

typical agency has several levels of probation and parole officers and correctional treatment specialists, as well as supervisors. A graduate degree, such as a master's degree in criminal justice, social work, or psychology, may be helpful for advancement.

### Job Outlook

This occupation is not attractive to some potential entrants due to relatively low earnings, heavy workloads, and high stress levels. Therefore, the number of entrants to the occupation may not be enough to fill all expected openings, resulting in good employment opportunities over the projection period.

Employment of probation officers and correctional treatment specialists is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2010. Despite recent decreases in the crime rate, vigorous law enforcement is expected to result in a continuing increase in the prison population. Overcrowding in prisons also has increased the probation population, as judges and prosecutors search for alternate forms of punishments, such as electronic monitoring and day reporting centers. The number of offenders released on parole is expected to increase to create room for other offenders in prison. The increasing prison, parole, and probation populations should spur more demand for probation and parole officers and correctional treatment specialists.

In addition to openings due to growth, many openings will be created by replacement needs, especially openings due to the large number of these workers who are expected to retire over the projection period.

The job outlook depends on the amount of government funding that is allocated to corrections, and especially to probation systems. Although community supervision is far less expensive than keeping offenders in prison, a change in political trends toward more imprisonment and away from community supervision could result in reduced employment opportunities.

### Earnings

Median annual earnings of probation officers and correctional treatment specialists in 2000 were \$38,150. The middle 50 percent earned between \$30,270 and \$49,030. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$25,010, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$59,010. In 2000, median annual earnings for probation officers and correctional treatment specialists employed in State government were \$36,980; those employed in local government earned \$40,820. Higher wages tend to be found in urban areas.

### Related Occupations

Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists counsel criminal offenders as they re-enter society. Other occupations that involve similar responsibilities include social workers, social and human service assistants, and counselors.

Probation officers and correctional treatment also play a major role in maintaining public safety. Other occupations related to corrections and law enforcement include police and detectives, correctional officers, and firefighting occupations.

### Sources of Additional Information

For information about criminal justice job opportunities in your area, contact your State's Department of Corrections, Criminal Justice, or Probation.

Further information about probation officers and correctional treatment specialists is available from:

- ▶ The American Probation and Parole Association, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910. Internet: <http://www.appa-net.org>

## Social and Human Service Assistants

(O\*NET 21-1093.00)

### Significant Points

- While a bachelor's degree usually is not required, employers increasingly seek individuals with relevant work experience or education beyond high school.
- Social and human service assistants are projected to be among the fastest growing occupations.
- Job opportunities should be excellent, particularly for applicants with appropriate postsecondary education, but pay is low.

### Nature of the Work

Social and human service assistant is a generic term for people with various job titles, including human service worker, case management aide, social work assistant, community support worker, mental health aide, community outreach worker, life skill counselor, or gerontology aide. They usually work under the direction of professionals from a variety of fields, such as nursing, psychiatry, psychology, rehabilitative or physical therapy, or social work. The amount of responsibility and supervision they are given varies a great deal. Some have little direct supervision; others work under close direction.

Social and human service assistants provide direct and indirect client services. They assess clients' needs, establish their eligibility for benefits and services, and help clients obtain them. They examine financial documents such as rent receipts and tax returns to determine whether the client is eligible for Food Stamps, Medicaid, welfare, and other human service programs. They also arrange for transportation and escorts, if necessary, and provide emotional support. Social and human service assistants monitor and keep case records on clients and report progress to supervisors and case managers. They also may transport or accompany clients to group meal sites, adult daycare centers, or doctors' offices; telephone or visit clients' homes to make sure services are being received; or help resolve disagreements, such as those between tenants and landlords. They also may help some clients complete insurance or medical forms, as well as applications for financial assistance, and may assist others with daily living needs.

Social and human service assistants play a variety of roles in a community. They may organize and lead group activities, assist clients in need of counseling or crisis intervention, or administer a food bank or emergency fuel program. In halfway houses, group homes, and government-supported housing programs, they assist adults who need supervision with personal hygiene and daily living skills. They review clients' records, ensure that they take correct doses of medication, talk with family members, and confer with medical personnel and other caregivers to gain better insight into clients' backgrounds and needs. Social and human service assistants also provide emotional support and help clients become involved in their own well-being, in community recreation programs, and in other activities.

In psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation programs, and outpatient clinics, social and human service assistants work with professional care providers, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, to help clients master everyday living skills, to teach them how to communicate more effectively, and to get along better with others. They support the client's participation in a treatment plan, such as individual or group counseling or occupational therapy.



*Social and human service assistants help patients with daily activities in adult daycare centers and rehabilitation programs.*

### **Working Conditions**

Working conditions of social and human service assistants vary. Some work in offices, clinics, and hospitals, while others work in group homes, shelters, sheltered workshops, and day programs. Many spend their time in the field visiting clients. Most work a 40-hour week, although some work in the evening and on weekends.

The work, while satisfying, can be emotionally draining. Understaffing and relatively low pay may add to the pressure. Turnover is reported to be high, especially among workers without academic preparation for this field.

### **Employment**

Social and human service assistants held about 271,000 jobs in 2000. Approximately half worked in private social or human services agencies, offering a variety of services, including adult daycare, group meals, crisis intervention, counseling, and job training. Many social and human service assistants supervised residents of group homes and halfway houses. About one-quarter were employed by State and local governments, primarily in public welfare agencies and facilities for mentally disabled and developmentally challenged individuals. Social and human service assistants also held jobs in clinics, detoxification facilities, community mental health centers, psychiatric hospitals, day-treatment programs, and sheltered workshops.

### **Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement**

While a bachelor's degree usually is not required for entry into this occupation, employers increasingly seek individuals with relevant work experience or education beyond high school. Certificates or associate degrees in subjects such as social work, human services, gerontology, or one of the social or behavioral sciences meet most employers' requirements.

Human services programs have a core curriculum that trains students to observe patients and record information, conduct patient interviews, implement treatment plans, employ problem-solving techniques, handle crisis intervention matters, and use proper case management and referral procedures. General education courses in liberal arts, sciences, and the humanities also are part of the curriculum. Many degree programs require completion of a supervised internship.

Educational attainment often influences the kind of work employees may be assigned and the degree of responsibility that may be entrusted to them. For example, workers with no more than a high school education are likely to receive extensive on-the-job training to work in direct-care services, while employees with a college degree might be assigned to do supportive counseling, coordinate program activities, or manage a group home. Social and human service assistants with proven leadership ability, either from previous experience or as a volunteer in the field, often have greater autonomy in their work. Regardless of the academic or work background of employees, most employers provide some form of in-service training, such as seminars and workshops, to their employees.

Hiring requirements in group homes tend to be more stringent than those in other settings. For example, employers may require employees to have a valid driver's license or to submit to a criminal background investigation.

Employers try to select applicants who have effective communication skills, a strong sense of responsibility, and the ability to manage time effectively. Many human services jobs involve direct contact with people who are vulnerable to exploitation or mistreatment; therefore, patience, understanding, and a strong desire to help others are highly valued characteristics.

Formal education almost always is necessary for advancement. In general, advancement requires a bachelor's or master's degree in counseling, rehabilitation, social work, human services, psychology, or a related field.

### **Job Outlook**

Job opportunities for social and human service assistants are expected to be excellent, particularly for applicants with appropriate postsecondary education. The number of social and human service assistants is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations between 2000 and 2010—ranking among the most rapidly growing occupations. The need to replace workers who move into new positions due to advancement or retirement or for other reasons will create many additional job opportunities. This occupation, however, is not attractive to everyone. It can be draining emotionally, and the pay is relatively low. There will be more competition for jobs in urban areas than in rural areas, but qualified applicants should have little difficulty finding employment.

Faced with rapid growth in the demand for social and human services, employers are developing new strategies for delivering and funding services. Many employers increasingly rely on social and human service assistants to undertake greater responsibility in delivering services to clients.

Opportunities are expected to be best in job-training programs, residential care facilities, and private social service agencies, which include such services as adult daycare and meal delivery programs. Demand for these services will expand with the growing

elderly population, who are more likely to need services. In addition, social and human service assistants will continue to be needed to provide services to pregnant teenagers, the homeless, the mentally disabled and developmentally challenged, and those with substance-abuse problems.

Job-training programs also are expected to require additional social and human service assistants. As social welfare policies shift focus from benefit-based programs to work-based initiatives, there will be more demand for people to teach job skills to the people who are new to, or returning to, the workforce. Additionally, streamlined and downsized businesses create demand for persons with job-retraining expertise. Social and human service assistants will help companies to cope with new modes of conducting business and employees to master new job skills.

