

**Office of Primary  
Care & Rural Health**

Oral Health  
Rural Health  
Primary Care



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## Missouri's Social Work Workforce- 2015

Social work is a practice-based profession focused on promoting social change, cohesion and development; and empowering and liberating people by advocating and upholding social rights and human justice. Social work engages people and structures in their environment to address life challenges and enhance well-being.<sup>1</sup> In Missouri, the Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions, and Professional Registration, State Committee for Social Workers licenses four categories of social workers:<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Licensed Bachelors Social Worker (LBSW) – holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from an accredited program and passing score on the required examination.
- 2) Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) – holds a Master’s degree in Social Work from an accredited program and passing score on required examination.
- 3) Licensed Advanced Macro Social Worker (LASW) – holds a Master’s or Doctorate degree in Social Work, passing exam score, and three thousand hours of supervised advanced macro experience.
- 4) Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) – holds a Master’s or Doctorate degree in Social Work, passing exam score, and three thousand hours of supervised clinical experience.

Social work degrees must be obtained from programs of social work that are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Of the twenty-one accredited social work schools in Missouri: four are located in St. Louis; two in Kansas City, Fulton, and Springfield; and one each in St. Joseph, Neosho, Jefferson City, Columbia, Point Lookout, St. Charles, Parkville, Wentzville, Hannibal, Cape Girardeau, and Warrensburg.<sup>3</sup>

This assessment was produced fourteen months after the initial DHSS report, *Social Work Workforce-2014*, and is an updated and more in-depth look at social work as a profession in both Missouri and nationwide. Information on licenses is current as of 5/1/2015 and was obtained through the publicly reported records of the Committee for Social Workers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Federation of Social Workers, Definition of Social Work. Accessed May 1, 2015 at <http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/>.

<sup>2</sup> Missouri Division of Professional Registration, *Social Workers*. Accessed May 1, 2015 at <http://pr.mo.gov/listings-clis.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> Career Index. Social work schools in Missouri. Accessed May 15, 2015 at <http://www.educationnews.org/career-index/social-work-schools-in-missouri/>.

## Progression of the Profession

The first licensing requirement for LCSWs in Missouri was passed in 1989. Subsequently, requirements for various levels of licensed social workers were added. In 2001, a bachelor degree level license (LBSW) was added. Licenses for Master (LMSW) and Advanced Macro (LASW) were added in 2007.<sup>4</sup> Since 2009 the total number of LCSWs has continued to stay relatively flat (5083 in 2009 vs. 5315 in 2014), albeit with fluctuations (Figure 1). In contrast, the total number of LMSWs has more than quadrupled since 2010 (Figure 1). Given the consistent variation seen in total numbers of LCSWs and the enduring expansion in the total number of LMSWs (227 in 2010 vs. 1041 in 2014), a more thorough analysis and additional monitoring of trends and impacts in the profession could be warranted.<sup>2</sup>

Looking at the total number of new LCSW and LMSW licensees since the year 2009 suggests a consistent production of LCSWs, with a strong interest in the LMSW license. In the five year time period in which new licensee data is available for both LCSWs and LMSWs, the average number of new LMSW licensees (315) continues to outpace the average number of new LCSW licensees (239).<sup>2</sup> The radically low number of LBSW licensees suggests that the vast majority of social work students continue on to higher education. This is most likely attributed to the fact that the majority of employers require graduate level experience.<sup>3</sup>

