



Boston University School of Social Work

SOCIAL WORK

CAREER GUIDE

2009 Revision

Table of Contents

I. Letter to Reader	3
II. Introduction to BUSSW Career Center	4
III. Deciding What to Do Within Social Work	5
Skills	6
Values	8
Interests	10
Prioritize Your Skills, Values, and Interests	12
Personality Traits	13
Now You Know	15
IV. Locating Social Work Employment Opportunities	16
Using the Internet	17
V. Networking and Informational Interviewing	20
Suggested Questions for Informational Interviews	21
Sample Letter Requesting Informational Interview	22
VI. Resume Writing	23
General Guidelines	24
Action Verbs	26
Resume Worksheet	27
Sample Clinical Resume	28
Sample Macro Resume	29
VII. Writing Cover Letters	31
Sample Cover Letter	32
VIII. References	33
IX. Interviewing Guidelines	34
Improper Questions and Interviewing	36
Most Commonly Asked Questions	38
Suggested Questions for Interviewer	39
Sample Thank You Letter	40
Job Offer Letter of Decline	41
X. Negotiating Terms of Employment	42
Letter of Acceptance	45
XI. Where the Jobs Are	46
XII. Licensure	48
XIII. Job Placement and Temporary Employment Services	51
XIV. Tracking the Job Search Process	54

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the *Boston University School of Social Work Career Guide!*

This publication is designed to assist BUSSW students and alumni in their career decision making. This guide contains tools, tips, and trends for job seekers, compiled through Career Center staff's searches of career development resources and suggestions from BUSSW graduates concerning experiences with their career pursuits.

You are invited to visit the Social Work Career Center to gain further information about any of the topics outlined in this publication or to obtain further assistance with your own important career decisions.

We wish you the very best for a successful employment search!

Social Work Career Center
Boston University School of Social Work
264 Bay State Road
Boston, MA 02215
617-353-3761
<http://www.bu.edu/ssw/career>
swcareer@bu.edu

Introduction to the BUSSW Career Center

The Alumni Relations Office and the Office of Student Services and ALANA Affairs at the Boston University School of Social Work initiated the Social Work Career Center in 1990 to meet the unique career development needs of the School's students and alumni.

The mission of the BUSSW Career Center is to:

- ❖ Provide comprehensive information and quality services to promote social work career development.
- ❖ Enhance relationships with the social work practice community at large, with particular emphasis on the urban environment.
- ❖ Facilitate the process by which students make the transition between the School and the practice community, and by which alumni make the transition to different fields of social work.
- ❖ Provide a greater understanding of social work among different professions, create options for social workers in different settings, and provide students and alumni the opportunity to participate in such processes.

The Center is currently housed in **Room 115**, School of Social Work, 264 Bay State Road.

BUSSW students and alumni may utilize resources between **9 a.m. and 5 p.m.** weekdays. If you want access the Center when it is not staffed, see a staff person in the Admissions Office or Student Services Office. Please be prepared to leave an I.D. with the Receptionist/Student Services Office while you visit the Center.

The Center houses a variety of **career resources**, contacts for international social work practice, subscription publications, and networking opportunities through the **Career Advisory Network** (an on-line listing of BUSSW alumni who have agreed to be contacted by students and alumni for networking purposes). Throughout the academic year, the Center also sponsors a number of **career information workshops** on topics such as resume writing, interviewing, career planning, etc. Workshops are open to all students and alumni of the Boston University School of Social Work.

The Center also tracks the employment of its newest graduates to examine trends in the field and in job searching.

For more information on the Social Work Career Center:

(617) 353-3761 ♦ 1-800-735-ALUM ♦ swcareer@bu.edu

<http://www.bu.edu/ssw/career>

Deciding What You Want To Do Within Social Work

Introduction to Self-Evaluation

You already made an important career decision when you made the move to social work. The flexibility that allows you to pursue any number of specializations within the social work profession is also one of the primary causes of career confusion for social workers. Finding your niche in the profession requires that you examine and prioritize the three elements that determine your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with any job: skills, values, and interests.

Skills: The abilities of the worker that can be used in the work setting. Workers should identify personal skills and prioritize those he/she chooses to exercise in employment and those he/she prefers to use as hobbies. For instance, a person may be a skilled clinician and a capable artist but may or may not choose to exercise those artistic skills in the workplace.

Values: Work values encompass the factors that determine the quality of work life (and sometimes personal life) in one's role, organization, or profession. Workers should prioritize these values and determine which must be present in the workplace, which are negotiable, and which are not necessary for the position to be satisfying. Examples of work values are salary, flexibility of hours, variety of work tasks, supportive environment, and autonomy.

Interests: Interests may be defined as the focus of the work performed by the worker in the work role. For social workers, for example, interests may include work with a particular population or social issue.

Employees, especially social workers, who do not meet their top requirements in regards to these three variables face the probability of burnout, a term used to describe anger and apathy that result from job stress and frustration.¹ Taking the time to reflect upon these variables may help you to locate the ideal position for you and to avoid burnout.

The following seven pages are exercises to help you to identify and prioritize your own skills, values, and interests. There is also an exercise to identify your personal qualities. Read the directions and respond honestly. You'll be surprised what you will learn about yourself.

You can also draw upon past work and volunteer experiences and ask yourself these important questions. Which skills did I enjoy and not enjoy using? Which skills did I want to use that I did not have the opportunity to exercise? What did I particularly like and dislike about the environment and how I fit into the organization? Was the mission or focus of the work in line with my own interests? If not, what topic or issue would have interested you more?

You can also study help wanted ads that hold certain appeal for you. What is it about the ads that are attractive to you? Consider the tasks, salary, the focus of the organization, etc.

The following process is worth a few hours of your time. Because you will be able to identify what is most important to you, you will be better able to convince an employer of your abilities, that you want the position for which you are interviewing, and that you are confident of your ability to fulfill the requirements of the job.

¹ Definition of burnout acquired from Barker, R.L. (1991).
The Social Work Dictionary. Silver Spring, MD: National
Association of Social Workers.

Skills

Below is a list of job-related skills that social workers may use in their work. Review the list in total. The first three columns allow you to indicate which skills you possess and how much you want to use these skills in your job. The second three columns indicate the level of development of those skills. A final column indicates the skills you do not yet possess but would like to develop in the workplace.

Indicate your desire to utilize or develop your skills by placing check marks in the appropriate boxes.

Skills	Skills I Possess and Level of Use in the Workplace			Level of Development			
	Wish to use	Would like to use occasionally	Do not wish to use	Very well-developed	Somewhat developed	Not well-developed	Hope to develop in future
1. Administering/overseeing programs							
2. Advocating for others							
3. Assessing needs of clients/patients							
4. Budget management							
5. Coalition building/community organizing							
6. Consulting							
7. Educating/Training							
8. Empowering others							
9. Facilitating meetings							
10. Grant writing/fundraising							
11. Initiating/implementing projects							
12. Interagency liaison/facilitating communication							
13. Interdisciplinary work							
14. Leading a process							
15. Lobbying							

Skills	Skills I Possess and Level of Use in the Workplace			Level of Development			
	Wish to use	Would like to use occasionally	Do not wish to use	Very well-developed	Somewhat developed	Not well-developed	Hope to develop in future
16. Marketing/public relations							
17. Motivating others							
18. Negotiating/arbitration							
19. Presenting/public relations							
20. Program design/development							
21. Recruiting/outreach							
22. Research/evaluation							
23. Supervising others							
24. Team player							
25. Treatment planning							
26. Understanding public policy/governmental structure							
27. Other							

Values

The following is a list of employment-related values. Read through the list and select the **THREE** top values that must be in place for you to consider a job. Next, select **three** values that you would like to have in place in your next job, but that are negotiable. In doing this exercise, disregard the jobs you may have pictured yourself doing and choose the values based on what you know about yourself, your needs, and the importance of particular aspects of work to your happiness.

Values	My three top choices	My three secondary choices
Advancement opportunities: to grow and learn; take on increasing responsibilities		
Autonomy/ independence: the chance to work on projects alone and with my own discretion		
Challenge: work that is not routine and keeps me on my toes		
Creativity: work that allows me the freedom to think about alternatives and the possibility to implement some of my own ideas		
Clearly defined responsibilities: a workload and expectations that are clearly articulated and understood by me and my supervisor		
Decision-making authority: the ability to become an authority on a topic area within my work		
Developing professional expertise: the ability to become an authority on a topic area within my work		
Diversity of tasks: to be involved in a variety of different projects		
Fringe benefits: excellent health, dental, vacation time, tax-deferrable options, etc. available to me as an employee		
Fame/notoriety: to have people recognize my name as an authority on something		
Flexibility of schedule: to have the ability to shape my own schedule		
Geographic location: where I work is an easy commute and short distance from where I live		
Good supervision: a supervisor who is accessible, clear, constructive w/ feedback, supportive, etc.		
Intellectual stimulation: work that challenges my intelligence		

Values	My three top choices	My three secondary choices
Interdisciplinary setting: to work with people from several different professions		
Job security: not having to worry about the funding of my position or the importance of my work to the institution		
Knowledgeable/ expert co-workers: to be surrounded by co-workers who are intelligent and who have a great deal of knowledge about the work we have in common		
Lack of stress: a relaxed atmosphere w/out a lot of pressure from deadlines and/or heavy workload		
Leadership responsibilities: the chance to take charge of projects and/or facilitate a process		
Power: the ability to create change and see that things work the way I want them to		
Respect: feeling that my co-workers, constituents, and superiors admire and express their respect for me and my work		
Salary: to make a wage I feel is consistent with the quality of work that I do		
Social justice/ creating change: feeling like my work makes a difference		
Support: co-workers who are understanding and support me in my goals, approach to my work, etc.		
Seeing things through: being able to complete tasks from beginning to end		
Team work: being the member of a team that works together to address a common goal		
Other:		
Other:		

Interests

Below is a list of job interests that include social issues, types of service and particular populations with whom you may work with as a social worker. Select up to **THREE** primary populations, issues, settings/types of work with which/whom you feel most dedicated to serving. Next, select up to **three** populations, issues, settings/types of work that are of secondary interest to you.

