

**LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS  
SERVING CHILDREN AND  
ADOLESCENTS, 2004**

**Chapter 4 of 7**

**Where Social Workers Work**

**Prepared by**

**Center for Health Workforce Studies  
School of Public Health, University at Albany  
Rensselaer, NY**

**For**

**The National Association of Social Workers  
Center for Workforce Studies  
Washington, DC**

**March, 2006**

## Table of Contents

Chapter 4. Where Social Workers Work .....	1
Summary of the Findings.....	1
Employment Sector.....	1
Settings.....	5

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Percent of Licensed Social Workers in Selected Employment Sectors, by Extent of Involvement with Children and Adolescents.....	2
Figure 2. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents in Different Employment Sectors, by Age Category.....	2
Figure 3. Percent of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Working in Selected Employment Sectors, by Highest Social Work Degree.....	3
Figure 4. Employment Sector by Practice Area.....	4
Figure 5. Percentages of Social Workers Employed in Selected Employment Sectors, by Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents.....	4
Figure 6. Primary Employment Sector by Years Experience with Children and Adolescents.....	5
Figure 7. Sector of Employment of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Employment Setting.....	6
Figure 8. Percentage of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents with MSWs and BSWs, by Employment Setting.....	7
Figure 9. Primary Employment Setting by Years Experience with Children and Adolescents ....	9

## List of Tables

Table 1. Primary Employment Setting of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Practice Area.....	7
Table 2. Employment Settings of MSWs and BSWs Serving Children and Adolescents, by Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents (Ns in Parentheses) .....	8
Table 3. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Working in Selected Employment Settings, By Rural/Urban Setting .....	9

