

Social Work

Obj. 7.2: Identify the roles of a social worker.



What do you know about Social Work?

1. When you think of social work, what do you think of?

2. Have you had any encounters with a social worker? If so, what were they like?

3. Compare social workers with other health professionals. How do you think their roles are different?

4. How do you think social workers address social, mental, and physical health needs?

DISCUSS

All People Matter

The National Association of Social Workers selected the theme “All People Matter” for the 2014 annual Social Work Month, which occurs in March. Why do you think they selected this theme? How do you think it represents the social work profession?



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, behavioral, and emotional issues. Sometimes social workers are called “professional helpers” because they help others obtain resources, resolve problems, make it through crises, and fulfill needs.



Why do Social Work?

If you're looking for a career with meaning, action, diversity, satisfaction, and an abundance of options, consider social work. Social workers are people who care about people, who want to make things better, who want to relieve suffering, who want their work to make a difference.

Social work is a profession devoted to helping people function the best they can in their environment. This can mean providing direct services or therapy directly to people (called “clients”). It also can mean working for change to improve social conditions.

The phrase “in their environment” points to a distinguishing characteristic of social work—one that sets it apart from other helping professions. Social workers help clients deal not only with how they feel about a situation but also with what they can do about it. For example, a man suffering stress stemming from single parenting may be referred by a social worker to a child care agency. The social worker also might help him explore flextime with his employer and might work with a coalition of local employers to make flextime and child care more available. In addition, the social worker might provide therapy to help him handle the immediate stress.

Many social workers work for social change as well. The victim of an assault benefits not only from therapy but also from efforts to curb neighborhood crime. The client under stress because illness has devastated the family finances benefits from efforts to reform the nation's health care system.

Source: National Association of Social Workers, Help Starts Here (<http://www.helpstartshere.org/careers>)



Social Work & Violence

Work with a partner to identify examples of work a social worker may do in relation to violence in each of the following settings where social workers can be found.

Setting	Ways Social Workers May Help Respond To & Prevent Violence
Elementary School	
High School	
College	
Hospital	
Senior Center	
Prison	
Mental Health Clinic	
Military Barracks	
Veterans Hospital	
Corporation	
Homeless Shelter	
Reproductive Health Agency	



The Role of a Social Worker

In the scenarios below, describe one way a social worker may help the client:

1. A 35-year-old man has recently been laid off of his steelworker job. He lives with his mother and just went through a messy breakup with his long-term girlfriend. He is eager to try to win her back.

2. A 10-year old girl is struggling with reading and math. Her teacher reports that she looks tired and often seems hungry in the mornings. She has also started making inappropriate comments to other students in the class.

3. A 88-year old woman with Alzheimer’s disease has recently lost her only daughter in a car crash. She doesn’t have any other family to take care of her. With her daughter no longer able to pay for her care in an upscale elderly care facility, she will have to move elsewhere.



Social Work in Your Community

Identify a problem among some people in your community and describe how social work is working to resolve it. Answer the questions below based on your problem.

1. What is the problem?

2. How could this problem be addressed by social workers? (List as many ways as you can).

3. Do social workers in your community seem to be addressing this problem? Why or why not? (List any evidence you have of this answer.)