

So You Want to be a VA Social Worker?

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FAQs:

- 1) What type of work does a VA social worker do?

The mission of VA Social Work is to maximize health and well-being, through the use of psychosocial interventions for Veterans, Families and Caregivers.

******Check out the VHA Social Work Page for information about the great variety of ways that a VA social worker helps Veterans with their problems and concerns. <http://www.socialwork.va.gov/socialworkers.asp>**

- 2) Where do I find available positions to apply for?

Jobs for both VA and other federal positions can be found at USAjobs.gov

- 3) How do I apply?

You can only apply online via the USAjobs.gov website. There is a tab on the website that helps you learn about the Federal Application Process. We suggest that you gather all required documents requested prior to starting the application.

- 4) What type of interview can I expect if offered an interview?

VHA conducts performance based interviews (PBI). Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) is a selection process that uses interviewing techniques to ask job applicants questions about the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) they have that are important in order for them to do a good job.

The link below provides additional information.

www.va.gov/pbi/pbi_introduction.asp

- 5) What level of licensure do I need?

In compliance with Public Law 106-419, VA social workers appointed after August 14, 1991, must be licensed at the master's level to independently practice social work in a state. Reference VHA Handbook 5005/23: Social Worker Qualification Standard Including Licensure and/or Certification

Requirement. This handbook sets forth the qualification for appointment as a social worker in VHA. It includes recent changes to the licensure and/or certification requirements for DVA social workers made by section 205 of Public Law 106-419, the Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000, November 1, 2000



- 6) I have a license in one state, but want to apply for a job in another state. Do I have to apply for licensure in that state?

Only one active, unrestricted state license is required to work in any VA facility. This means that when and if you decide to relocate, you can seek employment at any federal location with a vacancy, and if hired, transfer with no loss of benefits and no re-licensing required.

- 7) If I am a student trainee with the VA, can I be hired directly by the VA?

Students who complete field placements at VA facilities are encouraged to discuss employment opportunities with the field placement supervisor and Social Work Chief or Executive. They are encouraged to visit Human Resources to look at vacancies.

- 8) I have heard that if I work for the federal government, my student loans will be forgiven. Is this true? **If you are employed by a government or not-for-profit organization, you may be able to receive loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF). The PSLF program forgives the remaining balance on your Direct Loans after you have made 120 qualifying monthly payments under a qualifying repayment plan while working full-time for a qualifying employer (including the Department of Veterans Affairs). Please see <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service> for more information.**

- 9) What types of opportunities are there for advancement?

There are many opportunities to hone your skills as a social worker, including committee involvement, classes, workshops, leadership trainings and more. As you gain skills and experience, you may be able to apply for Senior Social Worker positions and/or leadership roles, including administrative and supervisory positions.

10) What are the benefits of working as a social worker for the VA?

The greatest benefit of all is serving our Nation's Heroes and helping them live the best possible life. However, the VA offers a robust benefits package including professional benefits, insurance benefits, financial benefits, and retirement benefits. Further information about the extensive benefits offered to VA employees can be found here: <http://www.vacareers.va.gov/VACAREERS/why-choose-va/benefits/index.asp>



11) I am aware there is an organization for VA social workers. Can I belong to the Association of VA Social Workers (AVASW) as a student? If so, how do I become a member?

Social Work graduate students with a full academic year VA field placement may join during their placement. Student memberships terminate when the student's VA training ends. Student members may not vote or hold elective office. The annual dues for a student member for 2017 is \$10.00. To join visit the AVASW website – www.vasocialworkers.org – and click on the "Join AVASW" button and follow the instructions.

12) What are the benefits of membership in AVASW?

<http://vasocialworkers.org/Documents/AVASWFlyer.pdf>. As any membership in a professional organization the purpose is to bring people together who share in issues relevant to practice. Membership demonstrates the strength and vitality of VA social work and facilitates our sense of identity throughout the VA healthcare system.