## Chapter 4. Where Social Workers Work

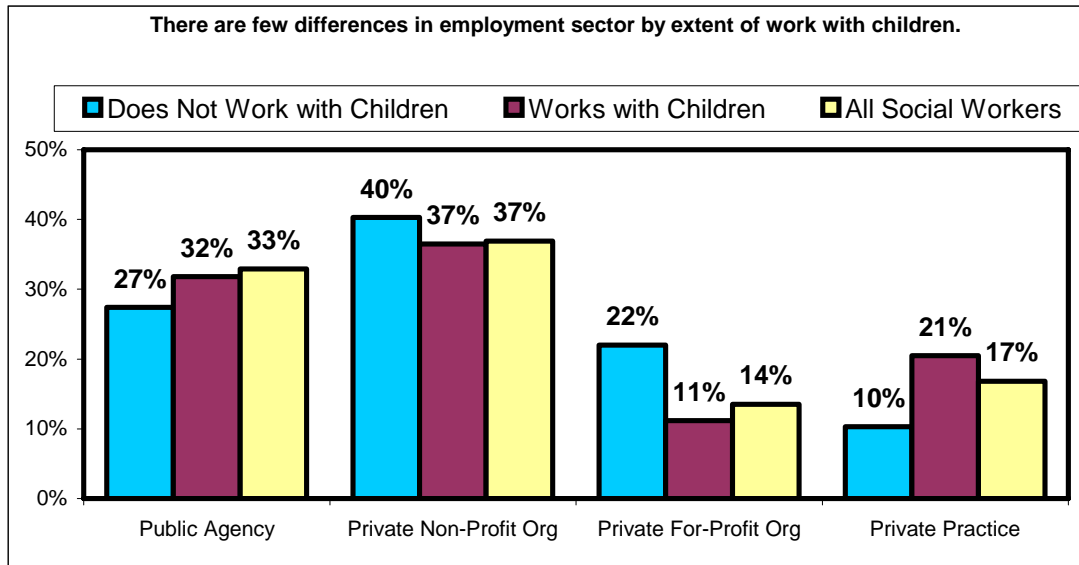
### Summary of the Findings

- Social workers are employed across employment sectors and settings. This demonstrates the broad need for social workers, but presents challenges in terms of formulating practices and policies that address varied missions, resources and funding available to support social work services.
- The private nonprofit sector is the most common employment sector for social workers who serve children and/or adolescents (37%), followed by the public sector (32%), private practice (11%) and the for profit sector (11%).
- The public sector was the most common employment sector among those specializing in Child Welfare/Family (53%), and those serving children/adolescents as more than half their caseload (47%).
- Half of BSWs working with children and adolescents are employed in the public sector (51%) as compared to fewer than one third of MSWs (28%).
- Private practice (24%), social service agencies (15%), hospitals (12%) and schools (12%) are the most common settings of social workers serving some children/adolescents.
- Social service agencies are the settings with the highest percentages of social workers in the practice area of Child Welfare/Family (59%) as well as BSWs (39%).
- Private practice is the setting with the highest percentages of social workers with 50% or fewer clients who are children and/or adolescents (80%), as well as MSWs (24%).
- Social workers in Adolescents are most likely to work in private practice (17%), schools (17%) and group homes (16%).

### Employment Sector

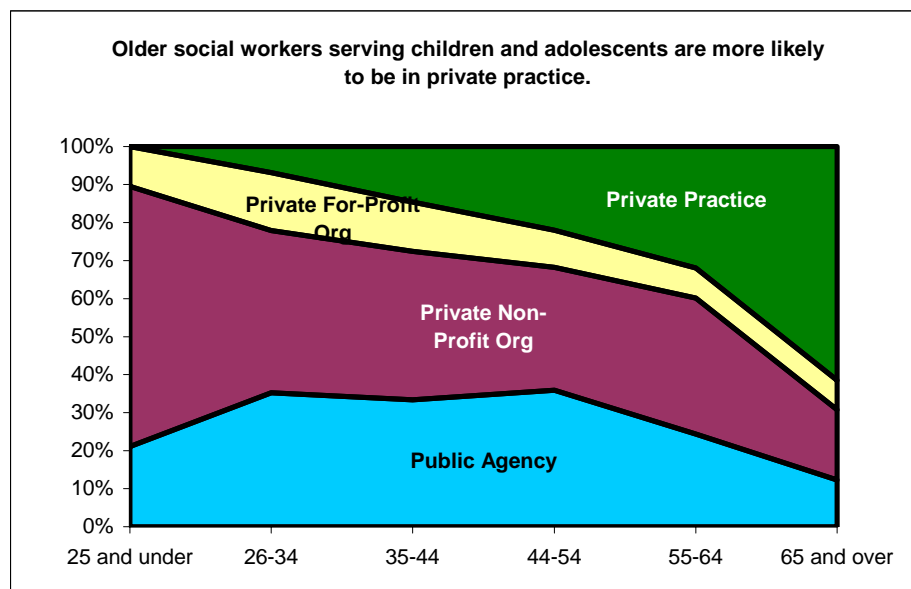
Figure 1 shows that the most common employment sector for social workers who serve children/adolescents is the private non-profit sector (37%), followed by the public sector (32%), private practice (21%) and the private for-profit sector (11%). This distribution is largely consistent with that of social workers overall.

**Figure 1. Percent of Licensed Social Workers in Selected Employment Sectors, by Extent of Involvement with Children and Adolescents**



As can be seen in Figure 2, licensed social workers age 26-34 years and younger are most likely to work in private non-profit organizations (43%). Those 55-64 are most likely to be in private non-profit organization (36%).

**Figure 2. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents in Different Employment Sectors, by Age Category**



As seen in Figure 3, BSWs were more likely than MSWs to work in public agencies and MSWs are more likely than BSWs to work in private practice.

