Social Work
Where You Can Make a Difference

Introduction & Overview
INTRODUCTION -- WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK?

Preamble to the
Code of Ethics of the
National Association of Social Workers

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s focus on individual wellbeing in a social context and the wellbeing of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals’ needs and social problems.

The field of social work addresses human problems with a focus on improving people’s lives and improving society as a whole. In order to accomplish those tasks, social workers employ a wide variety of skills including working directly with individuals and families as well as within the communities in which they reside. In addition, social workers advocate for their clients and for policies and practices that serve the clients.

Social workers are a diverse group of skilled professionals who act as advocates in navigating social systems as they link them to essential resources within their communities. They educate clients and teach them new skills and they counsel those who need support and assistance. At all times, social workers have a duty to protect their clients and to consider what is in the client’s best interest. To work effectively, social workers must establish and maintain good working relationships with such partners in the field as lawyers, judges, mental health and health professionals, educators and other community service providers.

The National Association for Social Work’s (NASW) Code of Ethics says that the mission quoted above is rooted in a set of core values which have been embraced by
the profession throughout its history. These core values are the foundation of social worker. They include the following:

- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence

Social workers are sensitive to cultural or ethnic diversity and employ empathy and respect in working with vulnerable individuals who need assistance due such challenges as poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, family violence, unemployment, discrimination or other forms of social injustice. To do this, social workers employ direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation.

Most bachelor’s level social workers are prepared for generalist social work practice meaning they work with client systems at all levels in a variety of practice settings. Master’s level social workers typically choose a concentration in either direct service/clinical social work or administration (includes research, planning or policy development).

Specialties within social work include child, family and school social workers who provide assistance to children and families in schools or community settings.

Medical and health social workers assess and treat individuals with mental illnesses, substance abuse or other health-related problems in hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers, treatment facilities and other community settings. These social workers may be referred to as clinicians. Their work is similar to yet different from that of psychologists and psychiatrists who address their clients' problems from a

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Job Benefits: Typically health, sick leave, paid vacation, and employee assistance are provided. Many employers in child welfare provide short-term disability and retirement benefits as well.

Work Environment: Generally work occurs in an office or residential facility, in clients’ homes, schools, mental health facilities, or courts. Travel required for most positions. Some evening and weekend work required to meet with clients attend community meetings and handle emergencies or to address crises.

SOURCES
medical perspective. Licensed clinical social workers have special training in mental illness, although the scope of their practice is focused less on medical aspects than on problem-solving and promoting positive social functioning.

Another general type of social work involves planning and policymaking. These social workers often work in program design and administration or conduct research and policy advocacy to support agencies that provide social work services.

To be effective, social workers must be emotionally mature, objective and sensitive to people and their problems. They must have a deep understanding of human development and behavior including a strong belief in the capacity for change. Effective social workers seek to enhance the ability of people to address their own needs as well as promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to support clients' building strengths.

THE JOB OUTLOOK FOR SOCIAL WORK

Unfortunately, families and individuals continue to struggle in our complex society. Data indicates that the need for social workers also continues to rise. The U.S. Census of 2010 counted 46.2 million Americans living below the official poverty line. The U.S. Department of Education reported the number of homeless students in the country crested at 1 million during the 2010-2011 school year. And, the nonprofit organization Childhelp estimated that there are 3.3 million reports of child abuse annually in the U.S.

While this information is unfortunate for our society, it emphasizes the importance of social work, particularly in the area of child and family services. According to the Bureau of Labor, employment of social workers is expected to increase by 25% from 2010 to 2020 which is better than average for all occupations. The growth in child, family and school social workers will increase by 20 percent over the same period. The job outlook is also influenced by the fact that 30% of social workers are 55 or older as compared to 13.9% across all occupations which means that as they retire, their positions will have to be filled.

While the concentration of social work clients may be in cities or larger communities, the demand for services is strong in rural areas where it may be difficult to find qualified staff. It is anticipated that jobs with private agencies will continue to increase. Many agencies have positions titled “family support workers” who support social workers providing child protection and child welfare services. These positions require a high school diploma or equivalency and are often pathways to social work degrees for individuals who wish to pursue a degree while working in the field.

