

SERVING OTHERS



A Guide to the BSW Job Market

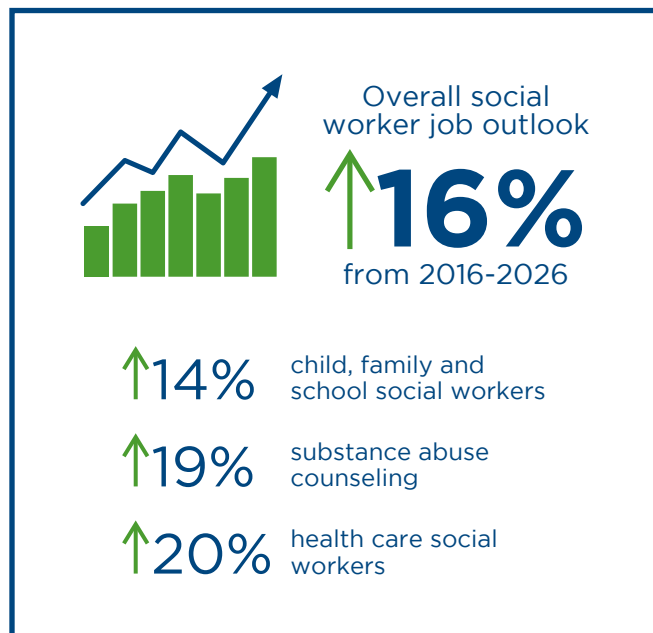
INTRODUCTION

Social work is about assisting those in need. Everyone deserves to live a fulfilling life and to have someone willing to fight for them. Social workers do that, and their service takes many forms. The job market for service-centered jobs is large and varied, and sometimes all it takes to start this career is a bachelor's degree.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported overall employment of social workers is projected to grow 16 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the national average job growth.

Employment of child, family and school social workers is projected to grow 14 percent from 2016 to 2026. The fastest-growing segments of the field are substance abuse counseling (19 percent)

and health care (20 percent). Health care social workers will continue to be needed to help aging populations and their families adjust to new treatments, medications and lifestyles.



Entering the fast-growing field of social work requires at least a bachelor's degree, typically a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). The BSW is composed of general education requirements and courses in the major, such as social work research methods, school social work and the American social work system. Most BSW programs require field instruction, as well.

“The BSW degree is probably the strongest bachelor's-level human service degree you can get. Recognizing what is unique and special about the BSW degree can be of great value in helping you market yourself in today's difficult job market,” wrote [Kathy Boyd](#), ACSW, CMSW.

Part of that value, Boyd explained, is that the BSW is the only bachelor's-level human service degree that has its educational programs accredited by a national accrediting body, the Council on

Social Work Education (CSWE). Accreditation shows potential employers that graduates have met national standards for faculty, instruction and course work.

Many states, including Illinois, offer licensure to social workers with only an undergraduate degree. To obtain [Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker](#) (LBSW) status, candidates must have a BSW and pass the Association of Social Work Board's Bachelor's Exam (ASWB), which they can register for [online](#). In most states, there is no on-the-job training or work experience required to become a LBSW.

In addition to licensure, certain specialized fields in social work are eligible for certification from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) with a BSW and time working in the field. Those certificates are in:

- Social work case management
- Social worker in gerontology
- Hospice and palliative care social worker
- Social worker for military members and their families

In 2000, NASW has developed the specialty practice certifications to support association members in a competitive workplace. The qualifications for earning a [social work certificate](#) are:

- A bachelor's degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education
- Documentation of at least three years and 4,500 hours of paid, supervised, post-BSW professional experience in an organization or agency in your field
- Current state BSW-level license or an ASWB BSW-level exam passing score
- Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics and the NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education

Both certification and licensure can lead to better opportunities, leadership positions and higher pay.

INTERNSHIPS AND FIELD INSTRUCTION

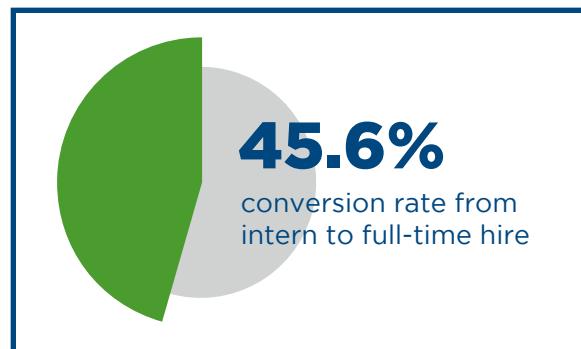
Most BSW programs require field instruction, which is one of the reasons that the BSW is such a valued degree. For most BSW students, field instruction is the first setting in which they can integrate and apply social work theory under the supervision of a professional social worker.

