

A CAREER IN SOCIAL WORK

A career in social work is both challenging and nourishing. From comforting a person who is facing surgery, to finding a home for an abandoned child, to helping communities organize for change — social workers are in the forefront of personal and social change. Wherever people are experiencing problems in living; wherever battles for social and personal justice are being waged — social workers are there.

Because they work with people, social workers need a substantial body of knowledge, specialized skills, self-discipline, and realistic attitudes to ensure meaningful and equitable solutions to individual, family, group, organizational and societal problems. To be an effective social worker, you must confront the harsh realities of life objectively while retaining a basic sense of compassion for others. You must also be motivated to help reduce human suffering and strengthen social ties.

Social work requires an interest in helping people with a wide range of problems in a wide range of settings. They must be committed to social and racial justice, embracing anti-racist practices. Social workers practice in advocacy organizations, schools, churches, hospitals and other health facilities, group homes, mental health facilities, prisons, community centers, employee assistance programs, adoption agencies, family services, preschool settings, public welfare settings, child and adult protective services, residential settings for children, or adults, legislatures, social change organizations, and many other settings.

With such diversity of practice, what binds social workers to a common profession? First, social workers view people and their environment as integrally intertwined and interactive. Therefore, social workers work with individuals toward change and share a commitment to institutional and societal change. As professionals, social workers are devoted to helping people function as well as they can within their environment- or helping advocate for environmental changes. Second, social workers maintain a service commitment to the disadvantaged, vulnerable, and economically deprived segments of the population. Historically, social workers led the fight for child labor laws, voting rights for women, and other progressive milestones. Finally, social workers share a common set of professional values and ethics and a common set of basic or generic skills that enable them to work with diverse populations and fill diverse roles in diverse settings.

All social work education is built on a strong liberal arts base in order to produce social workers who can think critically, analyze alternatives skillfully, communicate well verbally and in writing, appreciate their own culture and the culture of others, and dedicate themselves to life-long learning. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has set national standards for this specialized education. It is the only accrediting agency for social work education and is so designated by the United States Office of Education and the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

In Texas and most other states, graduation from a school accredited by CSWE is required for a social worker's licensure. Additionally, to be eligible for advanced placement in social work graduate schools, applicants must have baccalaureate degrees from programs accredited by CSWE. The Baylor University Social Work Program has been affiliated with the Council since 1965. Initial accreditation was granted to the baccalaureate program in 1976 and to the graduate program in 2001. The accreditation of both programs was reaffirmed in 2020.