Indicate your interests by placing check marks in the appropriate boxes.

Population Interests	My top three interests	My secondary interests
Children		
Adolescents		
Young adults		
Elders		
Families		
Men		
Women		
Couples		
People of Color		
Middle/upper income populations		
Lesbians and/or gay men		
Single parents		
Refugees/immigrants		
Homeless population		
Victims of domestic violence		
Perpetrators of violence		
Substance abusers/addicts		
People with disabilities		
People with mental health issues		
People with health issues		

Veterans		
Issues (settings/types of work)	My top three interests	My secondary interests
Public policy/public systems		
Public programs (e.g., TAFDC, Medicaid, Social Security)		
Housing		
Child protective services		
Day care		
Foster care/adoption		
School systems		
Special education		
Correctional facilities		
Legal system		
Health/public health		
Mental health		
Family planning		
Long term care (e.g., hospice)		
Employee assistance programs/ services		
Private practice		
Day treatment settings		
Residential settings		
Ambulatory/out-patient settings		
Community-based programs/services		

Personality Traits

The follow two pages list a number of personality traits. Please indicate those which you believe you possess as well as those traits you would like to have in a supervisor.

Personality Traits:	Traits that describe me	Traits I'd like in a supervisor
Adaptable/Flexible		
Adventurous		
Approachable		
Authoritative		
Careful		
Consistent		
Cooperative/a team player		
Creative/innovative		
Dependable		
Driven		
Dynamic		
Efficient		
Experienced		
Firm		
Independent		
Methodical		
Neat		
Organized		
Perceptive		
Perfectionist		
Persistent		
Pioneer		
Precise		
Procrastinator		
Private		
Practical		
Risk taker		
Quick learner		
Self-motivated		

Supportive		
Tactful		
Thorough		
Trustworthy		
Versatile		
Other:		
Other:		

Keep these characteristics in mind when interviewing in case you are asked to describe yourself. You may also find this list valuable in evaluating the personality traits of others with whom you have interviewed. Ask yourself if you feel the characteristics you were able to identify in the interview are compatible with your own.

Now You Know: Using the Skills, Values, and Interests Tools

You have just prioritized what are perhaps the most important aspects of any job and the factors that determine your satisfaction with your work. These tools provide a synopsis of the characteristics you should look for in job advertisements, and informational and job interviews. You have decided that there are certain skills, values, and interests that must be met in the workplace and others that are negotiable. You have also indicated some skills you would like to develop. Now, when you look for employment you can use this list to screen employment opportunities and to direct your search.

You can also use what you have learned in these exercises in interviews to talk about those skills you wish to use and the level of development of each. If all of the skills you wish to use are not well-developed, you may need to consider methods for developing these skills before an employer will hire you to use them as the primary part of your practice. These skills may be honed through continuing education programs, training institutes, professional organizations, etc.

You can also formulate questions for potential employers based on the skills, values, and interests that must be present for you to be fulfilled by a job. Use those questions to evaluate the job, agency, supervision, benefits, etc., to determine if they meet your standards. Knowing what you need is empowering because it allows you to interview the potential employer.

The exercise regarding personal qualities is yet another step toward self-evaluation and understanding. Standardized personality tests (such as the Myer's Briggs Personality Inventory) or skills inventories (e.g. the Strong Skills Inventory) are also available for a reasonable fee through the Martin Luther King Center Career Service Office, or through other counseling centers. Having completed a comprehensive self-evaluation process will allow you to convince the employer that you have done the introspection to know what you can do well, what you have yet to learn, what is important to you, and how you will fit into the organization.

If, after completing the process, you are still unsure about the kind of social work you want to practice, you may wish to contact the Boston University Office of Career Services in the King Center at 19 Deerfield Street (Kenmore Square), 617-353-3590. Terry Brown is a Career Counselor who has previous social work experience.

Locating Social Work Employment Opportunities

Once you've figured out what you want to do within the profession, you need access to job openings. The BUSSW Career Center maintains job listings on the web at which you can access by visiting <http://www.bu.edu/ssw/career> and clicking on Job Postings.

Limited job listings may also be found at the **Boston University Martin Luther King, Jr. Center Career Services Office** at 19 Deerfield Street. The resource room is located on the 3rd floor of the building and is open to all BUSSW students and alumni. The Career Services Office phone number is (617)353-3590.

Massachusetts One-Stop Career Centers provide access to Internet job listings free of charge, as well as additional job search resources. While access to job listings and many workshops are free, there is a charge for counseling services.

JobNet	Boston	http://www.jobnetboston.org
Career Link	Boston	http://www.bostoncareerlink.org
The Work Place	Boston	http://www.theworkplace.org
Career Source	Cambridge	http://www.yourcareersource.com
The Career Place	Woburn	http://www.careerplacejobs.com
ETC	Marlboro	http://www.etrcc.com

The Massachusetts Chapter of the **National Association of Social Workers** also maintains job listings for its members. You can view job listings by accessing <http://www.naswma.org> and clicking on Jobs.

Using the Internet

Preparing for a job search or contemplating a career change can be at your fingertips through the use of the Internet! Information on-line expands daily, so any printed directions for using on-line job information can quickly become out of date.

The wide array of career services available on-line include:

- job listings
- resume databases
- discussion group/on-line
- career and job hunting information
- company/employer information

*Internet addresses and on-line information can change daily. Please keep this in mind during your Internet job search. If the Internet address no longer works, try using one of the search engines to search for the page. Or you can try using the main part of the address minus the routes at the end. For example, if <http://www.advocatesinc.org/jobs.htm> no longer works, type in <http://www.advocatesinc.org> to determine if that address is still active.

Social Work/Human Service-Specific Career Services and Listings

<i>Alliance for Justice</i>	http://www.afj.org/
<i>Alliance for Nonprofit Management</i>	http://allianceonline.org
<i>American Public Human Services Assoc. Job Bank</i>	http://www.aphsa.org
<i>American Sociological Association</i>	http://www.asanet.org
<i>Amnesty International</i>	http://www.amnesty.org
<i>Child Welfare League of America</i>	http://www.cwla.org
<i>Children's Hospital (Boston)</i>	http://www.childrenshospital.org/jobs/
<i>Community Career Center</i>	http://www.nonprofitjobs.org/
<i>Delta T Group</i>	http://www.delta-tgroup.com/
<i>Federal Government Employment</i>	http://www.usajobs.opm.gov
<i>Government Job Net</i>	http://www.govtjob.net
<i>Guidestar</i>	http://www.guidestar.org
<i>Habitat for Humanity</i>	http://www.habitat.org/hr/
<i>Health Promotion Career Advancement</i>	http://www.hpcareer.net
<i>HS People</i>	http://www.hspeople.com
<i>Idealist</i>	http://www.idealist.org
<i>Impact Online</i>	http://www.impactonline.org
<i>Internet Nonprofit Center</i>	http://www.nonprofits.org
<i>Jobs in Social Work, Social Services</i>	http://www.socialservice.com
<i>Mass. Dept. of Mental Health</i>	http://www.state.ma.us/hrd/ceo

<i>Mass. Dept. of Social Services</i>	http://www.magnet.state.ma.us/dss/
<i>MedCAREERS</i>	http://medcareers.com
<i>Mental Health Net – JobLink</i>	http://mentalhelp.net/joblink/
<i>MentalWeb</i>	http://www.mentalweb.com
<i>Miracle Workers</i>	http://miracleworkers.com/
<i>NASW Job Link</i>	http://www.naswdc.org
<i>NationJob – Medical and Health Care Jobs</i>	http://www.nationjob.com/medical/
<i>National Institute of Mental Health</i>	http://www.nimh.nih.gov/
<i>National Service Organization</i>	http://nationalservice.org
<i>The New Social Worker Online</i>	http://www.socialworker.com/jobs.htm
<i>NonProfit Career Network</i>	http://nonprofit.lexitech.com/
<i>Opportunity Nocs</i>	http://www.opportunitynocs.org
<i>Philanthropy News Network Online</i>	http://pnnonline.org/jobs/
<i>Social Justice Jobs & Internships</i>	http://www.nmef.org/index.html
<i>Social Work P.R.N.</i>	http://www.socialworkprn.com/
<i>Social Worker Jobs</i>	http://www.socialworkerjobs.com
<i>United Jewish Communities</i>	http://www.ujc.org
<i>United Way</i>	http://www.unitedway.org
<i>Vinfen Corporation</i>	http://www.vinfen.org

