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A Day in the Life of a Social Worker

In their daily lives, social workers live by the fundamental principles of the dignity and worth of a person, service, advocacy, and social justice (“Careers in Social Work”). They empower people and improve their lives in an array of areas, including family life, schools, mental and public health centers, and substance abuse rehabilitation centers. Social workers can also work as teachers, researchers, and consultants. Also, opening private practices is a career option for licensed clinical social workers (“Social Workers”).

Social workers may come from different educational backgrounds, and requirements vary by state. The minimum education level required to practice social work is a bachelor’s degree, also known as a BSW, typically requiring four years of schooling and four hundred hours of observed field experience (“Social Workers”). A social worker with a BSW earns an average salary of $30,000 to $40,000 (“Careers in Social Work”). A master’s degree in social work, also known as a MSW, may be required for positions in health care or a school setting. Social workers pursuing a MSW focus more on their area of concentration during their advanced schooling, requiring two years of further education as well as nine hundred hours of supervised field experience (“Social Workers”). A social worker with a MSW typically earns a salary around $50,000 to $60,000 (“Careers in Social Work”). A social worker with a doctorate degree, also known as a DSW, can choose from even more opportunities, including teaching and research at a university (“Social Workers”). A social worker with a DSW typically earns a salary around $70,000 (“Careers in Social Work”). Each state requires different certifications to be a licensed clinical social worker. Most states require two years of further education and three thousand hours of supervised clinical experience (“Social Workers”).

A typical day for a social worker is not always predictable and according to plan like other careers. A social worker in a high school may have appointments set for the day, but when an emergency situation suddenly arises, the social worker must prioritize and reschedule appointments (Centerrino). Social workers interact with students each day dealing with behavioral issues, teenage pregnancies, and students’ disabilities. They must try to develop a plan for the next day, but it is not certain what will come up (Centerrino).

Vicki Ellis, a 2004 LSU graduate with a Masters in Social Work, currently owns Heritage Ranch, a group home for Baton Rouge families in crisis to be given a second chance. One of her biggest challenges was not meeting her expected deadlines and outcomes, but her biggest success includes the wonderful staff and volunteers that help make Heritage Ranch possible. When asked how she balances her family and work life, she explains how it is challenging sometimes because she is passionate about her career. However, she knows her family comes first. She also lives on Heritage Ranch, so traveling from work and home is easy, and her children love to play on the land.

A major challenge in the field of social work is the burnout rate, which is approximately seven years. Eighty-one percent of administrators and authorities said it is difficult to hire and keep social workers in the profession due to decreasing job satisfaction, feeling unappreciated, and working long hours (“Poor Job Satisfaction”). A benefit for social workers includes improving the lives of many different types of people, from children to the elderly. Another advantage includes the many opportunities for promotions in the field of social work (“NASW Benefits”). In the next decade, the demand for social workers, especially working in fields of aging and substance abuse and living in rural areas, are likely to increase (“Careers in Social Work”).

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