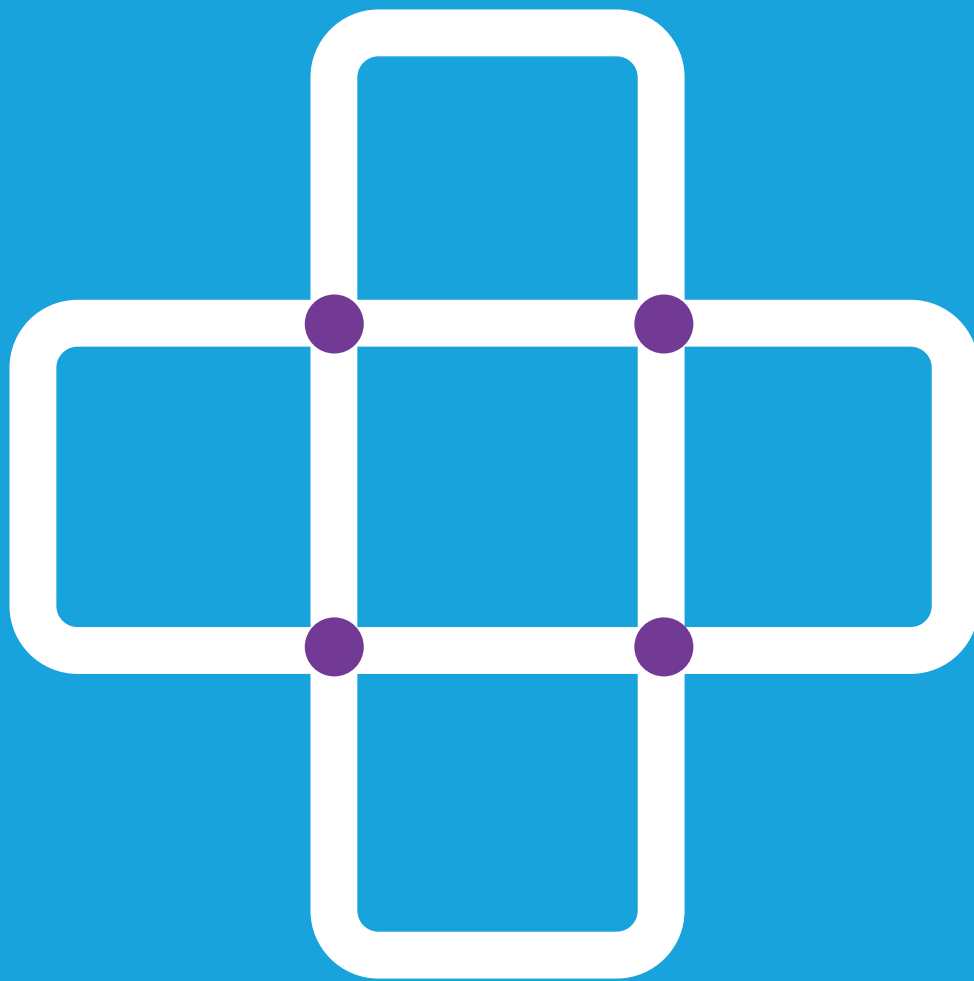


Social Work Career Guide

A guide for educational, guidance, and career counselors and advisors; mental health counselors; child, family, and school social workers; healthcare social workers; mental health and substance abuse social workers; community health workers.



Finding Your Way to a Career: Social Work

Social workers provide important advisory services and assist individuals in a wide variety of contexts and settings. Individuals helped by social workers can range widely in age, from children and young adults in educational settings to adults in health care or community settings. Social workers help individuals achieve optimal mental and emotional health and are experts of available social services in the region to help their clients. Social workers are found in inpatient hospital settings as well as in various outpatient settings throughout the community.

How to use this document to learn more.

As one of the Top 100 Hot Jobs for 2022, social workers is a promising occupation for job-seekers in West Michigan. To find out if this is the right career choice, use this Career Map to examine:

- Who might enjoy this kind of work.
- Qualifications needed in this career field.
- Growth potential and levels of pay.
- Valuable skills for this type of work.
- Common tools and technology used in this work.
- Occupations, responsibilities, and other job titles.

This information is drawn from national data and insights from West Michigan employers. It is meant as a starting point for job seekers and career coaches to work together in the exploration of meaningful and fulfilling careers.



Exploring Occupations in Social Work

Social workers provide social supports and counsel to individuals who seek their care. As a social worker, you might interview clients to gather information about their backgrounds and needs, develop treatment plans for patients or clients, or plan programs to address community health issues. You may also present social services information to the public or counsel clients or patients regarding personal issues.

The Path to Success

Who might enjoy this type of work?

People who enjoy working in the social workers field tend to enjoy:

- Working with, communicating with, and teaching people.
- Helping or providing service to others.
- Mental problem solving.
- Working with ideas and using cognitive (thinking) skills.
- Working in a creative setting, with the ability to accomplish work without a clear set of rules.
- Working with forms, designs, and patterns.

People who do well in this work generally perform well in such areas as:

- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Adaptability
- Listening
- Speaking

Qualifications needed in this career field.

