



Health Career Directory

Social Worker

Overview

Social workers help individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations develop the skills and resources they need to improve their social functioning, and social environments. Social workers assess, diagnose, treat and evaluate individual, interpersonal and societal issues.

They use social work knowledge, skills, interventions and strategies to help individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations and communities achieve ideal psychological and social functioning.

Social workers often work with children in the family setting. They may make home visits to evaluate child development, the quality of child care, and the safety of children. Social workers promote social change, problem solving in human relationships and empowerment of people to enhance well-being.

Main Roles

Social workers perform some or all of the following duties:

- interview clients, either individually or in a group or family setting, and make an assessment to decide what actions and/or services are necessary
- provide counselling and therapy to develop their clients' insight into their personal problems. Develop their clients' coping skills to help with any social and personal difficulties
- perform hospital discharge planning
- investigate claims of child abuse or neglect and enforce protective measures as needed
- advocate for client groups in the community, including lobbying for remedies to problems which have a direct impact on those client groups
- develop prevention and intervention programs to meet community needs
- develop strategies of assistance for clients. This includes obtaining legal aid, financial assistance, housing and medical treatment from the appropriate agencies
- provide mediation services
- develop, promote, implement and evaluate social policies and programs
- may interact with professionals or groups to provide consultation with regards to counselling services and the issues that affect those services
- perform social planning
- help with community development

- may be involved in international development with non-governmental organizations.

Special Duties

Social workers may specialize in fields of practice, such as:

- Child welfare
- Adult guardianship
- Adult abuse neglect and self-neglect
- Medical social work
- Gerontology
- Chronic illness
- Mental health
- Addictions
- Corrections
- Immigration
- Family services

Who is suited to become a social worker?

Social work is a demanding profession. Social workers are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- maturity and emotional stability
- empathy
- ability to be non-judgmental
- high energy
- patience
- sensitivity to and an understanding of beliefs and values that are not your own
- good communication skills
- critical thinking skills and good judgment
- integrity and honesty
- resourcefulness
- belief in social justice.

Social workers should enjoy working with and counselling people. They should also enjoy finding innovative solutions to problems and be able to problem-solve creatively. They should also be comfortable, working alone, and within teams. Social workers also need to be able to take responsibility for their work

Who employs social workers?

Social workers are employed by:

- government departments
- school boards
- human and health service agencies
- hospitals medical settings
- long-term care organizations
- mental health clinics
- family and social service agencies
- employee assistance programs
- correctional services and agencies
- Aboriginal band councils and other cross cultural agencies
- not-for-profit community agencies.

- Online counselling in remote areas.

Most social workers work in the Health and social services industry or in the Public administration industry (government). Although most social workers have a normal work week they may need to work some evenings and weekends. Working conditions vary. Social workers often divide their time between face to face contact with clients and completing assessments, case studies, plans and reports. Face to face contact may include interviewing clients in their homes, family counselling sessions, group work, attending meetings and co-ordinating services with other helping professionals and community agencies.

Salary

Salary Range - \$38,555 - \$60,978

Required Training and Education to Become this Professional

Social workers must have a bachelor's degree or master's degree in social work. Other requirements may include a criminal record check, child welfare intervention record check, a valid driver's license and the use of a vehicle.

A university degree in social work is needed in BC. However, increasingly, a master's degree is required for many social work positions. Supervised practical experience is a typical requirement, and individuals may also need to pass written and/or oral provincial exams. Additional training may be required to work in certain areas of social work, such as child protection.

A PHD in Social Work is becoming more common in healthcare settings, and increases opportunities for individuals to find roles in leadership, research, and practice roles.

Qualified applicants with degrees from related fields (i.e. Youth and Child Care) may also be considered for employment. However, this does not apply to healthcare unless they have a completed a Master of Social Work (MSW).

Social Work is a regulated profession and social workers need to be registered with the British Columbia College of Social Workers, unless they work for an exempt employer. The current move is to have all social workers registered before they are hired.

Workers already licensed or certified in another province or territory, in a provincially regulated occupation, will have their credentials recognized in BC. They still need to be registered with the BC College of Social Workers, and their registration from another province is not automatically transferable.

