Chapter 1: What is a Psychiatric Social Worker? | Mental Health Social Work Education and Resources

Mental health and substance abuse social work almost always requires licensure beyond the Master's in Social Work, or at the very least, supervision by someone licensed while you work to meet your state's licensing requirements. This is especially important if your employer gets paid by insurance companies.

Social workers practice in a variety of settings, but they usually fall in one of three main categories of social work: Instead, they work toward policy change and program implementation. However, both direct and clinical social workers engage with clients firsthand. Most states require clinical social workers to complete thousands of hours of supervised experience before obtaining licensure. MSW programs often allow students to specialize in a particular area of practice, such as substance abuse counseling, child and family social work, mental health counseling, and disability services. Some candidates find that choosing a specialization helps in finding employment. States vary in their standards for clinical social workers, but most require candidates to obtain special licensure. LCSWs can work in clinical settings to diagnose and treat patients with psychiatric disorders. Many work in mental health treatment facilities to help people struggling with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and similar conditions. These social workers may also practice in substance abuse rehabilitation facilities to help treat those struggling with addiction, while others might open their own private practices to counsel families and children. Generally, LCSWs in hospitals and private practice make more than their peers. This class provides basic knowledge about helping individuals through clinical social work. Students learn how to assess a patient, prepare a treatment plan, and execute interventions. Clinical Practice with Groups: Many clinical social workers lead group classes, such as those in rehabilitation centers. This course prepares students to help groups of people whose struggles are similar, but backgrounds are diverse. This class helps students understand the unique challenges that people who struggle with addiction face, plus how to properly diagnose their patients and create evidence-based treatment plans. Policy classes prepare degree candidates to tackle the complicated legal and ethical questions that may arise in their practices. Many social work degree programs allow students to earn graduate credits for field experience. These learners may work as interns under licensed professionals. Direct services is perhaps the most diverse of the three social work categories, with positions available in a variety of settings. For example, direct social work in healthcare requires practitioners to help patients understand their insurance, advocate for their healthcare rights, and find the appropriate resources to use during recovery. Child and family social workers visit homes to ensure child safety, evaluate potential foster care homes, and help with adoption proceedings. Direct social workers also practice in schools, where they identify students in need, discover the root of their problems and connect them with resources. At undergraduate and graduate levels, a social work student can choose a concentration, such as gerontology, children and families, healthcare, or school social work. Social workers help people from all walks of life. These courses help students understand cultural differences and the challenges they present, plus the benefits of a diverse community. These classes teach aspiring social workers how to identify a child in need, and what children need to thrive. These classes prepare students to confront the unique mental and social challenges that the aging population faces. Professionals can then help elderly clients find the resources they need to age with dignity. Social Welfare Programs, Policies and Issues: Before a social worker can help clients locate resources and get through bureaucracies, the professional must understand the available programs and current laws. These courses get learners up-to-date on current social welfare issues. Both graduate and undergraduate programs may require students to complete internships in the field for credit. These practicums help degree candidates understand what it means to make a career in direct practice in social work. Direct Services Social Work Both clinical and direct services social workers perform duties that require one-on-one client interaction, but clinical social workers have more authority for diagnosing and treating. For that reason, the requirements to become a clinical social worker tend to be stricter. This is reflected in the pay range for each area.
Chapter 2: Differences Between Clinical and Non-Clinical Social Work - Blog

Clinical social work is a specialty practice area of social work which focuses on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illness, emotional, and other behavioral disturbances. Individual, group and family therapy are common treatment modalities.

