PREFACE

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This book, under the capable editorship of Drs. Rosa Perez-Koenig and Barry Rock, is a good example of a town-gown relationship. The Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services collaborated on a conference focusing on the impact of the devolution of support for the delivery of social services to populations and persons in need.

Professions have a deep responsibility to attend to the changes that occur in society in order to ensure that their practices are responsive to the needs of the times in which they are offered. At the onset of this new millennium, we are inundated with magazines, journals, books, and broadcasts reminding us of the changes that have occurred during the past centuries, especially the changes of the last hundred years. There is also considerable forecasting of some of the changes we can expect to experience in the new century, particularly in its first decades. The main tenor of these reviews is the dramatic improvements that have occurred in our society as a result of technological and other changes that have been the result of innovations and experiments.

This book focuses on the changes that have occurred recently in the economic and political climate in this country. Regrettably, these changes do not represent growth or improvement, but rather are regressive and often oppressive. While deploring some of these changes, the social work profession is reacting in its usual responsible manner by pointing out how practitioners can respond to focus on the best interests of the clients. At the same time that we are examining ways in which our interventions can be accommodated and adjusted to new policies, we are

mindful of our role as advocates to restore the support required to provide the services needed. There appear to be two main streams that converge to make this situation as grim as the articles in this book depict. One is the dramatic shift from many decades of belief in this country that the federal government is the best agent for provision of basic support to people in need, as opposed to that responsibility being carried by states and communities, where there could be greater politicization of the process and procedures. There is also greater unevenness in the availability of help depending on how each state allocates the funds provided by the federal government. While this has been happening, the managed care approach to health and other human services, including child welfare, emerged, with its emphasis on cost containment, often to the detriment of the children and families.

The chapters in this book represent an effort by experts in the various affected areas of social work practice to examine the issues and to provide some guidance in new practice approaches. I believe you will find, as I did, that the book is very comprehensive in its coverage; it provides a balance of critical analyses of some of the developments and issues in the various fields, as well as a practice-oriented approach to interventions that may serve well at this time.