

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

Chapter 5 of 7

Work Environment

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Chapter 5. Social Workers' Work Environment¹

Summary of the Findings

- Seven in ten social workers serving some children and/or adolescents are satisfied with their compensation packages. MSWs are more satisfied with wages than BSWs, but less satisfied with benefits.
- Median wages of social workers with MSWs and BSWs are \$47,099 and \$33,154, respectively.
- Social workers in Child Welfare/Family and in Adolescents earn less than other social workers regardless of degree. They are less satisfied with their wages but more satisfied with benefits.
- MSWs and BSWs carrying caseloads of more than 50% children and adolescents earn less than social workers with similar degrees serving fewer children and adolescents.
- Salary differences are pronounced among MSWs who work in different employment sectors, but not among BSWs. MSWs earn the highest median salaries in private practice (\$56,853) and the lowest in private non-profit organizations (\$43,548).
- Men earn \$5,834 more than women in the practice areas of Child Welfare/Families and Adolescents. Controlling for multiple factors, this disparity is attributable specifically to differences in gender.
- More than one-fifth of social workers report staffing challenges in their agencies, including vacancies that are common and /or difficult to fill, and use of outsourcing or non-social work staff to perform social work functions.
- Social workers in Child Welfare /Families are much more likely than other social workers to report vacancies as common (40% versus 21%), hiring of non-social workers (38% versus 28%) and outsourcing of social work functions (45% versus 23%).
- Group homes targeted to children/adolescents are the settings most likely to experience vacancies that are both common and difficult to fill. They are also the settings with the lowest median salaries for MSWs and BSWs.
- Outsourcing social work jobs and hiring staff with no formal social work education for social work jobs are most common in criminal justice and social service agencies.
- More than half (55%) of social workers who serve children and adolescents face personal safety issues on the job. Sixty eight percent of these social workers indicate that employers have not adequately addressed their concerns.

¹ With the exception of wages and benefits, all data in the section on “agency environment” is limited to social workers practicing in organizational settings for their primary practice and excludes those in private practice as their primary job.

- Criminal justice agencies (77%), social service agencies (62%), group homes (61%) and behavioral health clinics (60%) are the settings most commonly reported as having job safety concerns. Three fourths of social workers in criminal justice agencies and group homes report that their issues were resolved as compared with just more than half in social service agencies.
- The service systems social workers who serve children and adolescents most commonly work with are the mental health (66%), school (63%), and protective services systems (52%).
- The percentages of MSWs working with mental health and school systems are significantly higher than for BSWs, and significantly lower in work with children within the courts, foster care and income maintenance systems.

Wages and Benefits

Social workers who served any children or adolescents earned a median of \$34,532 at the BSW level and \$47,099 at the MSW level working full-time for a single employer (compared to \$33,466 and \$51,764 respectively for those who did not see any child/adolescent clients). BSWs in Child Welfare/Family earned a median of \$33,154, while MSWs in this practice area earned a median of \$43,607. BSWs in Adolescents earned \$36,668, and MSWs earned \$45,504. As can be seen in Table 1, licensure results in increased wages for social workers overall.

Table 1. Median Annual Salaries of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents in Selected Categories, 2004

Category of Social Worker	2003 U.S. Employment	Mean Salary	Median Salary
Licensed Social Worker, BSW	37,400	\$34,274	\$32,356
Licensed Social Worker, MSW	249,136	\$48,782	\$46,825
Licensed Social Worker, DSW	6,676	\$64,798	\$94,314
MSW – Practice Area is Child Welfare/Family	40,111	\$43,607	\$44,037
BSW – Practice Area is Child Welfare/Family	13,838	\$33,154	\$33,405
MSW – Practice Area is Adolescents	21,426	\$45,504	\$44,796
BSW – Practice Area is Adolescents	3,104	\$36,668	\$33,710
MSW – NPA	187,350	\$47,290	\$47,569
BSW – NPA	20,458	\$34,630	\$34,578
Licensed SW - More than Half Children	114,353	\$46,070	\$42,636
Licensed SW - 50% or Fewer Children	115,819	\$52,605	\$46,718
Social Worker, Mental Health and Substance Abuse*	102,110	\$35,860	\$33,650
Social Worker, Medical and Public Health*	103,040	\$40,540	\$39,160
Social Worker, Child, Family and School*	252,870	\$37,190	\$34,300

*Source for non-licensed SW salaries is Bureau of Labor Statistics.²

Median salaries for full-time social workers working for a single employer vary dramatically by demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, and practice location. Men earn \$5,834 more than women in the practice areas of Child Welfare/Families and Adolescents, after controlling for other factors. Some race/ethnicity differences are explainable by differences in practice location (non-white minorities are more likely to be in metropolitan areas, where pay is higher).

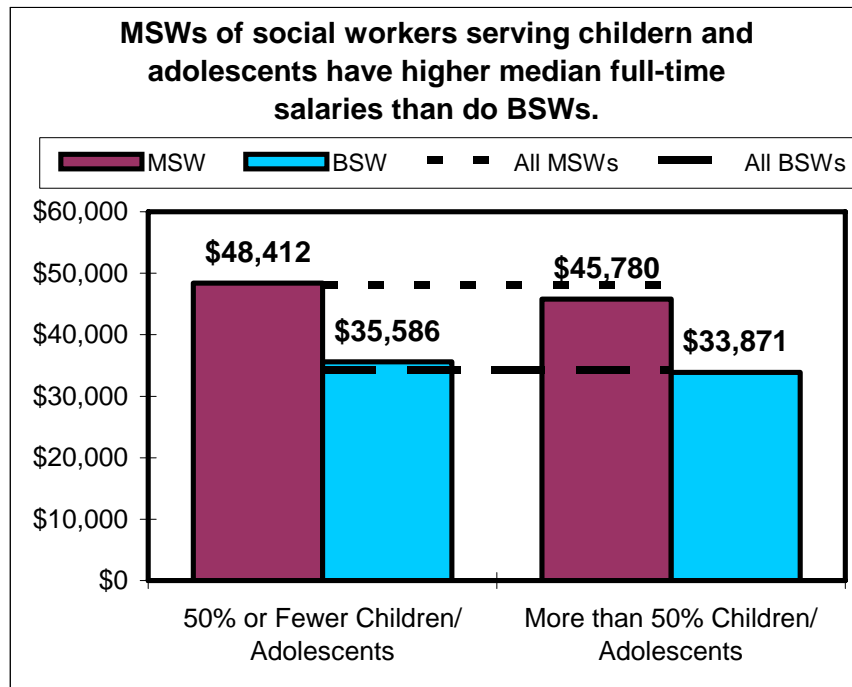
² The summary report on licensed social workers provides a more extensive examination of social work salaries. This includes discussion of approaches used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Current Population Survey to compare salaries of different classes of social workers.

