Careers in Social Work

http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/choices/choices.htm

- For information about accredited schools of social work, contact the Council on Social Work Education at www.cswe.org
- For information about state licensing of social work, contact the Association of Social Work Boards at www.aswb.org

Social work is a profession devoted to helping people function the best they can in their environment. This can mean providing direct services or therapy directly to people (called "clients"). It also can mean working for change to improve social conditions.

About the Profession

The social work profession has its own body of knowledge, code of ethics, practice standards, credentials, state licensing, and a nationwide system of accredited education programs. These equip the professional social worker to combine the desire to help others with the knowledge, skill, and ethics needed to provide that help.

For sheer variety, few occupations can match social work, which offers the broadest range of opportunities and settings. Social workers are found in public agencies, private businesses, hospitals, clinics, schools, nursing homes, private practices, police departments, courts, and countless other interesting workplaces.

Social workers serve individuals, families, and communities. They are managers, supervisors, and administrators. They serve at all levels of government. They are educators. They are therapists and researchers. More and more, they are also elected political leaders and legislators.

Educational and Licensing Requirements

Graduate degrees include the Master of Social Work (MSW) and the Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) or PhD. An MSW is required to provide therapy.

Degree programs involve classroom study as well as practical field experience. The master's degree is for more advanced clinical practice and a DSW or PhD is useful for doing research or teaching at the university level.

Most states require practicing social workers to be licensed, certified, or registered, although standards vary.

Income

A social worker with an MSW degree can expect an annual income ranging to about $40,000; a DSW can anticipate an annual income of more than $40,000. A few experienced private practitioners and senior administrators earn as much as $100,000.