

Community and Social Services

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Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers work with people who are abusing alcohol or other substances, in recovery, or have other mental problems. They may provide individual and group therapy or crisis intervention, teach life skills, engage in outreach, and help with treatment plans after release from in-patient substance abuse or mental health treatment. They often work with the families or loved ones of people who are dealing with addiction or mental illness. The work may take place in private practice, in outpatient treatment facilities, or in inpatient treatment programs, where clients reside at the facility. Additionally, some mental health and substance abuse social workers may work in employee-assistance programs at a particular company, with a focus on job-related pressures.

Although work in this area can be very rewarding, it also can be very emotionally draining. Social workers in this area need to plan for and develop supports for their own stress management and emotional well-being. Working conditions vary from clean, well lit and comfortable offices to state sponsored clinics. Their work week is generally 40 hours although longer hours may be required if there is a shortage of social workers in their organization.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation, but some positions require an advanced degree, typically a Master's in Social Work (MSW).

New York and all other states also have licensing boards. Licenses are not necessarily required for all positions, or for entry and training, but are typically required for advancement. License requirements in most states commonly include: written examination, continuing education, or 1-3 years of experience. The requirements for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in New York include:

- A statement of moral character
- 21 years of age,
- A Masters in Social Work
- 12 hours of clinical coursework
- 3 years of supervised experience
- A written examination.

In addition to licensing or instead of (depending on the position), social workers in the area of substance abuse may pursue certification as an Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor (AODAC) through the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (ICRC). Requirements include:

- Prior hours of supervised experience (numbers vary based on educational degree),
- at least 270 hours of education,
- signing a code of ethics, and
- a written examination.

In New York State, the AODAC examination is offered through the Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Some counselors working in Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centers also pursue voluntary certification through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), which requires a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through an accredited program, internship or supervised work hours, and passage of a written examination.

More specialized credentials, involving continuing education, though not mandatory, may be helpful for advancement after initial licensing, and are available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

More Information on Licensing and Certification:

- Directory of state licensing boards: <https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawBoardWebsitedll.dll/EXEC/0/0yqtpd30za0u3g1eyif1b115x868>
- New York State licensing information: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>

- International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (ICRC):
<http://www.icrcaoda.org/AODAstandards.asp>
- Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS):
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/sqa/credentialing/index.cfm>
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC):
http://www.crccertification.com/pages/about_crc_certification/46.php
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW):
<http://www.socialworkers.org/credentials/default.asp>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree in the social and behavioral sciences, such as a Master's in Social Work (MSW), costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally two years.

Licensure and certification occurs at the state level: Costs vary by state, ranging from \$40-\$500. The cost in New York state is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Counselor examination in New York, the cost is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification examination, the cost is \$385, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Costs of continuing education vary.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Health Educators

Health Educators help individuals and communities develop healthy lifestyles and wellness. Much of the focus of health education involves encouraging behaviors that can prevent diseases, injuries, and other health problems. Health educators may be employed by schools, businesses, community health organizations in the non-profit sector, health-care facilities, or by state or federal public health agencies.

Common topics addressed by health educators include healthy nutrition, the importance of exercise, avoidance of sexually transmitted diseases, and illness prevention. Health education is typically tailored to the needs or cultural beliefs of a particular population or audience. For example, programs on self-examination for breast cancer are appropriate for women; classes on the effects of binge drinking may be helpful to college students; and programs targeted at older adults need to be different from those aimed at a college-aged population. Health educators must plan programs that are consistent with the goals and objectives of their employers. For example, many nonprofit organizations educate the public about one disease or health topic such as heart disease or diabetes prevention, and, therefore, limit the programs they provide.

Health educators are often responsible for developing their own educational materials and formats, such as a lecture, class, demonstration or health screening, or a video, pamphlet or brochure. These tasks require working with other people in a team or on a committee. Health educators will then implement their proposed plan. This may involve applying for grants or other funding, locating speakers, or securing a place for an educational event. Finally, health educators assess or evaluate their programming, for instance through surveys.