Table 2. Median Salaries of Full-Time Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Demographic Characteristics and Degree

Characteristic or Degree	Median Salary MSW	Median Salary BSW
Gender		
Male	\$52,778	\$39,238
Female	\$46,207	\$34,108
Race/Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	\$47,097	\$34,524
Black/African-American	\$48,181	\$29,387
Hispanic/Latino	\$49,268	\$38,552
Asian/Pacific Islander	\$50,132	\$39,855
Native American/Alaskan Native	\$41,082	\$34,558
Practice Location		
Metropolitan	\$47,649	\$34,294
Micropolitan	\$43,759	\$33,918
Small town	\$42,152	\$38,571
Rural	\$49,595	\$31,343

Figure 1 shows that social workers carrying caseloads of 50% or more children also had a lower median salary regardless of degree level, although some of this variation may be due to the settings in which they worked, as discussed below

Figure 1. Median Full-Time Salaries of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents by Highest Social Work Degree



Salary differences exist by sector for MSWs. MSWs earned the least in the private nonprofit sector (\$43,548), while those in private practice earned the most, a median of \$56,853 (Figure 2). Differences in BSW salaries by sector are not pronounced.

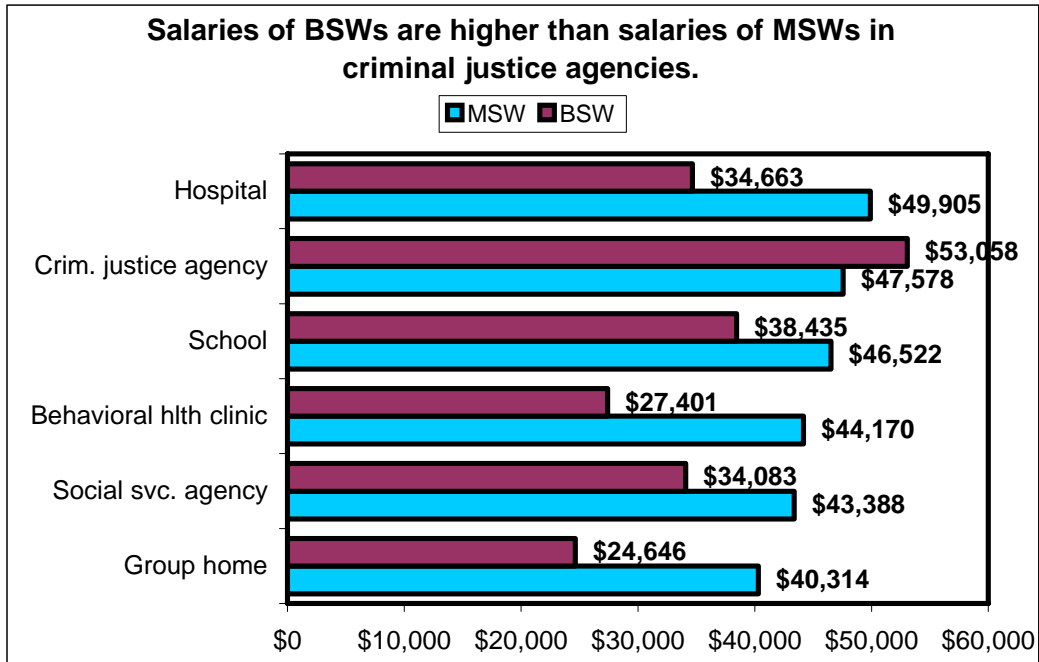
Figure 2. Median Annual Salaries of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by Degree and Employment Sector



Geographic location of practice was seen to impact salaries. BSWs who serve children and adolescents earned a median of \$38,435 in small towns, \$34,083 in metropolitan areas, and \$33,905 in micropolitan areas. MSWs earned the most in metropolitan areas (\$47,498), followed by micropolitan areas (\$43,856), and small towns (\$42,872). (Only 14 MSWs and 7 BSWs practiced full-time and served children/adolescents in rural areas, so reliable estimates for rural areas are not available.)

There was also variation in full-time median salary by setting. MSW earned the most in hospitals and the least in group homes (Figure 3). BSWs earned the most in criminal justice agencies (although this number was based on an N of only 7), followed by schools, and the least in group homes.

Figure 3. Median Full-Time Salaries of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, by MSW/BSW and Employment Setting



Benefits

Eighty-three percent of full-time social workers who serve children and adolescents receive health insurance, 67 percent receive dental insurance, 62 percent receive life insurance, and 56 percent receive pensions. Twenty-eight percent report that tuition reimbursement was available, and 42 percent report that they have flexible working hours. BSWs were more likely than MSWs to receive health insurance (93% vs. 80%), life insurance (75% vs. 59%), and pensions (64% compared to 53%).

Those in Child Welfare/Family were more likely than those NPA to receive health insurance (92% versus 70%), dental insurance (74% versus 58%), and pensions (56% versus 47%), and were somewhat more likely to report that they had flexible working hours (48% versus 41%). Those in Adolescents were also more likely to receive health insurance (93%), and were more likely to report that flexible working hours were available (51%).

Further variation existed among full-time social workers by the extent of their involvement with children and adolescents. As seen in Figure 4, those who served more children and adolescents in their caseloads were more likely to receive most benefits than those serving fewer children and adolescents.