General Employment Opportunities and Special Groups

<i>America’s Job Bank</i>	http://www.ajb.dni.us
<i>BestJobsUSA</i>	http://bestjobsusa.com
<i>The Black Collegian Online</i>	http://www.blackcollegian.com/
<i>Black Voices</i>	http://www.blackvoices.com
<i>BostonWorks (Boston)</i>	http://bostonworks.boston.com
<i>Career City</i>	http://www.careercity.com
<i>Career Path</i>	http://www.careerpath.com
<i>CareerWeb</i>	http://www.cweb.com
<i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>	http://chronicle.com/jobs/
<i>Diversity Employment</i>	http://www.diversityemployment.com/

<i>Hispanic Career and Employment Resources</i>	http://www.saludos.com
<i>Jobfind</i>	http://www.jobfind.com
<i>JobTrak</i>	http://www.jobtrak.com
<i>Jobweb</i>	http://www.jobweb.org
<i>Job Fairs</i>	http://www.career.com
<i>JobsOnline</i>	http://www.jobsonline.com/
<i>Latino Social Workers Organization</i>	http://www.lsw.org
<i>The Monster Board</i>	http://www.monster.com
<i>NationJob Network</i>	http://www.nationjob.com
<i>Placement Agency RI and MA</i>	http://jobconnectionltd.com
<i>Salary.com: What are you worth?</i>	http://www.salary.com

*If you have any updates for this information sheet, please contact the Career Center at swcareer@bu.edu or (617) 353-3761. We would like to hear from you if you find additional Web sites to add to our listing or if any of the sites are no longer operating or have new Web addresses. **Thank you!***

Networking and Informational Interviewing

Networking is perhaps the best way to hear about jobs. Informational interviewing is perhaps the best way to *network* when looking for a new job, considering a career change, or defining your interests.

The **BUSSW Career Consultants Network**, a volunteer network of nearly 300 alumni willing to assist students and other alumni in career decision making, is available through the Center. The network is accessible by specialization within social work or by geographic location.

Although the network is readily available, it is not the only way to establish contacts. The more assertive you are in your networking, the better your chances of uncovering the job that fits your skills, values, and interests. Each time you talk to people in the field, ask if they know anyone else who might be helpful to you. Seek out people within agencies of interest to you and request a brief informational interview. As busy as people are, they generally like to talk about what they do and how they got there.

Preferably, a prospective interviewee would like to be contacted by letter with an enclosed resume. In the letter, you should include:

1. An introduction – Who you are
2. How you got his/her name
3. Why you are writing
4. Next steps – When you will next be in contact

A phone call is not unacceptable, but the letter makes a good impression and gives the person time to review your resume and think about what he/she might have to say to you. Basically, you are asking the person to share his/her experiences with you. You can get a sense of what the person does within the specialty area and agency, tips for job searching and networking, and a sense of the person's career path.

Informational interviewing gives the person a chance to meet and like you. Although you can interview by phone, interviewing in person is preferable because you would like your new contact to feel comfortable referring you should a job open in the agency. It is important to make clear to the interviewee that you are not asking for a job when you contact him/her. However, if you are impressive, he/she will remember you should they hear of a job opening.

Networking is also important because people actually practicing the social work you want to practice can give you the best sense of prospects in the field, including which agencies may have picked up contracts or received grant monies to hire or start new programs.

Be prepared for the interview. Know what you want to ask. You don't have to know exactly what you want to do with your life, nor do you need to know exactly which job you want. You can use the interview to shape your ideas about these things. You should, however, go in with questions that will help you get the information you need to make some decisions and expand your network.

You should not ask the interviewer to contact you. Make it clear how you can be reached, but tell him/her you will follow-up your letter with a call within a week or two.

Be sure to follow-up the interview with a **thank you note** (either a card or a formal letter is acceptable and appropriate) and highlight what was valuable about the interview.

Suggested Questions for Informational Interviews

1. How did you decide to do this work?
2. How did you get started with this work and agency?
3. What are the best/worst aspects of your job and this line of work?
4. How is your time divided between people, data, and things?
5. If possible, describe a typical workday, workweek, and work year.
6. What are the kinds of jobs one could pursue in this specialty area?
5. Describe your job search and path to this job?
6. How long did it take you to find your first job in this specialty area of social work?
7. What has been the greatest challenge you have faced in your career thus far?
8. How valuable is social work considered in this organization?
9. Do you feel your education prepared you for the job(s) you've done and employer expectations of you?
10. What do you know now that you wish you had known when looking for your first post-M.S.W. job or this current job?
11. Would a geographic move affect your job in any way?
12. How much work do you take home? How many hours do you work each week?
13. How often do you travel for work and for how long?
14. Whom do you supervise and to whom do you report? (You are looking for organizational structure.)
15. Is there anyone else with whom I should speak for additional information?

Sample Letter Requesting Informational Interview

878 Oak Grove
Boston, MA 0221

February 23, 2008

Lanark Andrew, Director
Children's and Youth Services
123 Callahan Street
Boston, MA 02216

Dear Ms. or Mr. Andrew:* (*** Call the agency and find out the contact person's full name.
This is more effective than using Dear Sir/Madam**)

My name is Karen Donough, and I will be completing the M.S.W. program at Boston University in May. I received your name from Joan DeKnows at Children and Family Services West. She recommended you as a valuable resource to someone who is interested in protective services.

I am hoping you might be willing to set up an informational interview at your convenience. I would be happy to come to the agency to meet with you or to interview by phone if that would be more convenient for you.

I am particularly interested in your own job search and career path, how you chose child protection and Children's and Youth Services, and what you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of working for a private versus public agency. My current field placement is with the Department of Social Services, but I would like to explore other possibilities in this area. I have enclosed a copy of my resume so you can see the kind of work I have done.

You can reach me at 617-783-0999 if you would like or I can call within the next two weeks to see whether we will be able to meet. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Karen Donough
Enc.

Resume Writing

General Guidelines

Your resume is an encapsulated presentation of your experiences, strengths, successes, etc. It should be easy-to-read and laid out with headline, categories, boldface, and underlining of important information. **Most employers give a resume a fifteen-second review during the initial phase of the recruiting process.** Although they may review your resume in more detail later, should you make it beyond the initial screening process, you must catch their attention quickly and clearly to get that far. During that fifteen seconds, the employer should be able to spot the qualities you possess that make you a promising candidate.

There are several formats you can consider that may best package your qualifications. The resume examples included in this section may help you pick the style most appropriate for you. The worksheet in this section can get you started by putting your information on paper.

Be as specific as possible:

1. Tailor your resume to the specialty field or job you want. You can write a general resume to get started, but as you narrow your interests, you will want to package your experience in a way that will most likely catch the attention of employers.
2. You do not have to list an objective on your resume. In fact, unless you will be able to change it to correspond to each job for which you apply, you should leave the objective off the resume and use the cover letter to spell out what you want in a job. If an objective is too general, the employer will think you do not know what you want. If it is too specific and not perfectly in line with the job opening, the employer will assume his/her job is not your first choice.

DO:

- Use phrases starting with an action verb (see list on page 25).
- Use language that creates a vivid picture for employers.
- Keep descriptions brief, but give a picture of the populations you served; the social, medical, and/or psychological issues with which you have worked; the social work skills you have practiced.
- Include issues with which you've dealt that would be transferable and of value to nearly any setting (i.e. substance abuse, sexual abuse, etc.)
- Use quantities, amounts, dollar values, when possible (i.e., managed \$250,000 annual budget).
- Use professional terminology when appropriate.
- Be consistent with use of boldface, underlining, capitalizing, and italics.
- Send a cover letter with your resume.

DON'T:

- Use personal pronouns (I or we).
- Include personal data (age, gender, race, etc.).
- Include a photograph.
- List street addresses of schools, former employers, etc.
- Have any grammatical errors or typos (*Hint* - read the resume backward to check for typos).
- Send your resume without a cover letter.

Categorizing your resume

You can use general headings for objective, education, honors, research, skills, and interests. It is best to use specific headings for work experience. This section presents those experiences you believe represent the work you've done that prepares you for the position for which you are applying. Examples of specific headings:

Human Services Experience
Community Organizing Experience
Administrative Experience
Program Planning Experience
Clinical Experience
Therapeutic and Advocacy Experience
Child Welfare Experience
Experience with Children and Families
Experience in Gerontology
Substance Abuse Treatment Experience

You may have two categories to advertise and emphasize two sets of relevant experiences. For instance, you may be applying for a job that requires administrative experience and experience with children. You may not have administrative experience in a children's program, but you may have experience from other employment. These are "transferable" skills (from one job to another), and are worth emphasizing.

