



Career Focus - SOCIAL WORKER

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Dear students

If you are interested in helping others through difficult life situation, you may want to consider a career in Social Work. Learn more about the different fields of service, educational requirements and training. Find out what skills you need to succeed in this field.

-Martina

WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK?

Social workers help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives. One group of social workers—clinical social workers—also diagnose and treat mental, behavioural, and emotional issues.

The following fields of service can be differentiated within the profession:

- **Child and family social workers** protect vulnerable children and help families in need of assistance. They help families find housing or services, such as childcare, or apply for benefits. They intervene when children are in danger of neglect or abuse. Some help arrange adoptions, locate foster families, or work to reunite families.

- **School social workers** work with teachers, parents, and school administrators to develop plans and strategies to improve students' academic performance and social development. Students and their families are often referred to social workers to deal with problems such as aggressive behaviour, bullying, or frequent absences from school.

- **Medical social workers** in hospitals help patients and their families by linking patients with resources in the hospital and in their own community. They may work with medical staff to create discharge plans, make referrals to community agencies, facilitate support groups, or conduct follow-up visits with patients once they have been discharged.

- **Elderly care social workers** help senior citizens and their families. They help clients find services, such as programs that provide older adults with meals or with home healthcare. They may provide information about assisted living facilities or nursing homes, or work with older adults in those settings. They help clients and their families make plans for possible health complications or for where clients will live if they can no longer care for themselves.

- **Psychiatric social work** help clients with mental illnesses or addictions. They provide information on services, such as support groups and 12-step programs, to help clients cope with their illness. Many clinical social workers function in these roles as well.

- **Social work with mentally or physically disabled persons** :People who have mental or physical disabilities often face a unique set of challenges in their everyday lives. For this reason, they may need the help of professionals who hold a master's in social work. These professionals can help disabled individuals in a variety of ways, from showing them what social services they can use to ensuring they have access to safe and stable housing.

TASKS OF SOCIAL WORKER AND INVOLVEMENT

Some of the social workers' tasks are aimed at the prevention and elimination of social problems in the community. This involves close cooperation with specific members or groups within the community. In some cases, social workers work in close contact with other disciplines, such as doctors, psychologists and educationalists. Social workers identify social pressures and needs in a community, to employ existing resources or to establish those that might be lacking.



Communities may, for example, be in need of:

- housing
- improvement and development of the environment
- facilities for leisure-time activities
- day-care for pre-school children
- centres for the care of school-going children after school
- homes and service centres for the aged
- rehabilitation centres
- facilities for the disabled.

As with all professions, social workers are involved in research and administration. Tasks in this regard are aimed at the identification of problems and needs; the exploration of the most effective way of preventing such problems and resolving that need, and the maintenance and development of social work services.

In addition to interviewing clients at the office, at their homes and contacting other significant persons in their social environments, social workers are also responsible for large amounts of office work. This includes the preparation of reports on clients for welfare organizations, schools and courts of law.

Three primary methods are used by social workers in their professional work, namely: casework, group work and community work. These three methods are usually complementary to each other.

Case work: Case workers develop one-to-one relationships with individuals, visiting them to give personal assistance and encouragement.

Group work: Group workers organize group activities for people sharing similar problems, interests and needs; for example the organization of recreational activities for the elderly.

Community work: These social workers identify needs in the community and helps to plan and develop health, housing, rehabilitation and other welfare services.



REQUIREMENTS

Secondary Education

Possession of a valid **HIGCSE** Grade 12, or equivalent qualification, with matriculation exemption is required to enrol at a South African university, and an **IGCSE/HIGCSE** Grade 12, or equivalent qualification, with passes in five subjects and at least 25 points on the UNAM point evaluation scale, is needed to be admitted to UNAM.

Compulsory subject

English is a compulsory subject and should normally have been obtained as English as a Second Language at NSSCO level with a minimum C symbol, or English as a First Language at NSSCO level with a minimum D symbol

Recommended subjects

Mathematics (South Africa)

Mathematics, a Science subject and English (Namibia)

Tertiary Education

South African universities as well as **UNAM** offer the four-year degree course in Social Work. The academic training is complemented with intensive practical training. Postgraduate degrees and specialization in a specific area are also offered at South African universities.

Personality

The prospective candidate should have good interpersonal skills, be mentally and physically fit as well as able to adjust to dissimilar circumstances. He/she should also try to maintain an empathetic, objective and realistic approach .

Work Opportunities

Social workers are employed by the Ministries of Woman Affairs and Child Welfare, Prisons and Correctional Services, Justice, Basic and Higher Education, and Health and Social Services. They are also employed by other welfare organizations and work opportunities are generally good. Persons with the necessary qualifications and experience can lecture at a training institute.

Social workers can be appointed by their employers to take charge in the training of social auxiliary workers. They have to be able to train pupils theoretically as well as practically and to integrate theory and practice.

Satisfying Aspects

- helping others
- making a difference in people's lives
- the chance to work part-time, as the demand for social workers is usually very high

Demanding aspects

- working with disagreeable people
- dealing with depression when there seems to be no solution to a client's problem
- the stress of not letting other people's problems become your own.

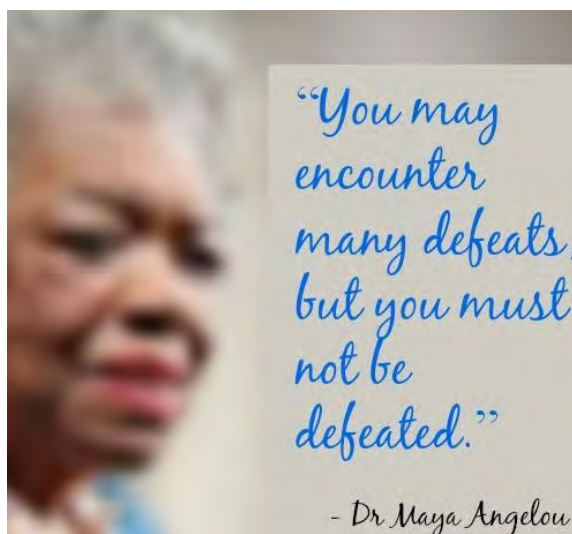


WHAT SOFT SKILLS DO YOU NEED TO SUCCEED?

Those who want to become social workers should bring with them certain soft skills. These personal qualities are usually acquired outside the classroom. Some of them are:

- **Service Orientation:** A strong desire to help other people is essential.
- **Active Listening:** You must give clients your full attention when you are meeting with them.
- **Verbal Communication:** Your clients will rely on you to clearly convey information to them, their families and other service providers.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** In addition to listening and speaking skills, you also need social skills.
- **Time Management and Organizational Skills:** Given the large case-load common for most social workers, these skills are essential.
- **Critical Thinking:** You must be able to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of different solutions when helping your clients solve problems.

I am a
 basic agent for positive change - a client
 advocating, injustice fighting, therapy
 providing, systems testing, family
 preserving, social conscious raising
 datacollecting, rights protecting, child
 defending, staff developing, human
 assisting, strengths focused, social
 rights championing, ego lending, and
 crisis intervening teacher, facilitator,
 listener, encourager, supporter, and
 leader with professionalism, integrity
 concern, empathy, values, love, trust,
 honesty, and warmth -
 Social Worker



References : Namibia Careers (e-campus) ; About Careers

We're on the web:

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Previous newsletters can be found on the TUCSIN website:

<http://www.tucsin.org/index.php/en/project/documents-for-students/career-prospect>.