**Figure 3. Percent of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Working in Selected Employment Sectors, by Highest Social Work Degree**

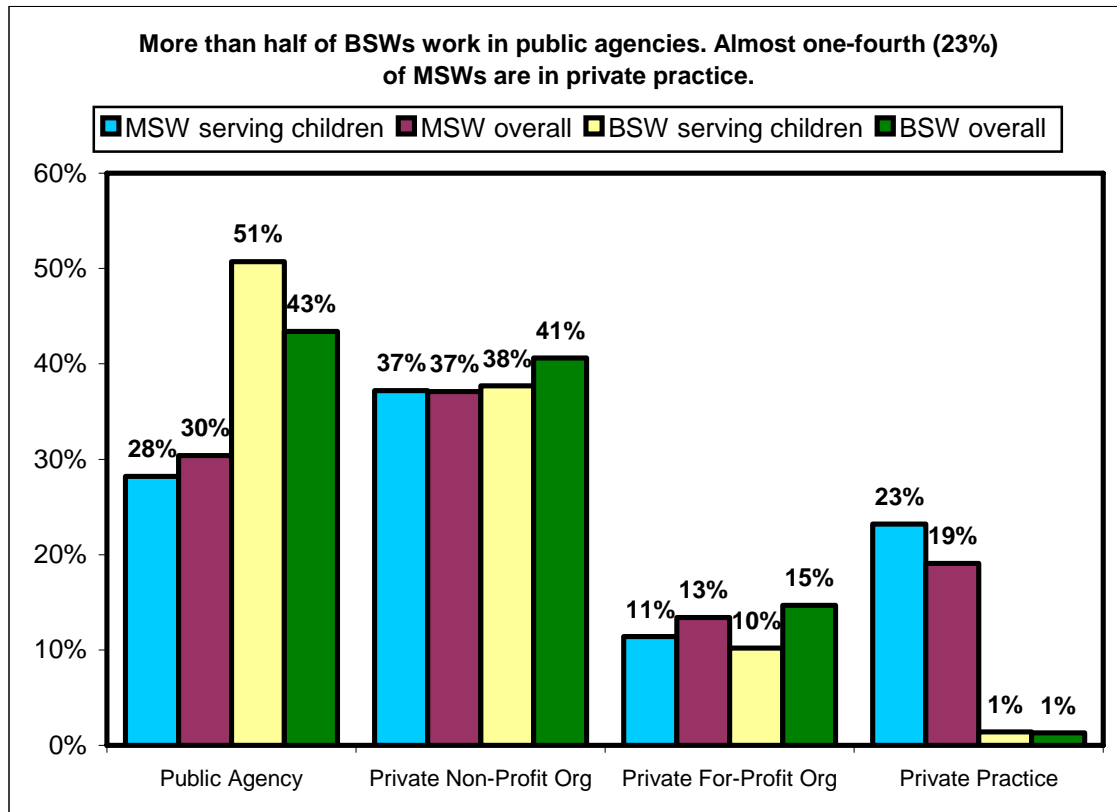
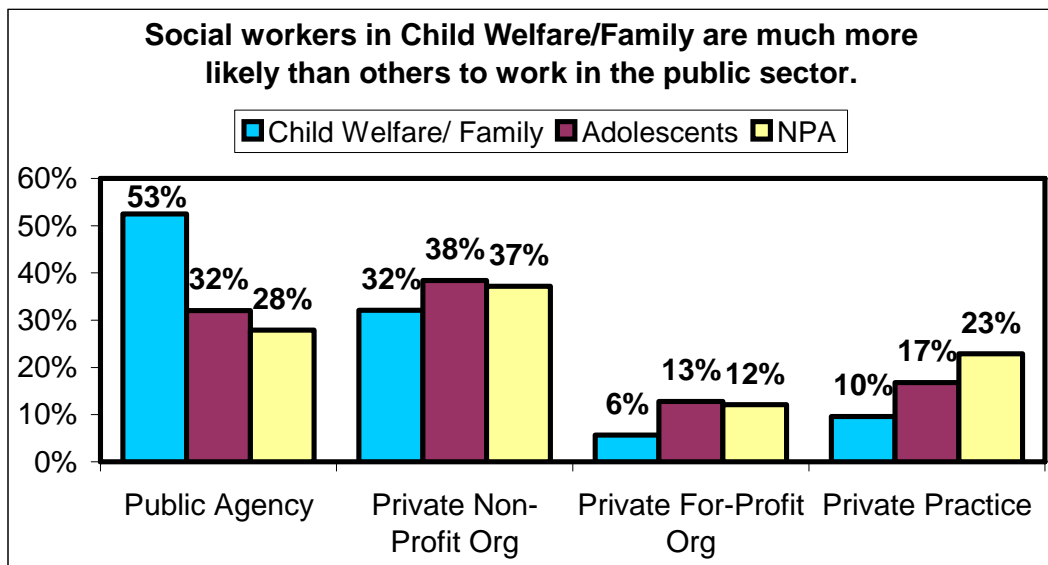


