The following information is directly cited from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09n Edition, social Workers, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos060.htm> (visited August 26th, 2010).

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people's lives. Social workers assist people by helping them cope with and solve issues in their everyday lives, such as family and personal problems and dealing with relationships. Some social workers help clients who face a disability, life-threatening disease, social problem, such as inadequate housing, unemployment, or substance abuse. Social workers also assist families that have serious domestic conflicts, sometimes involving child or spousal abuse. Additionally, they may conduct research, advocate for improved services, or become involved in planning or policy development. Many social workers specialize in serving a particular population or working in a specific setting. In all settings, these workers may also be called licensed clinical social workers, if they hold the appropriate State mandated license.

Social workers held about 642,000 jobs, in 2008. About 54 percent jobs were in healthcare and social assistance industries, and 31 percent were employed by government agencies. Although most social workers are employed in cities or suburbs, some work in rural areas. Employment by type of social worker, in 2008, follows:

Median annual wages of child, family, and school social workers were $39,530 in May 2008; medical and public health social workers earnings were  $46,650 in May 2008, and mental health and substance abuse social workers earnings were  $37,210 in May 2008.

Median annual wages of social workers, all other were $46,220 in May 2008. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of social workers, all other, in May 2006 were: local government ($46,330), State government ($45,070), and individual and family services ($35,150).

Job prospects are expected to be favorable. Many job openings will stem from growth and the need to replace social workers who leave the occupation. However, competition for social worker jobs is expected in cities where training programs for social workers are prevalent. Opportunities should be good in rural areas, which often find it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff. By specialty, job prospects may be best for those social workers with a background in gerontology and substance abuse treatment.

Employment of social workers is expected to increase by 16 percent during the 2008–18 decade, which is faster than the average for all occupations. The growing elderly population and the aging baby boom generation will create greater demand for health and social services, resulting in rapid job growth among gerontological social workers. Employment of social workers in private social service agencies also will increase.

Social work is a challenging and fulfilling profession that attracts persons who have the spark of idealism, the desire to take action and make a difference in the world, a belief in social justice and a natural love of working with people. Social workers work directly with people in need, but many hours also may be spent with attorneys, judges, physicians, psychologists, teachers, clergy, police, correctional officials and group home directors, as well as fellow social workers. Frustrations that occur in social work positions are balanced by the many satisfactions.

For more information, visit <http://www.mswguide.org/careers/>