Mental health or substance abuse social workers may work in group offices, individual offices, in schools, or in specialized settings such as a therapeutic wilderness camp or group home. Some mental health and substance abuse social workers are business owners with their own practices. After you find your niche, you may even be called upon to serve as an expert witness in court. You may work for an agency that does exclusively grief counseling, or an addictions treatment center that assists clients with everything from eating disorders to methadone maintenance. Some social workers in this field work for a large group practice that provides a variety of services where you can diversify your practice or specialize. Generally speaking, your job revolves around diagnosing clinical disorders, identifying client goals, formulating a plan to meet those goals, connecting clients with resources to supplement your work, and working with clients to achieve the goals set out in their individual plans. This is accomplished via psychosocial assessments, collaborating with a treatment team, conducting ongoing counseling with the identified client and significant others, reviewing progress, and working with the client to establish support systems when your work is finished. Do you enjoy critical thinking? Most mental health and substance abuse social workers are responsible for creating unique treatment plans for each client. This requires analytical and out-of-the-box thinking, particularly if the client is resistant. Would you enjoy working with the same clients over a long period of time? You may work with some clients for months or even years. What issues do you bring to the table? You will probably hear more than once during graduate school that would-be therapists should engage in therapy. Can you handle client failure? These clients fight hard, sometimes lifelong battles with conditions which carry stigmas and daily challenges. You must earn their trust while maintaining professional distance. It takes a special personality to work in addictions and mental health. What Are the Requirements? This is especially important if your employer gets paid by insurance companies. You will participate in ongoing continuing education courses to renew your license every couple of years. This is a tricky question. Nonprofit organizations fund their services via grants and donations. Some for-profit agencies take cash payments only. You can expect to make a lot less money as a grief counselor in a nonprofit community agency funded by a local grant than in a private practice where clients pay out of pocket or via insurance. Even in private practice, there are a lot of factors that influence how much money you make, such as the community you serve or how good you are at pitching your services. At present, mental health and substance abuse practitioners make up approximately 19 percent of MSWs. In general, the job forecast for these practitioners is pretty good! With socialized health care and mental health parity on the way, we can expect insurance carriers to increase the demand for services as more families have access to treatment. This starts with assessing new clients, identifying their areas of concern, and developing a treatment plan in partnership with the client. In a community-based setting i. Your day is filled with client sessions, though what this consists of varies. Some workers meet with clients exclusively on a one-to-one basis. Others may rotate between individual, couples, or family counseling and group therapy meetings. A substance abuse social worker might work at an outpatient clinic for teens. Your day starts by checking voicemail and email to see if any urgent matters have come in since the last shift. Particularly when working with school-age youth, your day may start later or your morning may be focused on case management, billing and related documentation, phone calls with parents, court officers, and other constituents. Individual clients or families may come in for assessments to determine the level of care needed. Many substance abuse counselors also conduct group therapy where all participants work on a mutually identified goal. For both mental health and substance abuse social workers, you can expect to put out client fires from time to time, including suicidal ideation, intentional or accidental overdose, runaway or other
related behavioral problems, and incarceration. Your clients will definitely keep things interesting! Best of the Blog.
Primary mental health care was institutionally based for the first half of the century, with a period of de-institutionalization beginning in the late sixties preceding the current emphasis on community-based care. The field of mental health provides a unique opportunity for social workers to practice collaboratively with allied professionals and at the same time maintain the integrity of their knowledge and skill base. This document will define health and mental health; describe the current roles of social workers within the spectrum of mental health services; identify the necessary education and knowledge base; and consider future directions. It is the extent to which an individual or group is able, on the one hand, to realize aspirations and satisfy needs and, on the other hand to change or cope with the environment. It speaks of health as "a resource which gives people the ability to manage and even to change their surroundings. It also requires us to think of health as something experienced not only individually, but also collectively. Striking a Balance, a discussion paper from Health and Welfare Canada, proposes a set of ideas designed to expand our understanding of mental health. This document points out that until recently much of what we know about mental health actually came from the study and treatment of mental disorders. Past attempts to define mental health have usually focused on the psychological and behavioural characteristics of individual people, rather than on conditions in society as a whole. In much the same way, most of the services, programs, laws and professions that have to do with "mental health" are really oriented towards dealing with mental disorder. In these circumstances, it is easy to understand how mental health has come to be viewed simply as freedom from psychiatric symptoms, or the absence of mental disorder. In the past few decades there have been significant developments in our understanding of mental health. They have arisen from a growing community mental health movement and a body of social science research that places increasing importance on the ability of external forces and events to influence individual mental health. Social and economic situations, family and other relationships, the physical and organizational environment - all are plainly recognized as contributing factors. As a result, current concepts of mental health reflect a number of themes: We now know that human biology and human experience interact continually in shaping mental life. Mental life embraces both inner experience and interpersonal group experience. Our interactions with others take place within a framework of societal values; therefore, any