Logical Reasoning Question for MSW Program Application – Fall 2014

Setting: You are a social worker for a multi-purpose service site housed in a low-income housing complex populated mostly by low-income African-American, Vietnamese, El Salvadoran and Honduran immigrants. The site provides support groups for mothers, emergency food, clothing and assistance with referrals for low-cost health care and pro bono legal work. In addition, clients can also speak to caseworkers about problems such as domestic violence and job searches.

Included in the population are undocumented immigrants, most of whom are Latina. Most immigrated without authorization within the preceding 10 years. The women typically work under the table in the service industry (cooking, cleaning hotel rooms, housekeeping at private homes).

The client: One day, a distraught Latina arrives. You take her back to a private office and learn that her name is Teresita Maldonado, 29. She tells you that she crossed the border from Mexico to Texas four months previously. As is common practice, she used a guide (called a coyote) to lead her and a group of other migrants through the Sonoran Desert, where more than 500 migrants die annually from thirst, starvation, exposure and injury.

Since crossing the border and traveling north, Teresita has been living with an older sister and working as a ‘bus girl/dishwasher’ in a Peruvian restaurant. Both she and her sister are sending money home to their widowed mother, who is subsisting on $5 per day, working in a textile mill owned by an American manufacturer.

Teresita reports that she is having trouble working. She suffers insomnia and panic attacks. In addition, lacking legal papers, her work opportunities are limited. She earns $7 per hour and occasionally receives tips from the wait staff on busy nights. She and her sister worry about eviction from the apartment as well as deportation. There are rumors of impending workplace raids by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS:

1. Define social work in your own words and briefly explain what you believe the role of a social worker should be in general and in terms of this case in particular.

2. As the social worker in this case scenario, how would you:
   a. Assess this situation
   b. Intervene to effect planned change

   In addressing a and b above, consider what information you will need to obtain, what sources and resources you would use and how you would access them. Be sure to critically think and examine multiple system levels: for example, individual – family/groups – community – society.