Although programming is a large part of their job, health educators also serve as a resource on health topics. This can include locating services, reference material and other resources, and referring individuals or groups to organizations or medical professionals. Within medical care facilities, health educators tend to work one-on-one with patients and their families. In this setting, a health educator's goal is to educate individual patients on their diagnosis and how that may change or affect their lifestyle. To this end, they may explain the necessary procedures or surgeries as well as how patients will need to alter their lifestyles or follow treatments to manage their illness and/or return to full health. They may also direct patients to outside resources, such as support groups, home health agencies, or social services. In some cases, health educators train hospital staff on how to better interact with patients. They generally work a standard 40 hour week.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree, generally in health education, through an accredited public or private university is necessary. A master's degree (MA/MS), in health education, may be required for some positions and is usually required for career advancement.

Some health educators opt to obtain a credential as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), by taking an additional examination, after completion of a bachelor's degree. The test is administered by the National Commission of Health Education Credentialing. After receiving their certification, health educators must take 75 hours of continuing education courses over a 5 year period to maintain their certification.

More Information on Certification:

National Commission of Health Education Credentialing, Inc.:
<http://www.nchec.org/>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned at an accredited public university in an area like education, including health education costs an average of \$7,900* per year. Completion time is generally 2 years.

Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) examination fee: \$240, or \$210 for full-time students (early registration), plus the cost of any exam study aids

Costs of continuing education, certification and recertification vary.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors

Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors help people who have problems with drugs or alcohol, eating disorders, or other forms of addiction, such as gambling or sex addictions. Counseling involves:

- helping people to identify “triggers”, meaning feelings, relationships or activities which motivate addictive behavior,
- identifying underlying problems which motivate an addiction,
- developing a personalized recovery program, and
- providing mental health treatment to address those underlying problems.

Counseling may be done in individual and group settings, and most clients will use both forms, whether with the same counselor, or with a whole treatment team. Counselors often work with family members or loved ones as well. Some counselors also engage in public education or outreach activities related to addictions, or eating disorders.

Although work in this area can be very rewarding, it also can be very emotionally draining. Counselors in this area need to plan for and develop supports for their own stress management and emotional well-being. Working conditions vary from clean, well lit and comfortable clinics to homeless shelters. Their work week is generally 40 hours although longer hours may be required if there is a shortage of counselors in a particular workplace.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree is usually the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation. Some positions require an advanced degree, typically a Master's in Social Work (MSW). New York and all other states also have licensing boards.

Licenses are not necessarily required for all positions, or for entry and training, but are typically required for advancement. License requirements in most states commonly include: written examination, continuing education, or 1-3 years of experience.

The requirements for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in New York include:

- statement of moral character
- 21 years of age
- A Masters in Social Work
- 12 hours of clinical coursework
- 3 years of supervised experience
- A written examination.

In addition or instead (depending on the position), social workers in the area of substance abuse may pursue certification as an Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor (AODAC) through the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (ICRC).

Requirements for Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor certification include:

- Prior hours of supervised experience (numbers vary based on educational degree)
- at least 270 hours of education
- signing a code of ethics
- A written examination.

In New York State, the AODAC examination is offered through the Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Some counselors working in Rehabilitation Centers also pursue voluntary certification through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), which requires a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through an accredited program, internship or supervised work hours, and passage of a written examination.

Some more specialized credentials involving continuing education, though not necessarily mandatory, may be helpful for advancement after initial licensing, and are available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

More Information on Licensing:

- Directory of state licensing boards:
<https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawBoardWebsitedll.dll/EXEC/0/0ygtpd30za0u3g1eyif1b115x868>
- New York State licensing information: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>
- International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium:
<http://www.icrcaoda.org/AODAstandards.asp>
- Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services:
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/sqa/credentialing/index.cfm>
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification:
http://www.crcrcertification.com/pages/about_crc_certification/46.php
- National Association of Social Workers:
<http://www.socialworkers.org/credentials/default.asp>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned at an accredited public university in the social behavior sciences, such as a Master's in Social Work (MSW) costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally two years.

Licensure and certification occurs at the state level: Costs vary by state, ranging from \$40-\$500

The cost in New York state is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor (AODAC) examination in New York, the cost is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) examination, the cost is \$385, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Costs of continuing education vary.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Mental Health Counselors

Mental Health Counselors work with individuals, families, or particular communities or populations, in order to treat emotional and mental illness and support mental health. The issues mental health counselors commonly treat include: depression, anxiety, addiction and substance abuse, suicidal impulses, stress, trauma, low self-esteem, and grief. Mental health counselors work with clients to address a range of issues related to life skills including: job and career concerns, educational decisions, and relationship problems.

