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career

Future job opportunities

Where/how to get training

Associate degree programs in human services are offered by 24 North Carolina community colleges. Colleges in our area offering training are: Central Carolina Community College, Edgecombe Community College, Piedmont Community College, Sandhills Community College, Vance Granville Community College, and Wake Technical Community College.

The Human Services Technology curriculum prepares students for entry-level positions in institutions and agencies which provide social, community, and educational services. Along with core courses, students take courses which prepare them for specialization in specific human service areas.

Graduates are prepared for entry level positions in a variety of settings, including adoption agencies, child care protective services, retirement and health centers, departments of social services, departments of aging, and domestic violence and family abuse centers. Although a bachelor's degree usually is not required for this occupation, employers increasingly are seeking individuals with relevant work experience or education beyond high school. Certificates or associate degrees in subjects such as social work, human services, or one of the social or behavioral sciences meet most employers' requirements.

Human services programs have a core curriculum that trains students to observe patients and record information, conduct patient interviews, implement treatment plans, employ problem-solving techniques, handle crisis intervention matters, and use proper case management and referral procedures. General education courses in liberal arts, sciences, and the humanities also are part of the curriculum. Many degree programs require completion of a supervised internship.

An employee's education may influence the kind of work he is assigned and the degree of responsibility that is entrusted to him. For example, workers with a college degree might be assigned to do supportive counseling, coordinate program activities, or manage a group home. Regardless of the academic or work background of employees, most employers provide some form of in-service training for their employees.

Scholarship Information

Grants, scholarships, loans and work/study programs are available for college and private school students. For most of this aid, students should submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, available from high school guidance counselors and higher education financial aid offices.



For more information on federal financial aid programs, call (800) 4-FEDAID

focus on jobs in Human Services

Human service workers and assistants is a generic term for people with various job titles, including social service assistant, case management aide, social work assistant, community support worker, alcohol or drug abuse counselor, mental health aide, community outreach worker, life skill counselor, and gerontology aide. They usually work under the direction of professionals from a variety of fields, such as nursing, psychiatry, psychology, rehabilitative or physical therapy, or social work. The amount of responsibility and supervision they are given varies a great deal. Some have little direct supervision; others work under close supervision. Human service workers and assistants provide direct and indirect client services. They assess clients' needs, establish their eligibility for



benefits and services, and help clients obtain them. They examine financial documents such as rent receipts and tax returns to determine whether the client is eligible for food stamps, Medicaid, welfare, and other human service programs. They also arrange for transportation and escorts, if necessary, and provide emotional support. Human service workers and assistants monitor and keep case records on clients and report progress to supervisors and case managers. Human service workers and assistants also

may transport or accompany clients to group meal sites, adult day care centers, or doctors' offices. They may telephone or visit clients' homes to make sure services are being received, or to help resolve disagreements, such as those between tenants and landlords. They also may help clients complete insurance or medical forms, as well as applications for financial assistance. Additionally, social and human service workers and assistants may assist others with daily living needs. Human service workers and assistants play a variety of roles in a community. They may organize and lead group activities, assist clients in need of counseling or crisis intervention, or administer a food bank or emergency fuel program. In halfway houses, group homes, and government-supported housing programs, they assist adults who need supervision with personal hygiene and daily living skills. They review clients' records, ensure that they take correct doses of medication, talk with family members, and confer with medical personnel and other care givers to gain better insight into clients' backgrounds and needs. Human service workers and assistants also provide emotional support and help clients become involved in their own well being in community recreation programs and in other activities.

In psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation programs, and outpatient clinics, human service workers and assistants work with professional care providers, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers to help clients master everyday living skills, to teach them how to communicate more effectively, and to get along better with others. They support the client's participation in a treatment plan, such as individual or group counseling or occupational therapy.

According to the North Carolina Job Outlook, human service is the fourth fastest growing job sector in our state. It is fast changing as well as fast growing. In the next year, available positions are expected to increase from 4,250 to 7,200, a 71% increase. (Source: NC Employment Security Commission) Job opportunities should be excellent, particularly for applicants with appropriate postsecondary education.

The need to replace workers who move into new positions due to advancement, retirement, or for other reasons will create many additional job opportunities. This occupation, however, is not attractive to everyone. It can be draining emotionally, and the pay is relatively low. Qualified applicants should have little difficulty finding employment.

Job availability is high and tends to be concentrated in urban areas such as Fayetteville, Durham, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem.

What you wear



Working conditions of human service workers and assistants vary. Some work in offices, clinics, and hospitals, while others work in group homes, shelters, sheltered workshops, and day programs. Many spend their time in the field visiting clients. Most work a 40-hour week, although some work in the evening and on weekends.



Want to know more?

CCCC web:

www.centralcarolina.org

Toll Free in NC:

1-800-682-8353

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Jobs in this field

Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of human service workers and assistants in 1997 were:

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| State government, except education and hospitals ... | \$25,600 |
| Local government, except education and hospitals ... | \$23,500 |
| Hospitals ... | \$21,200 |
| Health and allied services, not elsewhere classified ... | \$20,600 |
| Social services, not elsewhere classified ... | \$20,200 |

Median annual earnings of human service workers and assistants were \$21,360 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$16,620 and \$27,070. The top 10 percent earned more than \$33,840, while the lowest 10 percent earned less than \$13,540.

Employers include departments of social services, departments of aging, public housing, sheltered workshops, group homes, health care facilities, departments of correction, or other human service agencies.

*Salaries may vary widely depending upon education, experience and size of employer

Skills needed

Communication, responsibility, time management, patience, understanding, and a strong desire to help others are highly valued characteristics.

Activity

Look through the classified ads and list all jobs that fall into the category of human services. Cross reference the different employers.



Profile

Charlene Ray Angier



While in high school, Charlene Ray was always interested in working with people, so she enrolled in the nursing program when she graduated from high school. This career became short lived because she and her husband were ready to start their family. She told me, "I worked in a factory for a little while, but I continued to apply for other career oriented positions. It will be eight years in June since I started working for the NC State Department of Health & Human Services in the HIV/STD Prevention & Care Branch, where I am the NC HIV Case Registrar." She currently maintains the registry of all NC reported HIV cases. "After working in the branch, I saw the effect my co-workers were having on people and our communities, and I knew immediately that this is what I wanted to be involved in. I approached my supervisors with the idea of going back to school, and they gave me full support and encouragement. Currently Charlene is attending classes at night at Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) in the Human Services curriculum and anticipates graduating with the next class. "This is a two year program, but it is taking me four years because I am working and attending classes at night. Both my supervisor and the professors at CCCC are very supportive." She said, "It is an awesome feeling to know that you can make a difference in people's lives. Initially I felt uncomfortable, but people open up because they know we care." After graduation, Charlene looks forward to the opportunity to become a Disease Intervention Specialist. She said, "It has been a long road, but it is worth it. I have two teenage children and I am very open with them about what we do. Moms and Dads, if you are looking to go back to school, don't get discouraged. Know that if people like the staff at CCCC, your family, friends, employer, and most importantly yourself, believe that you can do it, you can!"

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Best Advice

Working with people is a very rewarding profession and definitely good for the soul.