Education:

If you are just graduating, the M.S.W. is your most recent degree so you will probably want to begin with this section on your resume to call attention to it. Over time, after you accumulate more experience, you will want to move this section nearer the end of your resume.

- Try to keep the educational experience together (i.e. honors, research).
- If you are comfortable and proud of your GPA, it is fine to list it with your education.
- Don't forget to list concentration, degree, and graduation date. Also include dual degree, or certificate program information, if applicable.

Experience:

This is usually considered the most important section by employers and most will admit that the skills acquired during activities, internships, volunteer experience, etc. are as valuable as paid positions. Those should be listed and highlighted. Under the heading for specific and related experience (i.e. child welfare experience) you can list these experiences along with paid employment in the same field. If you are a new graduate, the name of the agency is generally more eye-catching than your title (i.e. social work intern), so you should list the agency before you give your title.

Skills:

In this section, you should highlight any skills or talents you have that may be useful in the workplace and that separate you from other applicants.

For example: Fluency or proficiency in a foreign language or American Sign Language; certifications in CPR or Outdoor Leadership; public speaking training; computer skills such as use and programming experience.

Other Categories:

If you have designed and delivered speeches and workshops or if you have been published, you may want to organize a category to highlight these skills. If you have work experience that does not fit in the "specific" categories you designed and you want to include it, you could add a category called "Other Work Experience." You can also add categories for specialized training, relevant research, etc.

Length:

As a general rule, resumes should be one page. Human service professionals, however, can afford to have more than one page if the experience included within the resume is relevant and important to your social work career. Your most important experience should be listed on the first page if possible. However, if you do choose to have a two-page resume, it should be a full two pages, not one and a half pages. If your resume is less than two pages, but over one page, you may want to consider cutting out the least relevant experience such as non-human service experience. Additionally, undergraduate experience can be removed to make room for graduate experience.

Action Verbs: (Use in present tense if currently using skill.)

Abstracted	Computed	Enforced	Interviewed	Prepared	Shared
Accommodated	Conceived	Enlightened	Introduced	Prescribed	Simplified
Achieved	Conceptualized	Enlisted	Invented	Presented	Sketched
Acquainted	Conducted	Ensured	Inventoried	Prioritized	Sold
Acquired	Conferred	Established	Investigated	Processed	Solicited
Acted	Conserved	Estimated	Judged	Produced	Solved
Adapted	Consolidated	Evaluated	Kept	Programmed	Sorted
Addressed	Constructed	Examined	Launched	Projected	Spearheaded
Administered	Consulted	Exceeded	Learned	Promoted	Specialized
Advertised	Contracted	Excelled	Lectured	Proposed	Spoke
Advised	Contributed	Executed	Led	Protected	Sponsored
Advocated	Controlled	Expanded	Lifted	Proved	Stimulated
Aided	Converted	Expedited	Listed	Provided	Strategized
Allocated	Cooperated	Experimented	Listened	Publicized	Streamlined
Analyzed	Coordinated	Explained	Located	Published	Strengthened
Answered	Copied	Explored	Logged	Purchased	Stressed
Anticipated	Correlated	Expressed	Made	Queried	Studied
Applied	Corresponded	Extracted	Maintained	Questioned	Substantiated
Appraised	Counseled	Facilitated	Managed	Raised	Succeeded
Approved	Created	Fashioned	Manipulated	Ran	Suggested
Arbitrated	Critiqued	Financed	Mapped	Ranked	Summarized
Arranged	Cultivated	Fixed	Marketed	Rationalized	Supervised
Ascertained	Dealt	Followed	Mastered	Read	Supplemented
Assembled	Debated	Formulated	Maximized	Realized	Supplied
Assessed	Decided	Fostered	Mediated	Reasoned	Surveyed
Assisted	Defined	Founded	Memorized	Received	Sustained
Assumed	Delegated	Gained	Mentored	Recommended	Symbolized
Attained	Delivered	Gathered	Met	Reconciled	Synthesized
Audited	Demonstrated	Gave	Minimized	Recorded	Systematized
Augmented	Designated	Generated	Modeled	Recruited	Tabulated
Authorized	Detected	Governed	Modernized	Reduced	Talked
Balanced	Determined	Guided	Modified	Referred	Taught
Bolstered	Developed	Handled	Monitored	Regulated	Tended
Briefed	Devised	Headed	Motivated	Related	Tested
Brought	Diagnosed	Helped	Narrated	Relied	Theorized
Budgeted	Directed	Identified	Negotiated	Removed	Trained
Built	Discovered	Illustrated	Observed	Reorganized	Translated
Calculated	Discriminated	Imagined	Obtained	Repaired	Traveled
Cared	Dispatched	Implemented	Offered	Reported	Treated
Charged	Dispensed	Improved	Operated	Represented	Tutored
Chartered	Displayed	Improvised	Ordered	Researched	Undertook
Checked	Dissected	Inaugurated	Organized	Resolved	Unified
Clarified	Distributed	Increased	Originated	Responded	United
Classified	Diverted	Indexed	Overcame	Restored	Updated
Coached	Documented	Indicated	Oversaw	Revamped	Upgraded
Collaborated	Drafted	Influenced	Participated	Reviewed	Utilized
Collected	Drove	Informed	Perceived	Scanned	Validated
Combined	Edited	Initiated	Perfected	Scheduled	Verified
Comforted	Educated	Inspected	Performed	Screened	Visualized
Communicated	Eliminated	Inspired	Persuaded	Selected	Weighed
Compared	Emphasized	Instituted	Piloted	Separated	Won
Compiled	Empowered	Instructed	Planned	Served	Wrote
Completed	Enabled	Integrated	Practiced	Set	
Composed	Encouraged	Interpreted	Predicted	Shaped	

Resume Worksheet

Your name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____

Objective: (*optional* and use only if you have a specific job in mind and that job matches the one for which you are applying)

Education: (School, City, State)

Degree/date expected:

Concentration:

Dual Degree/Certificate Program:

Relevant Course work or Research Projects:

Honors/Awards:

Experience: (choose appropriate heading(s) and organize the experiences you list below after you have written descriptions)

Organization, City, State, Position, Dates you were there:

Organization, City, State, Position, Dates you were there:

Organization, City, State, Position, Dates you were there:

Organization, City, State, Position, Dates you were there:

Professional Memberships:

Skills:

Interests (*optional*):

SAMPLE CLINICAL RESUME

Jane A. Smith

123 Friend Street • Boston, MA 02110 • (617) 999-9999 • janea@bu.edu

EDUCATION

Master of Social Work May 2009 (expected)
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
Boston, MA

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology May 1998
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
New York, NY

EXPERIENCE

Social Work Intern 2004-present
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL
Boston, MA

- Provide supportive counseling and case management services to patients on the Oncology Unit
- Conduct psychosocial assessments
- Co-facilitate a support group for breast cancer patients
- Participate in multidisciplinary team meetings and family conferences
- Collaborate with multidisciplinary team members on behalf of patients

Social Work Intern Summer 2004
NEW ENGLAND HOME FOR LITTLE WANDERERS
Jamaica Plain, MA

- Provided individual and group therapy to adolescents with emotional and behavioral issues
- Co-facilitated anger management and social skills groups for adolescents aged 13-16
- Conducted family assessments
- Developed treatment plans and coordinated with Department of Social Services staff

Counselor 2000-2004
JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE
Boston, MA

- Provided counseling and job search assistance to individuals with disabilities and dislocated workers
- Assessed training needs and assisted clients in obtaining federal funding for training programs
- Coordinated with state agency staff on behalf of job-seekers with disabilities
- Facilitated workshops focusing on interviewing skills and job skills assessment
- Developed and conducted staff training regarding disability and employment issues

Case Coordinator 1999-2000
MASSACHUSETTS HOSPITAL SCHOOL
Canton, MA

- Provided counseling and case management services to young adults with disabilities
- Conducted supported living assessments
- Developed individualized supported living service plans
- Coordinated community resources to assist individuals in achieving vocational, educational, and recreational goals

Counselor 1998-2000
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DISABLED
New York, NY

- Provided vocational counseling to adults with physical and psychiatric disabilities
- Developed individualized vocational training plans
- Facilitated a vocational skills training group

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS 2003-present

SAMPLE MACRO RESUME

JANE A. SMITH
123 Friend Street
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 999-9999
janea@bu.edu

Education

Boston University Boston, MA
Master of Social Work May 2009 (expected)
Macro Concentration in Program Planning & Development

University of Rhode Island Kingston, RI
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Women's Studies May 2001

Professional Experience

Brigham & Women's Hospital, Office for Women, Family & Community Programs Boston, MA
Program Assistant (Intern) 2005-present

