of not having each particular trait. If an interviewer doesn't have conversational skills, humor or a probing intellect, these defects are less serious than if the interviewer lacks sincerity.
9. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is inappropriate for the interviewer to use his or her own judgement to decide which questions to use, as the authority to do this is usually lacking. Choice b is incorrect because reading from the form (there's no mention of whether the interviewer understands the purpose of each question) will probably result in superficial or inadequate answers. Choice c is incorrect because the interviewer will not be able to obtain behavioral feedback or probe deeply into questions. Choice d is the correct answer because it ensures that the interviewer will have a good grasp of what each question is attempting to determine, and the interview has a much better chance of being more effective.
10. The answer is b. This is a difficult question for many people, probably because it requires a textbook answer. Congruence in communication refers to a speaker being able to express exactly how he or she actually feels.
11. The answer is a. Choice b is incorrect because it is not true that explaining the purpose of an interview will necessarily create rapport. Choice c is incorrect because the time saved is unimportant if the client is confused about the purpose of the interview. Choice d is incorrect because it's not true that an interviewer should be able to start an interview in any manner he or she chooses. Choice a is correct because it is considered good practice to explain why the interview is necessary so that the client can understand the purpose of the interview.
12. The answer is a. Refusing to discuss the assault, telling the client to think positively, or proceeding with the interview in an impersonal manner would all be considered insensitive responses. Choice a, comforting the client and encouraging her to talk about the assault, might not be considered a great choice by some, but it's the best by far of the four choices you've been given.
13. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is irresponsible. Choice b is incorrect because it is not a serious approach to the problem. Choice c is incorrect because it is unlikely that you would encounter an actual beating. Choice d, reporting the case, is the most responsible of the four choices given.
14. The answer is a. Choice b is incorrect because the problem states that she is in need of the service, and delays shouldn't be added. Choice c is incorrect because it is inappropriate and insensitive. Choice d is incorrect because it is an overly suspicious response. Choice a is correct because it is the best of the four possible choices. It may also serve to draw her out more during the interview.

15. The answer is d. Choices a and b are incorrect because it is not considered good practice to verbally anticipate a client's answers. Choice d is correct because it is a better reason than c for not verbally anticipating a client's answers. The issue of a client tending to agree with the interviewer's answer even if the answer is not entirely correct is more of a serious problem related to the practice than the idea that it will threaten a client's "right to answer however he or she wishes".
16. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is an unnecessarily negative response. Choice b is incorrect because being a good listener takes more energy, not less. Choice c is incorrect because listening properly would not encourage a client to talk without restraint. It would encourage the giving of information which is generally more reliable and complete, because omissions would not be overlooked as easily.
17. The answer is a. If the witness is not cooperative, all of the other measures are irrelevant. It won't matter if the interview is conducted in secret, or where or when it takes place if one loses the cooperation of the witness.
18. The answer is a. Choice b is incorrect because emphasizing that the interviewer is a figure of authority could lead to resentment or an unwillingness to share information. Choice c is incorrect because being thought of primarily as efficient is not likely to result in obtaining the maximum information from a client. Choice d is incorrect because being sympathetic to a client's lifestyle, which could be interpreted in a number of ways, is not as effective as communicating interest in the client.
19. The answer is a. The key here is that the paragraph states that many of the clients you interview are "unusually hostile". This implies that there is something wrong with what you're doing. The other choices are incorrect because they don't directly address assessing your current interviewing techniques.
20. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is not the role of the caseworker to limit the client to concentration on objective data. Choice b is incorrect because a caseworker should give direction to the interview. Choice C is incorrect because it is too sweeping a statement to say that the main focus in casework interviews is on feelings rather than facts, and choice c is also not as good a choice as choice d. Choice d states that a caseworker is responsible for helping the client focus on any material which seems related to his or her problems, which is the best of the four choices.

