SOCIAL WORK: New Realities, New Opportunities

The University of Saint Joseph offers an innovative MSW program specifically designed to prepare graduates for careers in community-based clinical practice. Learn more at www.usj.edu/msw

INCREASING DEMAND

Social work is among the nation’s most rapidly growing fields, outpacing most job categories according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. While overall growth for all occupations is projected to be 14 percent between 2010 and 2020, the social work field is expected to grow by 25 percent. Here’s the breakdown by specialty:

• Employment of child, family, and school social workers is expected to grow by 20 percent.

• Employment of health care social workers is expected to grow by 34 percent.

• Employment of mental health and substance abuse social workers is expected to grow by 31 percent.

DIVERSE CLINICAL SETTINGS

Clinical social workers respond to individual and societal needs in various settings: hospitals, community health facilities, schools, veteran’s centers, inpatient and outpatient mental and behavioral health care programs, private practice groups and child welfare programs. All states require applicants for a social work license to have graduated from an accredited program, although each state has distinct licensing requirements.

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**DISTINCTIVE RANGE OF SERVICES**

A career in social work provides opportunities to work with diverse populations, as agencies increasingly develop community-based services that rely on the expertise of clinical social workers.

- **Health and Behavioral Health Care Services:** Increasing employment is driven by a combination of federal and state policy changes and demographic trends. Social workers provide over half of all mental health services in the U.S., and there is a greater demand for well-trained social workers to provide direct assistance, coordinate services, and support families. Increasingly, social workers are also included in integrated care teams, assisting patients with access to care, assessment of treatment, and enhancement of support systems.

- **Veterans Services:** The Veterans Administration plans to hire 1,600 new mental health clinical providers and 300 administrative support staff, responding to the acute needs of returning veterans and active duty personnel. New initiatives have been launched by government and private organizations to support the families of active duty service members and those who have returned home.

- **Aging and Disability Services:** It is estimated that by 2015 the number of Connecticut residents ages 65 and older will increase by nearly 12 percent. This dynamic – reflected nationally – will heighten demand for social work services, at a time of significantly fewer resources. Initiatives to enable seniors to remain in their homes maintaining a high quality of life will also require more clinical social workers to coordinate care and provide clinical services.

- **Child and Family Services:** Graduates with a child and family services specialization can pursue careers in high demand areas such as child welfare, juvenile justice, youth development, and immigrant and refugee services. Social workers in schools give students and teachers advice about learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and social stresses like bullying.