- Conducted quality improvement evaluation on domestic violence screening and identification in OB/GYN and Family Planning clinical areas
- Implemented protocols for screening and identification of domestic violence
- Consulted at Martha Eliot Community Health Center on evaluation of services for survivors of domestic violence
- Assisted in training medical providers in assessment of domestic abuse
- Collaborated with clinical and administrative staff to improve women's access to services

Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center Dorchester, MA
Program Assistant (Intern) 2003-2005

- Researched and composed grants to support adolescent health programs
- Planned and implemented a bi-monthly advisory committee on youth programming
- Coordinated the *Reach Out & Read* youth literacy program
- Developed and facilitated a mother-daughter health education group
- Co-facilitated a health education group for pre-teen girls
- Served as an on-call crisis manager for medical staff and the Harbor School

Blackstone Valley Community Action Program Pawtucket, RI
Adolescent Parenting Program Case Manager 2001-2003

- Assessed and monitored educational, medical, and social progress of thirty teen parents and their children

- Served as a liaison between clients and the Department of Human Services
- Instructed local high school teens on pregnancy and disease prevention
- Provided support and referrals to local social service agencies
- Coordinated life skills and parenting workshops

Women's Resource Center of South County

Volunteer Domestic Violence Advocate

Wakefield, RI
2000-2001

- Provided support and referrals to survivors of domestic violence
- Staffed drop-in center, hotline, and legal advocacy office
 - Assisted with the administration of restraining orders

Writing Cover Letters: Suggested Content

Your present address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Specific Name
Title
Agency/Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Dr., Mr. or Ms. _____:

Opening paragraph - Tell why you are writing, naming the position or field or general area of work about which you are inquiring. Mention how you learned about the opening and/or organization.

Middle paragraph - Talk about your qualifications. Do not repeat information from your resume verbatim. Do not list jobs. Make it clear why you are interested in the position and why they should be interested in you. The key is to highlight your skills, work with the population(s) of interest, and work with systems and issues important to the position and agency of interest. Mention specific results or achievements. This section is key and the one that can differentiate you from the next candidate.

Closing paragraph - Close by making a specific request. Usually reiterate that you would like an interview. State how the person can reach you but be sure to mention that you will follow up the letter with a phone call with a week (or two weeks) to see if there is any further information you can provide for the employer. Thank the employer for her/his time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Your name typed

REMEMBER: NEVER SEND A RESUME WITHOUT A COVER LETTER!

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Sharon E. Oliver
59 Yellowbird Drive
Bedford, MA 01730
(617) 100-0000

February 23, 2008

Karen McCoy, Director
Humanity, Inc.
375 High Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Ms. McCoy,

As I near the end of my Master of Social Work program, I have begun to search for jobs in program planning and evaluation. Margaret Hampton, your former co-worker, knew of my interest in services for teenage mothers and phoned to describe the position to me.

I had a great deal of experience in research before returning to graduate school. I have brought that experience to my field training and have completed a year-long outcome evaluation on children's support programs for the Boston Public Schools. I have also had the opportunity to plan an after-school program as part of the internship. Following the introduction of the program, I assisted in grant writing and lobbying for funds to continue the program. I have recently worked with Dr. Ann Cameron on her research program on the efficacy of support services to single mothers.

Your position is appealing because it affords the opportunity to apply my research and planning skills to a social issue that I care about and because it allows for close working relationships with both public and private service providers while spending a great deal of time working autonomously.

I would enjoy the opportunity to interview with you for this position and to discuss your organization in more detail. You can reach me at 617-100-1000. I will call you in two weeks to see if there is anything further that I can provide. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Sharon E. Oliver

References

It is very important that you locate at least **three** references you feel confident will speak highly of your work and ability. These references could be a field supervisor, professor, and *former employer*. These references should be able to speak about how they think you will perform for a new employer and your qualifications for a particular position; it is generally helpful if your references work in human services. You should also ask the references what they are prepared to say about you to prospective employers. Current references, people with whom you've had contact in the last couple of years, are best.

Most employers will want to talk to your references by phone so you must check with the people you ask for references if they will agree to do this. You will then want to prepare a list of names, titles, organizations, addresses, and phone numbers to present to the employer in the interview. It can be very frustrating to a potential employer if he/she is unable to reach your references because they are on vacation or out sick. It can also hold up the hiring process. It would be to your benefit to ask your references to write a general letter of recommendation for you to present to employers. You can then present the list of names and numbers to the employer and follow-up by indicating "in case one of the references should be difficult to reach, I have given you a general letter of recommendation each has written for me." Having the letter will also give you a chance to see what the reference will say about you.

Interviewing Guidelines

This is perhaps the most nerve-wracking part of the job search process because it is common to walk into an interview feeling as though you are at the mercy of the interviewer. Although difficult, it is beneficial to view the interview as a two way process. You must evaluate the setting, people, and position to know whether the fit will be a good one. If you are prepared to do that and to talk about yourself and what you can bring to the agency or organization, you are ready and need not worry. Refer back to the skills, values, and interests section to formulate the kind of information you want to take away from the interview and the kind of information you want the interviewer to know so he/she will be convinced you know yourself and what is right for you.

Below are basic guidelines that will allow you to relax in knowing you are ready to go!

1. Be prepared:

Do your homework. Know yourself. Complete the skills, values, and interests assignments if you have not already done so. Know which of your skills, values, and interests are useful, relevant, applicable and/or essential to the job opening and organization. Know what the agency does, the kinds of services provided, the populations served. Give serious thought to why you want to work in that agency and with that population delivering those particular services.

You can not know everything about the agency, but learn what you can. Most organizations have web pages where you can research the agency. For companies that do not have web pages, see if you can get an annual report and any materials used for outreach and advertising. Use *Nexus/Lexus* at Mugar Library or other reference sources to search for information on the agency or on social issues, policy decisions, etc., that might affect the agency. Talk to faculty, staff, and alumni about the agency and the issues related to it. Figure out what you don't know and formulate questions based on the gaps in your information. A list of questions you may want to ask is included at the end of this section. Knowing all that you can about the agency will help you talk about your goals and demonstrate how they are in line with the goals of the agency.

2. Packaging:

Your appearance is a sign of respect for the interviewer, the agency, and the field. Although social work staff at many agencies may dress casually on the job, do not take this as a sign you can present yourself casually at an interview (no jeans, shorts, or sandals). Keep your appearance simple and appropriate for the job, i.e., if the job involves contact with corporate clients and board members demonstrate that you understand the business culture, including attire. Save the latest trend-setting fashions and accessories for social occasions.

3. Enthusiasm goes a long way:

Your voice and body language say a lot about your interest in the job and about your energy-level. In this case, being yourself means answering questions the way that you would if you were not in a job interview. You should speak as if having a conversation with another professional who is trying to learn more about you. You will be more relaxed if you aren't trying to sit, speak, look, and sound like someone else.

Your best opportunity to show enthusiasm is in asking questions. Whether throughout the interview or at the end, be sure to have questions ready for the interviewer(s). Show that you are thoughtful and that you make careful choices regarding your job search. Show that you are curious. Do not, however, just fill the air for fear of silence. When you run out of questions and relevant information to share, let the interview be over. Silence is generally the greatest fear for interviewees.

Extended and repeated silences may indicate that you have both shared what you needed to and have come to an appropriate ending of a meaningful exchange.

It will help if you practice with someone else or at least practice in front of a mirror. Mock interviewing, or practicing within someone else, is preferable because the other person can point out habits you may have such as say “uhh”, slouching in your chair, shaking your foot, etc.

4. Ease of the interview:

As crazy as it sounds, try to put the interviewer at ease. Use familiar and appropriate humor and seem self-assured. The greatest fallacy of the job search process is that interviewers always know what they are doing and that they try to be intimidating. The majority are not professional interviewers. Most are human service professionals who have a full-time job and have been asked to lead the recruiting process in addition to other responsibilities. They do not necessarily know how to access the best and most useful information from candidates and know that the wrong choice of a candidate will be their responsibility. You might say that interviewers have a reason to be nervous. If you can make it "easy to be with you" and you seem sure of yourself, the interviewer is likely to enjoy the interview and being with you. Your major task will be to give the interviewer the information you think is most important and applicable to the job opening.

5. Be honest, positive, and thoughtful:

Although it is difficult when nervous, listen to the questions carefully before responding. Taking a second to think shows you are a thoughtful person and will allow you to answer honestly with relevant information. Silences will seem longer to you than they do to the interviewer.

A list of improper questions, that is questions that are inappropriate or illegal for the employer to ask, follows. You should give serious consideration to how you will handle it if asked one of these questions. You may wish to ask if the employer feels that information is important and/or crucial to fulfilling the position. Because not all persons with whom you will interview do it professionally, they may not be aware of the legal guidelines. You may choose to reveal information to the following questions, but know that employers are not supposed to ask. It is up to you to decide how you will handle such questions.