Figure 4. Benefits of Full-Time Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, By Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents

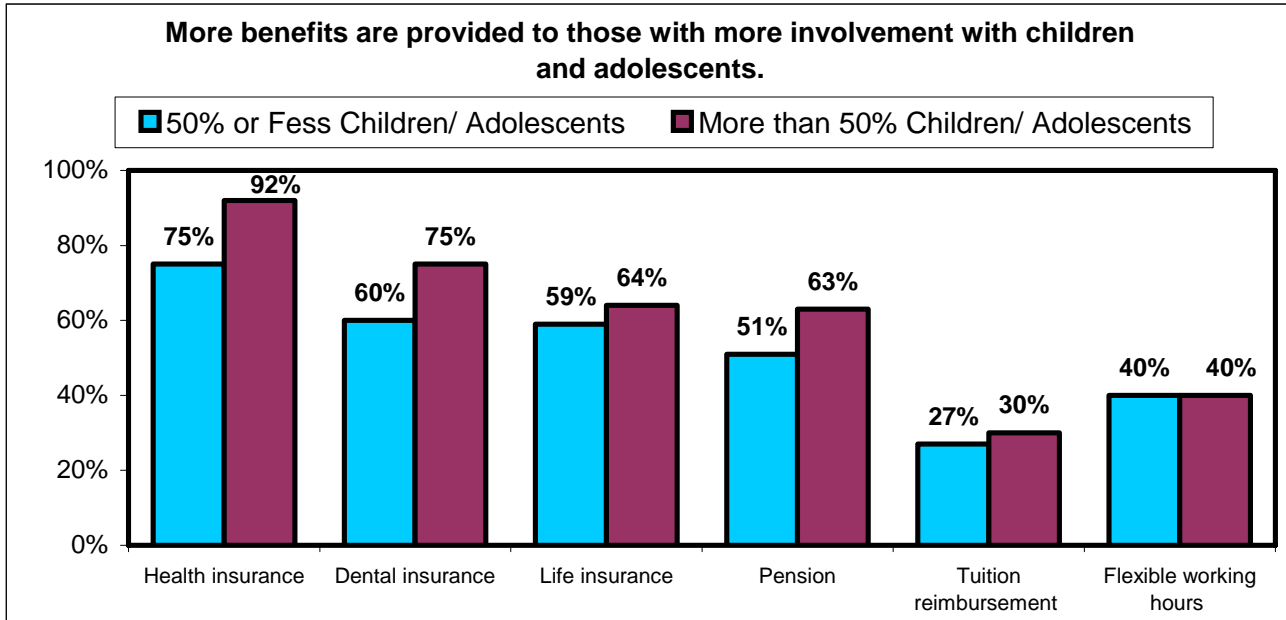


Table 3 shows that fringe benefits also varied by setting among social workers who served children and adolescents.

Table 3. Percent of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Receiving Selected Fringe Benefits, By Employment Setting

Employment Setting	Health Insurance	Dental Insurance	Life Insurance	Pension	Tuition Reimburse	Flexible Working Hours
Private Practice (N=182)	15%	7%	8%	7%	5%	44%
Hospital/Medical Center (N=128)	91%	76%	72%	66%	49%	32%
Psychiatric Hospital (N=36)	92%	83%	79%	66%	43%	47%
Health Clinic/Outpatient Facility (N=52)	89%	73%	60%	52%	39%	45%
Behavioral Hlth Clinic/Outpt Facil (N=122)	85%	68%	63%	53%	22%	54%
Social Service Agency (N=186)	92%	72%	64%	65%	22%	52%
School (N=177)	90%	75%	65%	70%	22%	21%
Group Home - Child/Adolescent (N=26)	79%	54%	46%	39%	29%	68%
Criminal Justice Agency/Court (N=19)	80%	70%	70%	77%	20%	40%

Satisfaction With Wages and Benefits

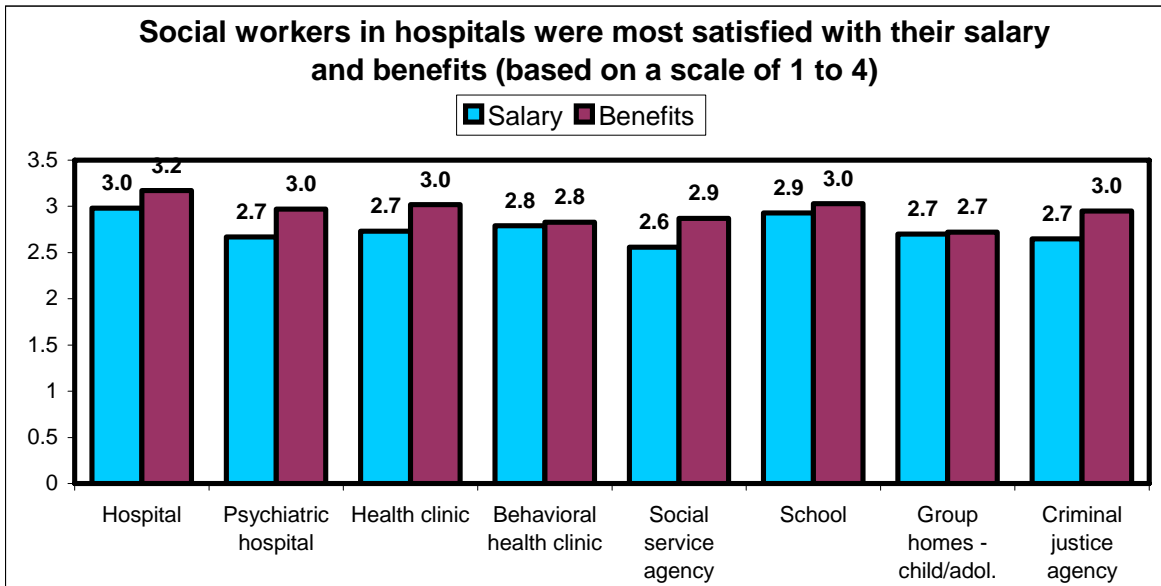
Sixty-eight percent of full-time social workers who serve children and adolescents report satisfaction with their salary, and 71% report satisfaction with their benefits. They were significantly less satisfied with both salary and benefits, on average, than social workers who did not serve this population (72% versus 68% for salary and 77% versus 71% for benefits). Men who serve children and adolescents (who earn a median of \$49,905 for full-time work for one employer compared to \$43,548 for women) were significantly more satisfied with both salary and benefits than women who serve this population, and MSWs were significantly more satisfied with salary, but not benefits, than BSWs. Satisfaction with salary is clearly linked to actual earnings, with those who earn more money reporting greater satisfaction.

