

Tennessee Social Work Snapshot

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**Authored by the National Association of Social Workers,
Tennessee Chapter**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	Page 3
Points of Interest.....	Page 4
About Social Workers.....	Page 5
Social Work Education Accreditation.....	Page 6
Tennessee Social Work Education Programs.....	Page 7
Name and location of social work programs	
Number of enrollees and graduates by level of degree	
Social Work Licensure and Voluntary Credentials and the Regulation of Social Workers.....	Page 12
Social Work Licensure Law (June 2007)	
New Multi-level Social Work Licensure Law	
NASW-TN Membership Data.....	Page 15
Tennessee Census Data	
Social Workers by County Data.....	Page 16
Tennessee Social Work Employment Data.....	Page 19
National Trends in the Social Work Labor Force.....	Page 20
The Need for Social Workers.....	Page 21
Resource Listing.....	Page 24

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Executive Summary

The United States is experiencing unprecedented human, social service, and health care requirements. These requirements now transcend social and economic strata, affect the old and the young, and place tremendous burdens on those in the middle. These trends are taking place at a time when equally complex challenges and demands are being placed on our nation's social workers.

Professional social workers ensure full participation of all members of society by working with millions of individuals and families in every community to combat a range of social problems that limit our nation's health and potential. Unfortunately, current social work professional shortages, impending retirements, lack of incentives to attract and retain social workers, and insufficient data on the efficacy of social service strategies all threaten the very fabric that distinguishes our nation from all others and our collective efforts related to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In light of these trends, the NASW National office announced a major initiative designed to unify and advance the social work profession at the state and national levels. The Social Work Reinvestment Initiative is a collaborative effort comprised of leading social work organizations and other stakeholders committed to securing federal and state investments related to recruitment, training, retention, and research that strengthens the profession and the communities it serves. Work on the initiative is occurring at both the national and state levels and includes components such as funding for social work education, support for research, strengthening policies and regulations to support social work practice, and social work education loan forgiveness. As explained by the National NASW Director, Elizabeth Clark, PhD, ACSW, MPH, "The goal is to get government, employers, and others to fully recognize the importance of social work and to persuade them to assist us in recruiting, retaining, and retraining professional social workers."

The following report is a compilation of data from a variety of sources that examines current information on the demographic makeup of social workers, employment trends affecting social workers, and information on the academic programs preparing students to enter the social work workforce in Tennessee. The purpose of this report is to educate social work professionals, policy makers, employers, and the general public about the current and future needs of the social work profession in the State of Tennessee.

The Social Work Dictionary, defines social workers as "Graduates of schools of social work (with either bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees) who use their knowledge and skills to provide social services for clients (who may be individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations, or society in general). Social workers help people increase their capacities for problem solving and coping, and they help them obtain needed resources, facilitate interactions between people and their environments, make organizations responsible to people, and influence social policies." A dilemma encountered in preparing this report is that some groups do not gather data on education credentials when compiling information on "social workers". When data on social workers is presented and educational training is not assessed it will be noted in the report.

Points of Interest

What major factors are influencing the current social work workforce?

National information illustrates that social work is one of the occupations most affected by Baby Boomer retirements. (Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics) At a state level an analysis of NASW Tennessee Chapter membership found that over 48% of current members are 50 years of age or older.

Across the nation social workers are entering the profession later in life, resulting in shorter careers and social workers' salaries are lower than comparable trained professionals. Additionally, social workers face significant educational debt that discourages retention in the profession. (Source: Social Work Reinvestment Initiative Social Work Shortage Fact Sheet)

How many social workers do we currently have and what are future employment trends for social workers?

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), social work is one of the fastest growing careers in the United States. The profession is expected to grow by 30% by 2010; currently, nearly 600,000 people in the United States hold social work degrees.

In July 2007, there were 3,472 licensed and certified social workers in Tennessee. (Source: Tennessee Department of Health) Data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development illustrates that the need for social workers is growing at an average rate faster than all other occupations. This information specifically shows that Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers are experiencing a growth rate of 2.9%, which is nearly twice the 1.5% average growth rate expected for all occupations in Tennessee from 2004 through 2014. Overall, the social work profession in the State of Tennessee is projected to add 245 new positions and 175 positions due to replacement/retirement each year through 2014.

What social work education programs exist in Tennessee?

The State of Tennessee currently has two Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited Master's in Social Work programs, which graduate an average of 216 master's level social workers each calendar year. Tennessee currently has 13 CSWE accredited Baccalaureate Social Work programs, and one program in candidacy for accreditation, which graduate an average of 360 baccalaureate level social workers each calendar year. Additionally, the state's only doctoral level social work program graduates an average of four students per year.