Interviewers should not ask about:²

1. Age
2. Date of birth
3. Previous address
4. How long at present address
5. National origin
6. Religion
7. Name of priest, rabbi, or minister
8. Father's surname
9. Mother's surname
10. Maiden name
11. Age(s) of child(ren)
12. How many children
13. Marital status
14. Who will care for children
15. Spouse's place of employment
16. Spouse's residence
17. Parents' residence
18. Parents' place of employment
19. Whether residence is owned or rented
20. Loans or financial problems
21. Wage attachments
22. Personal bankruptcy
23. If ever arrested
24. Legal convictions, unless relevant to the job
25. Foreign languages spoken, unless required by the job
26. Race
27. Memberships in social organizations
28. Attitudes towards geographical relocation, unless required by the job
29. Height and weight, unless required by the job
30. Type of military discharge

It is important to think about how you will respond if asked one of the above questions. There is no right or wrong answer; your approach should be based on your individual style. One possible response might be, “could you tell me how that question is related to the job?”

Remember that there are numerous questions, some of which may feel intrusive, that the employer may legally ask. Some of these questions follow.

Interviewers may ask about:

1. Reasons for termination of previous employment
2. About references
3. Work schedule
4. Previous work experiences
5. Job related feelings about previous assignments or present position
6. Career interests
7. Job duties

² List provided by the Career Services Office of the Bryn Mawr College School of Social Work.

8. Education and training
9. Job related professional associations
10. Qualifications for duties related to the job.
11. Citizenship

In the course of being honest with your answers, try to be positive. Even if a question is posed in a negative way, practice turning it around so that your response takes on a positive light. The following example demonstrates how you might do this.

Question: What is your greatest weakness?

Negative answer: I would say that I haven't had much experience making DSM-IV diagnoses.

Positive answer: I would say the thing I am most excited about is building on my experience making DSM-IV diagnoses.

6. Have examples of the skills you claim:

Your explanations of why they should hire you will be more powerful if backed up with objective facts. No one knows your history better than you. Think about the skills you have and when you have used them. Consider difficult tasks and conflicts that you have had to deal with and how you handled them. Consider challenges to your values and what keeps you interested in a job. Be ready to give examples in response to commonly asked questions. A list of these questions is included in this section.

7. Ending the interview:

Try to sense when the interview is over. Be sure you understand the next steps in the process before you leave. Do you need to furnish more information? Will they call or write or should you contact them? If there is to be any discussion of salary and benefits in the first interview, it should come near the end. This discussion usually takes place in subsequent interviews. Use the first interview to express your sincere interest in the agency and job. Always send a thank you letter or card to all who interview you.

8. Second interviews and call-backs:

Organizations do not call all candidates back for a second interview. They simply do not have time. So, if you get asked back, they are interested in you. This time around, you will probably be introduced to more people within the agency and will be asked similar questions about why you want the job, about your skills, etc. They are trying to finalize their decision and they are giving you serious consideration. Only go to a second interview if you are serious about the position.

Sometimes you will have a round of interviews on the first day or sometimes you will be called back. Whatever the format, be prepared. Practice, get a good night's sleep the night before, carry extra resumes.

Most Commonly Asked Questions in Interviews

1. What are your long and short-term goals and how did you come to have them?
2. How are you preparing yourself to meet these goals?
3. What do you see yourself doing in five years?
4. What would you be if you could be anything?
5. What are the rewards you expect in the career path you have chosen and in this job?
6. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
7. Why did you choose this career?
8. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
9. How would your friends describe you?
10. What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
11. How has your education prepared you for this work?
12. How has your work experience prepared you for this work?
13. Why should I hire you?
14. How do you define success for yourself?
15. What is success to you?
16. What kind of contributions can you make to our organization?
17. What do you look for in a supervisor?
18. Describe the qualities of a good manager.
19. What have been your three most satisfying accomplishments?
20. If you were hiring someone for this position, what would you look for?
21. Why did you select BUSSW? What was good/bad about your experience?
22. Do you have plans to continue your studies?
23. Are your grades a mark of your professional aptitude?
24. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
25. In what kind of environment do you like to work?
26. How do you handle stress and pressure?
27. Why do you want to work for this organization?
28. Which criteria do you use to evaluate an organization?
29. Are you willing to travel if the job requires it?
30. What have been the greatest challenges and how have you dealt with them?

Suggested Questions for You to Ask of an Interviewer

1. How long have you been here and how did you come to work here?
2. What do you like most and least about your job and this agency?
3. What would you change about this organization if you could change one thing?
4. Which qualities do you feel are most important in the person who may take the job?
5. What has your career path been like?
6. What do you think the most difficult aspects of this job are?
7. What do you think the most rewarding aspects of this job are?
8. How much opportunity is there for autonomy and for teamwork?
9. How much interaction is there amongst staff persons during and after work hours?
10. How did this job come to be available at this time?

Review skills, values and interests and inquire about the capacity for meeting your prioritized skills, values and interests within the current position for which you are applying.

Sample Thank You Letter

102 Brighton Avenue
Allston, MA 02134

March 1, 2008

Ms. Sandra Everett
Program Coordinator
Project HOPE
699 Hacienda Avenue
Mesa, AZ 87690

Dear Ms. Everett,

I appreciated and enjoyed speaking with you last Wednesday regarding the opening for an outpatient clinician at Project HOPE.

I am impressed by your agency's approach to meeting the needs of families, not just your adolescent clients. Your services are both holistic and comprehensive and seem to respond to the varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds of your clients. Your reflections on your experiences as a beginning therapist at Project HOPE were both amusing and helpful. I appreciate your candor.

After meeting with you, I am convinced that Project HOPE, the job opening, and my skills are compatible. My experience with a diversity of clients and presenting problems seems similar to the "typical" caseload you described. I look forward to an opportunity to use my Spanish again. In addition to my experience, I come with a great deal of enthusiasm and motivation.

I look forward to speaking to you again in the near future. Thank you for the time you spent with me and please let me know if there is anything further I can provide. I can be reached at the address and phone above after April 30, 2008. Until then, I am at (701) 855-9221.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kipme

Sample Job Offer Letter of Decline

212 Salisbury Drive
Oberlin, NH 03426

March 1, 2008

Ms. Ariel Masters
P.O. Box 935
Shenandoah Nursing Home
Carlin, NH 03525

Dear Ms. Masters,

Thank you for extending the offer of family therapist and intake coordinator to me and for giving me a week to consider the offer. As you can imagine, this time of multiple interviews has been hectic. I can not tell you how much I appreciate your consideration.

Though impressed with your program, facility, and staff, I have decided to accept another position that offers the opportunity to work with the elderly in a medical setting.

I look forward to hearing you speak at the Annual Conference for Gerontology Professionals in July. I wish you the best of luck in your continued search. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jon Acton

Negotiating Terms of Employment

When you get to this stage of the employment process, it is important that you understand your needs and be ready to negotiate. Generally, people think of salary as being the most important thing you will negotiate. However, you need to think about many other things. The various things you will need to negotiate are outlined below with items for consideration. Remember this very important fact. Employers, like everyone else, would like to get the very best for the least amount of cost to them. They may not get everything they want in a candidate, and they may have to pay more than they would like. It is all part of the process.

Salary:

Balance the benefits that follow before deciding on a firm salary. Decide the value of these to you. Figure out the minimum you need to live and what you think you are worth. If asked to present salary requirements, you may want to give a range, but be sure you can live with the bottom end of that range if that is what you are offered. If offered a salary with which you cannot live, be prepared to negotiate by presenting how valuable you can be to them and that you cannot live on the proposed salary. Be ready to hear that they cannot raise the salary. Not all agencies have that ability, but some do.

Social Work Salary Negotiations:

It can be to your advantage to request a higher starting salary than the one you are presented with at the time of the job offer. In the business world, salary negotiation is commonplace. Social workers should also be prepared to advocate for themselves and ask for higher salaries. When negotiating salary, it is typical to ask for a few thousand more than your true “bottom line” and work down. For example, if you are offered \$30,000 as a starting salary, but want to make \$33,000, you would want to request a salary around \$36,000 and hopefully you and the employer will be able to meet in the middle. You might even end up with the high number you request! However, when asking for more, be prepared to demonstrate why your qualifications are “deserving” of a higher salary. Such evidence would include relevant field placement experience, previous social work experience, a dual degree or any other special skills that differentiate you from the next candidate.

Again, not all agencies will be able to raise your starting salary. Many social work organizations operate under a limited budget. Another way around this is to request a significant raise for the next fiscal year. You can even request to be involved in the budget process and assist with grant writing and fundraising. **Note: With all salary negotiations, especially with promises of a raise in the future, be sure to get everything in writing.**

Be sure to consider all parts of “salary” including benefits (health, dental, eye care, child and/or elder care, tuition remission, 401K or other retirement plan), vacation time and/or birthdays off, LICSW supervision and continuing education. An agency with a small budget might not be able to raise your starting salary, but they may have a strong benefits package, or you may be able to negotiate your benefits package.

Health and Dental Insurance:

If you need benefits and they will not be offered to you through your job, be aware that policies can cost over \$200 per month. Some agencies cannot afford to subscribe to a plan. If that is the case, you should advocate for more money to put toward a policy. More often than not, agencies will not offer dental plans. Typically agencies pay 80-85% of health care policy premiums. The employee usually contributes the rest.