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family—who are most likely to be in the public sector—were less likely to be satisfied with salaries than those NPA (57% versus 69%), while those in Adolescents differed less substantially from NPA (64%). Those in Adolescents were more likely than NPA to be satisfied with their benefits (84% versus 70%), while those in Child Welfare/Family did not differ substantially (75%).

Satisfaction with salary is not associated with prevalence of children and adolescents in caseloads. However, social workers who served predominantly child and adolescent caseloads were significantly more satisfied with their benefits than those with caseloads of 50% or fewer children/adolescents.

Differences in satisfaction exist across settings in which social workers are employed. Figure 5 shows that social workers in hospitals were significantly more satisfied with both salary and benefits than others who work with children/adolescents, while those in social service agencies and schools were significantly less satisfied with their salary. Those in behavioral health clinics were significantly less satisfied with benefits.

Figure 5. Ratings of Salary and Fringe Benefits of Licensed Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents, By Employment Setting



Vacancies and Outsourcing of Social Work Roles

Seventy-two percent of social workers who serve children and adolescents rate adequate staffing as important to improving care provided to children and their families.

Vacancies

Twenty-one percent of social workers who work with children/ adolescents report that vacancies in their agencies are common, and 21% report that vacancies are difficult to fill. This does not differ substantially by degree.

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family are more than twice as likely as social workers in Adolescents or NPA to report vacancies as common (40% versus 18% and 16%). These social workers did not differ in their reports of difficulty in filling positions. Similar significant differences exist by highest earned social work degree as seen in Table 4.

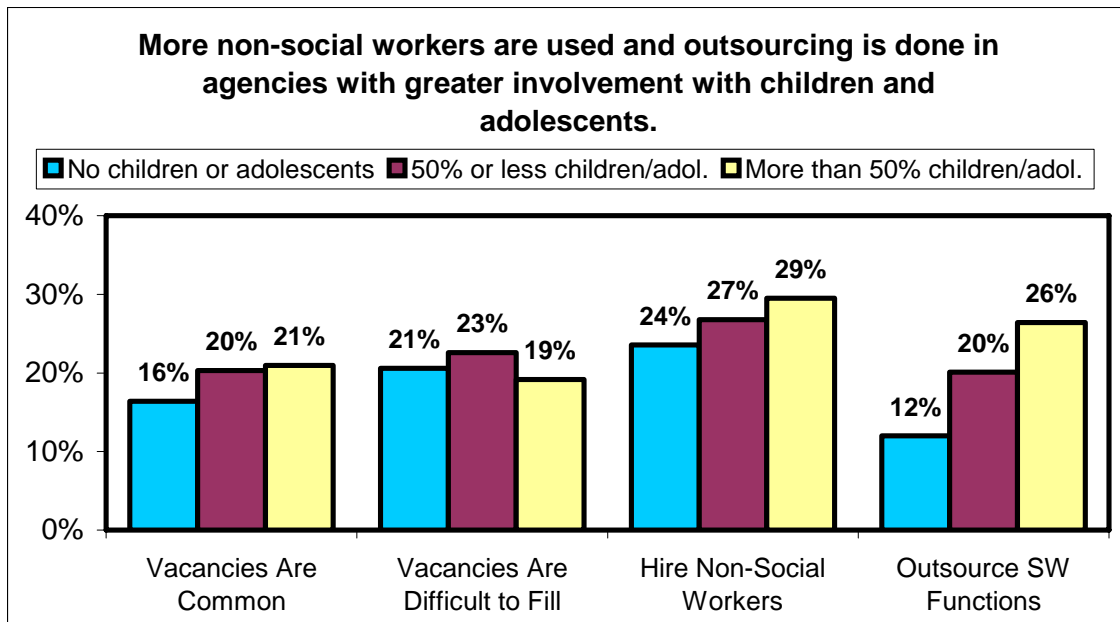
Table 4. Ratings by Social Workers of Vacancies and Responses

Vacancy Situation	All	Child Welfare/ Family		Adolescents		Not practice area	
		MSWs	BSWs	MSWs	BSWs	MSWs	BSWs
Vacancies are common	21%	36%	47%	18%	17%	17%	12%
Vacancies are difficult to fill	21%	19%	30%	22%	17%	22%	16%
Hire non-SWs	28%	44%	42%	26%	36%	23%	29%
Outsource SW functions	23%	41%	36%	34%	13%	19%	18%

Reports of vacancies were more common among social workers in the public sector (26%) than in either the for-profit or non-profit private sectors (both 17%). Social workers in private for-profit organizations were most likely to report that vacancies were difficult to fill (25%), followed by public agencies (22%). Those in non-profit organizations were least likely to report difficulty in filling positions (19%).

