

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.