

LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, 2004

Chapter 6 of 7

Who Do Social Workers Serve?

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Chapter 6. Who Do Social Workers Serve? A Demographic Overview of Clients

Summary of the Findings

- A majority of MSWs in Behavioral Health carried caseloads that were predominantly female (54%).
- MSWs in Mental Health had a higher percentage of predominantly female caseloads than MSWs in Addictions or MSWs NPA (54% versus 14% and 43%).
- Behavioral Health social workers were more likely to serve predominantly non-Hispanic White caseloads than social workers overall (65% versus 57%).
- MSWs in Mental Health were more likely to carry predominantly non-Hispanic White caseloads than MSWs in Addictions (66% versus 51%).
- Few carry caseloads that were predominantly from any single minority group.
- MSWs in Behavioral Health served clients from multiple age groups.
- Approximately three-fifths carry caseloads that were predominantly adults who are 22 to 55 years of age.
- Private insurance was the most common source of health coverage for clients.
- Clients of MSWs in Behavioral Health were significantly more likely to receive health coverage through private insurance (42%) than those served by MSWs NPA (17%) or social workers overall (24%).
- MSWs in Mental Health were twice as likely as those in Addictions to report private insurance as the most common source of clients' health coverage (44% versus 23%).
- Approximately one-third of Behavioral Health social workers' clients had health coverage through publicly funded programs: Medicaid, 32%, and Medicare, 6%.
- Approximately one-third of clients of MSWs in Addictions were uninsured.
- MSWs in Behavioral Health served clients with a broad range of diagnoses.
- More than half saw "many clients" with diagnoses of psychosocial stressors (87%), mental illness (60%), and affective conditions (56%).
- Ninety-five percent of MSWs in Addictions reported serving clients with substance abuse conditions, compared with 29% of those in Mental Health.
- Types of presenting problems, as well as the frequency of having many clients diagnosed with specific conditions, varied by setting.
- MSWs in psychiatric hospitals reported seeing a higher percentage of clients with diagnoses of mental illness (95%) and affective disorders (63%) than MSWs in other settings.

- MSWs in health clinics or behavioral health clinics reported serving a higher percentage of clients with psychosocial stressors (both 95%) than MSWs in other settings.
- While MSWs in hospitals were most likely to report that mental illness and affective disorders were the most common presenting problems in their caseloads (both 82%), they were the social workers most likely to serve clients with substance abuse conditions (65%).

Demographics

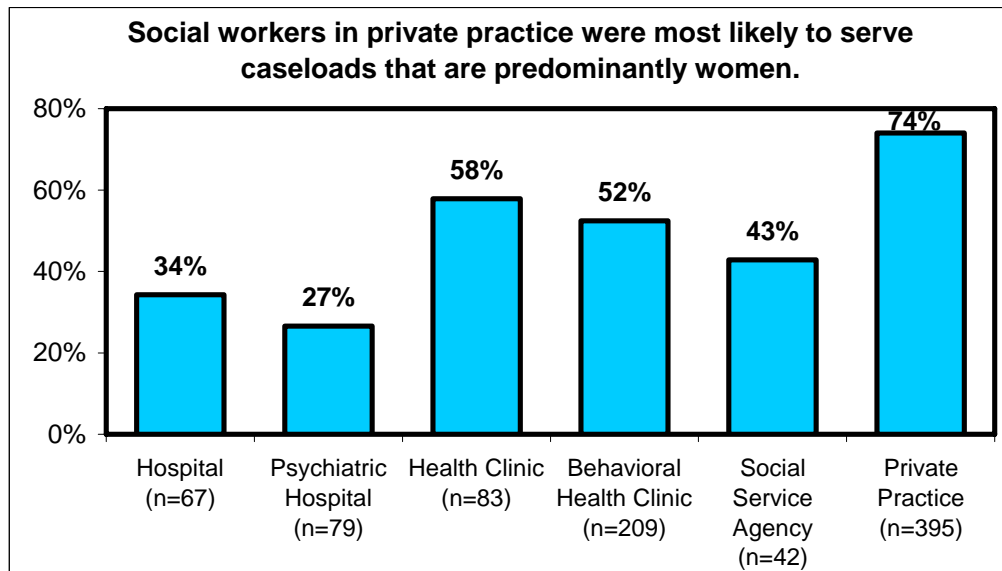
Gender

Fifty-four percent of licensed MSWs in Behavioral Health served caseloads that were predominantly female, compared to 47 percent of social workers overall. This varied quite dramatically by practice area: fifty-seven percent of social workers in Mental Health carried predominantly female caseloads, while only 14 percent of social workers in Addictions and 43 percent NPA did.