definition of mental health must necessarily reflect the kind of people we think we should be, the goals we consider desirable, and the type of society we aspire to live in. Social workers do not isolate ideas about mental health from such wider social values as the desire for equality among people, the free pursuit of legitimate individual and collective goals, and equitable distribution and exercise of power. Mental health is the capacity of the individual, the group and the environment to interact with one another in ways that promote subjective well-being, the optimal development and use of mental abilities cognitive, affective and relational, the achievement of individual and collective goals consistent with justice and the attainment and preservation of conditions of fundamental equality. In this definition, mental health moves into the realm of the relationship between the individual, the group and the environment. Mental health is no longer conceived of as an individual trait, such as physical fitness; rather it is regarded as a resource consisting of the energy, strengths and abilities of the individual interacting effectively with those of the group and with opportunities and influences in the environment. This conceptualization leads to certain conclusions about the factors that can enhance or weaken mental health. Whatever makes it difficult for the individual, the group and the environment to interact effectively and justly for example, poverty, prejudice, discrimination, disadvantage, marginality or poor coordination of or access to resources is a threat or barrier to mental health. A key feature of this new definition is that it does not define mental health in terms of the presence or absence...
of mental disorder, nor does it imply that mental health and mental disorder are simply opposite poles on a single continuum. This relationship-centred focus is a distinguishing feature of the profession. As these knowledge and skill areas are emphasized in social work education, social workers are well positioned to play a significant role as our society strives to achieve mental health goals in the twenty-first century. Social workers are involved at the micro, mezzo and macro levels in all sectors. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. At the micro and mezzo levels social workers are primarily concerned with "the social well-being of individual clients and their families equally valued with the importance of their physical, mental and spiritual well-being. This breadth of analysis and focus are specific strengths of social work in mental health. A distinguishing characteristic of social work practice is the dual focus of the profession. Social workers have, simultaneously, ethical responsibilities to address both private troubles and public issues. Many of the roles that social workers perform are common to all mental health disciplines. Specific to the domain of social work are roles of building partnerships among professionals, caregivers and families; collaborating with the community, usually with the goal of creating supportive environments for clients; advocating for adequate service, treatment models and resources; challenging and changing social policy to address issues of poverty, employment, housing and social justice; and supporting the development of preventive programs. Prevention occurs on many levels and includes a focus on early intervention, individual and public education, advocacy and improving access to services, resources and information. Specific Roles Mental health settings usually include services in three broad levels of health care application: It is recognized that individual social workers may practice exclusively within one setting or cross the boundaries of all three in response to diverse client, family and community needs. Prevention involves the promotion and maintenance of good health through education, attention to adequate standards for basic needs and specific protection against known risks. In mental health settings, preventive activities include public and client education regarding emotional self-care and healthy relationships, building community knowledge and skills community development, social action, and advocacy for social justice. In mental health settings, treatment activities are focused on individuals experiencing acute psychiatric symptoms, emotional trauma, relationship problems, stress, distress or crisis and include assessment, risk management, individual, couple, family and group counselling, intervention or therapy and advocacy. Social work uses relationship as the basis of all interventions. In mental health settings, rehabilitation activities focus on clients who are disabled by mental illness and may include individual, couple, family, and group interventions to build knowledge and skills, provision of specialized residential, vocational and leisure resources, and advocacy to ensure the development of needed services and to change community attitudes. Specific to their employment setting, social workers in mental health deliver the following professional services: Direct Services to individuals, couples, families and groups in the form of counselling, crisis intervention, therapy, advocacy, coordination of resources, etc. Case Management - coordinating inter-disciplinary services to a specified client, group or population. Community Development - working with communities to facilitate the identification of mental health issues and development of mental health resources from a community needs perspective. Social work knowledge base which facilitates practice in this field includes theories of intervention, practice-based research, concepts and theories of human development through the lifespan, mental health, family functioning, group behaviour and the broader socio-political processes that shape society. Specialized knowledge of mental disorders and their impact on individual family and community including the psychiatric classification system, major syndromes, theories and knowledge of aetiology, and current concepts of intervention, treatment, risk assessment and rehabilitation; organizational aspects of mental health services; community structure, social and political processes, development and resources; and knowledge and understanding of the paradigms for practice of the other mental health disciplines. Social work has a long and distinguished history of service to persons with mental disorders and their families. Because of the high degree of congruence between the conceptual framework through which
mental health services are now provided and the value base and practice domain of social work it is expected that the profession will play a strong leadership role in this field in the decades ahead. Since its inception, social work has focused on the social contributions to emotional well being and mental health. Foundations for the Future:
Clinical social workers provide mental health services for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental, behavioral, and emotional disorders in individuals, families, and groups. Their goal is to enhance and maintain their patients' physical, psychological, and social function.

