

BOR Regent's Advisory Committee for Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
"The Value of a Social Work Graduate"
November, 2013

1. What is Social Work?

Social Work is a profession that focuses on improving the well-being of people in their communities. Since 1898, the profession of social work has played an integral role in working with a wide range of social problems in the United States as well as internationally. Social workers serve in various roles that include direct services, policy, research, and community-based efforts that target such important societal issues as child welfare, health, and aging. Social Work is founded on key principles that endorse social justice, advocacy, self-determination, and the inherent value of human beings. *U.S. News and Work Report* ranked Social Work #18 on its list of "The 25 Best Jobs" for 2012.

2. How Does Undergraduate Training in Social Work Benefit Students?

Undergraduate students earn Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degrees from programs that are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Because the degree is recognized nationally, students who earn a BSW are eligible to pursue a career in all of the areas in which social workers are employed. Examples of work settings that employ social workers on a consistent basis include:

- Health: including hospitals, clinics, home health, and hospice services.
- Child Welfare: including child abuse and neglect, foster care, adoptions, and child advocacy.
- Aging: across all services to elders from home-based care to nursing homes.
- Criminal Justice: including drug and other treatment courts, intimate partner violence, and others.
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse: including hospitals and community-based programs.
- Schools: as social workers in public and private schools at all levels.
- Nonprofit Organizations: that target such issues as homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and human rights.
- Military: including any military setting from bases to community centers.

In addition, many graduate programs in social work admit BSWs to Advance Standing programs, which reduces the number of semesters to graduate with the MSW degree.

3. How Do Social Work Graduates Benefit the State of Georgia?

Although Georgia's population has continued to grow, unfortunately the number of BSW programs and graduates has not expanded. Therefore the job market for BSW graduate tends to be consistent and strong across the entire state. Because Georgia has disproportionately fewer programs that grant the BSW degree than surrounding states, it can be very difficult for employers to recruit BSWs, particularly in rural areas of the state. This is particularly true in such critical employment areas as child welfare and aging services where similar concerns are prevalent at the national level.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the top 10 percent in the field earned approximately \$68,030 in 2010, while the lowest-paid made approximately \$26,170. Indeed, salaries for BSWs in Georgia vary greatly depending on the type of work setting, geographic location in the state, and other factors.