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## RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL WORK

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### ABSTRACT

**S**ocial workers, in general, have always treated their clients fairly and with respect. School social workers have been no different. They have always worked to help young children and teenagers become better students and better young people. Currently, school social workers are helping students by taking a broader view of the student and his environment than they have done in the past.

**KEYWORDS :** Social workers , Social Services , behavioural problems.

### INTRODUCTION

Even now the role of school social workers continues to change. Issues like health care reform, changes in the law, decreasing school budgets, increased poverty among children and families, and the increase in school violence are forcing these changes.

A recent law that gives disabled students the right to an education has caused the role of school social workers to change even more. And, now school social workers are looking at the way a student's particular culture influences their behavior.

### DEMAND FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Over the past few years, demand for social services has both diversified and intensified. On the family front, the intensification of demand has arisen largely because of family instability. This instability has translated into a higher percentage of single-parent families and common-law relationships, which tend to be less stable. The increase



in cases of child poverty and family violence have also led to an increase in the need for services for children and families.

As to gerontology and home support services, the aging of the population and the shorter length of hospital stays (switch to home care) have had a significant impact on demand for social services, especially for reviews of elder abuse (physical, financial, etc.).

Other factors have also contributed to the rise in demand for social services both in the health and social services sector and in the school system, employee assistance programs (EAP) and private practice: stress, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling addiction, dropping out of school, behavioural problems, traumatic events, etc. While some of these dynamics have long been present in

society, the public is increasingly aware of these questions and therefore demands more by way of concrete intervention. All these trends should be maintained, or even accentuated, over the next few years.

### **OCCUPATIONAL COMPETITION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES FIELD**

Social workers are not the only people involved in the social services sector. Indeed, they have to share delivery of these services with members of many other occupations: psychologists, child care workers, family counsellors, guidance counsellors, community and social service workers, etc. Moreover, over the past few years employment growth has varied considerably depending on the type of organization responsible for delivery of social services. Thus, while the number of people assigned to delivering social services in public and parapublic institutions grew, it rose more quickly in community organizations. This strong increase stems among other things from the substantial investment by the provincial government in social economy enterprises, often specializing in services to specific clientele: women, children, the homeless, immigrants, etc. Note that these organizations usually hire a higher proportion of community and social service workers than of social workers.

A document put out by the Department of Health and Social Services in October 2004, the situation in public institutions was quite different from that in par public institutions. Although the number of social service technicians in health and service institutions has increased slightly over the past few years, the number of social workers has increased much more rapidly.

The trends are expected to change somewhat in the next few years. On the one hand, the community network is now well established and is expected to grow at a slightly less rapid rate than in the past few years. On the other hand, as a result of increased government spending in health and social services, the trend toward hiring more social workers than social service technicians is expected to continue or increase in strength.

Lastly, the passage in 2009 of Bill 21 on modernization of professional practices in mental health and human relations could significantly benefit members of professional corporations, such as psychologists, social workers and educational counselors, to the detriment of occupations not governed by the corporations, such as social and community workers, social service workers and special-education teachers, by limiting currently unregulated practices to corporation members. That being said, discussions are ongoing to determine whether some of these activities could be delegated to those with a college diploma (DEC) and if so, under what conditions.

In light of all these factors, the number of social workers should increase sharply in the next few years.

### **Trends Emerge With Care**

As current industry trends show, social workers make a difference to the resolve and well-being of individuals, which, in turn, impacts the health and welfare of communities. Learn more about the important work that social workers perform. If a social worker career is your calling, explore social worker schools and degrees, and find the training program that matches your professional and personal goals.

### **SOCIAL WORK TAKES ON BUSINESS**

Among the 10 imperatives for the next decade of the profession adopted by participants of the Social Work Congress in 2010 is "infusing models of sustainable business and management practice in social work education and practice." Fortunately, there are social work entrepreneurs who have blazed

the trail of using social work skills with various business models, from social entrepreneurship to corporate sector services to private practice.

### **FOUNDATIONS UTILIZE SOCIAL WORK SKILLS**

There are thousands of foundations in the U.S. Every year, these institutions decide where to donate billions of dollars to various charitable causes, research projects and scientific endeavors. According to the Foundation Center, a foundation is a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust with the principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations or institutions. In some cases, the benefactors may be individuals who receive funds for scientific, educational, cultural, religious or other charitable purposes. Foundations may be either private or public entities. Social workers involved in philanthropy say they find the job personally engaging and professionally rewarding.

