



# THE HUMAN SERVICES WORKER



## A GENERIC JOB DESCRIPTION

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The field of Human Services is a broadly defined one, uniquely approaching the objective of meeting human needs through an interdisciplinary knowledge base, focusing on prevention as well as remediation of problems and maintaining a commitment to improving the overall quality of life of service populations. The Human Services profession is one which promotes improved service delivery systems by addressing not only the quality of direct services, but by also seeking to improve accessibility, accountability, and coordination among professionals and agencies in service delivery.



### NATURE OF THE WORK

“Human services worker” is a generic term for people who hold professional and paraprofessional jobs in such diverse settings as group homes and halfway houses; correctional, and community mental health and development disability centers; family, child, and youth service agencies, and programs concerned with drug abuse, alcoholism, family violence, and aging. Depending on the employment setting and the kinds of clients served there, job titles and duties vary a great deal.

The primary purpose of the human service worker is to assist individuals and communities to function as effectively as possible in the major domains of living.

A strong desire to help others is an important consideration for a job as a human services worker. Individuals who show patience, understanding, and caring in their dealings with others are highly valued by employers. Other important personal traits include effective interpersonal communication skills, a strong sense of responsibility, and the ability to manage time effectively.



### EXAMPLES OF OCCUPATIONAL TITLES OF HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS

Case Worker  
Family Support Worker  
Youth Worker  
Residential Counselor  
Eligibility Counselor  
Alcohol Counselor  
Adult Day Care Worker  
Drug Abuse Counselor  
Life Skills Instructor  
Client Advocate

Probation Officer  
Parole Officer  
Child Advocate  
Gerontology Worker  
Juvenile Court Liaison  
Group Home Worker  
Crisis Intervention Counselor  
Mental Health Worker  
Community Organizer  
Intake Interviewer

Community Outreach Worker  
Community Action Worker  
Halfway House Counselor  
Case Manager  
Rehabilitation Case Worker  
Residential Manager  
Group Facilitator  
Activities Therapist  
Care Coordinator  
Assessment Worker



**HUMAN SERVICES**

*Making a Difference in People's Lives*





## GENERIC HUMAN SERVICE WORKER COMPETENCIES



The following six statements describe the major generic knowledge, skills and attitudes that appear to be required in all human service work. The training and preparation of the individual worker within this framework will change as a function of the work setting, the specific client population served, and the level of organization work.

1. *Understanding the nature of human systems:* individual, group, organization, community and society, and their major interactions. All workers will have preparation which helps them to understand human development, group dynamics, organizational structure, how communities are organized, how policy is set, and how social systems interact in producing human problems.
  2. *Understanding the conditions which promote or limit optimal functioning and classes of deviations from desired functioning in the major human systems.* Workers will have understanding of the major models of causation that are concerned with both the promotion of healthy functioning and with treatment-rehabilitation. This includes medically oriented, socially oriented, psychologically-behavioral oriented, and educationally oriented models.
  3. *Skill in identifying and selecting interventions which promote growth and goal attainment.* The worker will be able to conduct a competent assessment and problem analysis and to help clients select those strategies, services or interventions that are appropriate to helping them attain a desired outcome. Interventions may include assistance, referral, advocacy, or direct counseling.
  4. *Skill in planning, implementing and evaluating interventions.* The worker will be able to design a plan of action for an identified problem and implement the plan in a systematic way. This requires an understanding of problems analysis, decision-analysis, and design of work plans. This generic skill can be used with all social systems and adapted for use with individual clients or organizations. Skill in evaluating the interventions is essential.
  5. *Consistent behavior in selecting interventions which are congruent with the values of one's self, clients, the employing organization and the Human Service profession.* This cluster requires awareness of one's own value orientation, an understanding of organizational values as expressed in the mandate or goal statement of the organization, human service ethics and an appreciation of the client's values, life-style and goals.
  6. *Process skills which are required to plan and implement services.* This cluster is based on the assumption that the worker uses themselves as the main tool for responding to service needs. The worker must be skillful in verbal and oral communication, interpersonal relationships and other related personal skills, such as self-discipline and time management. It requires that the worker be interested in and motivated to conduct the role that they have agreed to fulfill and to apply themselves to all aspects of the work that the role requires.
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## WHERE HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS WORK



Working conditions vary. Human services workers in social service community-based agencies generally spend time in the office and in the field. Most work a 40-hour week. Some evening and weekend work may be necessary, depending on the work setting and target population.

Human services workers in residential settings generally work in shifts. Because program residents need supervision in the evening and at night, 7 days a week, evening and weekend hours are required.

Despite differences in what they are called and what they do, human services workers generally perform under the direction of, or in collaboration with, other professional staff. Those employed in mental health settings, for example, may be assigned to work with a treatment team made up of social workers, psychologists, and other human services professionals. The amount of responsibility these workers assume and the

degree of supervision they receive varies a great deal. Some workers are on their own most of the time and have little direct supervision; others work under close direction.

Human services workers in community, residential care, or institutional settings provide direct services such as leading a group, organizing an activity, or offering individual counseling. They may handle some administrative support tasks, too. Specific job duties reflect organizational policy and staffing patterns, as well as the worker's educational preparation and experience. The higher the degree the more likely a worker is to be a manager or supervisor.

Because so many human services jobs involve direct contact with people who are impaired and therefore vulnerable to exploitation, employers try to be selective in hiring. Applicants are screened for appropriate personal qualifications. Relevant academic preparation is generally required, and volunteer or work experience is preferred.



### JOB OUTLOOK

Employment of human services workers is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010. Opportunities for qualified applicants are expected to be excellent, not only because of projected rapid growth in the occupation, but because of substantial replacement and turnover needs.

Employment prospects should be favorable in facilities and programs that serve the elderly, mentally impaired, or developmentally disabled. Adult day care, a relatively new concept, is expected to expand significantly due to very rapid growth in the number of people of advanced age, together with growing awareness of the value of day programs for adults in need of care and supervision.

While projected growth in the elderly population is the dominant factor in the anticipated expansion of adult day care, public



response to the needs of people who are handicapped or mentally ill underlies anticipated employment growth in group homes and residential care facilities. As more and more developmentally disabled individuals reach the age of 21 and thereby lose their eligibility for programs and services offered by the public schools, the need for community-based alternatives can be expected to grow. Pressures to respond to the needs of the chronically mentally ill can also be expected to persist. For many years, as deinstitutionalization has proceeded, chronic mental patients have been left to their own devices. If the movement to help the homeless and chronically mentally ill gains momentum, more community-based programs and group residences will be established, and demand for human services workers will increase accordingly. Community based non-profit agencies will remain a major employer of human services workers, and replacement needs alone will generate many job openings in the public and private sector.