Field instruction, otherwise known as an internship, can put students in front of future employers. In 2017 the National Association of Colleges and Employers reported that the [conversion rate from intern to full-time hire](#) is 45.6 percent. In 2018, there was an expected rise of 1.8 percent in the hiring of interns over the previous year.

Even if an internship doesn't lead to full-time employment, networking with supervisors and colleagues during field instruction is a [valuable investment](#); connections with experienced professionals is another avenue for potential job prospects in the future, and they can serve as references during hiring processes.

Possible field placement locations include:

- Addictions treatment centers
- Adolescent service agencies
- Case management agencies
- Child and family services agencies
- Community outreach programs



The length of a field placement varies by program.

When asked by [researchers](#) to reflect on her BSW field instruction, one student told them, “My knowledge base about what it was really like to deal with clients (grew). We have these theories at school, and a homework assignment, and it seems like there is a right answer. But in real life with real clients, it takes a while to come up with answers.”

BACHELOR'S-LEVEL SOCIAL WORK JOBS

Social workers work in a variety of settings, including mental health clinics, schools, child welfare and human service agencies, hospitals, community centers, religious centers and private practices.

Though the duties of social workers vary depending on where they are employed and what position they hold, some typical activities associated with the profession, as described by the BLS, include:

- Identify people and communities in need of help
- Assess clients' needs, situations, strengths and support networks to determine their goals
- Help clients adjust to changes and challenges in their lives, such as illness, divorce or unemployment
- Research, refer and advocate for community resources, such as food stamps, childcare and health care to assist and improve a client's wellbeing
- Respond to crisis situations, such as child abuse and mental health emergencies
- Follow up with clients to ensure that their situations have improved
- Maintain case files and records
- Develop and evaluate programs and services to ensure that basic client needs are met
- Provide psychotherapy services

When examining specific positions, the duties and role of the social worker become more defined. The following are detailed descriptions of some of the jobs that require only a BSW.

GERONTOLOGY SOCIAL WORKER

As previously mentioned, this is one of the fields that can receive licensure from the NASW. Gerontological social workers meet the biopsychosocial needs of older adults and help connect them to community resources. Social workers coordinate care for individuals who need several services and who will, over a period of time, require care at different levels.

Work settings are varied and can include:

- Referral centers
- Rehabilitation centers
- Long-term care
- Outpatient health services
- Adult protection services
- Governmental agencies
- Faith-based agencies
- Private practice

[PayScale](#) reported the national average for geriatric social work as \$44,672. As the nation's population ages, there will be a rising need for social workers in this field.

FAMILY CASE WORKER

Family case workers help families and individuals through difficult times and assist them in obtaining support from various social services. They help determine what type of services their clients need, whether that be financial, addiction, mental illness or medical. Family case workers may supervise or facilitate adoptions or foster care procedures and continue to monitor the families after the procedures have concluded. The median pay for caseworkers in 2017 was [\\$47,980](#).

“When we, as social workers, sit with clients, we recognize the truly healing capacity of simple curiosity and attention to detail. We also know that to talk is to heal. We don't exactly know why, but the edict holds that once something is said out loud, it loses its psychological power.”

- Danna Bodenheimer, LCSW

SOCIAL SERVICE ASSISTANT

Social service assistants work with social workers to help clients identify and obtain benefits according to their needs. They may also develop, organize and conduct programs to prevent or resolve problems with substance abuse, family crisis or other social needs. Employment of social and human service assistants is projected to grow 16 percent by 2026. They earned a median income of [\\$33,120](#) in 2017.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE MANAGER

[Social and community service managers](#) coordinate and supervise social service programs and community organizations. They manage workers who provide social services to the public. Examples of these organizations include those that provide:

- Relief funds
- Food or housing for marginalized communities
- Foster care for children
- Home visiting services for homebound patients

Employment of social and community service managers is projected to grow 18 percent from 2016 to 2026, which will be driven by increases in the elderly population and the demand for substance abuse treatment and mental health and health-related services. The median annual wage for social and community service managers was \$64,100 in May 2017.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE SOCIAL WORKER

This is another field open to licensure by the NASW. Hospice and palliative care social workers provide palliative care for individuals in their last stage of life; palliative care relieves pain and symptoms without curing it. Hospice social workers also work with patients and families to determine the best end-of-life care decisions based on the patient's goals. Hospice social workers also help with insurance, Medicaid/Medicare paperwork and sometimes can extend to after the patient's death, including helping with funeral arrangements if requested. The average hospice social worker earns [\\$49,828](#) a year.