### **SOCIAL WORKERS HAVE A HEAD FOR BUSINESS**

It's no secret to anyone who has earned a social work degree that it is a versatile and practical professional tool. A social work education provides a theoretical framework and a set of real-world skills that gives social workers the flexibility to work in a wide range of settings with confidence and proficiency. One professional realm that social workers are well-prepared for is business. Many social workers who run their own businesses are in private practice. In addition to private practice in mental health, however, many social workers also use their professional skills for other business ventures. Many have launched businesses after years of professional practice; some also prepare themselves through business and management degrees.

### **PUTTING THE PROFESSION IN PUBLIC OFFICE**

Social workers are uniquely trained to serve in the political world. Their skills span both working with individuals and families as well as also understanding how change takes place and is shaped in communities and organizations. Social workers have good interpersonal skills, like active listening and conflict management and resolution and technical skills, such as program development and grant writing. Social workers also have knowledge in group dynamics, social systems and social policy, as well as possessing analytical and interactional skills.

### **ORGANIZATIONS EXTEND SERVICES GLOBALLY**

Social work-supported programs in the United States have grown and branched out into an array of specialties to help those in need. As the world becomes more of a "global village" in terms of industry and technology, longtime helping organizations in the U.S. are following suit. They are taking their successful programs and know-how and imparting their knowledge to other nations. This is particularly evident in the area of children-service organizations, where decades of social work experience and research, as well as proven procedures in assisting U.S. children and their families, are being utilized in developing countries.

### **MEDIATION A NATURAL FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**

Conflict is at the root of many areas of social work practice. School social workers deal with clashing students; policy professionals negotiate political disagreements; hospital social workers balance patient needs; clinical practitioners address internal battles. In many ways, therefore, social workers are ideally suited to mediation practice. While the growing field is attracting people from many professions, the social work perspective gives mediators the advantage of the field's commitments to

self-determination and conflict resolution.

### SCHOOLS

In schools, social workers deal with extraordinary issues, from child poverty to school violence. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) indicates that in the early years of school social work professionals typically focused on emotional issues without considering a student's home life. Starting in the 1970s, however, social workers began taking a more comprehensive approach, analyzing all aspects of a student's environment, including school, home and neighborhood, as possible factors influencing the student's behavior and mental health.

Today, social workers have added cultural influences to the list of environmental factors that may contribute to a student's conduct or struggles. And, according to the NASW, the latest industry trend necessitates that social workers look at schools as part of a community, rather than as separate entities—both of which continue to change as society moves forward.

### VETERANS

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects veterans in dramatic, life-altering ways, leading many to alcoholism, substance abuse, homelessness and, in some cases, violence. The NASW describes how veterans of the Vietnam War, as well as members of antiwar movements of that era, first garnered attention from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1980 regarding the seriousness of PTSD. Mental health therapy combined with medication became the standard treatment for this condition.

Expanding on that treatment, a social worker will assist today's veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan using a holistic approach. Rather than treating PTSD as a condition that impacts only the client's emotional and physical condition, social workers perceive its effects on veterans' families and the communities in which they live. Their understanding of the mental health and social ramifications of PTSD positions social workers as formative, active players in making a difference to the lives of veterans dealing with PTSD and its effects.

### SPECIALTIES IN THE SOCIAL WORK INDUSTRY

To have a rewarding career, you need to be in an environment that suits you and allows you to use your skills in a way that keeps you engaged and fulfilled. Social work professionals are no different. There are no many different settings to choose from when thinking about your career.

- Substance Abuse Centers
- Case worker in a Hospital
- Children's Services
- Veterans Agencies
- Domestic Violence Organizations
- Women's Shelters
- Elder Care
- Schools
- Anti-Bullying
- LGBT Organizations
- Research

There are now many different working environments to choose from once you complete your training.

### THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK



The profession continues to evolve. Social workers now understand that looking at a patient's circumstances holistically gives them a better understanding of how many factors are influencing behavior. This is a change from simply focusing in on one specific area that has brought the patient to seek help.

Further, they - like every other healthcare professional - are now being held to a standard of "evidence based medicine." Third party payers and healthcare organizations are demanding accountability and standards and social workers now must increase their knowledge of what "evidence based medicine" means to their organization.