Residential care establishments should face increased pressures to respond to the needs of the chronically and mentally ill. Many of these patients have been deinstitutionalized and lack the knowledge or the ability to care for themselves. Also, more community-based programs, supported independent-living sites, and group residences are expected to be established to house and assist the homeless and the chronically and mentally ill. Because more substance abusers are being sent to treatment programs instead of to prison, employment of social and human service assistants in substance abuse programs will also grow.

The number of jobs for social and human service assistants will grow more rapidly than overall employment in State and local governments. State and local governments employ many of their social and human service assistants in corrections and public-assistance departments. Although employment in corrections departments is growing, employment of social and human service assistants is not expected to grow as rapidly as employment in other corrections jobs, such as correctional officers. Public-assistance programs have been employing more social and human service assistants in an attempt to employ fewer social workers, who are more educated, and thus more highly paid.

**Earnings**

Median annual earnings of social and human service assistants were \$22,330 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$17,820 and \$27,930. The top 10 percent earned more than \$35,220, while the lowest 10 percent earned less than \$14,660.

Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of social and human service assistants in 2000 were:

State government, except education and hospitals .....	\$27,130
Local government, except education and hospitals .....	25,320
Social services, not elsewhere classified .....	21,820
Individual and family services .....	21,350
Residential care .....	19,880

**Related Occupations**

Workers in other occupations that require skills similar to those of social and human service assistants include social workers; clergy; counselors; childcare workers; occupational-therapist assistants and aides; physical-therapist assistants and aides; and nursing, psychiatric, and home-health aides.

**Sources of Additional Information**

Information on academic programs in human services may be found in most directories of 2- and 4-year colleges, available at libraries or career counseling centers.

For information on programs and careers in human services, contact:

- ▶ National Organization for Human Service Education, University of Rhode Island, Quinn 107-URI, Kingston, RI 02881. Internet: <http://www.nohse.com>

- ▶ Council for Standards in Human Services Education, Northern Essex Community College, 100 Elliot Way, Haverhill, MA 01830. Internet: <http://www.cshse.com>

Information on job openings may be available from State employment service offices or directly from city, county, or State departments of health, mental health and mental retardation, and human resources.

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## Social Workers

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(O\*NET 21-1021.00, 21-1022.00, 21-1023.00)

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**Significant Points**

- While a bachelor’s degree is the minimum requirement, a master’s degree in social work or a related field has become the standard for many positions.
- Employment is projected to grow faster than average.
- Competition for jobs is expected in cities, but opportunities should be good in rural areas.

**Nature of the Work**

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people’s lives. Social workers help people function the best way they can in their environment, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems.

Social workers often see clients who face a life-threatening disease or a social problem. These problems may include inadequate housing, unemployment, lack of job skills, financial distress, serious illness or disability, substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, or anti-social behavior. Social workers also assist families that have serious domestic conflicts, including those involving child or spousal abuse.

Through direct counseling, social workers help clients identify their concerns, consider effective solutions, and find reliable resources. Social workers typically consult and counsel clients and arrange for services that can help them. Often, they refer clients to specialists in services such as debt counseling, childcare or eldercare, public assistance, or alcohol or drug rehabilitation. Social workers then follow through with the client to assure that services are helpful and that clients make proper use of the services offered. Social workers may review eligibility requirements, help fill out forms and applications, visit clients on a regular basis, and provide support during crises.

Social workers practice in a variety of settings. In hospitals and psychiatric hospitals, they provide or arrange for a range of support services. In mental health and community centers, social workers provide counseling services on marriage, family, and adoption matters, and they help people through personal or community emergencies, such as dealing with loss or grief or arranging for disaster assistance. In schools, they help children, parents, and teachers cope with problems. In social service agencies, they help people locate basic benefits, such as income assistance, housing, and job training. Social workers also offer counseling to those receiving therapy for addictive or physical disorders in rehabilitation facilities, and to people in nursing homes who are in need of routine living care. In employment settings, they counsel people with personal, family, professional, or financial problems affecting their work performance. Social workers who work in courts and correction facilities evaluate and counsel individuals in the criminal justice system to cope better in society. In private practice, they provide