Overview

Professional social workers assist individuals, families, groups, or communities to restore or enhance their capacity for social functioning, while creating societal conditions favorable to their goals. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior, of social, economic and cultural institutions, and of the interaction of all these factors.

Who are Social Workers?

Social workers are highly trained and experienced professionals. Only those who have earned social work degrees at the bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral levels, and completed a minimum number of hours in supervised fieldwork, are “professional social workers.”

Social workers help people overcome some of life’s most difficult challenges: poverty, discrimination, abuse, addiction, physical illness, divorce, loss, unemployment, educational problems, disability, and mental illness. They help prevent crises and counsel individuals, families, and communities to cope more effectively with the stresses of everyday life.

Professional social workers are the nation’s largest group of mental health service providers. Currently, 60% of mental health professionals are clinically trained social workers who provide services in a variety of settings, including private practice, hospitals, community mental health programs, military and veteran services, disaster relief, and rehabilitation programs. In the wake of the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, clinical social workers were among the first professionals on site providing mental health services to victims, family members, and rescue workers.

Job Outlook

According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), social work is one of the fastest growing careers in the United States. The profession is expected to grow by 19% between 2012 and 2022; currently, close to 607,300 people hold social work degrees.

What do Social Workers Do?

- Disaster Relief
- Military 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
- 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