In an effort to expand opportunities for the graduate study of social work, a proposal for a collaborative master's program was developed and is now awaiting approval by the Tennessee Board of Regents. This collaborative would allow students to receive a master's in social work degree from Austin Peay State University, Middle Tennessee State University, or Tennessee State University. In addition to the efforts being made by this collaborative, Union University will accept its first class of graduate social work students in the Fall of 2008.

About Social Workers

Social workers have the right education, experience, and dedication to help people help themselves whenever and wherever they need it. It takes a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral social work degree — with a minimum number of hours in supervised fieldwork — to become a social worker. Today, more than 600,000 people in the United States hold social work degrees.

Social workers are uniquely qualified to help people in their own environment by looking at all the different aspects of their life and culture. For more than 100 years, social workers have been working to ensure the well-being of individuals, prevent crises and to counsel individuals, families, and communities. They make sure people get the help they need, from the best resources available.

All social workers adhere to a Code of Ethics that addresses the six principles of the social work profession: Service, Dignity and Worth, Importance of Relationships, Integrity, Competence, and Social Justice.

Professional social workers are the nation's largest providers of mental health services. According to government sources, more than 60 percent of mental health treatment is delivered by social workers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for social workers is expected to grow twice as fast as any other occupation, especially in gerontology, home healthcare, substance abuse, private social service agencies, and school social work.

What do social workers do?

Social workers care for people in every stage of life, from children to the elderly. They help many different individuals overcome some of life's most difficult challenges and the troubles of everyday living, including:

- Addiction
- Abuse
- Child Welfare
- Death
- Depression
- Disability
- Discrimination
- Divorce
- Mental Illness
- Physical Illness
- Poverty
- Stress
- Unemployment

Help from social workers reaches every part of the community, from adoption agencies to hospices, and in other places you may not expect, including:

- Associations
- Corporations
- Prisons
- Hospitals
- Legislative Offices
- Mental Health Clinics
- Military Centers
- Veterans Centers
- Disaster Relief Organizations
- Schools
- Universities
- Senior Centers
- Government
- Social Service Agencies

(Source: helpstartshere.org)

Social Work Education Accreditation

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in this country. As of 2004, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited 442 BSW programs and 168 MSW programs. The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) listed 80 doctoral programs in social work (DSW or Ph.D.). BSW programs prepare graduates for direct service positions, such as caseworkers, and include courses in social work values and ethics, and other topics such as learning how to serve diverse and at-risk populations, the promotion of social and economic justice, human behavior in the social environment, social welfare policy and services, social work practice, and research methods for program evaluation and clinical practice. Accredited BSW programs also require a minimum of 400 hours of supervised field instruction.

Master's degree programs prepare graduates for work in their chosen field of concentration and to continue to develop the skills required to perform clinical assessments, manage large caseloads, take on supervisory roles, develop innovative ways of serving the needs of clients, and how to effectively manage social service organizations. Full-time master's degree programs last 2 years and include a minimum of 900 hours of supervised field instruction, or internship. A part-time program may take 3-5 years to complete. Entry into a master's degree program does not require a bachelor's degree in social work, but courses in psychology, biology, sociology, economics, political science, or social work are recommended. In addition, a second language can be very helpful. Most master's degree programs offer an advanced standing option for those with a bachelor's degree from an accredited social work program, which allows students to complete an MSSW in less than 2 years.

The following pages include information on current social work educational programs in Tennessee and the most recent enrollment and graduation figures for each program.

Tennessee Social Work Education Programs

CSWE Accredited Baccalaureate Social Work Programs

Austin Peay State University

Department of Social Work
Marks Building
P. O. Box 4656
Clarksville TN 37044
<http://www.apsu.edu/socialwork/>

Belmont University

Department of Social Work
1900 Belmont Blvd.
Gordon E. Inman College of Health Sciences Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37212-3757
<http://belmont.edu/socwork/index.html>

East Tennessee State University

Department of Social Work
Hillrise Hall
PO Box 70645
Johnson City, TN 37614
<http://www.etsu.edu/socialwork/>

Freed-Hardeman University

Behavioral Science and Family Studies
Social Work Department
158 East Main St.
Henderson, TN 38340
<http://web.fhu.edu/fhu/>

Lincoln Memorial University

Social Work Program
6965 Cumberland Gap Parkway
Harrogate, TN 37752-0901
<http://www.lmunet.edu/>

