

# Quick Guides to the Health Professions

## Social Workers

### *What is a social worker?*

Registered Social Workers are regulated health professionals who recognize and respect the inherent worth and dignity of all persons, pursue social justice, and promote social change and well-being. Social workers are ethics driven and collaborate with one another and other interdisciplinary professionals in order to provide quality client-centered care and services.

### *What do social workers do?*

The role of a social worker can significantly vary based upon the practice setting. Social workers may enhance or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities by improving developmental, problem-solving and coping capacities of people and systems. This work may include interventions, mental health treatment, advocacy, systems navigation, social policy development, education, preventative programming, and research.

### *Where do social workers work?*

Social workers work in a wide variety of settings including:

- Community agencies and nonprofits
- Hospitals (e.g., discharge and after-care planning)
- Counselling agencies and private practice
- Educational settings (e.g., schools and universities)
- Government (e.g., policy development and social services such as income and employment supports)

- Social research organizations
- Residential settings (e.g., group homes and emergency shelters)
- Correctional services
- Management and development of social programs

### *Education and preparation*

Social workers must have a diploma, bachelor's degree, or master's degree in social work from an accredited post-secondary program that includes supervised practicums. These different levels of education prepare social workers for respective levels of practice and complexity.

### *Licensure*

Social workers practicing within Alberta must have an active practice permit from the Alberta College of Social Workers. The requirements to obtain a practice permit vary depending upon where and when the social work education was completed. Registration with the College allows members to use the protected titles listed in legislation including, registered social worker (RSW), and registered clinical social worker (RCSW).

### *Professional organizations*

Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW)  
<https://acsw.ab.ca>

Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)  
<https://www.casw-acts.ca>

### *Contributors to this guide*

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