



PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIAL WORKER

JOB DESCRIPTION

Medical and public health social workers provide persons, families, or vulnerable populations with the psychosocial support needed to cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, or AIDS. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help plan for patients' needs after discharge by arranging for at-home services, from meals-on-wheels to oxygen equipment. Some work on interdisciplinary teams that evaluate certain kinds of patients—geriatric or organ transplant patients, for example. Medical and public health social workers may work for hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, individual and family services agencies, or local governments.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

Social workers should be emotionally mature, objective, and sensitive to people and their problems. They must be able to handle responsibility, work independently, and maintain good working relationships with clients and coworkers. Volunteer or paid jobs as a social work aide offer ways of testing one's interest in this field..

- Compassion/sensitivity
- Patience
- Excellent communication skills
- Maturity
- Leadership skills
- Confidence

EDUCATION & TRAINING

A bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) degree is the most common minimum requirement to qualify for a job as a social worker; however, majors in psychology, sociology, and related fields may qualify for some entry-level jobs, especially in small community agencies. Although a bachelor's degree is sufficient for entry into the field, an advanced degree has become the standard for many positions. A master's degree in social work (MSW) is typically required for positions in health settings, as well as supervisory positions. All States and the District of Columbia have licensing, certification, or registration requirements regarding social work practice and the use of professional titles. Although standards for licensing vary by State, a growing number of States are placing greater emphasis on communications skills, professional ethics, and sensitivity to cultural diversity issues.

SALARIES

Salaries vary depending on work setting, years of experience, specialty and region or state.

Entry level: \$ 31,620	Hospitals: \$44,920	Local government \$39,390
Average: \$ 40,080	Home health care: \$42,710	Individual and family services:
Experienced: \$ 50,080	Nursing care facilities: \$35,680	\$ 32,100

EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS

Employment of social workers is expected to increase 18-26% for all occupations through 2014. The rapidly growing elderly population and the aging baby boom generation will create greater demand for health and social services, resulting in particularly rapid job growth among gerontology social workers. Many job openings also will stem from the need to replace social workers who leave the occupation.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- Counselors
- Public Health
- Special education
- Occupational Therapy

REFERENCES

National Association of Social Workers, 750 First St. N.E., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002-4241. Internet: <http://www.socialworkers.org>

Council on Social Work Education, 1725 Duke St., Suite 500, Alexandria, VA 22314-3457. Internet: <http://www.cswe.org>