Lipscomb University

Department of Social Work and Sociology
3901 Granny White Pike
Nashville, TN 37204-3951
<http://socialwork.lipscomb.edu/>

CSWE Accredited Baccalaureate Social Work Programs

Middle Tennessee State University

Social Work Department
PO Box 139
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~socwork/>

Southern Adventist University

Social Work Program
4881 Taylor Circle
Daniels Hall
PO Box 370
Collegedale, TN 37315-0370
<https://www.southern.edu/Pages/default.aspx>

Tennessee State University

Department of Social Work and Sociology
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd
PO Box 9525
Nashville, TN 37209-1561
<http://www.tnstate.edu/>

Union University

Social Work Program
1050 Union University Dr.
Jackson, TN 38305-3697
<http://www.uu.edu/>

University of Memphis

Division of Social Work
School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy
3820 Desoto Avenue
McCord Hall 119
Memphis, TN 38152
<http://memphis.edu/>

The University of Tennessee

College of Social Work
600 Henley St
Conference Center Bldg (CCB), Suite B80
Knoxville, TN 37996
<http://www.csw.utk.edu/>

CSWE Accredited Baccalaureate Social Work Programs

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Candidacy)

Social Work Program
615 McCallie Ave, Dept 3133
Chattanooga, TN 37403
<http://www.utc.edu/Academic/SocialWork/>

University of Tennessee at Martin

Social Work Program
544 University St.
Sociology Bldg.
Martin, TN 38238
<http://www.utm.edu/departments/cebs/saswcj/sw.php>

CSWE Accredited Master of Social Work Programs

East Tennessee State University

Department of Social Work
Hillrise Hall
PO Box 70645
Johnson City, TN 37614
<http://www.etsu.edu/socialwork/>

The University of Tennessee College of Social Work

<http://www.csw.utk.edu/>

Knoxville Campus

221 Henson Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996

Memphis Campus

711 Jefferson Ave., Room W607
Memphis, TN 38163

Nashville Campus

193 Polk Ave, Suite E
Nashville, TN 37210

University Offering Doctoral Social Work Education

The University of Tennessee College of Social Work

221 Henson Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996
<http://www.csw.utk.edu/>

The figures in the tables below are based on information provided by each institution for the academic years 2005-2007. The definitions of “annual enrollment” and “annual graduation” are determined by each institution.

BSW Annual Enrollment (annual average for 2005-2007)	
Austin Peay State University	200
Belmont University	42
East Tennessee State University	146
Freed-Hardeman University	40
Lincoln Memorial University	25
Lipscomb University	42
Middle Tennessee State University	280
Southern Adventist University	62
Tennessee State University	113
Union University	78
University of Memphis	150
University of Tennessee - Chattanooga	70 ¹
University of Tennessee - Martin	80
University of Tennessee - Knoxville	107
Total BSW	1435

BSW Annual Graduation (annual average for 2005-2007)	
Austin Peay State University	40
Belmont University	8
East Tennessee State University	44
Freed-Hardeman University	14
Lincoln Memorial University	8
Lipscomb University	11
Middle Tennessee State University	78
Southern Adventist University	17
Tennessee State University	20
Union University	19
University of Memphis	36
University of Tennessee - Chattanooga	19 ¹
University of Tennessee - Martin	23
University of Tennessee - Knoxville	23
Total BSW	360

¹ This figure represents data from 2008 only.

The figures in the tables below are based on information provided by each institution for the academic years 2005-2007. The definitions of “annual enrollment” and “annual graduation” are determined by each institution.

MSW Annual Enrollment (annual average for 2005-2007)	
ETSU	62
UT College of Social Work (includes Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis Campus)	224
MSW Total	286

MSW Annual Graduation (annual average for 2005-2007)	
ETSU	26
UT College of Social Work (includes Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis Campus)	190
MSW Total	216

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work Program Annual Enrollment (annual average for 2005-2007)	
UT College of Social Work	23
PhD Total	23

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work Program Annual Graduation (annual average for 2005-2007)	
UT College of Social Work	4
PhD Total	4

Social Work Licensure and Voluntary Credentials

All States and the District of Columbia have licensing, certification, or registration requirements for social work practice and the use of professional titles. Although standards for licensing vary by state, a growing number of states are placing greater emphasis on communication skills, professional ethics, and sensitivity to cultural diversity issues. Most states require a minimum of two years (3,000 hours) of supervised clinical experience after graduation with a master's degree for licensure as clinical social workers.

