

Social Work



Nature of the Profession

Social workers help people. They help individuals cope with problems such as inadequate housing, lack of job skills, financial mismanagement, prolonged illness, disability, substance abuse, or unwanted pregnancy. They also work with families that have serious conflicts, including those involving child or spousal abuse. Most social workers specialize in a clinical field. Clinical social workers offer psychotherapy or counseling and a range of services in public agencies, clinics, as well as in private practice. Mental health social workers provide services for persons with mental or emotional problems. These services include individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, social rehabilitation, and training in skills of everyday living. They may also help plan supportive services to ease patients' return to the community. Medical social workers help patients and their families cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses and handle problems that may stand in the way of recovery. They also advise family caregivers, and help plan for patient needs after discharge by arranging for at-home services. Some work on interdisciplinary teams that evaluate certain kinds of patients such as geriatric or transplant patients.

Aptitudes

- Ability to learn the principles and methods of social work and community organization
- Good verbal and math skills
- Ability to listen to people and to be persuasive
- Ability to keep records and write reports
- Ability to direct, organize, and plan projects, treatments, and programs
- Ability to make decisions based on experience and observation
- Objectivity and sensitivity to people and their problems

Education

A master's of social work (MSW) degree is usually the minimum requirement for employment. A bachelor's of social work (BSW) degree is adequate for a few entry-level positions. A doctoral degree is necessary for most teaching and some supervisory positions.

Certification

An applicant for certification to practice as a social worker must have a bachelor's or master's degree in social work from an approved program. To be certified to practice as a master social worker, an applicant must have a master's or doctorate degree in social work from an approved program, have three thousand (3,000) hours of experience practicing social work, and have passed the certification exam.

Annual Mean Wage

\$76,198 (MSW) / \$59,020 (BSW)

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