Supervision:

One of the most important benefits of a job for a new graduate is supervision. For example, to earn the LICSW in Massachusetts, a new LCSW must be supervised one hour for every 35 hours of work by a LICSW for two years full-time. If your agency does not offer LICSW supervision and you want to go on for that license yourself, you will have to find private supervision which can be obtained at a cost. If you cannot get supervision, you should advocate for more money to put toward the costs of getting supervision off-site.

You should also be concerned with the qualifications of your supervisor. Ask to meet the person and spend some time figuring out if you think your styles will work well together and if the person can offer you insight and help you develop professionally.

Continuing Education/Tuition Remission:

In order to maintain your LCSW and go on for the LICSW you will need a specified number of continuing education credits. You should figure this into your budget when figuring how much money you will need. If you can get training on-site that count toward the license or if the agency will pay for some hours, you could save a great deal of money.

Vacation, sick leave, and personal time:

You must decide how much time you think you need and how what the agency is offering measures up to what you want and need. Jobs that offer few or no time off generally result in burnout of workers who feel underappreciated and over stressed.

Day care, family leave, and flexibility:

The existence and generosity of these benefits show a commitment of the agency to you and your personal life. Employers that offer these benefits often understand you have needs outside the office. You should try to determine if you will be "punching the time clock" or if the agency trusts its people to fulfill their obligations and make up time missed. You should determine how much structure you have and how valuable benefits like these are to you both personally and financially.

401K and Other Retirement Plans:

If you are offered these as options, carefully consider how valuable they are to you and the quality of the plans. You should check the investment you will have to make, how long you must be employed by the agency for the plan to pay-off, what the penalties may be if you leave the agency and want your investment back, etc. Ask around and compare the plan with others so you will know how beneficial they may be to you.

Outlining Job Responsibilities:

In addition to the benefits outlined above, you should consider the many terms of employment that you are signing on to provide for the agency. For instance, you should clarify the average size of your caseload, the number of hours you will work, the ratio of client contact to paperwork, the amount of time on the road, the type of services you will provide and the skills you will exercise.

Put it in writing!

When you accept the job, you should write a letter outlining the terms of employment as you understand them and request any modifications in writing before you begin work. You would like to think that what you are offered is what you will get but that is not always so. It is better to be safe than sorry. You would not want to start the job search process over again because your supervision fell through or your job is not what you were promised. An example of a letter of acceptance follows.

Sample Letter of Acceptance

444 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10023

March 1, 2008

Dr. Eric A. Jonas Jr.
Shimayee Reservation School
Sioux-City, SD 50014

Dear Dr. Jonas,

As we discussed in our phone conversation, I am pleased to accept the position of school counselor. I have taken the liberty of outlining the terms of employment as I understand them. If there is to be a change or if I have misunderstood, please let me know in writing within two weeks from the date of this letter.

I understand that I will be providing individual and family counseling to an average weekly caseload of 25 clients or families. I will also supervise student volunteers in the after-school program in weekly meetings and individual sessions as needed. I understand that I am required to maintain all case files on my caseload which, as you explained, takes about twenty minutes each week for each case.

The salary we negotiated begins at \$32,500 with yearly reviews and merit raises. I will enroll in the Met Health and Dental plan and am able to be reimbursed up to \$300 in conferences or training per year. Jennifer Cones will provide supervision one hour per week on-site. I also understand that I am entitled to 21 days of paid leave per year to be used for vacation, sick, or personal time.

I can not tell you how excited I am to begin working with you and the staff at the school. I enjoyed our interviews and believe we will all work well together. I look forward to seeing you on June 15, 2008, my first day of work.

Sincerely,

Allison Bankit

Where the Jobs Are

Trends in the Field

There are several other trends in the field that particularly beginning social workers should understand as they enter their first post-Masters job search. Some of these trends are outlined below.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the social work field will grow much faster on average than most other fields during the 2006-2016 decade. The Bureau projects a 22% growth in the field during this period of time. Jobs in elder services are expected to increase as the baby boom generation grows older. In addition, a growth in private social service agencies is expected to increase, with many state and local government services being contracted out to smaller, private agencies. Growth in the following areas is expected to occur much faster than the average for all jobs in the United States: Child, family and school social work, mental health and substance abuse social work, and medical/public health social work. While growth is expected, competition will continue to be fierce, particularly in cities, even with an MSW degree. Some knowledge of the expectations and job requirements for each field will be helpful in obtaining a position most suitable for you.

The Most Popular Jobs

The most desired social work positions are often found in school social work, hospital social work, and outpatient therapeutic services. Unfortunately, the jobs are scarce and the competition is great. If you are sure one of these positions is what you want, you should have experience (preferably one of your field placements) in a school system, hospital, or outpatient setting.

School systems are highly competitive and openings are difficult to find. You will need to do a great deal of networking and know that you'll be competing with guidance counselors and school psychologists for these positions. Previous experience is essential. A second language and work with children, substance abuse, and sexual and physical abuse could be very beneficial.

School Social Worker/School Adjustment Counselor Certification is required in Massachusetts to work in a school setting. The Department of Education in Malden (http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html) oversees certification for School Adjustment Counselors. Certification requirements include: 1. an MSW degree 2. an internship in a school setting, 3. a passing score on the examination. The Department of Education also administers certification for School Guidance Counselors.

Medical hospital settings have so many applicants for positions that you probably will need to have had prior experience to be considered for an interview. The pay is generally generous so many social workers are attracted to these positions. Experience that will give you an edge includes work with domestic abuse, sexual and physical abuse, substance abuse, fluency in a second language, or work in a managed care setting (preferably medical). If you are unable to get into a medical hospital, you may want to consider beginning in a community health center or in an inpatient psychiatric facility to get experience with health issues and managed care, respectively. The trend in health care is in case management.

If you want to do outpatient therapy, especially in the Boston area, be prepared for fierce competition. Be prepared for a great deal of Fee for Service (FFS) work in this area. While FFS hourly rates often look desirable, keep in mind that you are only paid if your client attends his/her appointment and insurance benefits are usually not included. Full-time, salaried outpatient social work settings are harder to find, but do exist. If you are able to commute or move, you will probably find better opportunities and more money.

Bilingual/Bicultural Students

Students who are bilingual and/or bicultural should be very careful in the interview process to screen for quality jobs. There are an abundance of jobs asking for these candidates, but you must make sure you will be providing the services you want to provide and not just interpreting or filling a token role. You will have more choices and many offers because there are more positions for bilingual/bicultural workers than there are workers to fill them. Take your time and screen for what is right for you.

Clinicians Doing Outreach

Social workers should be aware that many agencies have begun to require recruitment of clients and the worker's salary is contingent upon maintaining a caseload. This arrangement saves the agency the costs of hiring an admissions/outreach worker. You should consider that you will generally be required to carry a full caseload so you will not have time to recruit during work hours. New social workers in particular generally do not have the contacts to have consistent referrals. Your salary will not be guaranteed under such an arrangement. Be careful and ask good questions. If you face this situation, try to get a guarantee of a minimum salary, a reduction in caseload until you can build a network for referrals, and find out who will help you get started in the outreach/recruiting process.

Saturation and Geographic Location

With new MSW graduates from Boston University, Boston College, Smith, Simmons, Wheelock, Salem State and Springfield College each year, there is often a saturation of new social workers in Boston. The majority hope to work in Boston or its immediate suburbs. After graduation, salaries may drop because employers know that competition is so fierce that someone will take positions for low salaries. This is especially true for outpatient treatment. If a worker is able to move or willing to commute the salaries are generally much higher. New Bedford, Fall River and locations on the Cape often cannot get enough qualified applicants. The Center receives many quality jobs announcements from these locations each year. Boston salaries tend to climb a bit in early fall as the competition declines a bit. Other options for those especially committed to outpatient clinical work may be to start with inpatient, residential, or day-treatment where you can increase your clinical skills and ease your way into outpatient work. A scarcity of social work jobs in major cities and more opportunities in rural areas is a trend consistent throughout the United States.

“Watch” the trends

Keep networking and read the paper. Watch for policies and macro issues and consider not only how those issues will have an impact on clients and services, but how they will affect social work employment.

Licensure

Do I need a license to practice as a Social Worker in the State of Massachusetts?

Yes. Massachusetts's law forbids the "practice" of social work without a license. Practice is defined as rendering or offering to render professional service for any fee, monetary or otherwise, to individuals, families, or groups of individuals, which services involve the application of social work theory and methods in the prevention, treatment, or resolution of mental and emotional disorders or family or social dysfunctioning caused by physical illness, intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict or environmental stress. Such professional services may include, but shall not be limited to, the formulation of a psychosocial evaluation, counseling, psychotherapy of a nonmedical nature, referral to community resources, and the development and provision of educational programs.

Individuals performing administrative or educational functions are not required to be licensed, but, since there is considerable overlap with "practice," it is strongly recommended that ALL Social Workers obtain a license.

How do I become a Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW)?