“As a social worker, I’ve found the nursing home as a place where we grow in compassion, understanding and loving, regardless of the stress and fatigue. A place we savor the goodness of humanity. Every day.”

- Doris Plaster

SOCIAL WORK CASE MANAGER

Social work case managers can be licensed by the NASW. The majority of case managers are employed by nonprofits or government agencies, but the for-profit insurance industry is also a major employer. Case managers provide vital services to those in need, including:

- Arranging transportation
- Obtaining benefits like Medicaid or food stamps
- Assisting in finding housing or clothing
- Acting as a liaison between their clients and other professionals involved in their clients' care, such as doctors, nurses, psychologists or government workers

Clients might include the homeless, chronically ill patients, substance abusers, hospice patients and people with developmental disabilities. According to [PayScale](#), larger cities offer the best rates of employment and salaries for case managers. The national average salary is \$39,040.

SOCIAL WORKER FOR MILITARY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Civilians and enlisted people can qualify to work as a social worker for military members and their families. These social workers:

- Counsel those who are about to deploy
- Offer crisis intervention for those who have been deployed
- Lead workshops on a variety of topics, such as transitioning from deployment to everyday life

Social workers provide advocacy, guidance and counsel for currently serving and retired military personnel and their families, and they coordinate resources for any issues involving psychology and behavior, finances, substance abuse, education and transitional areas. The average pay in 2017 was \$75,119.

According to [FederalJobs.org](#), social worker was the

21st

most popular job in the U.S. Government in 2017, with **15,207 employed**.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

School social workers may be employed at a specific school, work for a school district or work for other educational institutions. Their primary responsibility is to help students with issues that affect their school performance and behavior. They may have sessions with students one-on-one or hold sessions with a group or class. Through one-on-one, classroom or school-wide sessions, school social workers address issues relevant to the student population they serve, including:

- School attendance
- Teen pregnancy
- Drugs and alcohol use
- Social and emotional transitions

They also may facilitate teachers and administration during disciplinary measures or on how to best work with students diagnosed with emotional or psychological issues or learning disabilities. There are almost [40,000 people employed](#) as social workers in elementary and secondary schools. The average salary is \$62,690.

PROBATION OFFICER

Probation officers work with people who were convicted of a crime and sentenced to probation instead of serving time in jail. They generally monitor the offender for a period of time determined by a judge, and they coordinate rehabilitation and social services for the offender. A bachelor's degree in social work, criminal justice, behavioral sciences or a related field is usually expected, but requirements vary by jurisdiction. The average median pay in 2017 was [\\$51,420](#).

At the end of 2016, an estimated
4,537,100 adults
in the U.S. were under community
supervision ([probation or parole](#)).

JUVENILE COURT LIAISON

Court liaisons work with children in the justice system and coordinate communication between their client, the court and law enforcement. Much of the job entails administrative work facilitating the actions of the criminal or civil procedure in the courts. Juvenile court procedures are often more complex than those involving adults because there are more people involved, including parents or guardians and sometimes schools. Most juvenile court liaisons are required to have a bachelor's in social work or psychology. The median pay for a court liaison is [\\$37,440](#).



THE FIRST STEP TO STARTING YOUR CAREER IN SOCIAL WORK

The extensive training and experience provided by a BSW serve as the foundation for one of the many careers that involve human services. The [BSW curriculum](#) at Aurora University Online is built on a strong liberal arts base that prepares students for beginning social work practice with communities, groups, families and individuals. Graduates with the BSW degree are eligible to take the Licensed Social Worker (LSW) examination and to apply for advanced standing in the Aurora University Master of Social Work program.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Earning your BSW lays an excellent foundation for study of social work at the master's level. After obtaining your BSW if you decide you want to become a licensed clinical social worker, the qualifications to become a LCSW vary by state, but all require that you have your MSW. Some may require that you have two years' experience working alongside a LCSW.

110618