SUPERVISION

1. The answer is a. It's considered good supervisory practice to be firm and positive when taking disciplinary action, and to help workers set professional goals. Choice a, being accessible to staff at all times, may sound good, but is usually not a good idea at all, as a supervisor will then be subjected to possible constant interruptions.
2. The answer is d. It is not necessary for a supervisor to always work on the planning alone or with a supervisor. Involving the employees in the planning as much as possible (statement III) is considered better management practice, part of employee involvement programs. Statement II is incorrect because it is not good practice to assign more difficult tasks to workers who have been in the unit longer. That practice can have the effect of "punishing" workers who have been in the unit longer. It also assumes that tenure has a direct correlation with competence, which is not always true. Statement IV is correct because it is good practice to decide in advance how to give instructions to staff.
3. The answer is d. It is important to not assume anything about those you supervise. It is best to keep an open mind about what is happening with an employee.
4. The answer is d. An important principle in supervision is to take any complaint, no matter how ridiculous or insignificant it may sound, seriously. It is the way one of your employees feels, and should be taken seriously. Otherwise the employee may not feel you are treating him or her fairly or with respect.
5. The answer is c. Telling an employee you are unhappy with her attitude is too unspecific to be a legitimate criticism. What specific criteria can you use to change an attitude? How can an attitude be measured? When criticizing the behavior of an employee, it is so important that the criticism be as specific as possible.
6. The answer is c. It is very important in exam questions not to ignore the "chain of command". The caseworker should have first come to you with the complaint. Because she didn't, she went "over your head" by going directly to the administrator.
7. The answer is b. It has been found that the main reason supervisors are unwilling to criticize their employees is their wish to avoid unpleasant situations and to be liked.
8. The answer is b. Choice a is incorrect because the paragraph states the caseworker is still depressed about the problem, and mentions it regularly. To ignore the matter at this point would not be wise because it is obviously still on her mind, and as her supervisor you may be able to help. Choice c is incorrect because it is too severe a response under the circumstances, and not the best of the four choices given. Choice d is incorrect because it is an indirect way of trying to make her feel better, and she would probably know what you were up to. In addition, if there was no real reason to praise her work, you would seem insincere to both the caseworker and to the others you supervise. Choice b is the best of the choices, because that sort of reassurance from a supervisor could mean a lot. Again, when answering these questions it's important to keep in mind that they, by their

very nature, create artificial situations which can make answering them frustrating or difficult.

9. The answer is a. Choices b and d are incorrect because it would be very difficult for you to directly have an influence on the large caseloads or deadlines of your employees. Those are primarily budgetary considerations. Choice c is incorrect because it would also be difficult for you to have an influence on frequently changing procedures and regulations, since many of them are initiated by government. You could have the most impact, of the four choices, on conflicts between caseworkers.
10. The answer is b. Choice a is incorrect because it may appear that you are implying that she has not thought the situation through completely, or that she is being dishonest. Choice c is incorrect because it would be inappropriate behavior to call your supervisor without letting the employee know you were doing so. Choice d is incorrect because it is too harsh and insensitive. Letting the caseworker know you will take her concerns seriously is the best response.
11. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is insulting. Choice b is incorrect because you are not truly considering whether or not he could be correct. Choice c is incorrect because it is a little too combative. The first thing you should do is review the caseloads to see if he is correct.
12. The answer is a. Choice b is incorrect because calling in the caseworker is too extreme under the circumstances. The question states that the caseworkers are arguing about a minor matter, and that they're on their lunch hour. If you were to call in the worker it would seem like meddling. Choice c is incorrect for the same reasons. Choice d is incorrect because it is an indirect way to bring up the problem, and would no doubt cause the rest of the employees you supervise to wonder what was going on. Choice a is the best choice of the four, and the most appropriate under the circumstances.
13. The answer is d. While choice a may be a "real life" answer, it's not an appropriate exam response here. Choice b is incorrect because not only will your supervisor probably not appreciate the memo, but it will look like the employees are going over your head. Choice c is incorrect because it is too negative. A supervisor should be able and willing to communicate the feelings of the people he or she supervises to his or her own supervisor. In this case, the question does not indicate that nothing can be done, so it's best to assume nothing. Of the four choices, it would be best to discuss their objections with your supervisor.
14. The answer is b. In test questions, it's so important to read the question carefully, and not jump to conclusions. In this case, you have to find the statement that least represents a basic principle of the appraisal process. Choice b states that one should rely heavily on subjective judgement of that potential when evaluating performance. Subjectivity is not desirable when evaluating employees. The other three statements are all true.

15. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because it is too harsh a response. Choice b is incorrect because it is insulting and implies that the caseworker couldn't possibly be correct. Choice c is incorrect because it is also too harsh. Choice d is correct because it is good supervisory practice to first allow employees to present their objections in a case like this. They could have a point, but you wouldn't know if you don't give them a chance to explain their objections to you.
16. The answer is d. Choice a is incorrect because you are likely to be resented by whichever faction you decide against, and since the policy affects everybody, it's very possible that your action could be interpreted as autocratic. Choice b is incorrect for the same reasons. In some ways it's even a poorer choice, since you are taking people's time to hear their opinions, and then making the decision on your own. While it seems fairer, in a tense situation like this one the action is likely to be resented. Choice c is incorrect because a meeting that ends in a majority vote on a controversial topic like this is more likely to alienate the factions even more. Choice d, compromise, is the best choice of the four you've been given.
17. The answer is b. Choice a is incorrect because it is too hardline, and likely to make a potentially difficult situation worse. Choice c is incorrect because it is inappropriate for you, on an exam, to criticize a decision of this nature. Choice d is incorrect because it is even harsher behavior than choice a.
18. The answer is d. This is a difficult question, because none of the choices may seem particularly attractive. In this case, you'll have to choose the "least rotten" answer. Choice a is incorrect because it's unfair to the other employee and could lead to resentment. Choice b is incorrect for the same reason. Choice c is incorrect because it is likely to lead to resentment on the part of the employee who complained. In addition, it may lead to her becoming angry with the non-smokers in the office. Choice d seems the best of the choices you've been given.
19. The answer is d. Statement I is incorrect because it isn't true that good supervisors should always be able to resolve conflicts among those they supervise. Situations may occur that even the best supervisor would have little control over, especially because the issue is conflict among people. Statement II is incorrect because a supervisor should always be concerned about the accuracy of the work done in his or her unit. While it is not really clear what they mean by this sentence, it is too sweeping a statement the way it reads. It may mean that the routine procedures involve some sort of double-checking or use of computers or some other monitoring method. Since we don't know for sure, it's best to not assume anything. Fortunately, none of the choices specifically mentions this statement, so it isn't critical. If you had to choose between "only choice III is correct" and "only choices II and III are correct", then it would have been very difficult, and a poorly written test question. This way, it's mainly annoying. Statement III is correct because it is considered good supervisory practice to take into account the differences among the people you supervise. It may seem like a vague statement, but it's the best of the four choices you have. Statement IV is incorrect because "crisis management" is not considered good practice. It's managing by constantly dealing with crises as they arise, with very little attention paid to prevention.

20. The answer is d. Again, it's so important to try and find out why an employee is acting the way he or she is if they are acting inappropriately. The other choices are all incorrect because they fail to do this, and are too harsh under the circumstances.

We hope this booklet has been helpful to you in preparing for your examination.

Good luck'.

ANSWER KEY

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF SOCIAL CASEWORK

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| 1. c | 11. b |
| 2. d | 12. c |
| 3. b | 13. c |
| 4. b | 14. c |
| 5. d | 15. d |
| 6. d | 16. d |
| 7. a | 17. c |
| 8. d | 18. b |
| 9. b | 19. b |
| 10. d | 20. b |

INTERVIEWING

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|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 11. a |
| 2. c | 12. a |
| 3. d | 13. d |
| 4. a | 14. a |
| 5. c | 15. d |
| 6. c | 16. d |
| 7. c | 17. a |
| 8. b | 18. a |
| 9. d | 19. a |
| 10. b | 20. d |

SUPERVISION

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|-------|-------|
| 1. a | 11. d |
| 2. d | 12. a |
| 3. d | 13e d |
| 4. d | 14. b |
| 5. c | 15. d |
| 6. c | 16. d |
| 7. b | 17. b |
| 8. b | 18. d |
| 9. a | 19. d |
| 10. b | 20. d |