Finally, technology has impacted and changed social work just as it has on every other profession. In the article Information and Communication Technologies in Social Work, the authors state:

"ICTs have received some attention in the social work literature and curriculum, but we argue that this level of attention is not adequate given their ubiquity, growth and influence, specifically as it relates to upholding social work ethics. Significant attention is needed to help ensure they are responsive to the technological changes in the health care system, including the health care infrastructure and use of technology among clients. Social work practitioners also need ICT competencies in order to effectively lead different types of social change initiatives or collaborate with professionals of other disciplines who are using ICTs as part of existing strategies. This paper also identifies potential pitfalls and challenges with respect to the adoption of ICTs, with recommendations for advancing their use in practice, education, and research."

### **SOCIAL MEDIA & ETHICS IN SOCIAL WORK**

If you are a seasoned social worker, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and other social sites simply didn't exist when you started your career. Today, they are omnipresent and cannot be ignored given the enormous amount of time people spend on these sites.

Social networking has created social communities and in these spaces you may find kids talking about bullying, addicts talking about substance abuse challenges or support groups for grieving parents. These tools are being used by social workers to provide additional resources, to help educate patients and in some instances they are marketing their online practices.

With social networks comes ethical issues that need to be addressed. The clear boundaries you want to set with patients can become blurred; improper or incorrect information permeates the internet and social workers need to take care they are not leading their patients to sites that may cause more harm than good.

Since social networking is not going to stop, you as a professional need to make sure you're educated on how to properly use social media as part of your practice and discuss it with colleagues to arrive at an agreeable methodology.

As you can see, social work as a profession continues to grow and evolve as our society and world continue to change. The pace of that change continues to increase and with it can bring some new learning experiences and opportunities for those who pursue this challenging and rewarding career.

### **CAREER PATTERNS**

Although precise data are lacking, it can be observed that professional social workers engage in considerable mobility between agencies. In the tight labor market for trained social workers, this appears to be more a part of career choice than of necessity. Although there is a normal process of

rising to higher positions of supervision and administration, horizontal mobility seems to be more characteristic. This is also encouraged by the fact that some female social workers return to the profession after having interrupted their careers for marriage and family life, and some find jobs when they accompany their husbands to new locations. Movement to new jobs normally results in higher salaries, but within a relatively narrow range, for practitioners. There are salary differentials between men and women professional social workers, which are partly a function of the disproportionate number of men in higher positions and in fields of practice, such as community organization, where salaries are higher.

There is no clear prestige hierarchy of positions or agencies through which an individual moves in his professional career. However, observers have noted that casework in psychiatric and medical agencies carries relatively high prestige, and private agencies are sometimes preferred to public ones. Employment in public assistance agencies, except in administrative positions, appears to carry the lowest prestige.

### **FAMILIAL ASSISTANCE**

As people move to the developing world and improve their standard of living, they are able to remit money to their family in the developing world. A 2007 World Bank study shows that \$251 billion dollars sent to immigrants' families. It is a trend that has been growing and has positive impacts in the home country.

### **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

In the developing world, the trend of lower birthrates combined with increased retirement and a growing aging population creates labor shortage that legal and illegal immigrants are eager to fill.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT**

Global terrorism and ethnic conflict have caused countries in the developed world to enforce strict immigration policies. This has led to increased xenophobia and immigration quotas for specific populations.

### **IMPACT**

Recent trends in migration will have a significant impact on social work and the profession's education in the United States. Until recently, social work students have not shown interest in immigrant and refugee populations. However, statistics show that about 25% of the U.S. population is considered New Americans, and that 13% of the population is first generation. Social workers will need to assist these groups in integrating into various aspects of U.S. society, including the educational system and the workforce. There also needs to be more training to deal with mental health issues that arise from living in a conflict environment.

### **RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS**

In their presentation, Segal and Elliott called for a stronger emphasis on trans-cultural competency in social work education. Developing better trans-cultural assessment instruments for the effective delivery of social services was recommended. The researchers also call for more involvement by social workers in forming social policy to help ease the integration process for immigrants.

### **CONCLUSION**



In different areas of Social work we can see different kinds of trends, which are truly made positive impact on social work profession. Through these recent trends we must carry forward some steps which are very very important to make further changes or positive changes in our society. The trained social workers must take the responsibility to make changes, to make developments with the help of modern techniques and scientific methods of implications of plannings.

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