Family support workers work directly with families to assist them in accomplishing goals or they supervise visits and document their observations. The work is flexible and often occurs in the evening or on weekends when parents are available. That flexibility provides opportunity for family support workers to pursue degrees while maintaining employment.
WHAT IS CHILD WELFARE

The term “child welfare” is not a simple one to define. Parents have a constitutionally protected right to determine the best way to raise their children, yet children have a right to be nurtured within their own family. Intervening for the purpose of assuring that children are safe and are developing appropriately requires court intervention which means that the process is taken very seriously. Child welfare social workers are the eyes and ears of the courts and as such, they assess safety and risk and inform the court of their findings. Only a judge has the right to make a final determination as to what the best interests of children are. Social workers are charged with helping the family change, with monitoring progress and reporting to the court. They essentially help and support improvements to the social and psychological functioning of children and families and to maximize the well-being and educational accomplishment of children.

Foster care is recognized as a temporary service. Children are only removed and placed out of home if reasonable efforts to keep them safe at home are unsuccessful. From the first day in foster care, efforts begin to return the children home or to help them find another permanent family. Acknowledging the trauma of removal, social workers try to prevent placement in foster care by providing early intervention services such as family preservation which allows families to change and to work together to maintain the children in the home.

Parents, children and society are best served when families are provided immediate, affordable, high quality, and competent services to maintain the child safely within the family if possible, and if not, services necessary to achieve timely reintegration. When reintegration is not possible, children have a right to permanency in a timely fashion so that well-being as well as safety is assured. As issues of poverty, substance abuse and mental illness complicate the provision of child welfare services, specialized training, skills and expertise in child and family systems is required to assure that reasonable efforts are made to protect the integrity as well as the safety of children and parents alike. Laws and policies require consideration of child and family needs at removal as well as the potential harm that may result from multiple placements or long-term disruption of families through out of home placement.

The core values of child welfare emphasize protection from harm, but experience has shown that the trauma of removing a child from the home or from multiple placements can cause harm, so the core values also call for preservation of families where at all possible. Another core value is respect for families and respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Social workers in child welfare believe in crafting services to emphasize each client’s strengths and to allow each client to determine the best course for him or herself. Other core values include competency, diligence, honesty, and confidentiality.

In Kansas, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) provides child protective services by investigating reports of abuse and neglect and protecting children when allegations are verified. Family preservation and foster care services are provided by private contractors.
ABOUT CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN KANSAS


The primary charge in children and family services is to take carefully considered action to protect children. Professionals who interact with children on a daily basis – teachers, doctors, child care providers – are required to report apparent maltreatment. When these or other community members become concerned about a child’s welfare, they report their concerns to either law enforcement or the Department for Children and Families (DCF). When children are not in imminent jeopardy, family preservation services are available to help families deal with problems that might evolve into dangerous situations.

Only when a child is in imminent danger and cannot otherwise be protected will DCF request that law enforcement consider protective custody or ask a county or district attorney to consider involving the court. In 2012, DCF received 32,377 reports expressing concern. 17,379 cases were referred for investigation. In 2010, 1,552 children were victims of abuse or neglect, or 2.2 per 1000 children. In 2010, 5,979 children in Kansas lived apart from their families. Because children fare better when they remain safely with their family, DCF offers a variety of prevention programs to support and maintain families without involving courts.

Child Protective Services
When a report of abuse or neglect is made to DCF, an Initial Assessment is completed to determine if DCF should become involved. If the report meets the criteria for DCF involvement, it is investigated by a social worker or special investigator. Law enforcement may also investigate if a social worker is not available or a joint investigation is warranted. If it is determined that a child's safety is at risk, then a recommendation is made by DCF or law enforcement to the court regarding the necessary action that should be taken. The court is ultimately responsible for the decision to remove a child from the home. This may require placing the child in foster care or with a relative. When making a recommendation to remove a child, DCF must weigh the emotional harm of being removed from the home, with the likelihood of harm if the child remains in the home. Child Protective Services (CPS) may also be provided in non-abuse or neglect situations, where children are without proper parental care and control, are truant, or in the case of runaways.

Family Preservation
Family Preservation consisting of intensive in-home services are provided through a contract with private contractors. Supports and services are offered to pregnant women abusing substances as well as to their families. Services to families are focused on the entire family to address issues which the family identifies together with the Provider.

