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The Future of Social Work Practice in Addictions

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Abstract

Few social workers specialize in addictions practice. That number may grow in the years ahead due to demographic changes in the population, an expanding definition of addiction, and other factors. Social workers in all areas of practice see clients with addictions and their family members, but there is a large gap in the numbers who need treatment and receive it. The social work workforce of the future must be better equipped to develop and identify prevention and treatment services that are both appealing to clients and effective. These services may need to be offered in other setting where clients are seen. There is also much work to be done in the years ahead in the political environment to make treatment available and to see that individuals with addictions are treated fairly. Substantial research is being conducted on genetics and the brain chemistry of addiction. Psychosocial factors are also believed to play a substantial role in the development of addictions, thus ensuring social workers place in the addictions field in the years ahead.

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