Figure 4 shows that social workers in Child Welfare/Family were significantly more likely than those not in this practice area to be in the public sector (53% versus 28%). They were less likely than social workers NPA to be in the private nonprofit sector (32% versus 37%), the private for-profit sector (6% versus 12%), or private practice (10% versus 23%).

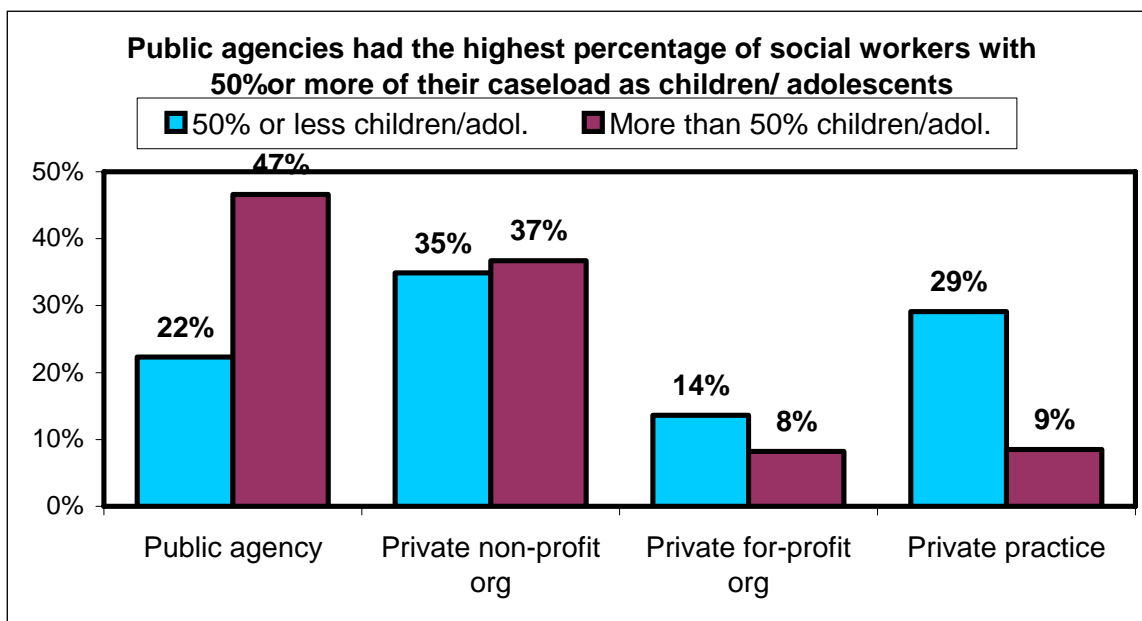
Social workers in Adolescents were also more likely than social workers NPA to be in the private non-profit sector (38% versus 28%). They were less likely to be in the public sector (32% versus 37%), private for-profit organizations (13% versus 12%) and private practice (17% versus 23%).

