Social Workers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia
1. Working as a Social Worker (NOC 4152)

Job Description

Social workers help individuals, families and communities with the resources and support they need to address personal and social issues.

As a Social Worker you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Interview clients individually, in families, or in groups, to assess their situation and determine the types of services needed
- Provide counseling and therapy to assist clients in developing skills to deal with and resolve their social and personal challenges
- Plan programs to assist clients including referral to agencies that provide financial assistance, legal aid, housing, medical treatment and other services
- Meet with clients to track progress
- Provide referrals to other supportive social services
- You may specialize in fields of practice such as child welfare, family services, corrections, gerontology or addictions.

Industry Overview

Social work is changing and new job opportunities continue to emerge. Most job openings, however, will come from the need to replace retiring workers.

The aging population will create work in gerontology, including jobs with the many assisted living complexes catering to seniors. Also, with hospitals emphasizing an early discharge of patients, there will be a need for in-house social workers to coordinate plans for individual patients by making sure that necessary medical services and social supports are in place.

Generally, there is a growing demand for social workers with clinical specialities.

Part-time work and self-employment has been unusual in this occupation, but a rise in corporate employee assistance programs and training seminars are creating these types of positions.


Job Outlook in BC

Forecasted average employment growth rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018 - 2023</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023 - 2028</td>
<td>+1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

Job openings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Job Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>+210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>+290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2028</td>
<td>+300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 year expected job openings: 2,830

Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook
Composition of job openings

Replacement of retiring workers: 64.2%

1,810 openings

New Jobs due to economic growth: 35.8%

1,010 openings

Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

Chart from WorkBC

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2018-2028

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Employment in 2018</th>
<th>Average Annual Employment Growth</th>
<th>Expected Number of Job Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Mainland / Southwest</td>
<td>3,860</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson-Okanagan</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cariboo</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast &amp; Nechako</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can learn more about working as a Social Worker in BC from:

- **WorkBC, Career Profiles**
  https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4152

- **Career Cruising**
  http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/ [profile for Social Worker]

  Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page
**Types of Employers**

The majority of social workers work in the health and social services industry or in public administration (government), including:

- Hospitals
- Mental health clinics
- Community health clinics
- Social Service agencies
- Schools
- Correctional facilities
- Employee Assistant programs
- Aboriginal Band Councils

You may also be self-employed, offering counselling, consultative and other services directly to the public or to workplaces, or contracting your services to organizations.

**Salary**

The median annual salary of social workers in BC is $62,568. Some senior-level workers earn $94,000 or more a year. In general, social workers with a master’s degree earn the higher-range salaries. Earnings for social workers in private practice depend on a number of factors including number of clients, clients’ ability to pay, and availability of government funding.

Full-time social workers usually receive benefits, such as paid sick days and vacation time, and dental coverage. Those in private practice must provide their own benefits.

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising
In BC regions you can expect to make:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/Area</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Columbia</strong></td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cariboo Region</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay Region</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast Region</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson-Okanagan Region</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island and Coast Region</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>42.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Working Hours**

Most social workers have a standard 40 hour work week but you may be required to work some evenings and weekends to meet with clients or attend public meetings affecting the community. As well, emergencies may also occur outside of regular office hours and sometimes demand immediate action.
2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills

- respect for diversity
- emotional maturity
- interest in helping others
- good with people
- problem-solving skills and decision making
- strong written and oral communication skills

Education and Experience

A university degree in social work is mandatory in to work in this profession in British Columbia. Increasingly, a master's degree is required for many social work positions. Additional training may be required to work in specialized areas of social work. Qualified applicants with degrees from related fields such as Youth and Child Care may also be considered for employment in this area but will not have the ‘Social Worker’ designation.

There are eight schools of social work in British Columbia. There are also distance education programs available. A complete listing of accredited Schools of Social Work in Canada can be found on the website of The Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work.

- Canadian Association For Social Work Education
  http://caswe-acfts.ca/members/institutional/

Sources: WorkBC & BC Association of Social Workers https://www.bcasw.org
Qualifications

This occupation is regulated in British Columbia

It is mandatory to be registered with the British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW) in order to work in as a Social Worker in British Columbia, unless you are employed by one the exempt employers listed in the Social Workers Regulation (see below).

