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Job Outlook for Social Workers by [Cathy Dionisio](#)

Article published on March 7th 2012 | [Education](#)

Most areas of social work employment are predicted to increase significantly over the next five to seven years. Some geographical considerations also impact job projections. Current estimates are that for the years between 2008 and 2018 the field will enjoy a 16% expansion of employment. This expansion is considerably higher than that of most other occupations.

Growing Population Of The Elderly

The job outlook for social workers entering the field of gerontological social work is especially good since the population of aging baby boomers will mean a larger demand for social services and health related care. Both public and private demand for social workers dedicated to this population will increase as the population needing this service expands.

Mental Health And Substance Abuse

One of the largest areas of growth in the social work field is predicted to be in the area of mental health and substance abuse. Experts are predicting nearly a 20% expansion of employment in this area of social work. Workers choosing this specialty will see employment opportunities in correctional facilities and in treatment of those released from correctional facilities as conditions of either parole or probation. Private treatment programs are also forecast to see a significant upswing in employment.

Child And Family

Experts predict around a 12% increase in social work positions involving child, home and family services. These workers investigate child abuse cases and are tasked with keeping children safe and placing them in protective and foster care among other duties. Keep in mind, however, that these positions are almost exclusively government funded. A precarious economy and lack of funding could change this prediction of expanded growth.

Public Health And Medical

The job outlook for social workers in the field of medical and public health is excellent. An estimated 22% increase is expected. This area dovetails into the realm of the gerontological social workers since medical and health care services for the aging baby-boomer population is expected to increase dramatically. Both public and private sectors should show significant growth. Private and partially publicly funded assisted-living centers and senior communities will allow for ample employment in the years to come.

Geography

Although a healthy expansion of the social work market is expected, some areas will offer more opportunity than others. The job outlook for social workers in rural areas will be the highest due to lack of competition and the unavailability of training centers that are more common to high density urban areas.

Conclusion

Prospects look particularly good in the field of social work in the near future. All areas are predicted

to expand so itâ€™s a safe bet heading into this field. Geographical areas and possible public funding cuts are wild cards to keep an eye on.

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