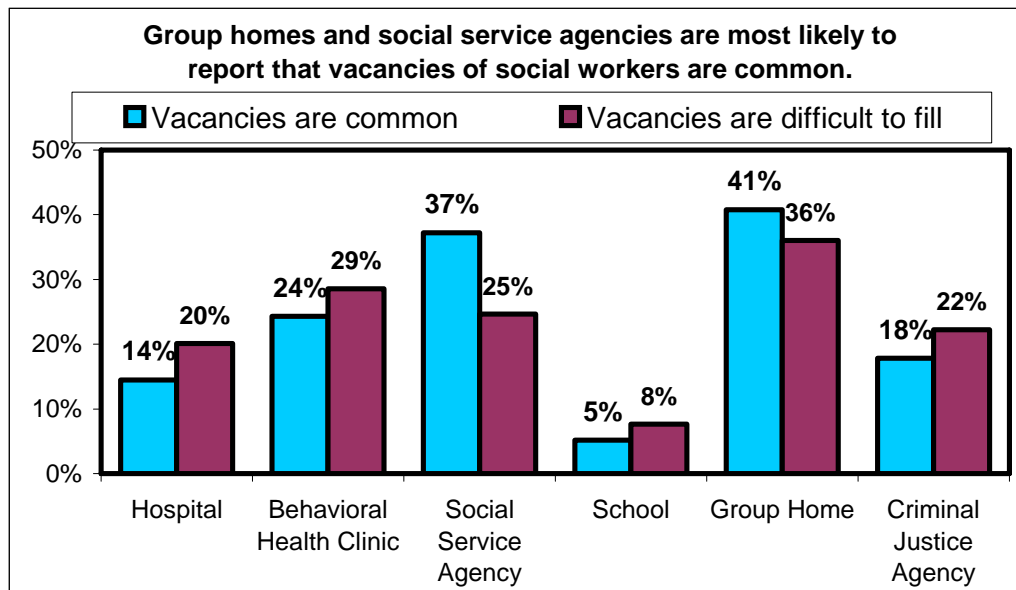
Social workers were much less likely to report that vacancies were common in metropolitan areas (17%) than in micropolitan areas, small towns, or rural areas (26%, 26%, and 28% respectively). They were also much less likely to report that vacancies were difficult to fill (18%) than those in micropolitan areas (27%), small towns (35%), and rural areas (37%). Variation in agency social work hiring experiences by level of involvement with children/adolescents is shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Social Work Hiring Experiences by Level of Involvement with Children and Adolescents



Frequency of vacancies varies with employment setting. Social workers in group homes and social service agencies were most likely to report vacancies (41% and 37%, respectively), while those in schools were least likely to (5%). Social workers in group homes were also most likely to report that vacancies are difficult to fill (36%), while those in schools were least likely to do so (8%).

Figure 7. Social Work Hiring Experiences by Employment Setting



Outsourcing and Hiring Non-Professional Staff

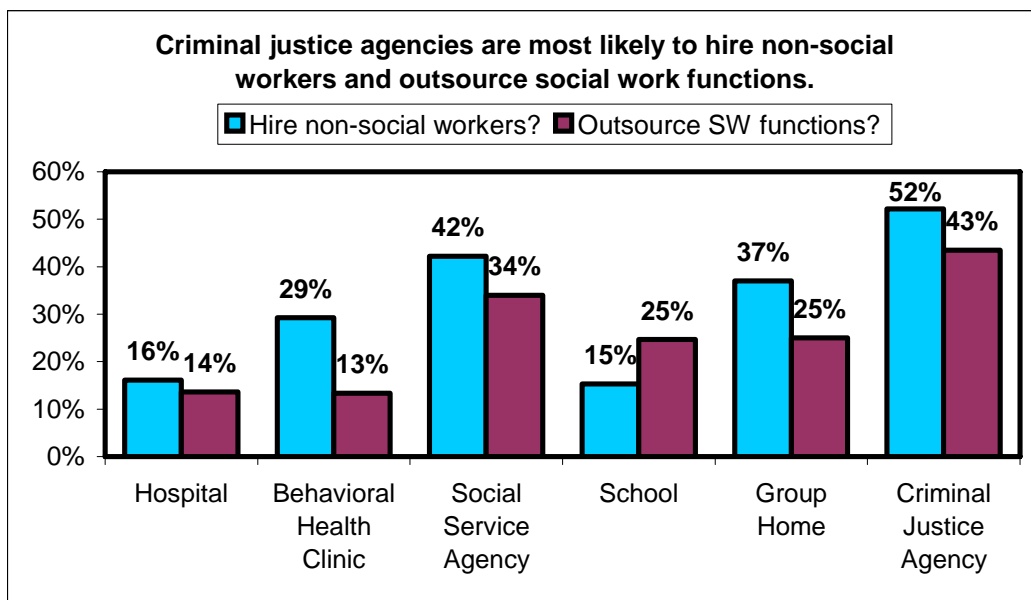
Twenty three percent of social workers report their agencies outsource social work jobs, and 28% report that workers lacking formal social work degrees were hired for social work positions. BSWs were much more likely than MSWs to report that their agency hired non-social workers for social work roles (33% versus 23%), but reports of outsourcing did not vary by degree.

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family were more than twice as likely as those not in this practice area to report outsourcing (38% versus 18%) and hiring of non-social workers (45% versus 21%). Those in Adolescents were also more likely to report outsourcing of social work functions (30%).

Hiring of non-social workers was most common in small towns (36%) compared to metropolitan areas (24%), micropolitan areas (28%), and rural areas (28%), while outsourcing was most common in micropolitan areas (27%) compared to metropolitan areas (21%), small towns (22%), and rural areas (23%).

Figure 8 shows that social workers in public agencies and non-profit organizations are most likely to report that non-social workers are hired to fill social work roles (31% and 27%, versus 23% in for-profit organizations). Those in public agencies are much more likely than others to report that social work functions are outsourced (35% versus 15% in non-profit and 17% in for-profit organizations). Outsourcing of social work functions is also most common in criminal justice agencies (43%) and social service agencies (34%), and least common in hospitals (14%) and behavioral health clinics (13%). Hiring non-social workers to fill social work roles is most common in criminal justice agencies (52%) and social service agencies (42%), but uncommon in schools (15%).

Figure 8. Percentages of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Reporting Outsourcing of Social Work Functions and Hiring of Non-Social Workers to Fill Social Work Roles by Employment Setting