As an LCSW, one may provide clinical services only as the employee of another individual, agency or institution, under the supervision of an LICSW. You must receive individual supervision at a rate of one hour for every 35 hours worked.

1. Pre-screening/Application Process

- a) Application, signed and notarized (processed by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB))
 1. Visit <http://www.aswb.org/massachusetts/Mass.application.pdf> **OR**
 2. Call ASWB at 866-527-2384
- b) Payment of application fee of \$155
- c) Photograph – 2" x 2"
- d) Official transcript of the highest relevant degree
- e) A total of three reference forms (see below)

Two professional individuals familiar with the applicant's professional experience in the field of social work shall complete section A of a reference form.

The most recent second year field placement supervisor licensed at the LICSW or LCSW level (or equivalent from another jurisdiction) shall complete sections A & B of a reference form.

2. Masters Level Examination (*to be scheduled after application approval*)

- a) No fixed administration date – candidates typically can schedule an exam within 4 weeks of receiving application approval
 - a. Register at www.aswb.org or call 1-888-579-EXAM (3926)
 - b. Pay examination fee of \$175
- b) Electronically administered at an ACT testing center
- c) 170 questions with 150 questions counting towards final score
- d) A passing exam score in Massachusetts is a scaled score of 75.

3. Pay Initial Licensure Fee (*to be paid once all requirements are met*)

- a) Fee of \$57
- b) Payable to ASWB, P.O. Box 1508, Culpeper, VA 22701

How do I become a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)?

To practice independently in the state of Massachusetts, that is, not under the supervision of another individual, agency or institution, one must obtain a LICSW.

1. Masters or doctoral degree in social work (no other field may be accepted).
2. A current license as a LCSW (see above).
3. 3,500 hours of post-MSW clinical social work experience under the supervision of someone who is currently licensed as an LICSW, or holds an equivalent license in another state. The 3,500 hours of experience must be accumulated over not less than two years post- MSW.
4. A total of 100 hours of individual one- to- one supervision from someone who is currently licensed as an LICSW, or holds an equivalent license in another state, at a rate of 50 hours per year, or one hour for every 35 hours of work experience.
5. Complete application process similar to LCSW process described above and pay applicable fees.
6. Pass Clinical examination administered by ASWB.

What does it take to maintain a license?

Each licensing jurisdiction has different rules governing continued professional competence. Since statutes and regulations change, licensed social workers need to ensure familiarity with current directives. Some states make the rules available online; if licensed in Massachusetts you should regularly check the Board's web site links to the rules.

After obtaining your initial license, you should investigate whether you are wholly or partly exempted from continuing education during the first cycle. Typically states require a specific number of hours or continuing education credits during each licensure cycle, but some give new licensees special credit. As you begin to seek sources of continuing education, you should be very careful to attend courses that meet the licensure Board's requirements. You should avoid courses that have not obtained pre-approval.

Am I responsible for renewing my license?

Yes. Renewal for both LCSW and LICSW must occur by October 1st, biennially (each even year). Renewal fees:

- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker \$68
- Licensed Certified Social Worker \$57

How do I prepare for the exam?

There are study courses, programs, and guides you may purchase. However, the Career Center has copies of both the Intermediate (LCSW) and Clinical (LICSW) sample tests that students and alumni can check out for free. This 50-question sample test will give you a sense of the exam questions and where your strengths and weaknesses lie. If you want to purchase your own copy of this study guide, it is available through ASWB. To order, visit https://www.aswb.org/study_guides.php.

It is important to remember that the exam is written by clinical social workers to assess your clinical skills. There are also limited questions on management and supervision. It is suggested that you focus your studying on social work skills such as case management, treatment planning, assessment, referral, etc.; diagnoses; issues related to treatment (i.e. suicidality); and treatment theories.

Studying *DSM-IV* and the *Social Work Dictionary* will help to familiarize you with diagnoses and important terminology in the field. The exam is not a comprehensive test of everything you learned in social work school. It is a test of your ability to do clinical work. Talk to someone who recently took the exam. You can also review class notes from your Clinical Social Work classes and Human Behavior.

Can I get hired before I have the LCSW?

Many job postings state licensing as a requirement for candidates. However, many employers will consider licensed eligible social workers. That means you should convey to the employer that your intent is to take the next available test date. New MSW graduates have obtained employment prior to becoming licensed but often their employment is contingent upon passing the exam.

How do I become licensed in a state other than Massachusetts?

Each state has different regulations for social licensing and certification. If you are interested in being licensed in a state or applying for reciprocity, only information from the destination state should be considered reliable. You can obtain a list of state Boards' telephones, addresses, and Internet links from:

http://www.aswb.org/resources_reg_boards.php

Job Placement and Temporary Employment Services

What are Job Placement Agencies?

Job Placement Agencies or "head hunters" are professional placement agents hired to find workers to fill particular positions. Generally, the agency fees are paid by the hiring organization. Placement agencies eliminate the administrative busywork and the screening process involved in hiring a new employee. Few social service agencies can afford to hire a recruiter to do this work so they will handle the hiring process themselves. Consequently there are few agencies in existence.

You should be aware that placement agencies paid by employers to hire a new employee have the agency's interests in mind, and not necessarily yours. You should be careful when using this sort of service that the job offered is really what you want. Ask lots of questions. On the other hand, you should question any agency that asks you to pay for them to find you a job. Beware! You may find they can offer only a handful of opportunities; they cannot meet your needs; and you will be out hundreds of dollars.

For graduates whose student loan deferments are coming to an end and who do not yet have jobs, forbearance agreements are possible for many loans. Forbearance means that you are currently unable to pay the loan but agree to do so as soon as you are able. You can arrange to pay the interest only or you can allow the interest to capitalize and be added to the loan. If you choose to arrange for forbearance, you will be asked to register with an employment agency. You may want to begin by contacting the following agency:

Job Connection, Ltd.
PO Box 485
Bristol, RI 02809
401-253-1435
<http://www.jobconnectionltd.com/>

Placements primarily in Rhode Island and Southeastern MA

Although the services of *Job Connection* have not been endorsed by Boston University or the School of Social Work, many students have found their services to be valuable when applying for forbearance or to learn more about employment agencies in general.

Loan Forgiveness

The Association of American Medical colleges provides information on loan forgiveness programs in most states. For example, social workers in Massachusetts working full-time in an underserved area at a community health center are eligible for a repayment per year of service of \$12,500. Go to www.aamc.org/stloan for more information.

Loan forgiveness programs not specific to social workers, but still possibly applicable can be found at:

<http://www.finaid.org/loans/forgiveness.phtml>

What are Temporary Employment Agencies?

Agencies that specialize in temporary work in social services generally place social workers to cover for permanent workers who are out sick, on maternity leave, or on vacation. These agencies will also call social workers to fill-in for shifts when regular employers call-in and are unavailable. Some such temporary employment agencies are:

Arbor Associates <http://www.arborstaffing.com>

Delta-T Group <http://www.delta-tgroup.com>

Lighthouse Staffing, Inc. <http://www.lighthouseplacement.com>

Social Work p.r.n. <http://www.socialworkprn.com>

Although Boston University and the School of Social Work cannot endorse the services of *Arbor Associates, Delta-T Group, Lighthouse Staffing, or Social Work p.r.n.* several graduates have engaged in successful temporary work for these agencies during their job search.

Planning Your Job Search

The average job search takes *two-to-three months*. You should decide when you want to be working and count backward on the calendar. The date you have selected is when you will begin submitting resumes and doing interviews. You may want to plan to schedule informational interviews and do the self-assessment process in the booklet before that date. Practice interviewing and be as prepared as possible before you begin the real thing.

Use the following checklist to help identify job search steps you may have missed.

I have...

- completed the self assessment process (prioritizing skills, values and interests)
- done informational interviews and begun networking
- written my resume
- used multiple resources to find job listings
- written cover letters and sent resumes to potential employers
- followed up on cover letters and resumes with phone calls
- practiced interviewing and considered responses to the most commonly asked interview questions
- formulated good questions to ask employers
- sent thank you letters to all who interviewed me
- determined my minimum salary requirements and the benefits I need and want
- responded to all offers with letters of decline or acceptance
- used my letter of acceptance to clearly spell out my expectations of salary, benefits, and responsibilities

The following page may be photocopied to help you keep track of your status with employers.

Tracking the Job Search Process

Agency: _____
Contact Name: _____
Title: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Position for which I am applying: _____
Description of position and qualifications: _____

Initial cover letter was sent on: _____
In my cover letter, I indicated that I would call to follow-up by: _____

I actually called to follow-up on: _____
I ___ was ___ was not granted an interview.
My first interview or round of interviews is/was: _____

I sent a thank you note(s) to:

Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____

My second interview or round of interviews is/was: _____
I sent a thank you note(s) to:

Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____
Name: _____	Date sent: _____

I ___ was ___ was not offered the position. If offered, date of offer: _____
I ___ declined ___ accepted the position on: _____
I sent letter of acceptance outlining salary, benefits, and job responsibilities
on: _____ and asked for a written response of any changes
by: _____

Other notes: