Cynthia Cannon Poindexter has given us a remarkable edited volume that contains much information on HIV that every professional social worker needs to know in order to practice competently in today’s complex world.”
—From the Foreword by Vincent J. Lynch, MSW, PhD, Boston College Graduate School of Social Work

“This comprehensive handbook assembles a group of social work scholars and practitioners to participate in, guide, and address many of the unresolved challenges characterizing the HIV debates. This handbook is a valuable and timely addition to the literature.”
—King Davis, MSW, PhD, The Robert Lee Sutherland Chair in Mental Health and Social Policy, The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work

“This handbook is an outstanding resource for the social work professional working to ensure equal access to care, treatment, and resources for all persons living with and/or affected by HIV.”
—Evelyn P. Tomaszewski, MSW, Project Director, NASW HIV/AIDS Spectrum: Mental Health Training and Education of Social Workers Project

“This book is an excellent, up-to-date guide on HIV. It is an indispensable resource for all those who work with HIV and all its complications.”
—Leon Ginsberg, MSW, PhD, Dean Emeritus, University of South Carolina School of Social Work and Editor, Administration in Social Work

The most current knowledge on the HIV pandemic in a thorough, diverse, and accessible volume

This invaluable book draws on a distinguished roster of HIV advocates, educators, case managers, counselors, and administrators, assembling the most current knowledge into this volume. Handbook of HIV and Social Work reflects the latest research and its impact on policy and practice realities, with topics including:

• History, Illness, Transmission, and Treatment
• Social Work Roles, Tasks, and Challenges in Health Care Settings
• HIV-related Community Organizing and Grassroots Advocacy
• The Impact of HIV on Children and Adolescents
• HIV-affected Caregivers

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To all the people living with HIV who have taught us all so much about living.
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Foreword

Throughout the history of the HIV pandemic in the United States, a vast number of professionally trained social workers have provided critical psychosocial care to those infected or affected. However, there have been few HIV and AIDS textbooks, handbooks, or other published works that have been written by and for social workers. It has been a decade since the last such published contribution was released. Clearly, such a volume is long overdue. Many of us who authored or edited earlier social work HIV and AIDS volumes have either retired from our professional work or are close to retirement age. Other HIV social workers need to build on our earlier contributions. Now is the time to pass the baton to a new cadre of men and women who can advance the HIV knowledge base for social work practice, policy, education, and research.

Cynthia Cannon Poindexter has taken that baton and given us a remarkable edited volume that contains much information on HIV that every professional social worker needs to know in order to practice competently in today’s complex world. Certainly, for the social worker committed to HIV social work practice as a specialty area, this volume is a must-have for one’s professional library. I believe it will be the leading text that guides our work in this country for at least the next 5 to 10 years.

This important book is crisply organized and begins with four chapters that outline the basics of the disease and their relationship to social work practice (Part 1). We then are presented with a rich set of chapters that address the important and diverse HIV-related roles and tasks in which social work is involved in HIV service delivery (Part 2). The book concludes with several chapters that address very specific service delivery needs and practice approaches in working with those most vulnerable to HIV disease (Part 3).

In my role as founder and chair of the Annual National Conference on Social Work and HIV (in its twenty-second year as I write) I witness each year the hunger that our colleagues from across the country have for continuing education offerings that are produced by and for HIV social workers. Our extensive and diverse conference presentations each year fill that need to some degree, but they are not enough. Such offerings need to be augmented by various published works such as this one that will keep us informed and current about the ever-changing aspects of HIV practice today. This important book will help a great deal in addressing many of those unmet social work continuing education needs now and for the next several years of the pandemic. It will also provide inspiration for some of our younger colleagues to add to our knowledge base by writing other important contributions in the not too distant future. Many of the chapter contributors are longtime friends and social work colleagues who, like me, have worked in HIV since the early years of the pandemic. Others have more recently entered the field. All have in common the same degree of passion and commitment to this important work. This handbook builds a critical intergenerational bridge by linking tomorrow’s leaders in HIV social work practice, policy, education, and research with those mentors who are rich with many years of practice wisdom. I commend the editor and all chapter authors for this much-needed and excellent addition to our HIV social work knowledge base.

Vincent J. Lynch, MSW, PhD
Boston College Graduate School of Social Work
Preface

This handbook on HIV-related social services is intended for social work and human services practitioners, managers, advocates, and students. We hope it is also useful for HIV-infected and HIV-affected persons. The chapter authors, all of whom have been involved in the HIV field for years as advocates, educators, case managers, counselors, or administrators, hope that their contributions will address the current realities of the HIV pandemic in North America almost 30 years after the disease was identified.

It is a shock for old-timers in the HIV field to meet young adults—as students, coworkers, friends, and neighbors—who have never known a world without HIV. We realize with disbelief that HIV is no longer the new disease that once captured the world’s attention and became a focal point for the public’s fears and prejudices. What happened to that “new emergency” we jumped to address? It seems to have grown old with us and to have become routine. Even though HIV has been around long enough to seem commonplace, we still know without a doubt that it cannot be taken for granted; it cannot be ignored. Even though HIV is becoming integrated into mainstream health and social service organizations, we know that the response to it cannot be like the response to anything else. HIV is not exactly like any other physical condition or social problem. The HIV pandemic is unlike any other health phenomenon in recorded history. Science has known of no other infectious, life-threatening, blood-borne, and sexually transmitted disease that destroys the body’s immune system, whose symptoms remain hidden for years, and that keeps the host alive long enough to spread the agent far and wide. Social science has not recently dealt with a disease as hidden, highly stigmatized, and full of religious, political, societal, economic, behavioral, or cultural barriers to ameliorating it. HIV calls for responses and skills that are HIV-specific. This handbook strives to begin to address those issues. Now that it is clear that the pandemic will be with us for many decades to come, what should the service, prevention, and advocacy responses be in light of what we now know?

We have seen two different HIV pandemics in the developed world. During the first 15 years or so, before the advent of combination antiretroviral therapy, the social service and social action response was to an extreme emergency. Everyone operated in crisis mode, needing to create systems and practice models quickly, yet still hoping that a vaccine and a cure would be soon developed. In the earliest years, most efforts were made by small community-based advocacy organizations run by people directly affected by HIV and their allies. In the second 15 years of the pandemic, the medical progress made in a relatively short period of time in developed countries has been amazing: Death rates from HIV have plummeted. Advancements in treatment have shifted the required service and advocacy responses away from crisis intervention to a more traditional long-term approach.

Still, over the past decade some new challenges have appeared. One challenge has been that a social service system originally developed to address acute needs, crises, and death has struggled to adapt rapidly enough to the realities of today’s pandemic, which comprises an ever-growing number of people who are living longer and longer with more and more chronic conditions. As Peter Piot, the former head of UNAIDS, has stated, we must shift “from crisis management to sustained strategic response” if we are to address