Credentials are particularly important for those in private practice; most health insurance providers require social workers to have state licensure in order to be reimbursed for services.

In addition, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) offers degreed social workers voluntary credentials, including the ACSW, based on their level of professional experience.

Regulation of Social Workers in Tennessee

The regulation of social work practice in Tennessee began in the mid 1980's with passage of a social work licensure law that focused on certifying master's social workers and licensing clinical social workers for independent practice. This section will outline the requirements of that law which is currently in effect. Information will also be provided on the requirements of the new multi-level social work licensure law that will begin to be implemented in July 2008. (The current law will remain in effect until new rules and regulations are approved to implement multi-level social work licensure.)

Current Tennessee Social Work Licensure Law (June 2007)

Independent Practitioner or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Requirements for licensure

Complete minimum of two years LCSW supervised full-time clinical experience after receipt of CMSW, complete appropriate forms, pay fees and pass Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) clinical practice exam. Can practice clinical and non-clinical social work within an agency, organization, or independently. Can supervise CMSW working towards LCSW.

Examples: LCSW providing services and supervision in AIDS service organization and clinical social worker in private practice.



Certified Master Social Worker (CMSW)

Requirements for certification

Graduate from Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited social work graduate program, complete appropriate forms, pay fees. May not practice privately or use title LCSW.

Example: Master's social worker in community mental health center working under LCSW supervision.

Regulation of Social Workers in Tennessee

New Tennessee Multi-level Social Work Licensure

In June 2006 state legislation was implemented that generally restricts the use of the title social worker to persons that have graduated from an accredited social work program. An analysis was conducted by NASW-TN after the passage of this legislation to determine if other changes were needed to strengthen Tennessee's social work licensure law. Information gathered illustrated that Tennessee's social work licensure law needed to be updated. This information included:

- 30 states licensed Master's practitioners as they entered practice and all the eight states surrounding Tennessee regulated MSWs at this level. All the surrounding states required a test for the credential similar to Tennessee's CMSW. (Tennessee did not require a test to become a CMSW.)
- 35 states regulated baccalaureate social workers and seven of the eight surrounding states licensed or certified BSWs. All seven states required a test for this level of practice.

NASW-TN shared their analysis and suggested changes to the licensure law with social workers across the state, and in January 2008 Multi-Level Social Work Licensure legislation was introduced in the Tennessee General Assembly. This legislation was introduced as part of NASW-TN's statewide plan for reinvesting in the social work profession and strengthening social work standards of practice. The new law was passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor on May 22, 2008. The law will begin to be implemented in July 2008 with the addition of new members to the state social work licensure board. Rules and regulations to implement the new law must be written and this process may take over a year.

As is standard with changes in licensure laws, there will be a "grandfathering" period after the new rules and regulations are finalized when persons can apply for approval for one of the new licensure categories without taking a test. This "grandfathering period" extends through December 31, 2010.

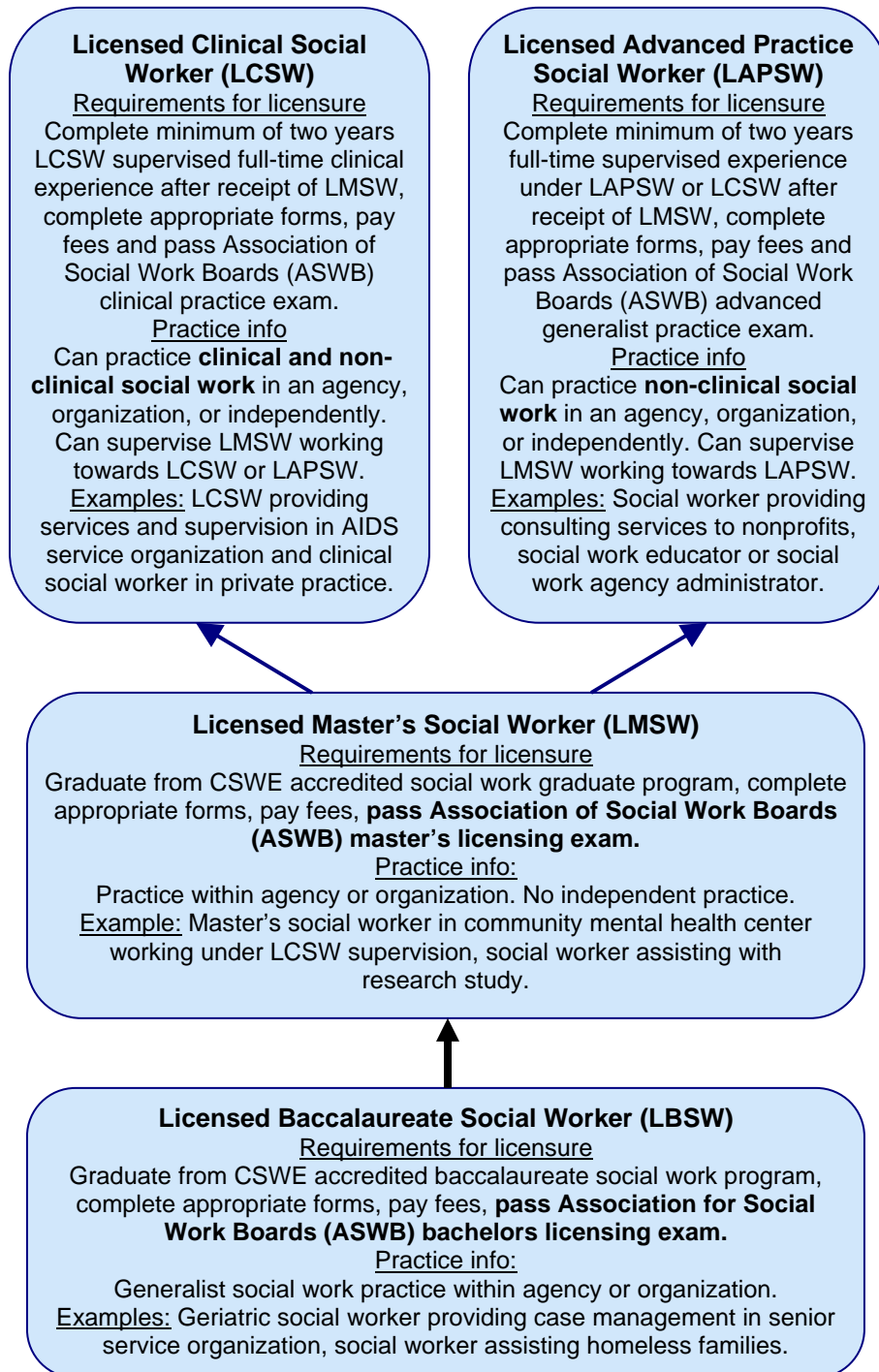
The diagram on page 14 outlines the new levels of licensure for social workers in Tennessee. More detailed information about the new licensure law is available at the NASW-TN website at www.naswtn.com.

Tennessee Board Responsible for Licensing Social Workers

Tennessee Department of Health
Board of Social Worker Certification and Licensure
227 French Landing Drive Suite 300
Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615) 532-3202 or (877) 778-4123
Website: <http://health.state.tn.us/Boards/SW/index.htm>

Regulation of Social Workers in Tennessee

New Multi-Level Social Work Licensure (July 2008)



Demographic Data on NASW-TN Members and Tennessee Population

Age of NASW-TN Active Members		
Age Range	Total	Percentage
No Data	94	5%
19-29	233	12.5%
30-39	339	18.2%
40-49	295	15.9%
50-59	451	24%
60-69	359	19.4%
Over 70	90	5%
TOTAL	1,861	100.0%

Gender of NASW-TN Active Members	
Females	1,555
Males	278
Not Reported	28
TOTAL	1,861

Ethnicity of NASW-TN Active Members	
African American	105
Asian or Pacific Islander	8
Chicano/Mexican	2
Native American	6
Other	12
Other Hispanic/Latino	6
White/Caucasian	1,031
Not Reported	691
TOTAL	1,861

2005 Tennessee Population Census Data

80.7%	Caucasian
16.8%	African American
1.2%	Asian
1.3%	Hispanic

Social Workers by County Data

In July 2007, there were 1,603 CMSW social workers and 1,869 LCSW social workers in Tennessee for a total of 3,472. This total includes 475 individuals who reside outside of Tennessee. The following charts analyze the number of certified and licensed social workers in each county of the state. (Source: NASW-TN analysis of CMSW and LCSW lists from Tennessee Department of Health)