Nationally, most people working as a social worker have a Master's degree. The next largest group has a bachelor's degree. Many roles require a license.

Sample certifications include:

Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors Credential: Career readiness certificate, school counselor certification

Mental Health Counselors Credential: Licensed master social worker, licensed professional counselor (LPC)

Child, Family, and School Social Workers Credential: Licensed master social worker, licensed professional counselor (LPC)

Health Care Social Workers Credential: Licensed master social worker, licensed professional counselor (LPC)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers Credential: Licensed master social worker, licensed professional counselor (LPC)

Community Health Workers Credential: Certified community health worker

Growth potential.

In the West Michigan counties of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa, there were 6,174 social worker jobs in 2020. That number is projected to grow by at least 4% to 6,413 by 2025.

Valuable skills for this type of work.

Tasks and functions performed by social workers include:

- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.
- Assisting and caring for others.
- Communicating with supervisors, peers, or subordinates.
- Documenting/recording information.
- Getting information.

Common tools and technology used in this work.

Tools: computers, telephones, audio recorders, overhead projectors

Technology: medical health information software, informational retrieval or search software, appointment scheduling software, presentation software

Mapping a Career:

Child, Family & School Social Workers
Community Health Workers
Health Care Social Workers
Mental Health Counselors
Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers
Educational, Guidance, School & Vocational Counselor
Social & Community Service Managers



Wage ranges represent 25th - 75th percentile.
Timeframes represent the typical education and experience combined.
See page 6 for detailed description of occupations.

LESS THAN 2 YEARS

2-4 YEARS

5-9 YEARS

10+ YEARS

Social Work: A Field Guide

Occupations, responsibilities and other job titles.

Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisor

Advise and assist students and provide educational and vocational guidance services.

Examples of locally used job titles: academic advisor, academic counselor, admissions counselor, career counselor, college counselor, guidance counselor, school adjustment counselor, school counselor, student development advisor, student services coordinator

Mental Health Counselor

Counsel and advise individuals and groups to promote optimum mental and emotional health, with an emphasis on prevention. May help individuals deal with a broad range of mental health issues, such as those associated with addictions and substance abuse; family, parenting, and marital problems; stress management; self-esteem; or aging.

Examples of locally used job titles: behavior analyst, behavior support specialist (BSS), case manager, clinician, correctional counselor, counselor, mental health counselor, mental health specialist, mental health therapist, therapist

Child, Family, and School Social Worker

Provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the family well-being and the academic functioning of children. May assist parents, arrange adoptions, and find foster homes for abandoned or abused children. In schools, they address such problems as teenage pregnancy, misbehavior, and truancy. May also advise teachers.

Examples of locally used job titles: adoption social worker, case manager, case worker, child protective services social worker (CPS social worker), family protection specialist, family resource coordinator, family service worker, foster care social worker, school social worker, youth services specialist

Health Care Social Worker

Provide individuals, families, and groups with the psychosocial support needed to cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses. Services include advising

family caregivers. Provide patients with information and counseling, and make referrals for other services. May also provide case and care management or interventions designed to promote health, prevent disease, and address barriers to access to healthcare.

Examples of locally used job titles: clinical social worker, dialysis social worker, hospice social worker, medical social worker, nephrology social worker, oncology social worker, renal social worker, social work case manager, social worker

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Worker

Assess and treat individuals with mental, emotional, or substance abuse problems, including abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and/or other drugs. Activities may include individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, case management, client advocacy, prevention, and education.

Examples of locally used job titles: case manager, clinical social worker, clinical therapist, clinician, counselor, mental health therapist, psychotherapist, social worker, substance abuse counselor, therapist

Community Health Workers

Promote health within a community by assisting individuals to adopt healthy behaviors. Serve as an advocate for the health needs of individuals by assisting community residents in effectively communicating with healthcare providers or social service agencies. Act as liaison or advocate and implement programs that promote, maintain, and improve individual and overall community health. May deliver health-related preventive services such as blood pressure, glaucoma, and hearing screenings. May collect data to help identify community health needs.

Examples of locally used job titles: apprise counselor, community health outreach worker, community health program coordinator, community health program representative (community health program rep), community health promoter, community health worker (CHW), community nutrition educator, human immunodeficiency virus counseling and testing services specialist (HIV CTS specialist)



West Michigan Works! is part of the statewide Michigan Works! system and the workforce development agency in West Michigan. We serve the employers and job seekers of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa counties.

We partner with employers, educators, economic developers and community organizations to create a qualified workforce that meets our region's current and future talent needs and fuels our shared economic future.

Learn more at: <https://www.westmiworks.org/>



CareerPoint helps students and job seekers find their place in the world of work by matching interests and abilities with training, support, and meaningful and rewarding careers.

By providing training and tools, CareerPoint supports the workforce professionals who help people navigate the West Michigan job market.

CareerPoint promotes evidence-based coaching to help students and job seekers discover and follow pathways to rewarding careers. This model follows seven steps to each participant's success.

Learn more at: <https://talnetcareerpoint.org/>