There was also dramatic variation in the gender of clients by setting, as shown in Figure 1.

Approximately three-fourths of social workers in private practice carry predominantly female caseloads. In contrast, 27 percent of social workers in psychiatric hospitals and 34 percent of those in hospitals carry predominantly female caseloads.

Figure 1. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs Serving Predominantly Female Caseloads, by Employment Setting

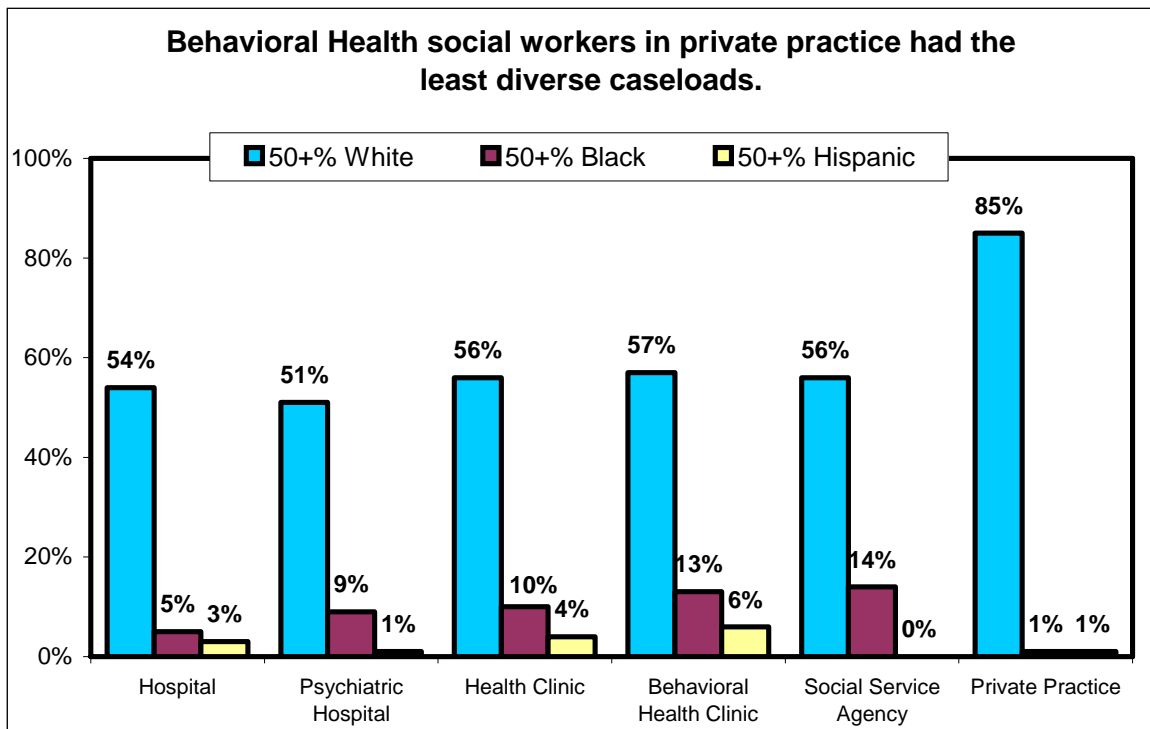


Race/Ethnicity

MSWs in Behavioral Health carried caseloads that were less diverse than those of social workers overall: sixty-five percent served caseloads that were predominantly non-Hispanic White, compared to 57 percent of social workers overall. Those in Mental Health were more likely to carry predominantly non-Hispanic White caseloads than MSWs in Addictions or MSWs NPA (66% versus 51% and 49%).

