What Do Social Workers Do?

Professional social workers are found in every facet of community life — in schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, elected office, private practices, prisons, military, corporations, and in numerous public and private agencies that serve individuals and families in need. They often specialize in one or more of the following practice areas:

Mental Health Therapy
Disaster Relief
Military Social Work
Rural Social Work
Adoption & Foster Care
Child Welfare Services
Family Preservation Services
Homeless Family Assistance
Eating Disorders
Genetics
Hospital Social Work
Crisis Intervention
School Violence
Hospice and Palliative Care
Depression
Institutional Care
Chronic Pain
Outpatient Treatment
Development Disabilities
International Social Work
Advocacy, Consulting and Planning
Community Mental Health
Employee Assistance
Private Practice
Veterans Services
Child Abuse & Neglect
Domestic Violence
Political Development
Parent Education
Family Planning
HIV/AIDS
School Alternative Programs
Difficulties in School
Gerontology Services
Community Based Services
In-Home Services
Senile Dementia and Alzheimer’s
Addictions
Prevention/Treatment
Criminal Justice
Housing Assistance
Public Welfare
Employment Services
What is social work?

• “The professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favorable to this goal.” (National Association of Social Workers)

Whom do social workers help?

• The profession of social work is committed to helping people to meet social, political, economic, and emotional needs.

• Among the populations served are the following: individuals with chronic mental illness; families who are grieving; people with developmental disabilities; survivors of domestic violence; organizations expanding to meet the needs of their neighborhoods; pregnant and parenting teens; adults facing job-related stress; prisoners; communities caring for their elders; adolescents having difficulties in school; children who have been abused or neglected; older adults needing home-based services.

Who are social workers?

• Social workers provide more than half of the mental health services in the United States.

• They work in roles such as the following: executive director; long-term care administrator; behavior specialist; clinical supervisor; program director; family therapist; parent educator; program analyst; vocational counselor; victim/witness advocate; development director; legislator; research administrator; union organizer; public policy analyst; employee assistance program counselor; rehabilitation specialist; clinical social worker; intake coordinator. Where do social workers practice?

• Social workers are employed in a wide variety of public and private organizations, as well as in private practice. Social workers are licensed by individual states. Licensure allows master’s level clinicians to bill insurance providers for their services. This enhances social workers’ employment opportunities.

• Among the settings where social workers practice are the following: community mental health centers; hospitals; adult day care programs; adoption service programs; schools; child care centers; courts; state protective service agencies; recreational programs; group homes; domestic violence programs; shelters; prisons; community action agencies; fund-raising organizations; the list is endless

What can social workers expect in the future?

• There were 680,000 social workers in the U.S. in 2016, and social work has been listed as one of the occupations with the largest projected job growth in the country, growing 16% through 2026.