Career Advancement

Recent graduates often get positions with the government working in child protection. They also get positions with community-based organizations helping youth, seniors and others with special needs related to mental health, the criminal justice system, disability, and immigration and adjustment to Canadian society. They may also obtain positions doing international work with non-governmental organizations.

Social workers may advance to supervisory or administrative positions based on their level of education and work experience. Or, social workers may go into private practice in their areas of

specialization. Those who have graduate degrees may move into post-secondary teaching and research positions. They may become case managers or policy analysts.

It is also possible for social workers to become specialist in areas such as:

- child welfare
- family services
- corrections
- adult guardianship
- abuse
- neglect and self-neglect
- gerontology
- mental health or addictions.

Social workers with graduate degrees have the option to focus on social planning or research activities. Those with doctorates sometimes become faculty in colleges and universities where they teach or conduct research.

Resources

Educational Programs

Carleton University

<http://www1.carleton.ca/socialwork/prospective-students/>

University/College of Saint-Boniface

<http://www.ustboniface.mb.ca/page.aspx?pid=693>

Dalhousie University

<http://socialwork.dal.ca/Prospective%20Students/>

King's University College (University of Western Ontario)

<http://www.kings.uwo.ca/academics/school-of-social-work/master-of-social-work/admissions/>

Lakehead University

<http://socialwork.lakeheadu.ca/>

Laurentian University

http://www.laurentian.ca/Laurentian/Home/Departments/School+of+Social+Work/MSW/Exigencesdadmission.htm?Laurentian_Lang=en-CA

McGill University

<http://www.mcgill.ca/socialwork/prospective>

McMaster University

<http://www.socialwork.mcmaster.ca/graduate-program/admissions>

Memorial University of Newfoundland

<http://www.mun.ca/socwrk/undergraduate/prospective.php>

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

<http://www.nvit.bc.ca/admissionrequirementsapplication.htm>

Renison University College, University of Waterloo

<https://uwaterloo.ca/school-of-social-work/node/30>

Ryerson University

<http://www.ryerson.ca/undergraduate/admission/programs/social.html#fouryear>

St-Thomas University

http://w3.stu.ca/stu/academic/departments/social_work/default.aspx

Thompson Rivers University

<http://www.tru.ca/hse/programs/bsw/admits.html>

University of Moncton

<http://www.umoncton.ca/>

University of Montreal

<http://www.esersoc.umontreal.ca/presentation.html>

University of Ottawa

http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/svs/fra/SVS_programmes_bac.asp

University of Sherbrooke

<http://www.usherbrooke.ca/service-social/etudier-en-service-social/>

Laval University

<http://www.svs.ulaval.ca/?pid=640>

University of Quebec at Chicoutimi

<http://programmes.uqac.ca/7798>

University of Quebec at Abitibi-Témiscamngue

<http://www.uqat.ca/etudes/admission/>

University of Quebec at Montréal

http://www.travailsocial.uqam.ca/Page/programme_bacc.aspx

University of British Columbia

<http://socialwork.ubc.ca/program-information.html>

University of British Columbia - Okanagan

<http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/socialwork/undergrad/bswadmit.html>

University of Calgary

<http://fsw.ucalgary.ca/ApplyBSW>

University of Manitoba

http://www.umanitoba.ca/social_work/programs/212.htm

University of Regina

<http://www.uregina.ca/socialwork/programs/bsw/index.html>

University of the Fraser Valley

<http://www.ufv.ca/ar/admissions/acceptapps>

University of Northern British Columbia

http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/undergraduate/undergraduate_programs/social_work.html

University of Toronto

<http://www.socialwork.utoronto.ca/admissions.htm>

University of Victoria

<http://socialwork.uvic.ca/prospective/bsw/admission.php>

University of Windsor

<http://www.uwindsor.ca/socialwork/BSW-Course-Information>

Wilfrid Laurier University

http://www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=30&p=310

York University

<http://www.yorku.ca/gradsowk/msw/>

Financial assistance and bursaries

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml

Associations

British Columbia College of Social Workers

<http://www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca>

BC Association of Social Workers

<http://www.bcasw.org>

Canadian Association of Social Workers

<http://www.casw-acts.ca/>