Future Trends in Health Care Social Work

Health care social workers are creating many new practices and approaches to meet the changing contexts and realities of health care in the 21st century. New medical technologies, increasing numbers of elderly persons, co-morbidity of physical health, mental health, alcohol and drug addictions, shortened length of hospital stays, preference for community-based care and lack of universal health insurance all contribute to the current health care challenges. Health care promises to be an exciting and challenging area of social work practice in the years to come.

Social Work Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Viterbo University Social Work Program is to prepare baccalaureate students for entry level generalist social work practice. In an atmosphere of integrity and respect, students will develop professional knowledge, values, and skills for service provision and social change. The program is guided by the Franciscan values of human dignity, social justice, strengths of diverse populations, and respect for disenfranchised members of our global society.

Admission to the Social Work Program

Completion of a minimum of 36 semester hours prior to admission

- 2.5 cumulative GPA at time of admission
- Grade of “B” or better in SOWK 210 - Introduction to Social Work
- Completion of the following prerequisite courses with grades of C or better. These courses may be in progress at time of application:
  - SOCL 125—Introduction to Sociology
  - POSC 121—American Government
  - BIOL 203—Human Biology for Social Sciences (2 semesters of anatomy and physiology may be substituted)
  - PSYC 171 General Psychology
  - SOWK 240—Introduction to Research Writing
  - SOWK 275—Introduction to Professional Practice

Do you want to improve people’s lives?
Are you interested in working in a health care setting?
Do you want a professional degree?
Social work may be the major for you!

For further information, contact:

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Skills for Health Care Social Work

The health care social worker is the essential link between the patient, the health care facility (whether hospital, clinic, health department, nursing home, treatment facility, or home care setting), and the community and its resources. Social workers utilize a strengths perspective that recognizes the challenge of illness and loss while uplifting patient and family strengths, empowerment and wellness. Health care social workers have the privilege of interacting with patients and their families at times of enormous vulnerability. Times of medical crisis create windows of opportunity for competent and compassionate social work leaders.

Essential areas of knowledge and understanding for health care social workers include:

- comprehensive, culturally competent assessment and patient-focused intervention/treatment planning
- community resources
- understanding of physiological elements of illness and physical and psychiatric disability
- understanding of substance abuse, mental illness and trauma
- understanding of complex psychological and spiritual needs of patients and families
- ethical and legal questions and dilemmas
- laws, regulations, and policies affecting access to health care
- evidence-based practices and social work research in health care
- needs of special populations
- issues of disparities and oppression across cultures and economic groups in gaining access to and funding for health care
- patient and family advocacy
- crisis intervention, case management, discharge planning

Employment Outlook

The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that employment of social workers is expected to increase by 19 percent during the 2012-2022 decade, which is much faster than the average for all occupations. Social workers with expertise in mental health, substance abuse and gerontology will experience strong demand. Median annual earnings for health care social workers in May 2012 was $49,830.

Education and Credentialing

A bachelor’s degree in social work is the minimum requirement for a social work position in health care. A master’s degree in social work (MSW) is required in many health care settings and also for work as a clinical social worker or therapist. All states have credentialing requirements regarding social work practice and the use of professional titles. Social workers should be emotionally mature, objective, and sensitive to people and the challenges they face. They must be able to handle responsibility, work independently, and maintain good working relationships with clients and coworkers.

Placements of Viterbo Social Work Graduates in Health Care

- Cancer Center
- Hospice
- Emergency Room
- Obstetrics and Pediatrics
- Hospital Based Domestic Violence Specialist
- Inpatient General Medicine
- Inpatient Behavioral Health
- Case Manager for the AIDS Resource Center
- Respite Care
- Case Manager for Individuals With Severe and Persistent Mental Illness
- Care and Rehabilitation Centers
- Veterans Administration
- Residential Treatment for AODA
- Residential Treatment for Individuals with Chronic Mental Illness
- Home Health