

Community and Social Services

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.