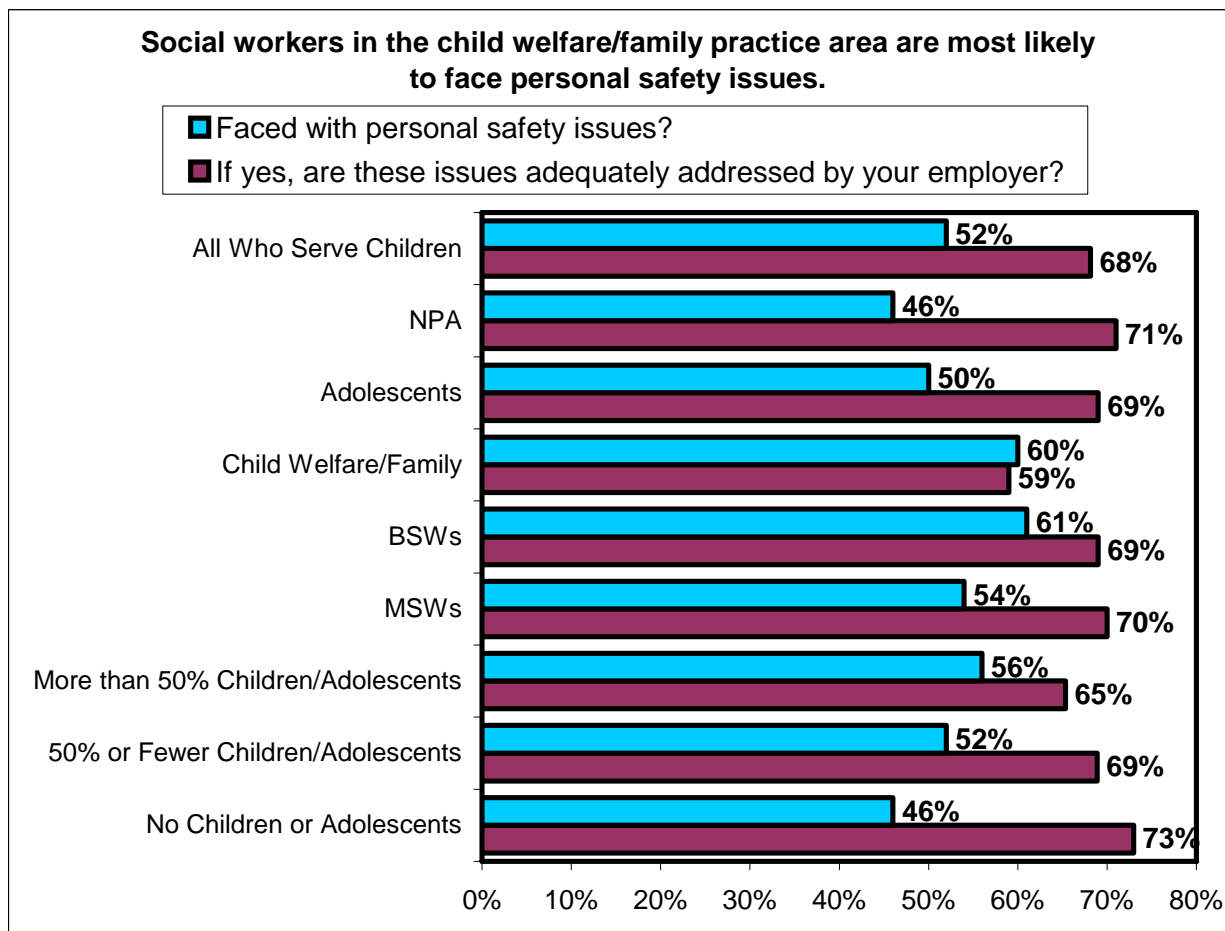


Job Safety

More than half (55%) of social workers who serve children and adolescents report facing personal safety issues on the job, with 68% of these social workers indicating employers did not adequately address their concerns. These reports are higher than for those social workers who did not serve children/adolescents (46%).

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family were more likely than those NPA to have job safety concerns (60% versus 46%) and less likely to report that their concerns were addressed (59% versus 71%). Social workers in the practice area of Adolescents did not differ from those NPA. BSWs were more likely to identify job safety concerns than MSWs (61% compared to 54%), but were no more or less likely to report that their issues were adequately addressed. Differences by prevalence of children/adolescents within caseloads were modest, as seen in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Percentages of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Facing Personal Safety Issues, by Emphasis on Children and Adolescents, Degree, and Practice Area



Settings influenced the reporting of job safety issues. Those in criminal justice agencies were most likely to report such issues (77%), followed by social service agencies (62%), group homes (61%), and behavioral health clinics (60%). Those in schools and hospitals were least likely to report such issues (51% and 46%, respectively). Social workers in criminal justice agencies and group homes were, however, most likely to report that their issues are adequately addressed (78% and 76%), while those in social service agencies were least likely to report that their issues are addressed (56%).

Supervision by Social Workers

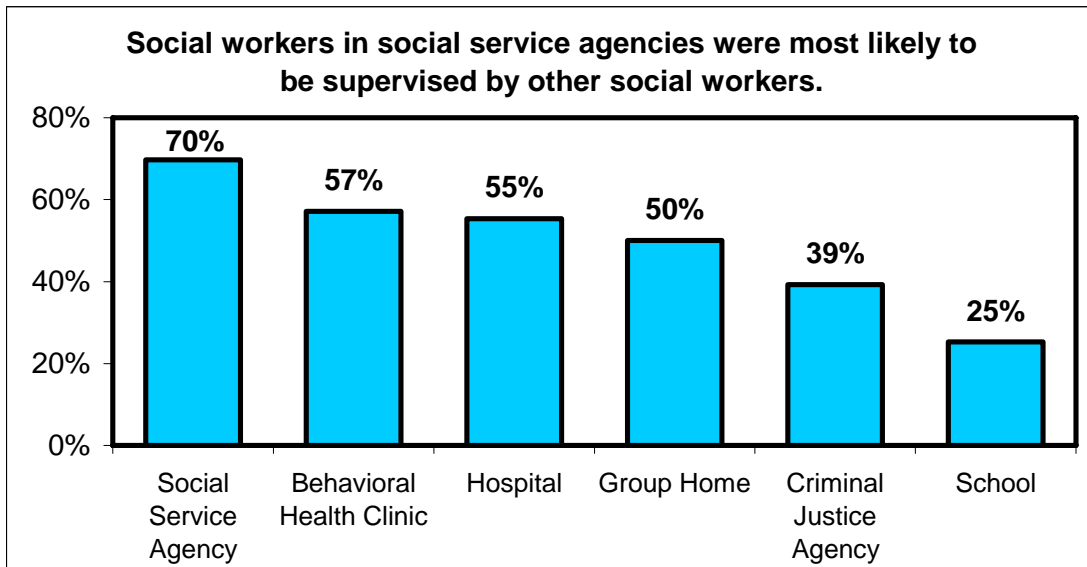
Previous analyses in the NASW/CHWS study of *The Role and Use of Social Workers in the U.S.* indicate that approximately 1 in 10 social workers report quality of supervision and peer support as factors influencing a change in position. Furthermore, 64% of social workers who serve children and adolescents rate supervision as important to improving care for children and families.

Fifty-two percent of social workers who served children and adolescents in an organizational setting were supervised by social workers compared to 44% of those who did not serve this

population. This varied little by degree, and there were only small differences by prevalence of children/adolescents within caseloads.

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family, however, were more likely than others to be supervised by a social worker (69%). Those in social service agencies were most likely to be supervised by a social worker (70%), while those in schools were least likely to be (25%).

Figure 10. Percentages of Social Workers Serving Children and Adolescents Supervised by Other Social Workers, by Employment Setting



Work with Other Professionals

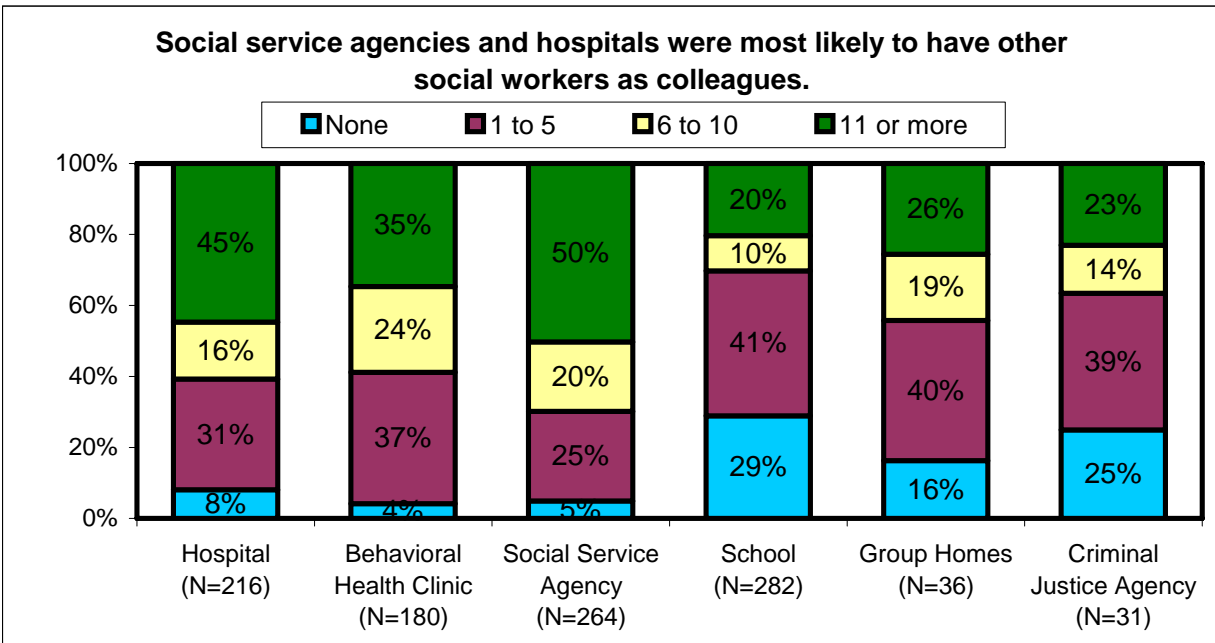
Working With Other Social Workers

Social workers who work with children and adolescents are more likely to be employed in organizations with more other social workers on staff than those who did not serve this population. They were more likely to work with 6 or more other social workers (51% compared to 43%) and less likely to work in settings with no other social workers (12% compared to 17%). This did not vary by degree, or by the extent of their involvement with this population.

However, social workers in Child Welfare/Family were much more likely than those NPA to work with 6 or more social workers (72% versus 46%), and less likely to work with no other social workers (4% versus 14%). Those in Adolescents did not differ from NPA.

Figure 11 shows that virtually all social workers in behavioral health clinics (96%) and social service agencies (95%) had social work colleagues in their job settings, while fewer social workers in schools (71%) and criminal justice agencies (75%) did. Fifty percent of social workers in social service agencies and 45% of those in hospitals reported having 11 or more other social workers at their job site.

Figure 11. Numbers of Other Social Workers as Colleagues, by Employment Setting



Working with Systems

Seventy percent of social workers identified interagency coordination as important to improving the care provided to children and families.

The mental health system (66%), school system (63%), and protective services system (52%) are the systems social workers most commonly work with. MSWs are more likely than BSWs to work with each of these three. In contrast, BSWs were more likely than MSWs to work with the court system, foster care system, and income maintenance system, as seen in Table 28 below.

Social workers in Child Welfare/Family differ from other social workers in that they work most commonly with the protective services system (68%), the foster care system (65%), and the court system (63%).

Table 5. Percentages of Social Workers Who Work With Various Service Systems on Behalf of Children, by Degree and Practice Area

Service System	Child Welfare/ Family		Adolescents		NPA		All Serving Children and Adolescents
	MSW (N=185)	BSW (N=69)	MSW (N=132)	BSW (N=19)	MSW (N=1220)	BSW (N=134)	
MH System	57%	49%	78%	54%	71%	51%	66%
Schools	58%	53%	78%	92%	64%	53%	63%
Protective Services	71%	65%	52%	38%	49%	36%	51%
Health System	20%	13%	14%	15%	39%	50%	35%
Courts	59%	68%	41%	62%	23%	24%	31%
Foster Care	64%	69%	33%	38%	21%	18%	29%
Supplemental Services	16%	19%	16%	0%	26%	33%	24%
Police/CJ System	8%	24%	42%	69%	18%	15%	19%
Social/Recreational Systems	12%	15%	23%	23%	17%	22%	17%
Income Maintenance System	6%	12%	2%	8%	10%	21%	10%
Legal Aid/Attorneys	14%	12%	1%	0%	7%	7%	7%

Table 6 shows that social workers with caseloads of more than 50% children and adolescents worked with all systems with a greater frequency than others, except for the health care system.