April 29, by Simmons Staff The need for professional social workers continues to grow. While both types of social workers are educated at the graduate level, there are key differences. Non-clinical social workers—sometimes also referred to as macro-level social workers—effect change by seeking reform and change within the larger systems, services, and policies that impact individuals, groups, and communities. Macro practitioners serve as community organizers, policy analysts, and legislative advocates. Clinical social workers work directly with their clients to improve the quality of their lives. Many integrate advocacy into their work and consider themselves activist practitioners, which is exactly our approach to teaching at Simmons. Clinical Social Worker Clinical social work is one of the most common types of social work in which one identifies and solves problems to strengthen the functioning and quality of life of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Clinical social workers can work in a number of areas, depending on the population. Some examples include, but are not limited to: If you are interested in working with families and children, and want to provide support for them, you may wish to focus your study in this area in order to strengthen skills that will serve you in this area of social work. Trauma and Interpersonal Violence: Most social workers serve clients who have histories of trauma, either at the interpersonal, domestic, or systemic levels. Mental Health and Addictions: Health care social workers focus on supporting clients and their families during times of medical illness. They provide assessment and intervention that relates to chronic illness, disability, end-of-life care, and ethical and legal concerns. Social workers who work in health care settings are found in behavioral health homes or medical homes, hospitals, community health settings, physical rehabilitation institutions, and nursing homes. Social workers working with older adults provide support to empower and enhance the quality of life for elders as they face concerns related to their long-term care and well-being. Due to their direct involvement with their clients and communities, clinical social workers are primed to identify trends that may need to be addressed through policy changes. Almost all clinical social workers, even in private practice, work with other social workers and clinical professionals to effect policy change, and coordinate care and services. At Simmons, we train clinical social workers for practice in direct settings, by educating them about theories of human development, relational and group process, relational-cultural learning, and social policy in the service of individuals, groups, families, and communities. Non-Clinical Social Worker Non-clinical or macro-level social workers impact individuals through program and service development and implementation, at the policy level, and at the service delivery level. Macro practitioners cite communities as the identified client system, and identify key areas for change. With community members and agency partners, macro practitioners work to address gaps in resources, inequities and limitations on access to services because of systemic or structural oppressions. They also strive to remove roadblocks for clients who have instrumental and emotional needs that are not being met. Macro practice may include a mix of administrative duties and some form of counseling. Work can be in private or public organizations, and can be at the individual, group, or administrative level. Macro practitioners are often involved in emotional and mental health-related counseling and therapy, rehabilitation services, conflict resolution, mediation, policy analysis, and implementation. Wherever your interests lie, it is important to know the difference between non-clinical and clinical social work, so you can decide which one is a better fit for your experience, personality, and skills. If you are interested in pursuing a career in clinical social work, the acclaimed online program SocialWork Simmons, from Simmons College School of Social Work, focuses on clinical practice. Our curriculum offers four fields of Specialized Course of Study that allow you to develop skills in an area of particular clinical interest to you.
Abstract. This study of social workers in mental health services reports on practitioners’ descriptions of what they do as they perform their occupational roles and compares these descriptions with the social work role appropriate for community mental health practice.