Few MSWs in Behavioral Health carried caseloads that were predominantly any *single* minority group: six percent had caseloads that were predominantly Black/African-American, and 3% had caseloads that were predominantly Hispanic/Latino. One percent (1%) carried caseloads that are predominantly Asian or Native American. Again, some variation exists by practice area, with social workers in Addictions more likely to have predominantly Black/African-American caseloads than those in Mental Health (11% versus 6%).

Figure 2. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs Serving Predominantly White, Black, or Hispanic Caseloads, by Employment Setting

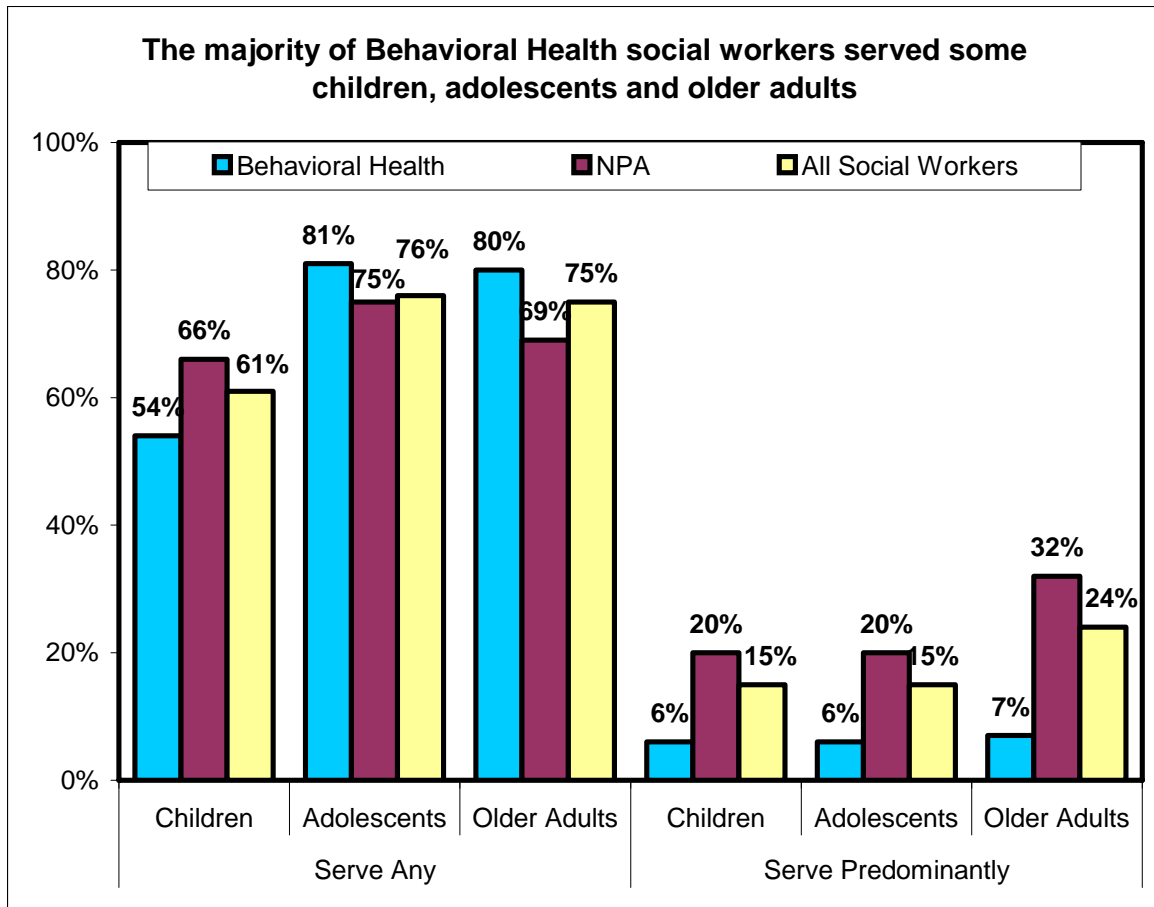


Age

A majority of MSWs in Behavioral Health served clients from multiple age groups. Fifty-four percent saw some children, 81 percent saw some adolescents, 94 percent saw some adults age 22-54, and 80 percent saw some adults age 55 and older. This broad range in age of potential clients highlights the need for social workers in Behavioral Health to have training related to child, adolescent, and geriatric issues.

Fifty-eight percent of these MSWs carried caseloads that were predominantly clients age 22-54; 7 percent saw predominantly adults age 55 and older; 6 percent saw predominantly children and another 6 percent saw predominantly adolescents. Although Behavioral Health MSWs were more likely than social workers overall or MSWs NPA to be involved with some members of special populations such as children, adolescents, and older adults, they were less likely to serve caseloads that were predominantly composed of these populations.

Figure 3. Percentages of Social Workers Serving Any or Predominantly Special Age Populations, Behavioral Health MSWs Versus MSWs NPA, and All Social Workers

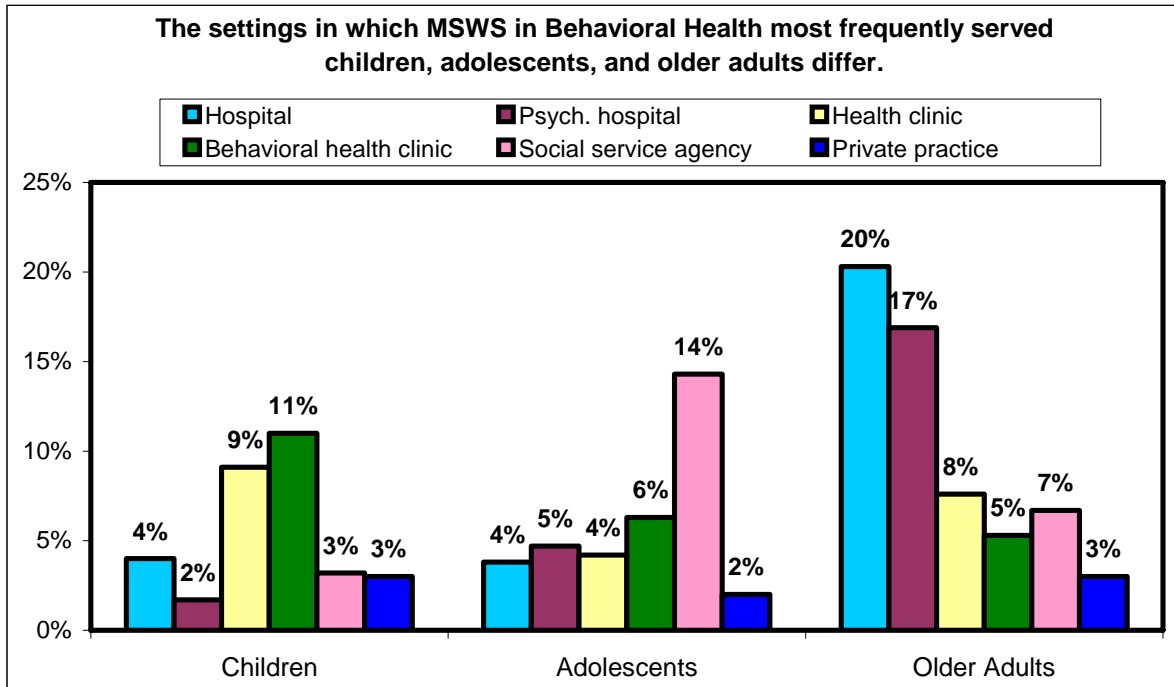


Mental Health social workers were more likely than those in Addictions to carry caseloads that were predominantly children (7% versus 0%), slightly less than those in Addictions to have caseloads that were predominantly adolescents (6% versus 9%) or adults (57% versus 71%); and equally likely to have seen predominantly older adults (7%).

Settings were associated with predominant client caseloads. Behavioral Health social workers were most likely to carry caseloads that were predominantly children in behavioral health clinics (11%), followed by health clinics (9%). MSWs in social service agencies were most likely to carry predominantly adolescent caseloads (14%), while those in hospitals and psychiatric

hospitals were most likely to carry caseloads that were predominantly older adults (20% and 17%).

