



National Association of Social Workers

Facts About Social Work

A [2006 study of licensed social workers](#) conducted by the [NASW Center for Workforce Studies](#) revealed the following about the profession of social work:

- Social workers have advanced educational preparation and practice experience. A master's in social work (MSW) is the predominant social work degree for licensed social workers (79% of active practitioners).
- Social workers' most frequent specialty practice areas are mental health (37%), child welfare/family (13%), health (13%) and aging (9%).
- Social workers spend the majority of their time providing direct client services (96%), followed by consultation (73%) and administration/management (69%).
- With 12% of respondents planning on leaving the workforce in the next two years and the increasing need for social work services, there will likely not be enough social workers to meet the needs of clients.

Social workers have the right education, experience, and dedication to help people help themselves whenever they need it. It takes a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral social work degree—with a minimum number of hours in supervised fieldwork—to become a social worker.

- More than [600,000 professionals](#) in the United States hold social work degrees.
- Social workers help [people in all stages of life](#), from children to the elderly, and in all situations from adoption to hospice care.
- You can find social workers in hospitals, schools, police departments, mental health clinics, private practices, military facilities, and corporations.
- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) social workers are the nation's largest group of clinically trained mental health service providers. Social workers provide more mental health services than psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses combined.
- The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#)—the largest employer of social workers in the country—employs more than 6,000 social workers to assist veterans and their families with individual and family counseling, client education, end of life planning, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention, and other services.
- Forty percent of mental health professionals working with the Red Cross Disaster Services Human Resources system are social workers.
- There are hundreds of social workers in national, state, and local elected office, including two [U.S. Senators and six U.S. Representatives](#).
- According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the need for social workers is expected to grow twice as fast as any other occupation, especially in gerontology, home healthcare, substance abuse treatment, private social service agencies, and school social work.

For more information about social workers, please visit [HelpStartsHere.org](#), the social work consumer website.

NASW IL, 404 S Wells 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60607
[www.naswil.org](#)