COUNTY	Number of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers	2005 Population Estimate	Ratio of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers to Population
Anderson County	30	72,430	1 to 2,414
Bedford County	10	42,204	1 to 4,220
Benton County	1	16,467	1 to 16,467
Bledsoe County	1	12,928	1 to 12,928
Blount County	79	115,535	1 to 1,462
Bradley County	23	92,092	1 to 4,004
Campbell County	3	40,686	1 to 13,562
Cannon County	3	13,337	1 to 4,446
Carroll County	7	29,121	1 to 4,160
Carter County	12	58,865	1 to 4,905
Cheatham County	23	38,603	1 to 1,678
Chester County	4	15,941	1 to 3,985
Claiborne County	3	31,033	1 to 10,344
Clay County	0	7,992	0 to 7,992
Cocke County	1	34,929	1 to 34,929
Coffee County	6	50,869	1 to 8,478
Crockett County	3	14,595	1 to 4,865
Cumberland County	9	51,346	1 to 5,705
Davidson County	611	575,261	1 to 942
Decatur County	2	11,686	1 to 5,843
DeKalb County	3	18,254	1 to 6,085
Dickson County	8	45,894	1 to 5,737
Dyer County	9	37,829	1 to 4,203
Fayette County	5	34,458	1 to 6,892
Fentress County	0	17,159	0 to 17,159
Franklin County	5	41,003	1 to 8,201
Gibson County	20	48,148	1 to 2,407
Giles County	7	29,297	1 to 4,185
Grainger County	3	22,283	1 to 7,428
Greene County	16	65,318	1 to 4,082
Grundy County	4	14,608	1 to 3,652
Hamblen County	18	59,898	1 to 3,328
Hamilton County	147	310,935	1 to 2,115
Hancock County	1	6,704	1 to 6,704
Hardeman County	9	28,170	1 to 3,130

COUNTY	Number of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers	2005 Population Estimate	Ratio of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers to Population
Hardin County	1	25,930	1 to 25,930
Hawkins County	5	56,196	1 to 11,239
Haywood County	3	19,656	1 to 6,552
Henderson County	3	26,425	1 to 8,808
Henry County	11	31,511	1 to 2,865
Hickman County	6	23,793	1 to 3,966
Houston County	1	7,988	1 to 7,988
Humphreys County	2	18,212	1 to 9,106
Jackson County	0	11,072	0 to 11,072
Jefferson County	17	48,394	1 to 2,847
Johnson County	3	18,116	1 to 6,039
Knox County	428	404,972	1 to 946
Lake County	1	7,583	1 to 7,583
Lauderdale County	3	26,795	1 to 8,932
Lawrence County	7	41,101	1 to 5,872
Lewis County	3	11,435	1 to 3,812
Lincoln County	5	32,392	1 to 6,478
Loudon County	13	43,387	1 to 3,337
McMinn County	15	51,327	1 to 3,422
McNairy County	9	25,285	1 to 2,809
Macon County	1	21,549	1 to 21,549
Madison County	65	94,916	1 to 1,460
Marion County	4	27,757	1 to 6,939
Marshall County	2	28,372	1 to 14,186
Maury County	18	76,292	1 to 4,238
Meigs County	1	11,657	1 to 11,657
Monroe County	2	43,185	1 to 21,593
Montgomery County	55	147,202	1 to 2,676
Moore County	0	6,024	0 to 6,024
Morgan County	3	20,157	1 to 6,719
Obion County	6	32,213	1 to 5,369
Overton County	0	20,523	0 to 20,523
Perry County	2	7,574	1 to 3,787
Pickett County	0	4,821	0 to 4,821
Polk County	1	15,944	1 to 15,944
Putnam County	22	66,580	1 to 3,026
Rhea County	5	29,918	1 to 5,984
Roane County	10	52,889	1 to 5,289
Robertson County	14	60,379	1 to 4,313
Rutherford County	109	218,292	1 to 2,003
Scott County	3	21,868	1 to 7,289
Sequatchie County	2	12,691	1 to 6,346
Sevier County	23	79,282	1 to 3,447
Shelby County	641	909,035	1 to 1,418
Smith County	1	18,647	1 to 18,647

COUNTY	Number of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers	2005 Population Estimate	Ratio of CMSW and LCSW Social Workers to Population
Stewart County	1	12,969	1 to 12,969
Sullivan County	48	152,716	1 to 3,182
Sumner County	40	145,009	1 to 3,625
Tipton County	15	55,998	1 to 3,733
Trousdale County	1	7,677	1 to 7,677
Unicoi County	3	17,572	1 to 5,857
Union County	1	19,076	1 to 19,076
Van Buren County	0	5,470	0 to 5,470
Warren County	3	39,753	1 to 13,251
Washington County	97	112,507	1 to 1,160
Wayne County	3	16,909	1 to 5,636
Weakley County	8	33,732	1 to 4,217
White County	3	24,253	1 to 8,084
Williamson County	138	153,595	1 to 1,113
Wilson County	24	100,508	1 to 4,188
TOTAL STATEWIDE	2,997	5,962,959	1 to 1,990

Tennessee Social Work Employment Data

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) does not track the social work profession as a total group, nor does it verify if persons have social work degrees. The Department does include in its *Community and Social Services Occupations* grouping data the following categories: *Child, Family and School Social Workers; Medical and Public Health Social Workers; and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers*. In addition this occupational grouping includes the following category: *Miscellaneous Counselors, Social, & Religious Workers*.

