**Social Worker**

**Job Description:** Social workers help individuals or groups of people change behaviors, emotions, attitudes, relationships, and social conditions to restore and enhance their quality of life. There are many types of social workers who serve clients dealing with a range of mental, emotional, behavioral, and environmental challenges, including: poverty, illness, developmental or learning disabilities, alcohol or substance abuse, marital or family struggles, unemployment, and others.

A social worker's job description will depend on his or her level of licensure, education, specialty, and job title. However, most social workers typically perform the following duties:

- Assess clients’ needs, situations, strengths and support networks to determine their goals
- Identify community resources and referral services (food assistance, childcare, healthcare) and provide direct services, such as: counseling, psychotherapy and case management to assist and improve a client’s wellbeing
- Develop, evaluate and modify treatment plans to ensure a client’s basic needs are met
- Engage in research, analysis and community organization to improve societal conditions
- Advocate for clients’ rights and access to resources

**Work Environment:** Social workers can work in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, correctional facilities, military installations, churches or within neighborhoods.

**Pay:** Just like job duties, a social worker’s salary will depend on his or her job title, education, licensure and other factors. In the North Country, the average salary for a child, family and school social worker is $48,310 per year. Healthcare social workers in our region make an average of $53,120 per year, and mental health and substance abuse social workers make roughly $53,780 annually.

**Employment Outlook:** Employment for social workers is expected to grow between 14% and 20% in the coming decade, which is faster than average for all occupations.
EDUCATION AND TRAINING: There are multiple educational pathways you can take to become a social worker, depending on specialty. Many students begin by enrolling in a human services associate’s degree program, which provides them with the fundamental knowledge and skills to further advance their studies.

A bachelor’s degree in social work (BSW) prepares students for entry-level, direct-service positions and is the minimum requirement for most social work positions. Some employers may also hire workers who have a bachelor’s degree in a related field, like psychology or sociology. Clinical positions require a master’s degree in social work (MSW), which generally takes 1-2 years to complete. MSW programs prepare students for work in their chosen specialty by developing clinical assessment and management skills.

Both BSW and MSW programs require students to complete supervised fieldwork or an internship. Accredited BSW programs require a minimum of 400 hours of supervised field experience, and at least 900 hours of supervised training is typically required for clinical social workers after they earn their MSW.

LOCAL PLACES OF STUDY:

- **Associate Degree Program**
  - State University of New York Jefferson

- **BSW Degree Program**
  - Keuka College
  - At JCC!

- **MSW Degree Program**
  - Nazareth College
  - At JCC!

*To learn more about all accredited baccalaureate (BSW) and master’s level social work (MSW) degree programs, please visit the Council on Social Work Education’s “Directory of Accredited Programs” at [https://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/Directory-of-Accredited-Programs.aspx](https://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/Directory-of-Accredited-Programs.aspx).

**CERTIFICATION:** In New York State, there are two professional licenses for social workers, with different state-specific qualifications. A **Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW)** may only provide clinical services under supervision of an Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a licensed psychologist, or licensed psychiatrist. A **Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)** has completed post-degree supervised experience and passed a national clinical exam, which licenses them to diagnose and treat mental, emotional and behavioral disorders.

**QUESTIONS?**

Contact The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization at workforce@fdrhpo.org.

For previous issues of the Health Career Close-Up, visit [www.northcountryvitals.com](http://www.northcountryvitals.com) and search for the “Career Close-Up.”