

MASTER MANAGEMENT DU DEVELOPPEMENT Mention Action humanitaire et sociale

Social worker

1) Nature of the work

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people's lives. He

- Assists people by helping them cope with issues in their everyday lives, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems.
- Helps clients who face a disability or a life-threatening disease or a social problem, such as inadequate housing, unemployment, or substance abuse.
- Assists families that have serious domestic conflicts, sometimes involving child or spousal abuse.
- Conducts research, advocate for improved services, engage in systems design or are involved in planning or policy development.

- *Child, family, and school social workers* provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the well-being of families and the academic functioning of children. They may assist single parents, arrange adoptions, or help find foster homes for neglected, abandoned, or abused children. Some specialize in services for senior citizens. These social workers may advise elderly people or family members about housing, transportation, long-term care, and other services; and coordinate and monitor these services. In schools, social workers often serve as the link between students' families and the school, working with parents, guardians, teachers, and other school officials to ensure students reach their academic and personal potential. In addition, they address problems such as misbehaviour, truancy, and teenage pregnancy and advise teachers on how to cope with difficult students. They often work for individual and family services agencies, schools, or State or local governments.

- *Medical and public health social workers* provide psychosocial support to people, families, or vulnerable populations with Alzheimer's disease, cancer, or AIDS. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help plan for patients' needs after discharge from hospitals. Some work on interdisciplinary teams that evaluate certain kinds of patients—geriatric or organ transplant patients, for example. Medical and public health

social workers may work for hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, individual and family services agencies, or local governments.

- *Mental health and substance abuse social workers* assess and treat individuals with mental illness or substance abuse problems, including abuse of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Such services include individual and group therapy, outreach, crisis intervention, social rehabilitation, and teaching skills needed for everyday living. They also may help plan for supportive services to ease clients' return to the community. Mental health and substance abuse social workers are likely to work in hospitals, substance abuse treatment centres, individual and family services agencies, or local governments. These social workers may be known as clinical social workers. Other types of social workers include social work administrators, and planners, who develop and implement programs to address issues such as child abuse, homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, and violence. These workers research and analyze policies, programs, and regulations. They identify social problems and suggest legislative and other solutions.

2) Work environment

Social workers usually spend most of their time in an office or residential facility, but they also may travel locally to visit clients, meet with service providers, or attend meetings. Some may meet with clients in one of several offices within a local area. Social work, while satisfying, can be challenging. Understaffing and large caseloads add to the pressure in some agencies. To tend to patient care or client needs, many hospitals and long-term care facilities employ social workers on teams with a broad mix of occupations, including clinical specialists, registered nurses, and health aides. Full-time social workers usually work a standard 40-hour week, but some occasionally work evenings and weekends to meet with clients, attend community meetings, and handle emergencies. Some work part time, particularly in voluntary non-profit agencies.

3) Education and training

A bachelor's degree in social work is the most common minimum requirement to qualify for a job as a social worker; however, majors in psychology, sociology, and related fields may qualify for some entry-level jobs, especially in small community agencies. A master's degree in social work is typically required for positions in health settings. Some jobs in public and private agencies also may require an advanced degree, such as a master's degree in social services policy or administration. Supervisory, administrative, and staff training positions usually require an advanced degree. College and university teaching positions and most research appointments normally require a doctorate in social work. A second language can be very helpful.

4) Success factors

- ✚ Emotionally mature

- ✚ Objective

- ✚ Sensitive to people and their problems
- ✚ Be able to handle responsibility, work independently, and maintain good working relationships with clients and co-workers.

5) **Earnings**

The monthly salary is between 1 300 and 1 700 €.