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FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT KANSAS SOCIAL SERVICE ASSISTANTS (FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS)

Avg Annual Salary 2011                                      $27,330
Degree Requirements                                         HS or GED
**Foster Care**
Foster care services are also provided by private contractors. They are provided to children and families when the court has found the child to be in need of care and the parents are not able to meet the safety and care needs of the child. Most children who require foster care have been abused or neglected and have significant developmental, physical, and emotional needs, which require an array of services. In addition, some children may be placed in foster care for reasons such as out-of-control behavior, truancy, overwhelmed parents, and running away from home. Placements range from relatives to inpatient psychiatric care. Family foster homes are the most frequently used placement resources, but some children require more structured settings, such as group home or a residential center.

Children enter the foster care system through a petition usually filed by a county or district attorney representing the state. The court determines whether the child must be removed or whether additional efforts should be made to improve the child’s care at home. To remove a child, courts must make specific findings that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent separation of child from parent and that it is contrary to the child’s welfare to remain in the home, although a child can be removed when an emergency exists. This legal requirement is intended to highlight the significant emotional difficulty of removing a child from a parent’s care. Parents who are unable to afford an attorney are entitled to appointed counsel. The child’s best interests are represented by an attorney serving as a guardian ad litem. When children are placed out of home, 25% are placed with relatives, 59% are placed in a KDHE-licensed family foster home, 8% are in group homes, 5% are in pre-adoptive homes, and 3% live independently.

**Adoption**
Nearly one-third of the youth in foster care will not return home or be placed with relatives. To achieve a permanent living arrangement, these children are matched with adoptive families who become their legal parents. Social workers in this area work with the potential families as well as birth and foster families to prepare children for their “forever homes.”

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Visit the Kansas Workforce Initiative’s website at [www.kwi.ku.edu](http://www.kwi.ku.edu) for a look at the jobs currently available with the private providers in Kansas. Child protection job listings are found at the Kansas Department for Children and Families’ website at [http://www.dcf.ks.gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/Pages/default.aspx).
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<td>It’s only abuse if there is physical violence.</td>
<td>Physical abuse is only one form of abuse. Children can also be harmed by emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. In 2011, there were 3.4 million reports of child maltreatment in the U.S. Of the over 680,000 children were found to be victims of child maltreatment. 78.5% suffered neglect. 17.6% suffered physical abuse, and 9.1% sexual abuse. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Mostly children are harmed by strangers.</td>
<td>In 78.3% of the cases, the abusers were parents, relatives or non-relatives living in the home. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Abused children always grow up to be abusers.</td>
<td>Abused children may repeat the cycle if intervention is not timely and successful, but many adult survivors of child abuse have strong motivation to protect their children and become excellent parents. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>There aren’t that many kids in foster care anymore.</td>
<td>There are approximately 400,000 children in out-of-home care in the U.S. on any given day. In 2011, 650,000 children spent some time in care. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>The average length of stay in foster care is 10 years.</td>
<td>The average length of stay has been declining and is now approximately two years due to federal laws that address the harm done to children from lengthy stays in the foster care system and to greater attention placed upon making permanency decisions so children can grow up in a stable home. 10% of children in foster care have been in placement for five or more years. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Kids in foster care are mostly babies and young kids.</td>
<td>The average of a child in out-of-home placement is nine years. The median age is 13.5. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Once children heal from the injuries that occurred when they were placed out of home, they can return.</td>
<td>Nearly half of all children in foster care have chronic medical problems. Half under five years in foster care have development delays. Up to 80% face serious emotional problems due to the trauma they have faced. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Children who age out of the foster care system do well on their own.</td>
<td>In 2011, 11% of the children exiting foster care (over 26,000) were found to be more likely to face homelessness, poor health, or unemployment. (Children’s Rights)</td>
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<td>Child abuse doesn’t happen in good families and wealthy households.</td>
<td>Child abuse can happen in any household, regardless of ethnic background, culture, religion, or economic status. (UNICEF)</td>
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<td>Kids in foster care have equal opportunities in school. They could compete if they’d just work harder.</td>
<td>Studies show that only 50% of the youth in foster care graduate from high school. Their records are often incomplete and they are one grade level behind. Of those who do graduate from high school, only 3% go on to finish college. (NBC News Education Nation)</td>
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<td>Sometimes children have difficult behaviors that drive adults to abuse them. Sometimes adults can be bullied by kids.</td>
<td>A child is never responsible for the abuse he or she suffers. Adults are responsible for getting help to parent difficult children and the responsibility for abuse rests solely on the offender. It is never a child’s fault if he or she is abused. (American Humane)</td>
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<td>Boys and girls are equally likely to suffer maltreatment.</td>
<td>In 2005, 47.3 percent of child victims were male and 50.7 percent were females. Victimization rates were highest among children birth to 3 years at a rate of 16.5 per 1,000 children. (American Humane)</td>
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<td>Substance abuse by adults is something they have to handle and it does affect their children.</td>
<td>In a 2005 report, substance abuse was found to be a factor in 70 percent of all reported cases of child maltreatment. Maltreated children of substance abusing parents were more likely to have poorer physical, intellectual, social and emotional outcomes and were at greater risk of developing substance abuse problems themselves. (American Humane)</td>
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<td>When kids go into foster care, they do not get to see their parents again.</td>
<td>If it is safe a child will get to visit his or her parents. Visits may be supervised to make sure that the kids are safe. As time goes on, a child may get to visit for longer periods of time with his or her parents, and may get to go back home for good. (Kids Matter, Inc.)</td>
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<td>When placed in foster care, brothers and sisters should be separated to prevent sibling rivalry.</td>
<td>Sibling rivalry is a fact of life in all families and in fact, it has been shown that separation increases the trauma of removal and denies children the opportunity to work out their differences in a safe and supportive environment. (NRCFCPP Sibling Practice Curriculum)</td>
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KANSAS CHILDREN 2012 – AT A GLANCE

