



get on the behavioral health path

Is this the job for me?

Take this quick quiz to find out if human services worker is a good direction for you:

- 1 **Would you like to use your past experiences to help others?**
 YES NO
- 2 **Would you describe yourself as patient, understanding and caring?**
 YES NO
- 3 **Are you a good listener?**
 YES NO
- 4 **Are you able to deal with conflict?**
 YES NO
- 5 **Are you a problem solver?**
 YES NO
- 6 **Do you like to plan programs or events?**
 YES NO
- 7 **Want to get into a career in two to four years?**
 YES NO

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you may be on the right track!

What's it all about?

"Human service worker" is a generic term for people who work with individuals, families and entire communities to meet physical, mental and emotional needs, and help people function as effectively as possible. In other words, human services workers help people in need get back on track.

Depending on your level of education, you can hold a diverse range of jobs, including case worker, family support worker, life skills instructor, probation officer, group home worker, drug abuse counselor, youth worker, mental health aide, community outreach worker, residential manager or care coordinator.

Human services workers are employed in a wide range of settings, such as group homes and halfway houses, correctional centers, schools, social service agencies, community assistance programs, nonprofit agencies, mental health and development disability centers, elder, family, child and youth service agencies, and programs dealing with drug abuse, alcoholism, family violence and aging.

What do human services workers do?

The responsibilities of a human services worker vary greatly depending on where they work. Here are a few basic responsibilities performed by human services workers:

- Interview clients and family members to assess their needs.
- Help clients fill out forms, such as tax or rent forms.
- Monitor and maintain case records on clients.
- Review progress with supervisors or medical support personnel.
- Deliver meals or provide transportation.
- Provide job training.
- Advise clients on a variety of topics, such as food stamps, budgeting, housing, communication and conflict resolution.
- Provide information and referrals to community services.
- Assist clients with locating housing, child care and other services.
- Provide emotional support and counseling.
- Work closely with social workers, psychologists and providers of medical care.
- Organize or lead support groups or discussion groups.

How much money can I make?

Wages vary based on the particular job, setting and level of education. To give you an idea of what you can earn, entry-level social and human services assistants in Alaska earn an average hourly wage of \$14.88, and have an average annual salary of \$30,950.

How do I become a human services worker? How long does it take?

The wide range of jobs that fall under the title “human services worker” mean there is a wide range of training options and education requirements. In general, to become a human services worker, you must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED.
- Complete a two-year associate’s degree (to be a paraprofessional) or a four-year bachelor’s degree (to be a professional).

You may also continue your education and advance your career by pursuing a graduate degree.

Learn more about educational programs in Alaska that can prepare you for a job in human services by reviewing the “training providers” section later in this publication.

Attention high school students!

If you think you might want to become a human services worker, the time to start planning is now. In general, you should take four years of English, three years of math, three years of social studies, two years of science and possibly two years of a second language. You should also consider taking college preparatory or advanced placement (AP) courses. Other recommended classes and electives include:

- Computer applications
- Ethnic and gender studies
- Keyboarding
- Legal system
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Advanced English composition
- Advanced U.S. history
- Political science
- Economics

You should also discuss your plans with a teacher, counselor or parent, and check to see what work-based learning opportunities, such as field trips, job shadowing and internships, are available in your community.

Are there jobs available?

In Alaska, there are currently many job opportunities for human services workers. For example, there are approximately 48 openings a year for social and human service assistants, which is just one of many human services jobs available, and this occupation is expected to continue to grow quickly (34.6 percent growth compared to 14.8 percent for all occupations). When you look at all the jobs categorized under “human services worker,” the number of opportunities is even higher!

Where are the jobs?

Human service workers are found in diverse settings such as group homes, correctional facilities, community mental health centers, social services agencies, and job training programs. In rural Alaska, employment opportunities include regional health corporations and federal, state and local governmental agencies.

What else is on this pathway?

Want to learn about other possible opportunities in the behavioral health career pathway? Be sure to read about case managers/care coordinators and social workers – other behavioral health “hot jobs” in Alaska!