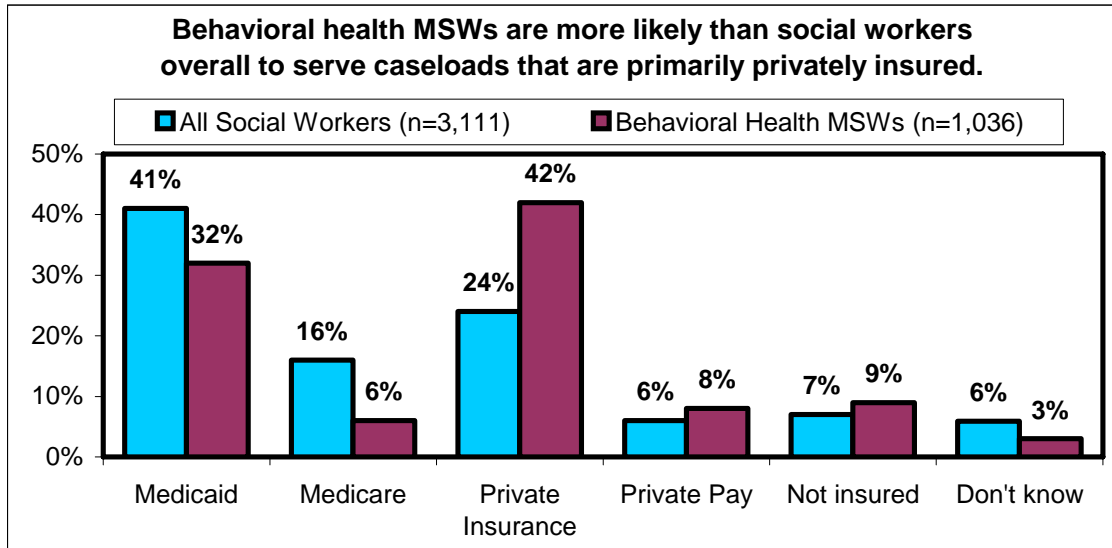
Figure 4. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs Serving Predominantly Special Age Populations, by Employment Setting



Health Care Coverage

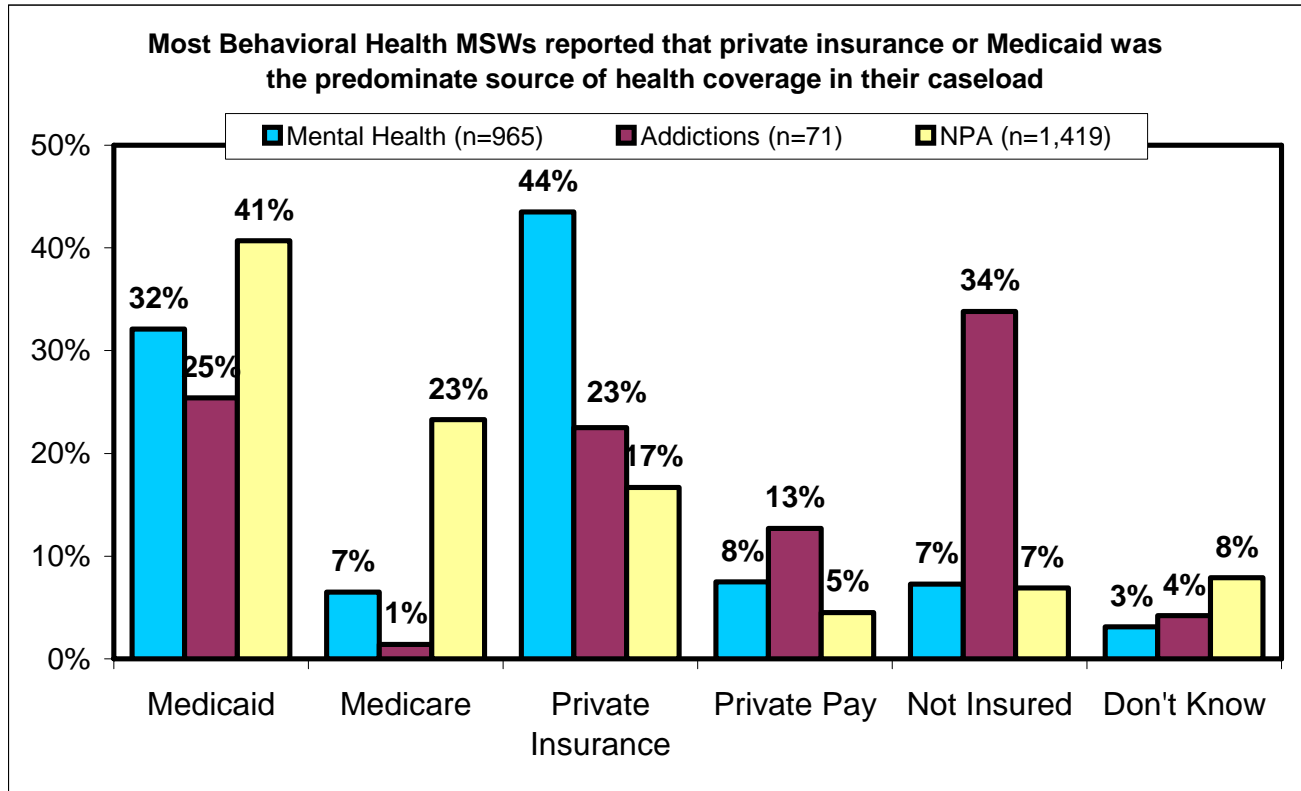
Private insurance was the most common source of health coverage reported for clients in caseloads of MSWs in Behavioral Health (42%). This percentage was substantially higher than the level of private insurance coverage reported by MSWs NPA (17%), or social workers overall (24%). As seen in Figure 5, MSWs in Behavioral Health were less likely to serve clients covered through publicly funded programs than other social workers. Clients of approximately one-third of social workers in Behavioral Health received health coverage through Medicaid, while less than 10% received coverage through Medicare.