The TDLWD obtains this data through confidential employer completed surveys. The employers are selected through a stratified random sample based on types of industry and size of employment. The projection data is researched based and compiled by utilization of the US Department of Labor models that have been refined to reflect the State of Tennessee. The TDLWD publishes this data and distributes to various organizations across the state including the Department of Education, Work Force Investment Boards, and Tennessee Career Centers.

Below is a summary of estimated current employment and projected employment.

Occupational Title	2004 Estimated Employment	2014 Projected Employment	Total 2004-2014 Employment Change	Annual Avg. Openings Due to Growth	Annual Avg. Openings Due to Replacement	Total Annual Avg. Openings	Growth Description & Annual Avg. Percent Change
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	5,640	6,800	1,150	115	95	210	Growing 1.9%
Medical and Public Health Social Workers	2,030	2,410	380	40	35	75	Growing 1.7%
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers	2,660	3,550	890	90	45	135	Growing 2.9%
Total With Social Work Position Title	10,330	12,760	2420	245	175	420	Growing
Counselors, Social, and Religious Workers, All Other	4,770	5,700	930	95	90	180	Growing 1.8%

National Trends in the Social Work Labor Force

Workforce

The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that employment of social workers is expected to increase faster than the average (18 to 26 percent) for all occupations through 2014. The need is even greater for social workers in the area of aging. The National Association of Social Workers Center for Workforce Studies estimates that nine percent or 30,000 licensed social workers specialize in gerontology. By 2010, as more Baby Boomers reach the age of 65, the National Institute on Aging projects that 60,000 to 70,000 social workers will be needed.

Compensation

Social work salaries are among the lowest for professionals in general and for those with Master's level educations in particular. A survey conducted by the John A. Hartford Foundation Inc. found that between 1992 and 1999 the annual rate of wage growth for degreed social workers was 0.8 percent. According to the National Association of Social Workers, Center for Workforce Studies, 60 percent of full-time social workers earn between \$35,000 and \$59,999 per year with 25% earning between \$40,000 and \$49,999 per year. Social workers who earn lower salaries are more likely to work in challenging agency environments and to serve more vulnerable clients. They are also more likely to leave the profession.

Educational Debt

According to one study of the Council on Social Work Education, 68 percent of individuals surveyed who held a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) graduated with an average debt of \$26,777. Additionally, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group states that 37 percent of public four-year graduates have too much debt to manage as a starting social worker. While social workers may be in positions that are personally fulfilling, due to their high loan debt and low income, many struggle financially.

Social Work Safety

Social work is unquestionably a dangerous profession for many. According to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, 70 percent of case workers report that frontline staff in their agency had been victims of violence or had received threats of violence. Social workers are considerably safer when measures such as global positioning systems, self-defense training, and conflict prevention are implemented.

(Source: <http://www.socialworkreinvestment.org>)

The Need for Social Workers

Social workers serve a broad spectrum of vulnerable populations, including children and youth, the poor, elderly, veterans, and persons with physical and mental illnesses. The following information provides important details on factors impacting the need for social workers in Tennessee.

Poverty Rate

The poverty rate in Tennessee is 15%, which is well above the National poverty rate of 12.6%. Tennessee ranks as the 10th poorest state in the nation. (Source: 2003-2005 Moving Average, <http://www.nemw.org/poverty.htm>)

Median Income

The median annual income for Tennesseans is \$38,874, which is well below the national median income of \$42,242. Tennessee has the 43rd lowest median income in the nation. (Source: US Census, 2004 estimates)

Veterans

Currently, there are approximately 537,000 veterans living in Tennessee, which makes Tennessee the state with the 17th highest number of veterans. (Source: Department of Veterans Affairs, 2004 estimated projection)

Elderly (Persons over Age 65)

Tennessee ranks 29th in the nation with 12.5% of the population aged 65 and over. This is slightly above the national average of 12.4%.

Youth (Persons under Age 18)

Tennessee ranks 40th in the nation with 24.6% of the population under age 18. This is below the national average of 25.7%.