One of the many skills mental health counselors often need involves “cultural competency”, meaning familiarity with and sensitivity to the context, norms, and needs of the communities they work with. In some instances, this may involve speaking a language other than English, or possessing awareness of family, religious, or cultural norms and traditions.

In addition, mental health counselors may be involved in community outreach, advocacy, and mediation activities. Some specialize in delivering mental health services for the elderly. Mental health counselors often work closely with other mental health specialists, as part of a treatment team, or in collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists, and other counselors. Depending on the position, mental health counselors may work in schools, community centers, state or local agencies, healthcare facilities, rehabilitation centers, prisons and jails, nursing homes, or across multiple locations.

Although work in this area can be very rewarding, it also can be very emotionally draining. Counselors in this area need to plan for and develop supports for their own stress management and emotional well-being. Their work week is generally a standard 40 hours although longer hours may be required depending on the workplace.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

Completion of a bachelor’s degree program at an accredited four year university is required. In most states, a Master’s degree in counseling or counseling education is also required.

Most states have some licensing requirements for mental health counselors for particular positions, or for advancement. In New York, requirements include:

- a Masters or higher degree,
- 3000 hours of supervised experience working with clients,
- Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE), offered by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).

More Information on Licensing:

- New York State: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/mhp/mhp-apply-faq.htm>
- National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC): <http://www.nbcc.org/>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree in the social and behavior sciences, such as a Masters in counseling, costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally 2 years.

Licensing costs vary by state, and can generally go up to \$600.

In New York, the fee for the examination is \$345. There is an additional \$70 application fee to begin supervised hours of experience, before licensing. In all, fees for licensing total \$415, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Medical and Public Health Social Workers

Medical and Public Health Social Workers work with people who are living with or affected by chronic, acute or terminal illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer or HIV/AIDS, in order to provide psychological services, social support, and counseling. They often play a direct role in advising or collaborating with family members or other caregivers, counseling patients on self-care, and planning for needs after release from a hospital. Medical and public health social workers may work for hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, individual and family services agencies, or local governments. In some instances, they are part of a team of social service providers focusing on a particular health issue or population.

Although work in this area can be very rewarding, it also can be very emotionally draining. Social workers in this area need to plan for and develop supports for their own stress management and emotional well-being. Although medical and public health social workers work weekday business hours, they may need to be available at nights or on weekends, to accommodate client schedules. Travel for home visits or travel to and from different medical facilities or nursing homes is sometimes required.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation, but some positions require an advanced degree, typically a Master's in Social Work (MSW).

New York and all other states also have licensing boards. Licenses are not necessarily required for all positions, or for entry and training, but are typically required for advancement. License requirements in most states commonly include:

- a written examination,
- continuing education, or
- 1-3 years of experience.

The requirements for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in New York include:

- statement of moral character
- 21 years of age
- A Masters in Social Work
- 12 hours of clinical coursework
- 3 years of supervised experience
- a written examination

Some more specialized credentials involving continuing education, though not necessarily mandatory, may be helpful for advancement after initial licensing, and are available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

More Information on Licensing:

- Directory of state licensing boards:
<https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawBoardWebsitedll.dll/EXEC/0/0ygtpd30za0u3g1eyif1b1I5x868>
- New York State licensing information: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW):
<http://www.socialworkers.org/credentials/default.asp>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned in the social and behavior sciences, such as a Master's in Social Work (MSW), costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally 2 years.

Licensure and certification occurs at the state level: Costs vary by state, ranging from \$40-\$500

The cost in New York State is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Costs of continuing education vary.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Child, Family and School Social Workers

Child, Family, and School Social Workers work with children and families to provide social assistance, counseling, and support for mental health and well-being. This often includes coordinating available services to assist a child or family. They may assist single parents in finding day care, arrange adoptions, or help find foster homes for neglected, abandoned, or abused children. These workers can specialize in working with a particular problem, population or setting, such as child protective services, adoption, homelessness, domestic violence, or foster care.

School social workers are often the primary outreach between schools and parents or guardians, and are responsible for helping to ensure that students get the chance to fully benefit from their education. They assist students in dealing with personal or emotional problems. They may deal extensively with children with disabilities and their families. In addition, they address problems such as misbehavior, truancy, teenage pregnancy, violence, and drug and alcohol problems and advise teachers. School social workers may teach workshops to groups or classes on topics like healthy communication, or conflict resolution.

Child, family, and school social workers are known as child welfare social workers, family services social workers, or child protective services social workers. These workers often work for individual and family services agencies, schools, or State or local governments.

Social workers may work all day at a particular site, or may be traveling frequently, to see clients, meet with other service providers, or attend meetings. Although social work can be very satisfying, large caseloads or inadequate staffing are a problem in many areas, so full-time social workers need to have plans in place for recuperation and stress management.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation, but some positions require an advanced degree, typically a Master's in Social Work (MSW).

New York and all other states also have licensing boards. Licenses are not necessarily required for all positions, or for entry and training, but are typically required for advancement. License requirements in most states commonly include:

- a written examination,
- continuing education, or
- 1-3 years of experience.

The requirements for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in New York include:

- statement of moral character
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- 12 hours of clinical coursework
- 3 years of supervised experience
- a written examination

Some more specialized credentials involving continuing education, though not necessarily mandatory, may be helpful for advancement after initial licensing, and are available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

More Information on Licensing:

- Directory of state licensing boards: <https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawBoardWebsitedll.dll/EXEC/0/0ygtpd30za0u3g1eyif1b1l5x868>
- New York State licensing information: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>
- NASW: <http://www.socialworkers.org/credentials/default.asp>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned in the social and behavioral sciences, such as a Master's in Social Work (MSW), costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally 2 years.

Licensure and certification occurs at the state level: Costs vary by state, ranging from \$40-\$500

The cost in New York State is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

The costs of continuing education vary.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.

Social and Human Service Assistants

Social and Human Service Assistants work with social workers, healthcare workers, and other professionals in order to help meet the needs of people who are vulnerable, or in need of advocacy or counseling.

Social and human service assistant is a generic term for workers with a wide array of job titles, including: human service worker, case management aide, social work assistant, community support worker, mental health aide, community outreach worker, life skills counselor, social services aide, youth worker, psychological aide, client advocate, or gerontology aide. The amount of responsibility and supervision social and human service assistants are given varies a great deal, depending on the specific job title, and location and nature of the work. For instance, a social and human service assistant may be fairly independently responsible for running a group home, or alternately may work directly as an aide to a psychiatrist in a hospital or rehabilitation center.

Social and human service assistants provide services to clients to help them improve their quality of life. They assess clients' needs, investigate their eligibility for benefits and services such as food stamps, Medicaid and welfare, and help clients obtain them. They may even arrange for transportation, if necessary, and provide emotional support. They monitor and keep case records on clients and report progress to supervisors and case managers.

Social and human service assistants play a variety of roles in the community. For example, they organize and lead group activities, assist clients in need of counseling or crisis intervention, or administer food banks or emergency fuel programs. In halfway houses, group homes, and government-supported housing programs, they assist adults who need supervision with personal hygiene and daily living tasks. They review clients' records, ensure that they take prescribed medication, talk with family members, and consult with medical personnel and other caregivers to provide insight into clients' needs. Assistants will often help clients become involved in community recreation programs and other activities to the extent possible.

This work can be very rewarding, because social and human service assistants get to be concretely involved in alleviating emotional pain, and helping people live better lives. However, this occupation also requires that workers develop careful plans for self-care and stress management, in order to deal with the emotionally draining consequences of the job. In addition, social and human services assistants in some contexts need to be alert to the possibility that working with some client populations can involve some physical danger, although safety is a priority for most employers. Working hours and conditions may include evening or weekend activity, and may in some instances involve travel to see clients in varying locations.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

Completion of a high school degree or equivalency is necessary. Some positions may require completion of an Associate's degree (2 year) program, or, for more advanced positions or promotion, a Bachelor's (BA/BS) or Master's (MS/MA) degree in areas such as counseling, rehabilitation or social work. Some positions require certificates in the areas of human services, gerontology, or a social or behavioral science, but this varies by organization.

Depending on the specific position, Case Manager Certification (CMC) is sometimes required, and often beneficial for advancement. . Certification requires

- at least 12 months of employment experience,
- demonstration of moral character,
- an Associate's degree (AA/AS) and
- successful completion of an examination.

More Information on Certification::

- Commission for Case Manager Certification (CMC):
<http://www.ccmcertification.org/index.html>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned in the social and behavioral sciences costs an average of \$10,900* per year. Completion time is generally two years.

Case manager certification costs a total of \$290 (\$130 for an application and \$160 fee for taking a written examination), plus the cost of any exam study aids.

*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.