

**SOCIAL WORK IS**  
*Everywhere.*

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**WHERE WILL IT TAKE YOU?**



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# A Field in Flux

## **SOCIAL WORK EVOLVES TO BETTER SERVE HUMAN POPULATIONS**

In many ways, the modern field of social work has borrowed its best characteristics from the talented individuals who work within it. Similar to the social workers themselves, the industry is flexible, multi-faceted, and existing in a constant state of growth and change.

As human populations evolve, the field of social work follows. As a result, today's social work degree programs attract students with a wide range of backgrounds and interests.

How can a social work degree support your goals, and how will you contribute to the continued evolution of this field? Keep reading to learn more about social work career options that may surprise you and find out how your unique strengths and passions could make you the right fit for this field.

# FOLLOW YOUR AMBITION



**Clinical**



**Community  
Organizing**



**Criminal  
Justice**



**Disaster  
Preparedness**



**Forensic**



**Gerontology**



**Mental Health**



**Policy**



**Rural**



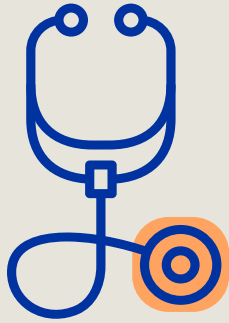
**School &  
Child Welfare**



**Substance Abuse**

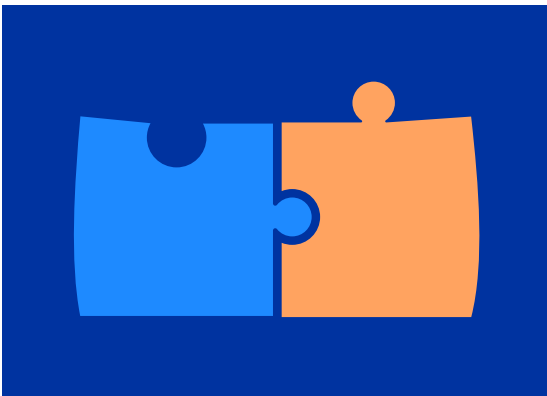


**Veteran & Military**



# Clinical Social Work

Clinical social workers provide individual and group care to people seeking **mental health treatment**. They may also support patients in accessing appropriate **medical care**. Clinical social workers may offer in-person or virtual services, or both.



**MAKING SURE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING VARIOUS HEALTH CRISES GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEED**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

To become a clinical social worker, you'll need to complete **specialized training** and become **licensed** to provide services in your state. Clinical social work could be a good fit for you if you're interested in:

- Fostering healthy human development
- Mentoring people at various stages of life
- Supporting individuals through difficulties
- Understanding the human mind

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Clinical Social Work Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Clinical social workers are helping **fill the gap** in mental healthcare and making sure people experiencing various health crises get the support they need. If you're passionate about supporting efforts to improve **health services**, learn more about the career paths below.

### HEALTHCARE SOCIAL WORKER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$60,280<sup>1</sup>**

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Healthcare social workers offer psychosocial support to people experiencing chronic and terminal illnesses. Their responsibilities include providing counseling services, implementing health interventions, and making sure patients understand important information about their health.

### FAMILY THERAPIST

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$56,570<sup>2</sup>**

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Family therapists must be licensed clinical social workers or certified to provide counseling in their state. Their responsibilities include delivering therapy sessions, helping clients overcome emotional struggles, and supporting clients in building new habits to lead healthier lives.



# Community Organizing Social Work

Community organizers are passionate about **inspiring change**. They work from the ground up to create services and improve systems that **help individuals and communities**.



**IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ENTIRE POPULATIONS**



# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

You'll be qualified to pursue a career in community organizing with an undergraduate degree in social work, but a **master's degree** could help you move into **management positions**. Community organizing could be right for you if you're interested in:

- Advocating for vulnerable populations
- Finding solutions to problems that affect communities
- Protecting the interests of others
- Working closely with community members and leaders

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Individualized Plan of Study](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Individuals working in community organization have the potential to **improve quality of life** for **entire populations**. If you think this area of social work could be right for you, learn more about the career paths below.

### SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE MANAGERS

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$74,240<sup>3</sup>**

Social and community service managers work to create, maintain, and improve programs that serve the public's wellbeing. Professionals in this role may work with many types of programs or organizations, and their responsibilities often include evaluating programs, recruiting and training staff members, and implementing program improvements.

### COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$45,684<sup>4</sup>**

As a community organizer, you'll help groups of people unite around a specific purpose or goal. Community organizing can involve a range of activities, and you may be responsible for leading workshops, lobbying politicians, organizing campaigns, and recruiting community members.

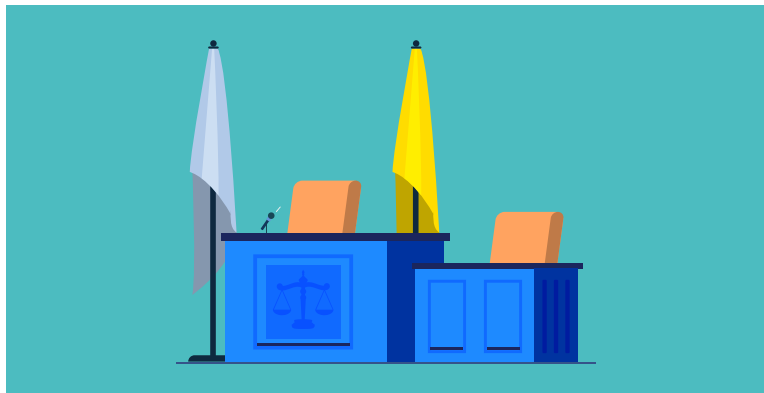


# Criminal Justice Social Work

Social workers who enter the criminal justice field are interested in **ensuring fairness** and working toward **just outcomes** for those impacted by crime.



**ENSURE FAIR TREATMENT  
FOR ALL PEOPLE**



# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

In addition to a degree in social work, knowledge or **experience in criminal justice is valuable** for individuals who are interested in this path. Social workers in the criminal justice field are often:

- Committed to justice and fairness
- Highly compassionate toward others
- Interested in ensuring humane treatment for both victims and perpetrators of crime
- Knowledgeable about legal issues and the criminal justice system

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Trauma-Responsive Practice Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Social workers focused on the field of criminal justice are there to help ensure **fair treatment** for all people who encounter the justice system. They are often passionate about **advocating for their clients' rights**. If you're interested in working in criminal justice as a social worker, learn more about the career paths below.

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOCIAL WORKER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$46,310<sup>7</sup>**

Criminal justice social workers interact directly with convicted individuals to provide the resources they need to live healthy and safe lives during and after incarceration. Their primary goals include assisting clients in building the skills and habits they need to avoid future criminal behavior and supporting those coping with substance use disorder.

### VICTIM SOCIAL WORKER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$46,310<sup>7</sup>**

Victim social workers interact directly with trauma survivors and family members of the incarcerated. They focus their practice on helping individuals overcome trauma experienced during crimes and may support them in the courtroom and provide social and mental health support.



# Disaster Preparedness Social Work

Social workers who specialize in disaster preparedness work with community leaders to **create processes and systems** that **protect members of the community** in the event of a disaster.



**RESPONSIBILITIES ARE  
CRITICAL TO DISASTER  
RESPONSE**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

Disaster preparedness is an area of social work that requires a great deal of **planning, organization, and attention to detail**. This type of social work may be right for you if you're interested in:

- Collaborating with community leaders to protect others
- Helping individuals and families access emergency services
- Organizing disaster response services in the case of an emergency
- Planning for natural and human-made disaster scenarios

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Individualized Plan of Study](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Social workers may assist in various aspects of disaster preparedness. From **planning** for natural disasters to **assisting community members** following a **major emergency**, their responsibilities are critical to disaster response. If you're interested in working in disaster preparedness, learn more about the career paths below.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$66,157<sup>8</sup>**

Emergency management specialists work to predict the impact of disasters, plan for the best course of action, and coordinate the on-ground response. Their duties include collaborating with first responders, creating and adjusting emergency response plans, and helping community members find the services they need.

### CASE MANAGER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$47,021<sup>9</sup>**

Emergency and refugee service organizations employ case managers to assist people who need help after major disasters. Case managers in these roles may be responsible for assisting families in accessing food and water, helping people find temporary housing, and supporting people through the process of applying for refugee status.



# Forensic Social Work

Forensic social workers often have a **background in criminal justice**, and they utilize this experience to help **improve systems** in order to better serve the individuals who interact with the justice system.



**MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT  
ON THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO  
ENCOUNTER THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

A background in criminal justice can help prepare you for positions in forensic social work, as can additional education such as a **minor in forensics or legal studies**. Some forensic social workers also provide **mental health counseling**; if you decide to take this route, you may need to pursue licensure to do so in your state. This area of social work may be right for you if you are passionate about:

- Advocating for policies to alter conditions for those involved in the justice system
- Improving legal systems and laws that relate to crime
- Providing mental health counseling to police officers or to inmates in juvenile and correctional facilities

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Trauma-Responsive Practice Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Forensic social workers have the potential to make a meaningful impact on the lives of people who encounter the justice system. If you're interested in pursuing forensic social work, learn more about the career paths below.

### CORRECTIONAL COUNSELOR

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$59,860<sup>10</sup>**

Correctional counselors, also called correctional treatment specialists, work with incarcerated people with the goal of rehabilitating them so that they can re-enter society. Their responsibilities often include creating treatment plans, helping clients build new skills, offering counseling services, and writing parole plans.

### POLICE CO-RESPONDER (LICENSED SOCIAL WORKER)

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$55,350<sup>7</sup>**

Licensed social workers may work directly with law enforcement agencies as police co-responders, assisting on cases that require social service interventions rather than incarceration. They are often trained in mental health counseling and various co-response models for collaborating with law enforcement. Their responsibilities can include practicing de-escalation tactics and helping vulnerable individuals access the social services they need.



# Gerontology Social Work

Social workers who focus on the area of gerontology are interested in building a society that better serves an **aging population**. Gerontology social workers may be involved with **nursing homes, end-of-life care**, and other issues faced by senior citizens.



**PASSIONATE ABOUT  
IMPROVING QUALITY  
OF LIFE FOR AN  
AGING POPULATION**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

Elderly adults face specific challenges that must be met with **respect and compassion**. Gerontology social work may be right for you if you are interested in:

- Helping elderly citizens access the care and services they need to live fuller lives
- Improving end-of-life care
- Supporting families in making choices that best serve their elderly loved ones' interests

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Individualized Plan of Study](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Social workers who focus in gerontology are passionate about **improving quality of life** for an aging population. If you're interested in gerontology social work, consider the career paths below.

### HEALTHCARE SOCIAL WORKER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$60,280<sup>1</sup>**

Healthcare social workers offer psychosocial support to people experiencing chronic and terminal illnesses. Their responsibilities include providing counseling services, implementing health interventions, and making sure patients understand important information about their health.

### NURSING FACILITY SOCIAL WORKER

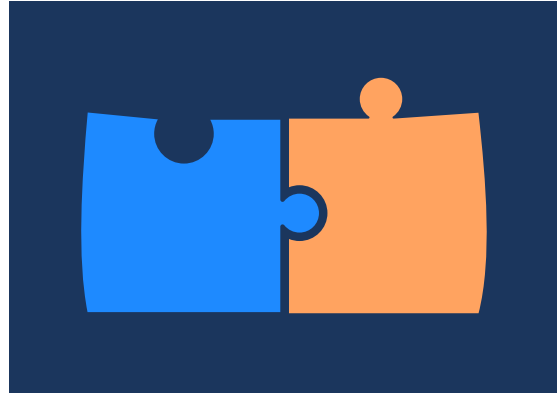
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$56,000<sup>11</sup>**

Social workers who are employed in nursing facilities are often responsible for helping clients navigate the complicated world of end-of-life care. This can include ensuring the client and necessary family members understand important medical information, keeping the client company, remaining vigilant for signs of elder abuse, and supporting the client through major decision-making processes.



# Mental Health Social Work

Mental health social workers are interested in understanding the **human mind** and seek to improve **mental health outcomes** for their clients.



**HELPING INDIVIDUALS BUILD  
THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO  
COPE WITH LIFE'S CHALLENGES**



# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

To work in mental health, social workers pursue a **specialized certificate** and **additional training** focused in the area of mental health counseling. This area of social work may be right for you if you're interested in:

- Helping individuals and groups work to build better habits and improve their lives
- Supporting people in coping with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse
- Understanding human psychology and human brain development
- Working to improve outcomes for those suffering mental health crises

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Trauma-Responsive Practice Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Social workers who pursue roles in mental healthcare are passionate about **helping individuals** build the skills necessary to **cope with life's challenges**. They may choose to provide generalized counseling or specialize in a specific area of mental health. If you're considering working as a mental health social worker, learn more about the career paths below.

### OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR

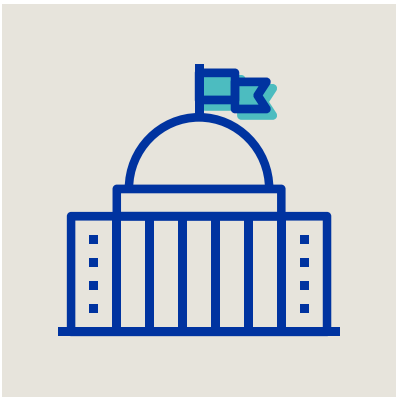
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$53,240<sup>12</sup>**

Mental health counselors who work in outpatient care centers help individuals build the habits and coping skills they need to live healthy lives. They also connect their clients to housing, financial, career, health, and social resources to support them through making positive changes that improve their quality of life.

### ART THERAPIST

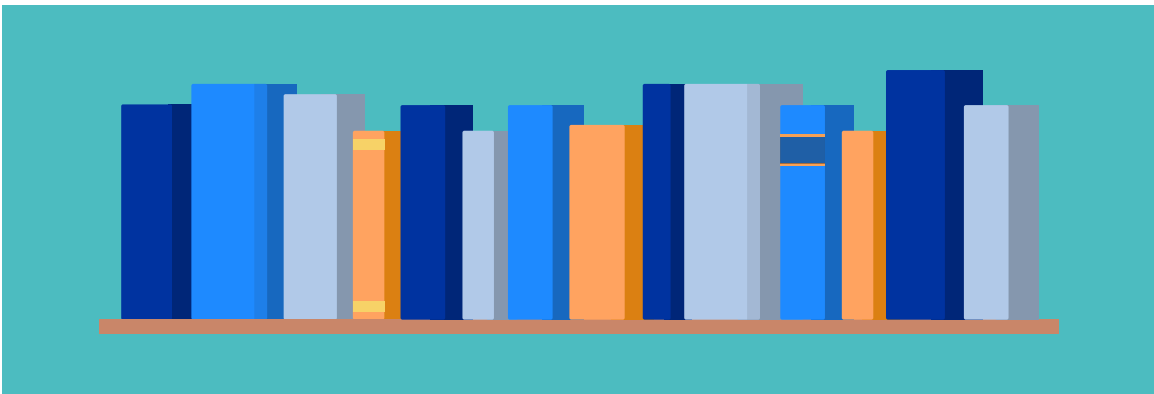
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$49,942<sup>13</sup>**

Art therapists support clients of all ages in expressing and processing their thoughts, feelings, traumas, and challenges through artistic expression. They may work in schools, counseling centers, hospitals, senior living facilities, and similar environments. In addition to counseling their clients, art therapists are often responsible for completing patient evaluations, maintaining progress reports, and collaborating with colleagues.



# Policy Social Work

Social workers who focus on the area of policy are interested in enacting **broad change** in their communities. They work to address the root causes of social issues through policies that **address disparities** and **advance equity** for all people.



**PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING  
THEIR COMMUNITIES BY MAKING  
LASTING CHANGE THROUGH LEGAL  
AND POLITICAL MEANS**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

Policy social work is closely involved with the **legal and political** fields, so individuals seeking roles in this area would benefit from **experience or education** in one or both of these industries. This type of social work could be right for you if you're interested in:

- Advocating for the rights of vulnerable individuals and communities
- Collaborating with lawyers, community leaders, and politicians to enact wider change
- Working to improve laws and government policies

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Individualized Plan of Study](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Policy social workers are passionate about **helping their communities** by making **lasting change** through legal and political means. If you're interested in this area of social work, learn more about the career paths below.

### POLICY ANALYST

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$64,171<sup>14</sup>**

Policy analysts work with a government organization or nonprofit to advance a social cause through legal and political routes. Policy analysts are often responsible for analyzing bills and proposed regulations from the perspective of a specific cause, and collaborating with lawmakers and community members to improve the impact of laws and regulations.

### LOBBYIST

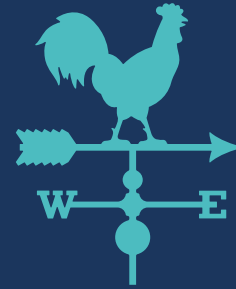
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$88,473<sup>15</sup>**

Lobbyists work on behalf of an organization to further a cause with lawmakers and other politicians. Their responsibilities can include collaborating with policy experts to understand the implications of specific pieces of legislation, networking with elected officials and politicians, and persuading elected officials to support their cause.



# Rural Social Work

Rural social workers have a desire to **give big voices to small towns**. They recognize the **unique needs** of rural communities and rise to meet the challenges faced by the population they serve.



**PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF SERVICES TO PEOPLE LIVING IN SMALL, OFTEN CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITIES**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

Individuals who are interested in working with rural populations may benefit from specialized training, such as a **rural social work certificate or emphasis**. This can help prepare social workers for the unique needs and challenges faced by rural communities, which include:

- Difficulty finding doctors
- Higher rates of poverty
- Higher risk of overdose death
- Lower access to mental health support

Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Individualized Plan of Study](#).

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Rural social workers have the opportunity to provide a wide **variety of services** to people living in small, often close-knit communities. If you're interested in pursuing this area of social work, learn more about the career paths below.

### RURAL SOCIAL WORKER

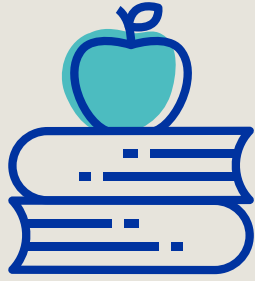
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$50,810<sup>16</sup>**

The needs of rural communities typically differ from those in urban areas. Social workers in these areas have a variety of responsibilities, including aiding in disaster relief, connecting clients with health services, helping families find housing, and supporting community services.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKER

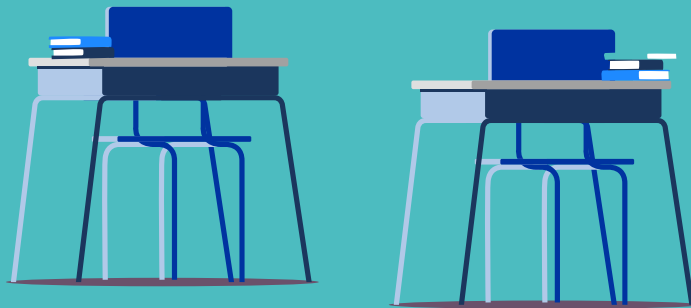
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$43,412<sup>17</sup>**

Community support workers provide services to individuals in day programs and group homes. Their responsibilities may include building relationships with clients, helping clients build social and emotional skills, and managing client healthcare and medical appointments.



# School & Child Welfare Social Work

Social workers who pursue positions in schools and child welfare programs are passionate about **helping children** grow and learn. They want to ensure children can thrive within **safe and nurturing environments**.



**MAKE A MEANINGFUL  
DIFFERENCE IN THE  
LIVES OF CHILDREN  
AND FAMILIES**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

You might be qualified to start your career in child welfare with an undergraduate degree. However, you will need to pursue **further education** to pursue management positions or roles within the school system, such as earning **school counselor certification**. School and child welfare social work may be right for you if you're interested in:

- Connecting with children, family members, and school personnel
- Helping families find the resources they need to thrive
- Intervening on behalf of vulnerable children
- Supporting healthy child development

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with School Social Work Certificate](#) or [Child Welfare Practice Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

As a school and child welfare social worker, you'll be poised to **make a meaningful difference** in the lives of **children and families**. If this area of social work interests you, learn more about the career paths below.

### SCHOOL COUNSELOR

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$60,140<sup>18</sup>**

School counselors work directly with children in school settings to discuss any emotional concerns, develop strategies for behavioral problems, and help children overcome challenges that may be taking place in their personal lives. Interpersonal communication and a strong understanding of child psychology are essential in this role.

### CHILD WELFARE SPECIALIST

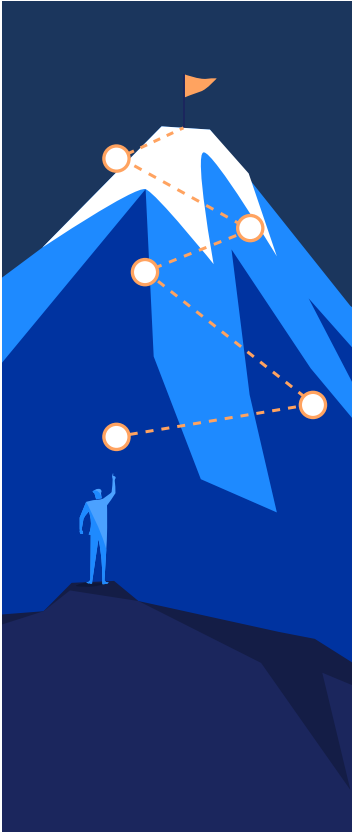
**ANNUAL SALARY: \$51,871<sup>19</sup>**

Child welfare specialists or social workers ensure the safety of children by providing necessary intervention and family services. Their responsibilities may include removing children from unsafe homes, providing one-on-one sessions to children who have experienced trauma, and developing treatment plans for mental and behavioral disorders.