**Figure 4. Employment Sector by Practice Area**



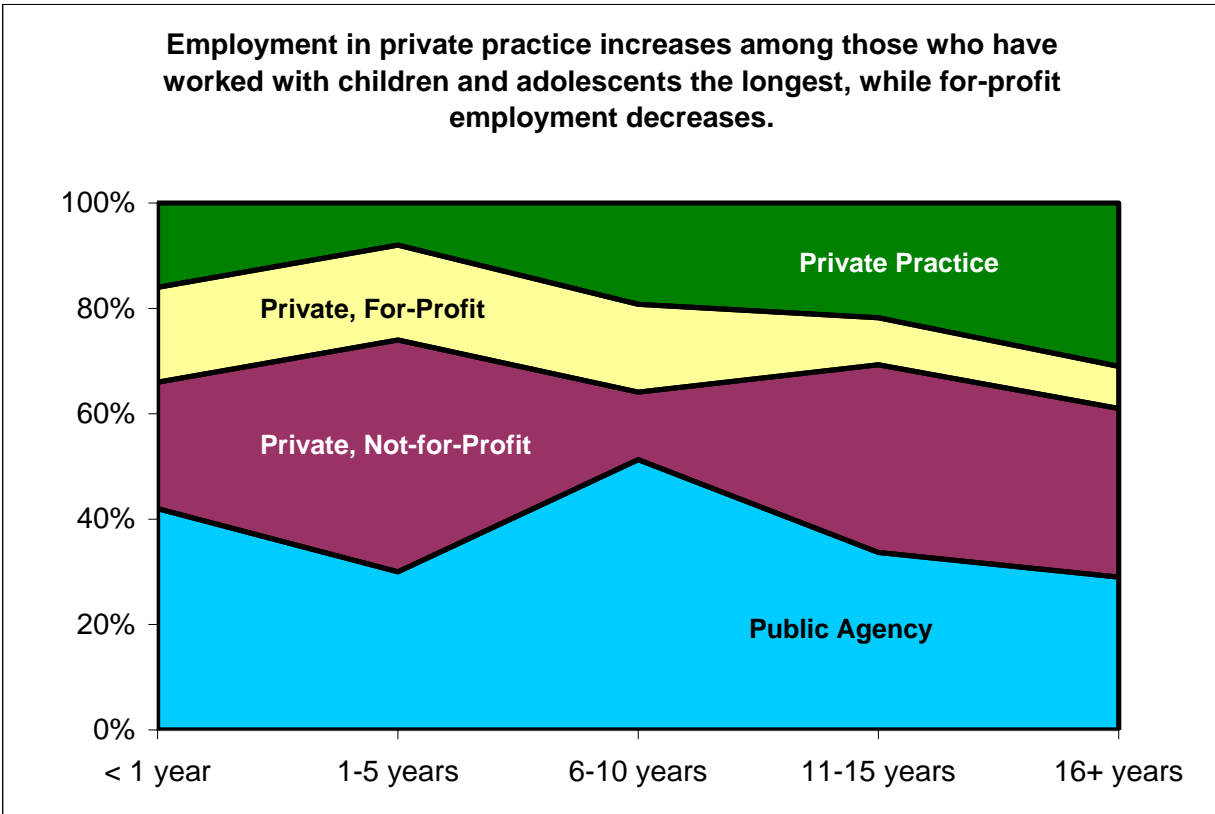
As seen in Figure 5, a great deal of variation exists in employment sector related to the level of involvement with children/adolescents. Almost half (47%) of social workers who served more than 50% children/adolescents work in the public sector, compared to only 22% of those who served fewer than half children/adolescents.

**Figure 5. Percentages of Social Workers Employed in Selected Employment Sectors, by Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents**



Employment by sector also varies according to experience with children and adolescents, as shown in Figure 6.