State Population2 ……………………2,853,118
Population, Children Under 183 ………726,939
State Poverty Rate4 …………………13.6%

Poverty Rate, Children Under 185 ………18.4%  Poverty Rate, Children Ages 5–176 ………16.2%
Poverty Rate, Children Under 57 ………22.5%

Child Abuse and Neglect

In 2010, Kansas had 32,377 total referrals for child abuse and neglect. Of those, 17,379 reports were referred for investigation.8

In 2010, 1,552 children were victims of abuse or neglect in Kansas, a rate of 2.2 per 1,000 children, representing a 13.9% increase from 2009. Of these children, 22.3% were neglected, 22.3% were physically abused, and 34.6% were sexually abused.9

The number of child victims has decreased 41.0% in comparison to the number of victims in 2006.10

In 2010, 6 children in Kansas died as a result of abuse or neglect.11

In 2010, 5,979 children in Kansas lived apart from their families in out-of-home care, compared with 5,691 children in 2009. In 2010, 2,103 of the children living apart from their families were age 5 or younger, and 1,045 were 16 or older.12

The number of children living apart from their families in out-of-home care has decreased 4.1% in comparison to the number of children in out-of-home care in 2006.13

Of Kansas children in out-of-home care in 2010, 65.6% were white, 18.2% black, 10.6% Hispanic, 0.8% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.4% Asian or Pacific Islander and 4.3% of more than one race or ethnicity.14

Adoption, Kinship Care, and Permanent Families for Children

Of the 3,173 children exiting out-of-home care in Kansas in 2010, 52.7% were reunited with their parents or other family members.15

In 2010, 694 children were legally adopted through the public child welfare agency in Kansas, a 17.0% decrease from 836 in 2009.16

Of the 5,979 children in out-of-home care in 2010, 1,825 or 30.5% were waiting to be adopted.17

In 2010, approximately 20,250 Kansas grandparents had primary responsibility caring for their grandchildren.18

Of the 5,979 children in out-of-home care in 2010, 1,536 were living with relatives while in care.19

Of all Kansas children in kinship care in 2010, 68.4% were white, 18.6% black, 9.2% Hispanic, 0.7% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.1% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 18.6% of more than one race or ethnicity.20
American Humane. Child abuse and neglect statistics. From:  


Debunking the myths: the facts about foster care adoption. National Adoption Day: Celebrating a Family for Every Child. From:  
http://www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/adoptionsDay/docs/Myths.pdf


Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting Program (MAPP)


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