# Substance Abuse Social Work

Substance abuse social workers possess a thorough understanding of the **complexity involved in substance misuse and abuse**. Individuals who work in this area care deeply about **helping people through hardship**.



**PASSIONATE ABOUT PROVIDING INVALUABLE SERVICES TO PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION**

# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

To become a substance abuse social worker, you'll need specialized training such as a substance use disorder certificate. People who work in substance abuse social work are often interested in:

- Helping clients build healthy coping skills
- Providing mental health counseling services
- Supporting others through difficult times
- Understanding the human mind and brain development

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Substance Use Disorder Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Substance abuse social workers are passionate about providing **invaluable services** to people struggling with **addiction**. If you're interested in pursuing roles in this type of social work, learn more about the career paths below.

### ADDICTION COUNSELOR

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$49,710<sup>20</sup>**

Addiction counselors provide mental health services to individuals who are living with substance abuse disorders. They help their clients overcome the challenges of addiction and live healthy lives. Many of today's employers require these professionals to be licensed clinical social workers in their state.

### PROBATION OFFICER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$59,860<sup>10</sup>**

Probation officers work with formerly incarcerated people to help them successfully re-enter society. Responsibilities in this role may include helping probationers find employment and housing, offering substance abuse testing and counseling, and tracking probationers' progress.

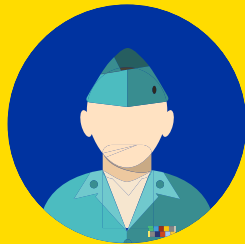


# Veteran & Military Social Work

Veteran and military social workers possess a deep sense of **respect for the service provided** by members of the military. They seek to repay this service by understanding and providing for the **unique needs** of this population.



**PERFORM THE IMPORTANT  
AND REWARDING TASK OF  
SUPPORTING THOSE WHO  
HAVE SERVED  
OUR COUNTRY**



# INTERESTED IN THIS PATH?

Working with veterans and military members requires an understanding of the **specific challenges faced** by this population. **Additional training** can be helpful, and certification is required for those working specifically in mental health. This type of social work could be right for you if you're interested in:

- Connecting military members and their families with mental health and medical services
- Helping veterans utilize their military-sponsored benefits
- Providing therapy services to active military members
- Supporting military members in accessing public services

*Learn more about the University of Kentucky's [online MSW with Military Behavioral Health Certificate](#).*

## CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

Veteran and military social workers perform the **important and rewarding** task of supporting those who have **served our country**. If you're interested in pursuing this area of social work, learn more about the career paths below.

### MILITARY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COUNSELOR

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$64,330<sup>21</sup>**

Military behavioral health counselors work directly with active members of the military, veterans, and their families to identify and treat PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. They provide counseling services and help clients build skills to cope with the specific challenges faced by a military population.

### VETERANS HEALTH ASSOCIATION (VHA) SOCIAL WORKER

**ANNUAL SALARY: \$63,910<sup>21</sup>**

This area of social work focuses on serving veterans and their families within VHA facilities. Many veterans require mental health, housing, financial, and social support; social workers in this field connect their clients to these resources.

# Forge Your Own Path

Social work offers a multitude of career options outside of the traditional social services setting. Whether you're preparing to start your career or already an established professional planning your next move, choosing the right educational opportunities is an essential first step in forging your path in the wide world of social work.

For a customizable, high-quality program that's accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), look into the University of Kentucky's [online MSW](#). Featuring multiple certificate options, it has an area of focus for any career path you choose:

- **Child Welfare Practice**  
Build the foundational skills and knowledge necessary to support and intervene on behalf of neglected and abused children and their families.
- **Clinical Social Work**  
Move from the broader foundation of generalist social work practice to an advanced level of clinical knowledge.
- **Military Behavioral Health**  
Enhance your ability to provide effective and culturally-sensitive behavioral healthcare services to veteran and military populations.
- **School Social Work**  
Gain the skills you need to assess and intervene on behalf of children and adolescents in a school setting.
- **Substance Use Disorder**  
Learn evidence-based treatment and prevention approaches and gain clinical and scientific knowledge about the nature of substance misuse.
- **Trauma-Responsive Practice**  
Learn how to work with individuals on their healing journey and reduce the risk of re-traumatization.
- **Individualized Plan of Study**  
Tailor your education to support your professional goals by choosing qualified elective courses with the guidance of your MSW advisor.

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