Table 6. Percentages of Social Workers Working With Various Systems on Behalf of Child or Adolescent Clients by Prevalence of Children/Adolescents in the Caseload

Systems Interacted With on Behalf of Children	50% or Fewer Children/Adolescents (N=1026)	More than 50% Children/Adolescents (N=1013)
MH system for children	66%	72%
Schools for children	52%	79%
Protective services for children	42%	56%
Health system for children	39%	27%
Courts for children	26%	39%
Supplemental services for children	22%	20%
Foster care for children	17%	38%
Social/recreational systems for children	16%	19%
Police/CJ system for children	15%	22%
Income maintenance system for children	10%	6%
Legal aid/attorneys for children	9%	7%

The systems that social workers worked with varied by setting as seen in Table 7. It is notable that school and mental health systems ranked in the top three systems with which social workers interacted across the six settings examined.

Table 7. Top Four Systems Social Workers Work With on Behalf of Children and Adolescents, by Employment Setting

Hospital (N=216)	Behavioral Health Clinic (N=181)
Health (77%)	Mental health (77%)
Protective services (61%)	Schools (74%)
Mental health (52%)	Protective services (60%)
School (38%)	Foster care (37%)
Social Service Agency (N=265)	School (N=284)
Courts (59%)	Schools (96%)
Protective services (58%)	Mental health (85%)
School (57%)	Protective services (56%)
Mental health (54%)	Health (28%)
Group Home - Child/Adolescents (N=37)	Criminal Justice Agency (N=32)
School (75%)	Courts (73%)
Mental health (64%)	Police (70%)
Courts (57%)	Mental health (60%)
Protective services (54%)	Schools (37%)

Agency Participation in Professional Activities

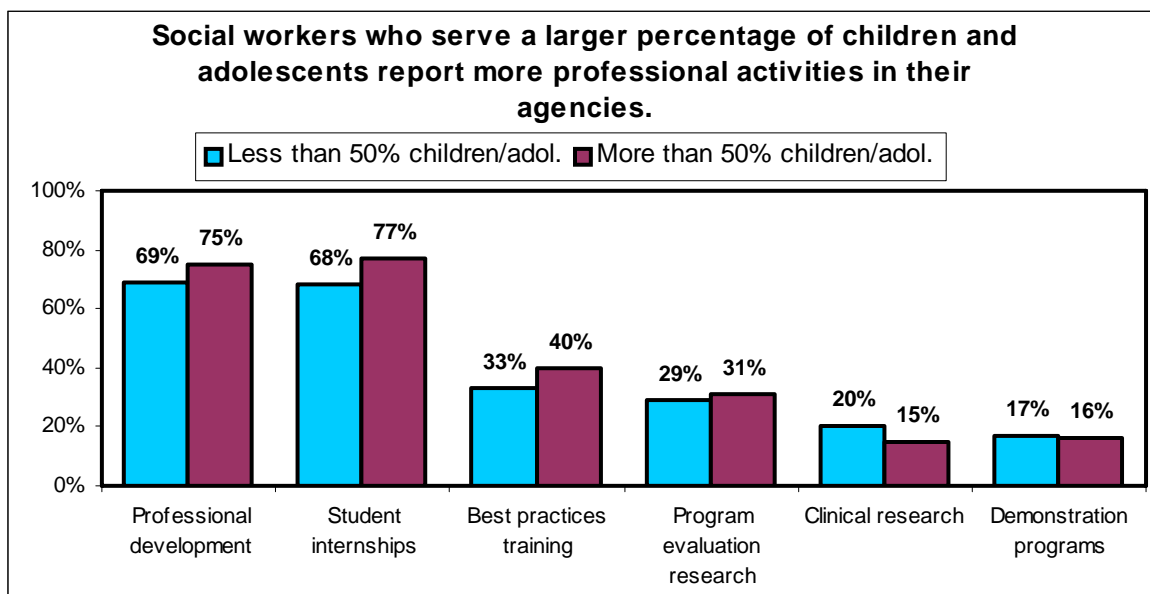
Professional development programs and student internships (both 72%) are the most common professional activities in organizations in which social workers serve children and adolescents. Participation in professional activities varies by setting. Between two-thirds and three-fourths of each type of organizational setting participates in some types of professional development programs. Agency participation in professional activities by setting is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Percentages of Employment Settings Offering Selected Professional Activities

Professional Activity	Hospital (N=216)	Behavioral Health Clinic (N=181)	Social Service Agency (N=265)	School (N=284)	Group Homes (N=37)	Criminal Justice Agency (N=32)
Demonstration Programs	16%	19%	16%	12%	18%	7%
Clinical Research	38%	21%	8%	5%	11%	13%
Student Internships	76%	80%	80%	70%	82%	57%
Best Practices Training	34%	41%	51%	28%	36%	47%
Program Evaluation Research	30%	34%	33%	15%	25%	40%
Professional Development	77%	72%	76%	79%	75%	53%

Those who are more heavily involved with children and adolescents have access to more of certain kinds of professional activities within their agencies, as shown below.

Figure 12. Agency Participation in Selected Professional Activities, by Level of Involvement of Respondent with Children



Agency Support and Guidance

Among those who serve children and adolescents, 66% say that organizational support for social work is important to improving care provided for children and families.

Two-thirds to three-quarters of social workers serving children/adolescents felt positively about the support and guidance provided by their agency. Sixty-five percent agreed that there was respect and support for social work services in their agency, and 67% agreed that they received support and guidance from their supervisor. Seventy-four percent report assistance with issues of ethical practice. These responses did not differ from those social workers not working with children or adolescents

At the same time, 16% felt that there was not support for social work in their agency, and 17% reported that they did not receive support and guidance from their supervisor. Ten percent reported that they did not give/receive assistance with ethical practice.

Rates of dissatisfaction did not vary by degree, practice area, or prevalence of children and adolescents in caseloads. Women tended to be more dissatisfied than men with the respect and support for social work services in their agency (17% versus 11%).

Setting significantly affected satisfaction with support and guidance. Social workers in behavioral health clinics reported the highest agreement that there was respect and support for social work services, followed by those in group homes. Those in criminal justice agencies reported the lowest respect and support for social work. Behavioral health clinics, group homes, and schools had the highest average levels of support and guidance from supervisors, while social service agencies and hospitals had the least. There were minimal average differences among settings related to assistance with ethical practice.