More information:
- Applicants - The British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)  
  http://www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca/application-information/
- Exempt employers – Social Workers Regulation  

All applicants to the College are required to successfully complete a licensure exam to become registered.
- British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)  
  http://www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca/application-information/welcome-to-the-examination-information-page/
- Association of Social Work Boards Examination  

Internationally Trained Social Workers

Graduates of social work programs outside of Canada must determine if your credentials will be recognized in British Columbia.

For more details see:
- Applicants with Degrees from Outside of Canada or the US  
  http://bccsw.pubweb.dc.thentia.com/?page_id=501
- Applicants with Degrees from the USA  
  http://bccsw.pubweb.dc.thentia.com/?page_id=492
3. Finding Jobs

You’ll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations’ publications.

**Local Newspapers**

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun & The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

**Job White Pages**

- Available in print at the Central Library or online at [http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/jobfreewaycom](http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/jobfreewaycom)

**NOTE:** You can only access this database from the Central Library or VPL branch libraries. Access is NOT available from home or outside the Library.

**Online Job Postings**

- **BC Government Job Postings**
  [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr)
  Employment opportunities within the British Columbia public services

- **CharityVillage.com**
  [https://charityvillage.com/app/job-listings](https://charityvillage.com/app/job-listings)
  Job postings within the Canadian non-profit sector

- **Indeed.com**
  [http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search](http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search)
  Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards
### BC’s Provincial Health Authorities

BC’s health authorities provide community programs in all BC regions (acute care hospitals, mental health, public health, addictions, and home and community care services)

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**
  [https://careers.vch.ca/](https://careers.vch.ca/)

- **Fraser Health Authority**

- **Interior Health Authority**
  [https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers/Pages/default.aspx)

- **Northern Health Authority**
  [https://careers.northernhealth.ca/](https://careers.northernhealth.ca/)

- **Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)**
  [http://www.phsa.ca/careers](http://www.phsa.ca/careers)

- **Island Health Authority**
  [https://www.islandhealth.ca/careers](https://www.islandhealth.ca/careers)

- **Providence Health Care**
  [http://www.providencehealthcare.org/careers](http://www.providencehealthcare.org/careers)

  Providence Health Care is a health care community operating four hospitals in the Metro Vancouver region

### Professional Associations’ Career Resources

- **BC Association of Social Workers**

- **Canadian Association of Social Workers**
**Identifying the Right Position**

When you browse job advertisements, you’ll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For social workers, look for these related job titles (from NOC and the Board of Registration for Social Workers in BC):

- Registered Social Worker
- Addiction Social Worker
- Case Management Consultant – Social Work
- Case Work Consultant – Social Work
- Caseworker – Social Work
- Child Welfare Social Worker
- Clinical Social Worker
- Family Social Worker
- Mental Health Worker/Counselor
- Geriatric Social Worker
- School Social Worker
- Social Casework Consultant
Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of employers who work in the social work sector in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they’re hiring.

- **BC211**
  Directory of social service providers in the Lower Mainland
  Available Online at [http://redbookonline.bc211.ca/](http://redbookonline.bc211.ca/)

- **Community Services Directories**
  A selection of directories of community services and community resources for regions across British Columbia and Canada
  Available at the Central Library

- **Reference Canada**
  Click on “Start Search” beside Canadian Businesses, then select the “Advanced Search” button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter “social worker” and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.
  Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

**NOTE:** You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).
4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume (curriculum vitae) and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/ to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following pathfinders which are available in print at the Central Library or online at http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**
  Go to http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca
  [Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
  Go to http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca
  [Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]

- **Networking for Employment**
  Go to http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca
  [Search Networking for Employment]

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
  Go to http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca
  [Search Learn More About Working in BC and Canada]
5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations
Associations for social workers in BC and Canada provide assistance to individuals. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW)**
  https://www.bcasw.org/
- **Canadian Association of Social Workers**
  https://www.casw-acts.ca/en
- **British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)**
  http://www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca/
  The regulatory body for the practice of social work in British Columbia
- **Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE)**
  https://caswe-acfts.ca/home/
  A national association of university faculties, schools and departments offering professional education in social work

Industry Journals
Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library:

- **Perspectives / British Columbia Association of Social Workers**
  Available at VPL Central, 361.9711S67
  http://www.bcasw.org/resources-publications/perspectives-magazine/

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/.