

Social Work Profession Fact Sheet

What do Social Workers do?

Professional social workers assist individuals, groups, and communities to restore or enhance their capacity for being self-sufficient, independent, and contributing citizens of Texas. 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. 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.

Many policy makers and employers, both in the public and private sectors, are not aware of the vast toolkit that the average social worker utilizes on a daily basis. A social worker operates on a Code of Ethics that is not found in any other discipline. Moreover, a social worker is uniquely trained to assess, diagnose and treat the client (whether the client is an individual, family or community) as a part of a larger environment rather than apart from it. This approach enables the social worker to address all aspects of a problem as an effective means of overcoming unseen barriers. In addition to that unique perspective, social workers possess other skills and abilities such as:

- Advocating for individual clients or the community on identified problems;
- Serving as a broker by connecting an individual with resources;
- Creating and maintaining professional helping relationships;
- Improving problem-solving, coping, and development capacities of all people;
- Engaging and communicating with diverse populations and groups of all sizes; and
- Having a knowledge and understanding of human relationships.

Does Texas require Social Workers to be licensed to practice?

Social workers are highly trained and experienced professionals. Only those who have earned social work degrees at the bachelor's, masters or doctoral levels, and completed a minimum number of hours in supervised fieldwork, are "professional social workers." In Texas, only those with a social work license can be called a social worker.

How many Social Workers does Texas produce?

Texas Schools of Social Work graduate approximately 1,800 students each year (combined baccalaureate, masters and doctoral degrees). There is no way that the schools can keep pace with the expected demand for social workers at all levels under the current system.

Meanwhile, Texas communities benefit from social work students while they are in school. Each baccalaureate student provides a minimum of 400 hours and each masters student provides a minimum of 1,020 hours in local health and social service agencies, supporting the mission and needs of those organizations and municipalities.

What is the demand for Social Workers?

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics has identified the upcoming shortage of social workers in its labor forecasts. The 2012-2013 Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook projects that the demand for new social workers will increase overall by approximately 25 percent by the year 2020—from the current number of 650,000 nationally to 811,700—(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), which is more rapid growth than the average of other professions. Within that projection is an anticipated 31% growth in need for mental health and substance abuse social workers and a 34% growth for medical and public health social workers.

Much of this increase is attributed to the aging of the population, which carries with it increased demand for social work services. A recent report by the Center for Health Workforce Studies, University at Albany (2005) pointed out that the projected 54 percent growth in the number of older adults in the United States between 2000 and 2020 is likely to be a primary driver of increased demand for social work services in coming decades.

Another driver is the increased number of military personnel being discharged via Texas military bases. The need for intensive medical and mental health services, including suicide prevention, as well as job readiness and re-entry services, for veterans is well known.

Disaster preparedness and relief is another area of increasing need within Texas. Social workers around the state are assisting with planning efforts and with the many recovery activities, such as relocation assistance, trauma/mental health care, relief efforts, case management, and medical care.



SOCIAL WORKERS:
The Bootstraps of Texas

Where do Social Workers practice?

Professional social workers are found in every facet of community life in Texas—in schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, elected office, independent clinical, 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:

Children and Adolescents

Adoption and Foster Care
Child Welfare
Child Abuse and Neglect

Community Services

Disaster Preparedness, Relief, and Recovery
Homeless Family Assistance
Community Mental Health
Parent Education
Public Welfare
Employment Services

Criminal Justice

Juvenile Justice
Probation Services
Domestic Violence
Victims' Services
Mitigation Services

Gerontology

Outpatient Care and Coordination
Hospice and Palliative Care
Senility, Dementia and Alzheimer's
Long-term Residential Care
End-of-Life Assistance

Medical Social Work

Patient Navigation
Hospital Services
Chronic Disease Management
Admission/Discharge Coordination
In-Home Services
Developmental Disabilities
HIV/AIDS Services

Mental Health Services

Behavioral Change
Crisis Intervention
Addiction Prevention and Treatment
Psychotherapy
Family/Marital Counseling
Independent and Group Clinical Practice

School Social Work

School Violence Prevention
Bullying Prevention and Programs
Delinquency/Drop-out Prevention
Suicide Prevention
Teen Pregnancy Prevention
Parenting and Life Skill Development
School Alternative Programs

Policy and Administration

Research
Policy Development and Evaluation
Program Implementation
Issue Advocacy
Agency Planning and Management
Consulting
Program Administration
Employee Assistance Programs
Professional Training
Higher Education
Teaching and Service

Veteran's Services

Rehabilitation and Habilitation
Reintegration
Case Management
Mental Health Treatment
Suicide Prevention

Social Workers: Helping Texas Communities!!

Additional information on the variety of roles played by social workers can be found at <http://www.helpstartshere.org/>. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), **professional social workers are the nation's largest group of mental health services providers, providing approximately 60% of all mental health services.** There are more clinically trained social workers—over 278,800 in 2012—than psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric nurses combined. Federal law and the National Institutes of Health recognize social work as one of five core mental health professions.

Over 40% of all disaster mental health volunteers trained by the American Red Cross are professional social workers. Today, 48 professional social work organizations contribute to the vitality and credibility of the social work profession. In Texas, there are approximately 18,000 licensed social workers. Approximately 6,000 social workers are members of the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

For more information, contact NASW/Texas at www.naswtx.org or 512-474-1454.

The demand for new social workers will increase 25% by the year 2020.

2012-2013 Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook

An average social worker will accumulate between \$25,000 and \$33,000 in debt, depending on whether they complete a bachelors, masters or doctoral program.

Public Interest Research Group