Figure 5. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs and All Licensed Social Workers Reporting Predominant Source of Health Coverage Among Client Caseload



Sources of health coverage varied substantially by practice area. MSWs in Mental Health were approximately twice as likely as those in Addictions or NPA to report private insurance as the most common source of health coverage (44% versus 23% and 17%). They were more likely to have clients covered predominantly by Medicaid or Medicare than MSWs in Addictions (32% versus 25% and 7% versus 1%) though they were less likely to report that clients received public health coverage than MSWs NPA (32% versus 41% and 7% versus 23%). Social workers in Addictions, in contrast, were more likely than those in Mental Health or those NPA to report that that most of their clients were uninsured (34% versus 7% and 7%) or private pay (13% versus 8% and 5%).

Figure 6. Percentages of MSWs Reporting Predominant Source of Health Coverage Among Client Caseload, by Practice Area



Private insurance was most commonly cited as the source of client health coverage among social workers in private practice (73%). Medicaid was most frequently cited by MSWs in Behavioral Health in social service agencies and behavioral health clinics (58% and 57%), and Medicare was most frequently cited by those working in hospitals (22%).

Table 1. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs Reporting Predominant Source of Health Coverage Among Client Caseload, by Employment Setting

Predominant Client Coverage	Hospital (n=63)	Psychiatric Hospital (n=75)	Health Clinic (n=77)	Behavioral Health Clinic (n=202)	Social Service Agency (n=40)	Private Practice (n=378)
Medicaid	27%	35%	51%	57%	58%	6%
Medicare	22%	17%	8%	4%	5%	2%
Private insurance	30%	24%	23%	23%	18%	73%
Private pay	0%	3%	3%	3%	8%	16%
Not insured	14%	21%	12%	11%	8%	2%
Don't know	6%	0%	4%	2%	5%	2%

Presenting Problems

As expected, most Behavioral Health MSWs saw clients with diagnoses of mental illness (97%), affective conditions (97%), substance abuse conditions (93%), and psychosocial stressors (100%). Interestingly, they also reported seeing clients with chronic medical conditions (91%), acute medical conditions (80%), neurological conditions (78%), physical disabilities (75%), and developmental disabilities (65%).