Finding a Program Psychiatric Social Workers and How to Become One Psychiatric social workers provide mental health services to individuals with high needs. They may perform psychotherapy and even diagnose mental illness. Duties vary according to work setting. Social workers in inpatient settings often have primary responsibility for putting together the discharge plan. The goal is ambitious: Hospital stays are shorter than they were in the past, but patients sometimes need to transition to a residential care center or a day program. Social workers who are employed at psychiatric hospitals also do psychosocial assessments and provide therapy. They are in frequent contact with the family members of patients. They meet with other members of the mental health team psychiatrists, nurse practitioners etc. If the patient is involved in any legal procedures, the social worker may have a role in information gathering. Psychiatric social workers may also be employed in outpatient centers, working with juveniles and adults. They perform psychotherapy and assessments, educate the patient and his or her family, and make referrals as necessary. Mental health therapies include more than just talk. Social workers may, for example, employ Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing with young trauma survivors. Clients may include those with schizophrenia and those with complex sets of co-occurring conditions. Governmental agencies and residential care facilities are among the other employment options for psychiatric social workers. Some eventually go into private practice as psychotherapists. Those interested in this career should enroll in social work programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Ideally, they will select programs with a clinical focus and a clinical fieldwork experience â€” the state may or may not make clinical focus a formal requirement for the highest level of licensing. Learn more about this program. GRE scores not required. The MSW program helps prepare students to enter the general or clinical practice role in most states. Capella also offers an online Doctor of Social Work. Most states have a continuing education requirement. So do colleges and universities. Some offer post-master certificate programs in areas like mental health. Licensing and Certification All U. The highest level of licensing is dependent on supervised work experience attained over a period of about two to three years. During this time, the prospective social worker will be working in a mental health setting. Many states tie licensing level or category to duties performed during this time period. Some social workers pursue additional voluntary certification to demonstrate their mental health expertise. There were 10, employed in such settings. The overall employment here was higher:
The practice of clinical social work requires the application of advanced clinical knowledge and clinical skills in multidimensional assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of psychosocial dysfunction, disability, or impairment including emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders, conditions, and addictions.

What are the educational requirements for a social worker? Non-clinical work may incorporate therapy, public or private organizations, case management, administration, and more. Many times non-clinical social workers will work on counseling and helping their clients with whatever issues they may be having. This can range from working with individuals to secure a new job, to coordinating rehabilitation programs, and more. This typically will have you working with clients on more of a consulting basis, compared to a clinical setting, which will be more comprehensive in services. Licensure varies depending on states. Some of these may include: The LSWA is for entry-level social work employees wanting to work at non-clinical level. In order to gain this licensure you must have a bachelor degree in social work. If you have a degree in another field than you can have a certain number of work experience under the supervision of a licensed social worker. This licensure allows you to provide non-clinical social work services, such as case management and administrative supervision. This is the most advanced non-clinical licensure you can receive. Though this is a licensed non-clinical social work license, you are still permitted to engage in private or independent practice. Most of your work will be done in a clinical setting and typically encompasses psychotherapy, counseling, therapy, and more. State licensing requirements vary, but some amount of supervised work experience is necessary for private practice. This is listed as both clinical and non-clinical, as the LMSW is permitted to perform clinical social work, but only under the direct consultation of a LCSW. This is the most advanced social work certification, and those with this licensure must have a master or doctorate level education. Some LCSW may work in socially oriented agencies, hospitals, treatment facilities, or own their own private practice. The National Association of Social Workers sets guidelines on what clinical social workers should be capable of doing for clients: Establish and maintain a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance, and trust Gather and interpret social, personal, environmental, and health information Evaluate and treat problems within their scope of practice Establish achievable treatment goals with the client Facilitate cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes consistent with treatment goals Evaluate the effectiveness of treatment services provided to the client Identify appropriate resources and assessment instruments, as needed Advocate for client services Collaborate effectively with other social work or allied professionals, when appropriate. Is the program accredited? Will the program prepare you for licensure and other exams? Does the program offer online or hybrid courses for working and non-traditional students?

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Clinical social workers, and the broader field of social work as a whole (which encompasses much more than mental health), represent an immense reservoir of scientific and practitioner talent which is eager to lend service in promoting evidence-based mental health services.