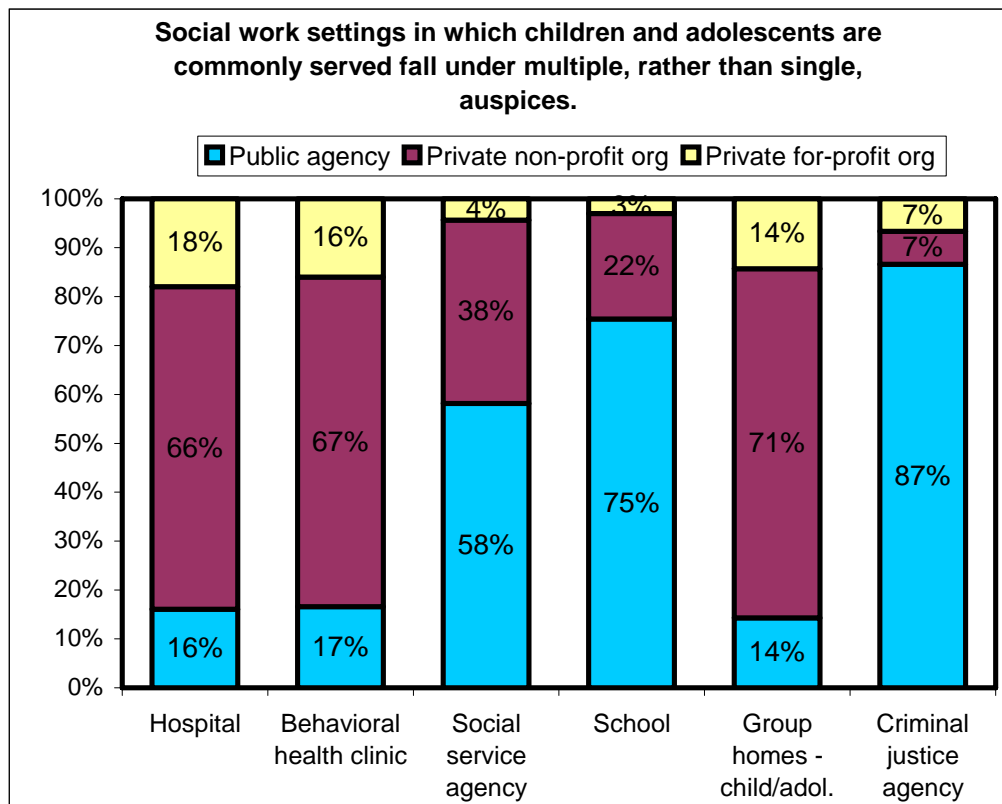
**Figure 6. Primary Employment Sector by Years Experience with Children and Adolescents.**



### Settings

Settings can cross sectors, complicating the understanding of the distribution of licensed social work employment across sectors. For example, Figure 7 shows that the majority of hospitals (66%) are private, nonprofit organizations, but they can also be public (16%) or for profit organizations (18%).

**Figure 7. Sector of Employment of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Employment Setting**



The most common settings for social workers providing services to some children and adolescents are private practice (21%), social service agencies (15%), hospitals (12%) and schools (12%).

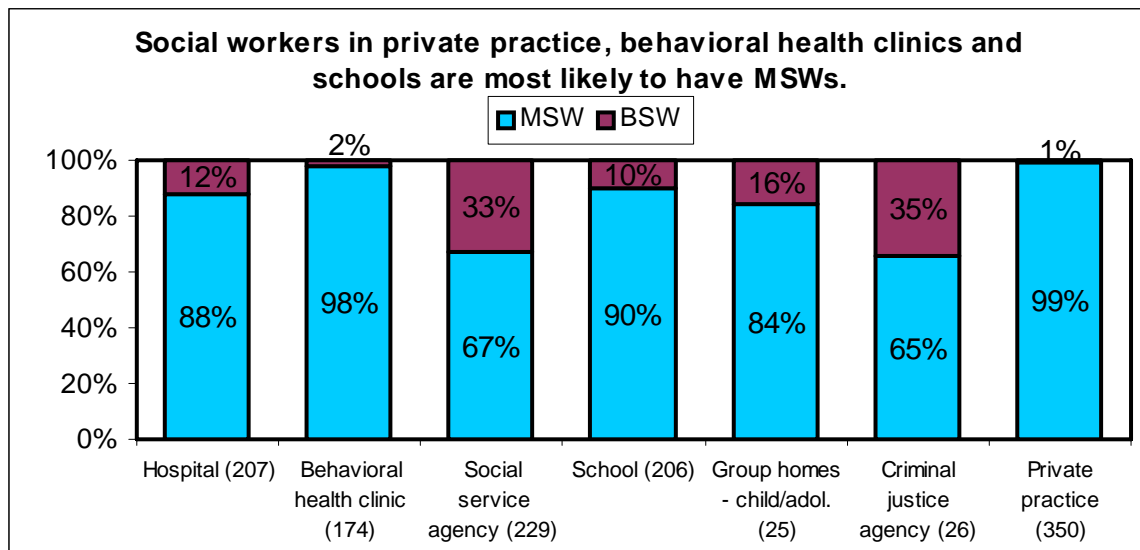
Most common settings vary with practice area. Social workers in Child Welfare/Family are most likely to be employed in social service agencies; those in Adolescents are most likely to work in schools or private practice; and those social workers not in these practice areas are most likely to be in private practice, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Primary Employment Setting of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Practice Area**

