

Offering Specialized Coverage for Social Workers

November 17, 2021

Social work is a practice-based profession and academic discipline, rooted in social science, humanities, and social work theory and advanced using evidence-based approaches. Its goal is to engage individuals and communities for the purpose of addressing life challenges and traumatic events, creating change, and fostering resiliency. In addition to providing services, improving conditions, and creating opportunities for growth, recovery, and personal development, social work also cooperates with other professionals, communities, and organizations.

Where and How Do Social Workers Work?

As of early 2016, an estimated 50,000 social workers were employed in Canada. It is estimated that 93% of social workers are employed in health and social services or government sectors, 74% in the former and 19% in the latter. (1) That being said, private practice is becoming increasingly popular among social workers.

A social worker may also work in any of the following settings:

- Family services agencies, children's aid agencies, and welfare administration agencies
- Correctional institutions
- General and psychiatric hospitals
- Federal and provincial departments
- Health and community service centres
- Schools

Social workers may work as part of a multidisciplinary team or individually with clients. Depending on the setting where they work, social workers have different duties to perform.

Child Welfare Agencies

Public and private child welfare agencies employ social workers to investigate cases of abuse, neglect and family violence and take protective action if necessary. Some of them recruit foster parents while others supervise the placement of children in protective care. Still others assist with adoptions.

Correctional Facilities

A social worker may work with a correctional team to help young or adult offenders with their social rehabilitation.

General and Psychiatric Hospitals

Social workers are part of the treatment team at general and psychiatric hospitals. They act as a link between the team and the family as well as with community resources. Their work in these settings involves caring for the aged and disabled, as well as treating and rehabilitating individuals with physical or mental ailments.

Government

In federal and provincial departments or social planning councils, social workers usually work on policy analysis, policy development and planning. They may also work as researchers in universities and governments or teach in universities and community colleges.

Health and Community Service Centres

Social workers offer counselling to individuals and families in health and community services centers, as well as services to seniors. Others work as community developers, identifying citizens' needs and suggesting solutions. They may also help with parent-child relationships and marriages. These services may be offered individually or in groups.

Private Practice

Private practice social workers provide their services on a fee-for-service basis to individuals, families, and organizations. These services include counselling, psychotherapy, mediation, sex therapy, organizational development, policy and program development, and employee assistance programs.

Schools

School boards often hire social workers to help students adjust to school life. In addition to serving students, parents and teachers, they help students and teachers deal with aggressive behaviour, truancy, family problems, and other problems that affect their performance.

Common Reasons A Social Worker Might Be Sued

Negligence

Clients may accuse social workers of doing something they shouldn't have done, or of neglecting to do something they should have done. As an example, the social worker fails to follow the care plan procedures necessary to ensure the safety of the patient. This negligence caused the patient to do self-harm.

Upset clients

A social worker can also be accused of causing poor client outcomes. One example could be a suicidal client's family blaming their social worker for their death. A lawsuit can be very expensive to defend, even if the suit is found to be without basis and the social worker is found not to be liable.

Slander

Social workers could have breached the patient's confidential health information to the other party. Say, for example, two social workers are out in public discussing a difficult patient who is well known to the community. They are overheard and what they said is relayed to the patient, who sues. A claim of this type requires coverage that protects healthcare professionals from any breach of confidentiality in the conduct of their professional services.

In the event of a lawsuit, social workers can protect themselves by carrying both general liability and professional liability insurance with them.

The MedThree Advantage

With specialized experience in the healthcare industry, MedThree Insurance Group can help by providing tailored policies for social workers and other professionals in healthcare. Our coverage options make it easy for brokers to find the right policy for their healthcare clients. Visit our website to get started or for more information: www.medthreeinsurance.com.

Content is current as of the date of broadcast and is subject to change without notice.

Sources:

1. <https://www.casw-acts.ca/en/critical-demand-social-work-canada-volume-1-final-report-2000>