The above state information is complimented with national data that further illustrates the need for social workers.

Aging/Gerontology

According to a study by the University of Michigan, approximately one in seven adults over the age of 70 have some form of dementia and 9.7 percent (or 2.4 million Americans) of those found with dementia, were also found to have Alzheimer's disease. Social workers in gerontology settings work with older adults, including those with dementia to support their physiological, psychological and social needs through mental health therapy, caregiver and family counseling, health education, program coordination, and case management. These professionals also assist the hundreds of thousands of older persons who are abused, neglected, frail and vulnerable. Between 2000 and 2004 there was a 19.7 percent increase in the total number of reports of elder and vulnerable adult abuse and neglect.

Child Welfare

The Children's Defense Fund states that every 35 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected. The U.S. Administration for Children and Families states that 513,000 children were in the U.S. foster care system in 2005. Most children in foster care are placed due to parental abuse or neglect. Research shows that professional social workers in child welfare agencies are more likely to find permanent homes for children who were in foster care for two or more years. Unfortunately, fewer than 40 percent of child welfare workers are professional social workers.

Mental Health

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimates that 26.2 percent of Americans aged 18 and older (one in four adults) experiences a diagnosable mental disorder. Additionally, one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health disorder. At least one in ten, or about six million young people, have a serious emotional disturbance. Social workers provide the majority of mental health counseling services in the United States, and are often the only providers in rural areas.

Military/Veterans Affairs

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that there are 23,977,000 veterans in the United States. Approximately 1.1 million active duty soldiers have been deployed to Iraq since 2001. Over 100,000 women have served in the Iraq War, compared with 7,000 in the Vietnam War. A once declining veteran population is now surging and is in dire need of mental health treatment to address issues such as post traumatic stress disorder, depression, drug and alcohol addiction, and suicide. Veterans make up 25 percent of homeless people in the United States, even though they comprise only 11 percent of the general population. Social workers working with veterans and their families provide case management, crisis intervention, mental health interventions, housing and financial counseling, high risk screening, and advocacy among other services. The VA employs over 5,000 professional social workers and is the single largest employer of social workers in the country. VA social workers also coordinate the Community Residential Care Program, the oldest and most cost-effective of VA's extended care programs.

Health

According to the American Cancer Society, there were 1,399,790 new cases of cancer and 564,830 cancer deaths in 2006 alone. The incidence of cancer will increase dramatically as the population grows older. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that at the end of 2003 there were 1,039,000 to 1,285,000 people living with HIV or AIDS in the United States. In 2005, 1.2 million people received care from one of the nation's hospice providers. Health care and medical social workers practice in all of these areas and provide outreach for prevention, help individuals and their families adapt to their circumstances, provide grief counseling and act as a liaison between individuals and their medical team, helping patients make informed decisions about their care.

Education

The National Center for Education Statistics states that in 2005 the national dropout rate for high school students totaled 9.4 percent. White students dropped out at a rate of 6 percent. African American students dropped out at a rate of 10.4 percent. Hispanic students dropped out at a rate of 22.4 percent. Some vulnerable communities have dropout rates of 50 percent or higher. Social workers in school settings help these students through early identification, prevention, intervention, counseling and support.

Criminal Justice

According to the United States Department of Justice, every year more than 650,000 ex-offenders are released from federal and state prisons. Social workers employed in the corrections system address disproportionate minority incarceration rates, provide treatment for mental health problems and drug and alcohol addiction, and work within as well as outside of the prison to reduce recidivism and increase positive community reentry.

(Source: <http://www.socialworkreinvestment.org>)

Resource Listing

Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)

<http://www.aswb.org/>

American Career Network

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

<http://www.cswe.org/CSWE/>

National Association of Social Workers

<http://www.socialworkers.org>

- For additional workforce information, please visit the NASW Center for Workforce Studies at workforce.socialworkers.org
- <http://www.helpstartshere.org/>
- National Association of Social Workers – Tennessee Chapter
<http://www.naswtn.com/>

Social Work Reinvestment Initiative

<http://www.socialworkreinvestment.org>

Tennessee Department of Health, Board of Social Worker Certification and Licensure

<http://health.state.tn.us/Boards/SW/index.htm>

Tennessee Department of Labor and Work Force Development

<http://thesource.tnui.net/timeout.asp>

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities

<http://state.tn.us/mental/>

US Census Bureau

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47000.html>

US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforcereports/profiles>

US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/>

- *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition*, Social Workers
<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos060.htm>