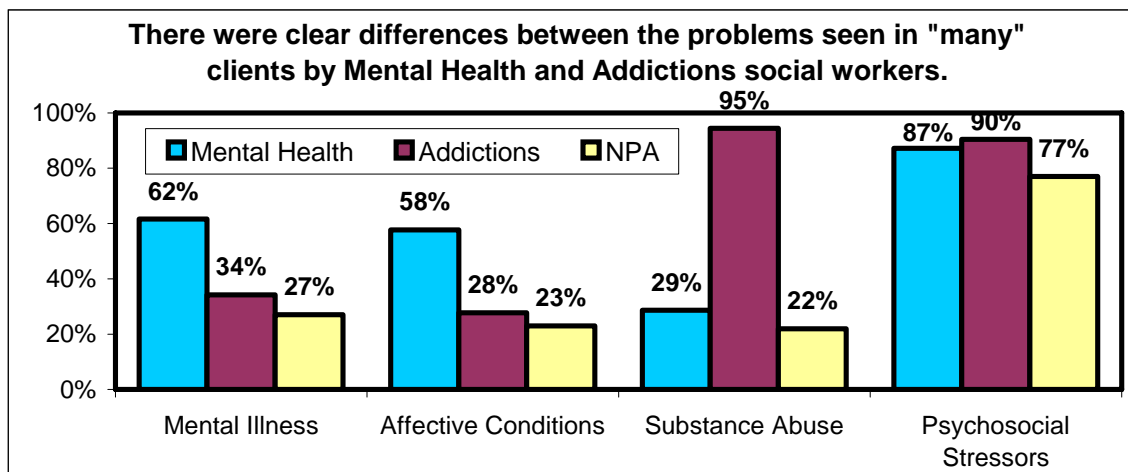
The predominance of mental and emotional issues among clients of Behavioral Health MSWs was demonstrated, however, by the percentages reporting that they treated “many” clients with selected conditions: mental illness (60%), affective conditions (56%), substance abuse conditions (33%), and psychosocial stressors (87%). In comparison, only 15% said they had many clients with chronic medical conditions, and 5% reported having many clients with acute medical conditions or physical disabilities.

Table 2. Percentages Serving Any or Many Clients with Behavioral Health and Other Conditions, Behavioral Health MSWs Versus All Social Workers

Client Conditions	Any Clients		Many Clients	
	All Social Workers	Behavioral Health	All Social Workers	Behavioral Health
Behavioral Health Conditions				
Mental Illness	96%	97%	39%	60%
Affective Conditions	90%	97%	33%	56%
Substance Abuse Conditions	87%	93%	27%	33%
Psychosocial Stressors	98%	100%	76%	87%
Other Conditions				
Neurological Conditions	80%	78%	7%	3%
Developmental Disabilities	75%	65%	10%	2%
Physical Disabilities	79%	75%	19%	5%
Acute medical Conditions	79%	80%	20%	5%
Chronic Medical Conditions	88%	91%	28%	15%
Co-Occurring Conditions	93%	97%	42%	41%

Within Behavioral Health, the frequency of problems seen in “many” clients by Mental Health and Addictions social workers also varied. Social workers in Mental Health were more than twice as likely as other social workers to see clients with diagnoses of mental illness or affective conditions. Almost all MSWs in Addictions saw clients with substance abuse problems, in contrast to less than one-third of those in Mental Health or NPA.

Figure 7. Percentages of MSWs Reporting Many Clients with Types of Behavioral Health Problems, by Practice Area



Variations in presenting problems were also associated with setting. MSWs in Behavioral Health in psychiatric hospitals were most likely to see “many clients” with mental illness (95%) or affective conditions (63%). Those in hospitals were most likely to see “many clients” with substance abuse conditions (65%). Those in health and behavioral health clinics were most likely to see clients addressing psychosocial stressors (both 95%).

Table 3. Percentages of Behavioral Health MSWs Reporting Many Clients with Types of Behavioral Health Problems, by Employment Setting

Serve “many” clients with...	Hospital	Psych Hospital	Health Clinic	Behavioral Health Clinic	Social Service Agency	Private Practice
Mental illness	82%	95%	75%	74%	63%	33%
Affective conditions	50%	63%	56%	61%	33%	59%
Substance abuse conditions	65%	57%	33%	37%	41%	13%
Psychosocial stressors	82%	84%	95%	95%	80%	83%