Employment Setting	Child Welfare/Family	Adolescents	NPA	All serving children/adolescents
Private Practice	10%	17%	24%	21%
Social Service Agency	59%	10%	6%	15%
Hospital/Medical Center	3%	3%	15%	12%
School	1%	17%	14%	12%
Behavioral Health Clinic/Outpatient Facility	4%	13%	11%	10%
Health Clinic/Outpatient Facility	2%	0%	7%	6%
Psychiatric Hospital	0%	5%	3%	3%
Group Home - Child/Adolescent	1%	16%	0%	2%
Criminal Justice Agency/Court	1%	3%	2%	2%
Other	19%	17%	17%	17%

Setting also varied by degree and prevalence of children/adolescents within caseloads (Table 2). The most common setting for MSWs who serve children and adolescents is private practice (24%), followed by schools (13%), hospitals (13%), and behavioral health clinics (12%). Social service agencies are the most common setting for BSWs who served children/adolescents, followed by hospitals (13%), and schools (11%).

**Figure 8. Percentage of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents with MSWs and BSWs, by Employment Setting**



MSWs who have 50 percent or fewer children/adolescents in their caseloads were most commonly found in private practice, while MSWs with more than half of their caseload

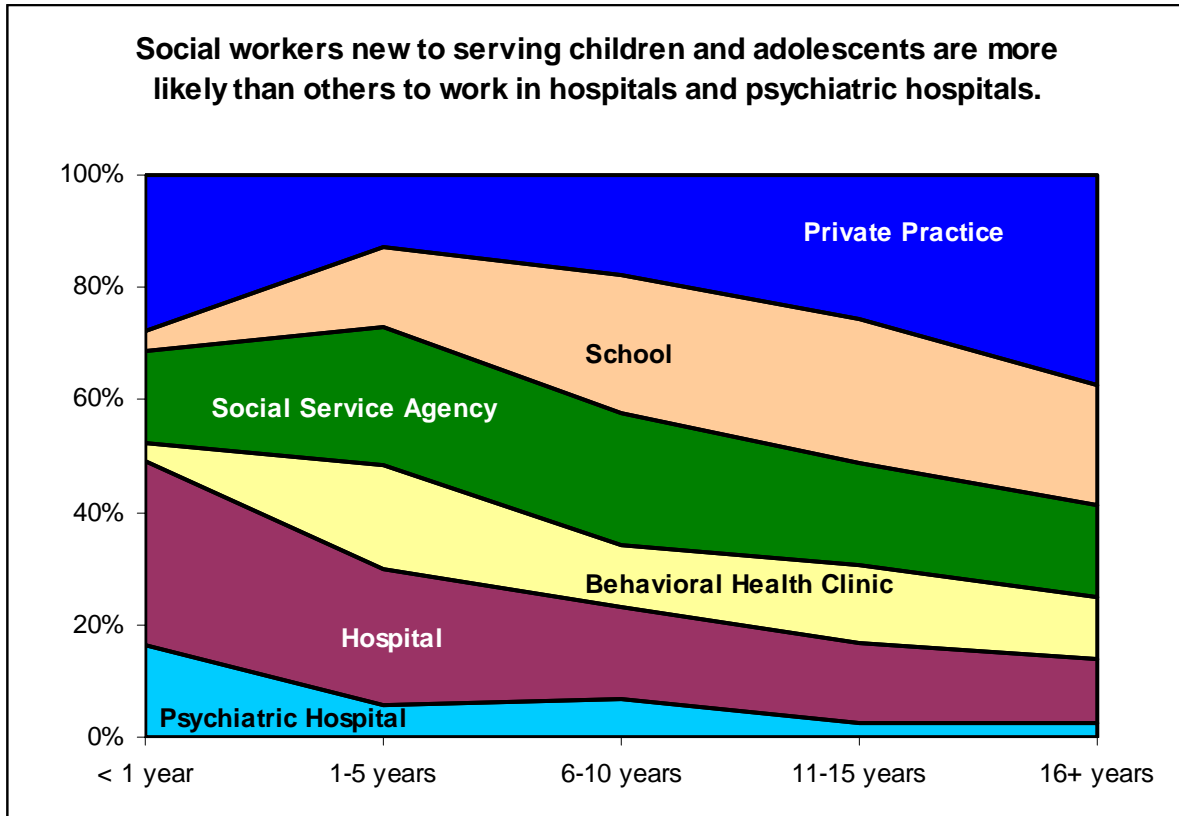
children/adolescents worked in schools. Social service agencies were the most common setting for BSWs regardless of prevalence of children/adolescents within their caseloads.

**Table 2. Employment Settings of MSWs and BSWs Serving Children and Adolescents, by Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents (Ns in Parentheses)**

Employment Setting (n)	MSW			BSW		
	50% or fewer of caseload	More than 50% of caseload	All MSWs	50% or fewer of caseload	More than 50% of caseload	All BSWs
