

Master of Social Work, MSW

Career Advancement

Professional social workers are found in every facet of community life—in schools, health settings (such as hospitals, hospice, skilled care facilities, substance abuse treatment, mental health clinics), senior centers, elected office, private practices, prisons, military, corporations, and in numerous public and private agencies that serve individuals and families in need. Many also serve as social and community service directors.

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. There are more clinically trained social workers—over 200,000—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.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employs more than 10,000 professional social workers. It is one of the largest employers of MSW individuals in the United States. More than 40% of all disaster mental health volunteers trained by the American Red Cross are professional social workers. There are hundreds of social workers in national, state, and local elected offices.

Projected growth in social work jobs is estimated to be greater than average for all occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Today, almost 50 special interest organizations contribute to the vitality and influence of the social work profession. There are social work groups for educators and researchers, as well as organizations for practitioners in health care leadership, nephrology, oncology, child welfare, schools, prisons, courts, and many other settings.