Private Practice (350)	33%	11%	24%	2%	1%	2%
Hospital (207)	16%	8%	13%	27%	2%	13%
Psychiatric Hospital (49)	4%	3%	3%	4%	0%	2%
Health Clinic/Outpt Facility (95)	7%	4%	6%	2%	2%	2%
Behavioral Health Clinic (174)	12%	12%	12%	2%	2%	2%
Social Service Agency (229)	8%	14%	11%	29%	46%	39%
School (206)	2%	28%	13%	0%	21%	11%
Group Homes - Child/Adol. (25)	0%	3%	1%	0%	4%	2%
Criminal Justice Agency (26)	1%	2%	1%	5%	2%	5%
Other (281)	17%	15%	16%	29%	20%	22%

Most common settings also vary by years working with children and adolescents. Among those newest to serving this population (less than one year), the most common employment settings include hospitals (20%), psychiatric hospitals (10%) and criminal justice agencies (7%). These settings are less common among social workers who are more experienced with this population, who are more likely to be found in private practice, schools, and behavioral health clinics, as shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Primary Employment Setting by Years Experience with Children and Adolescents**



Social workers practicing in rural areas are much more likely than others to work in behavioral health clinics, schools, or group homes, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Working in Selected Employment Settings, By Rural/Urban Setting**

Employment Setting	Metropolitan Area (N=1052)	Micropolitan Area (N=153)	Small Town (N=98)	Rural Area (N=34)
Hospital	18%	11%	14%	3%
Psychiatric Hospital	4%	0%	4%	0%
Health Clinic/Outpatient Facility	7%	8%	3%	9%
Behavioral Health Clinic	13%	14%	16%	26%
Social Service Agency	17%	25%	30%	20%
School	17%	14%	12%	20%
Group Homes - Child/Adolescent	2%	1%	2%	9%
Criminal Justice Agency	2%	3%	3%	3%
Other	21%	25%	16%	11%