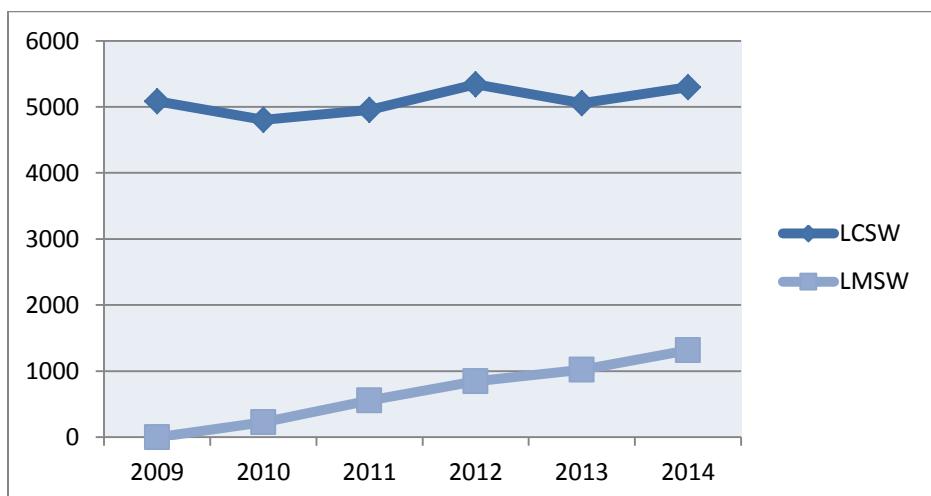


Figure 1. Total number of LCSWs licensed by Missouri, 2009-2014 and LMSWs licensed by Missouri 2010-14<sup>2</sup>

## Social Workers in Missouri

There are 6,681 social workers licensed by Missouri. Of those, there are 5,555 licensed social workers with Missouri addresses; 46 LBSWs, 1,041 LMSWs, no LASWs and 4,468 LCSWs. Of those with Missouri addresses, there are 4,575 licensed social workers located in urban regions compared with 980 in rural areas (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup> The population-to-LCSW ratio in Missouri is currently 1357:1.<sup>5</sup>

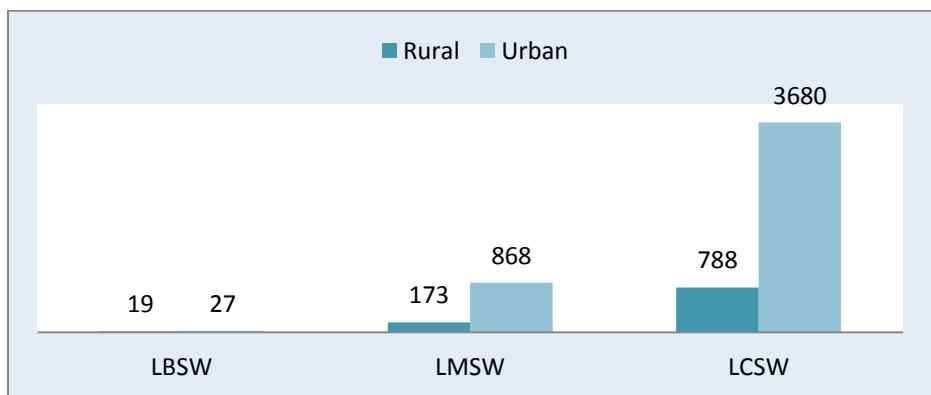
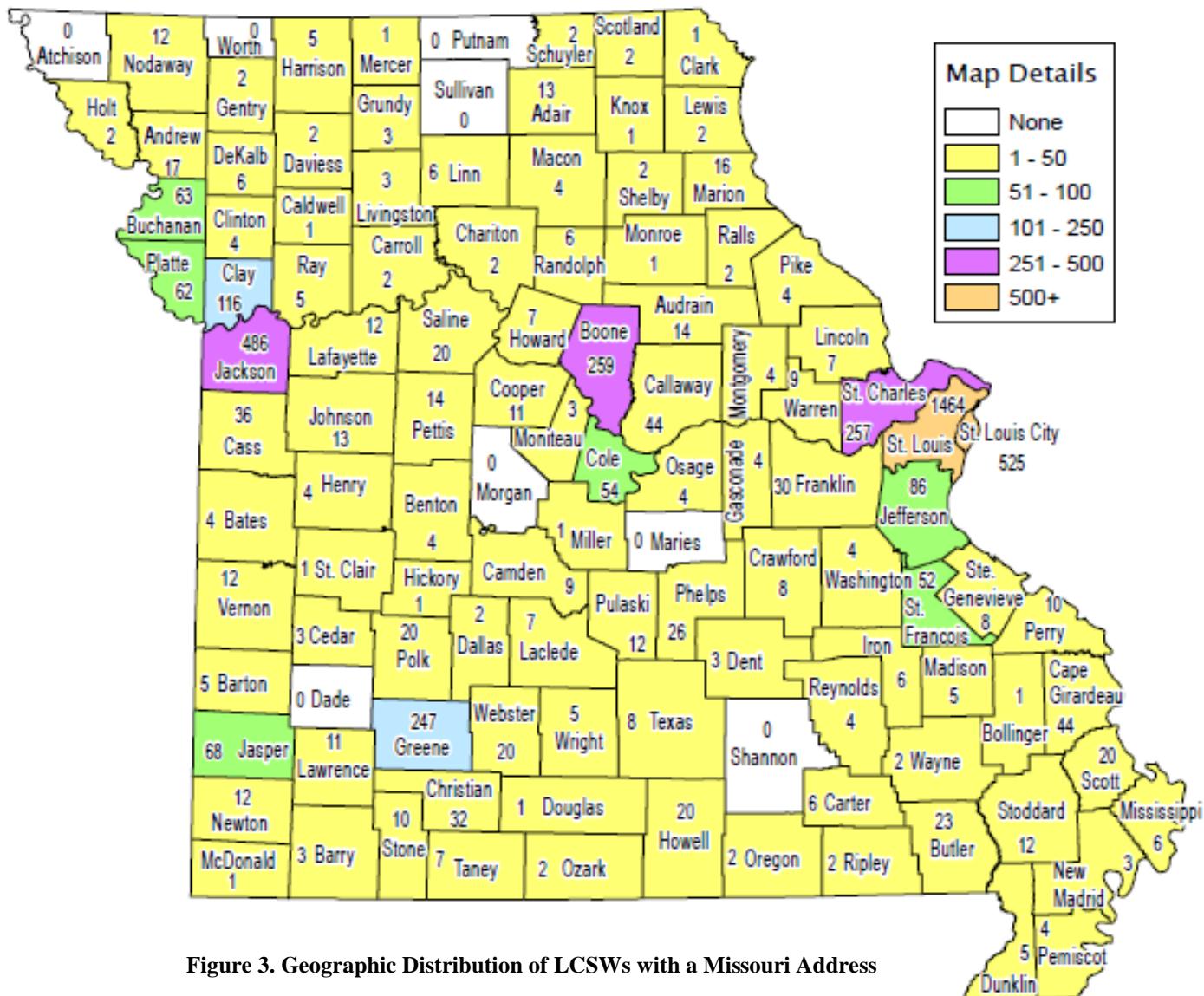


Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Licensed Social Workers in Missouri<sup>2</sup>

## Access to LCSWs in Missouri

Licensed Clinical Social Workers in Missouri are geographically maldistributed. Of Missouri's 115 Counties, 101 are classified as rural and 98% percent of these rural counties are considered Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>6</sup> Eight rural counties don't have any LCSWs listing a contact address within its borders. An overwhelming majority of Missouri Social Workers are located in St. Louis City/County area (1,989).<sup>2</sup> The amount of social work programs available in St Louis likely explains for the high volume of LCSWs currently working in the area. The ratio of urban to rural social workers in Missouri (4:1) suggests an inadequate supply of social workers in rural areas when viewed from a statewide perspective.



## Income

As of May 2012, the median annual wage for social workers in the U.S. was \$44,200. The average salary for a social worker located in Missouri was between \$33,000 and \$42,000.<sup>7</sup>

The median wage in Missouri differs by area of focus:

- \$33,910 for child, family, and school social workers
- \$41,190 for mental health and substance abuse social workers
- \$40,140 for all other social workers

Social work salaries have a high variability overall. Nationally, salary fluctuates by geographic location and sector of primary employment (Figure 4). Social workers in metropolitan areas earn considerably more than those in micropolitan areas, small towns, and rural areas, especially those in the government and private practice settings. Median salaries for those in private practice are significantly higher than salaries for the other three sectors.<sup>8</sup> There is an average increase of \$15,000 in annual salary for social workers who have completed their Master of Social Work versus those who have completed an undergraduate degree, which may be another factor in the low number of LBSWs.<sup>8</sup> Compared to all other professions in Missouri, as of 2010, social workers earned a lower annual income (Figure 5).<sup>3</sup>

Sector of Primary Employment	Metropolitan Area	Micropolitan Area	Small Town	Rural Area	Total
<b>Private Practice</b>	\$58,747	\$47,820	\$46,415	\$24,266	\$57,357
<b>Private, Not-For-Profit</b>	\$46,482	\$40,658	\$36,344	\$38,542	\$44,998
<b>Private, For-Profit</b>	\$47,286	\$45,713	\$39,332	\$33,628	\$46,433
<b>Government</b>	\$51,833	\$39,681	\$41,123	\$37,906	\$48,351
<b>Total</b>	\$49,175	\$42,160	\$39,014	\$37,641	\$47,640

Figure 4. National Median Salaries of Full Time Social Workers<sup>8</sup>

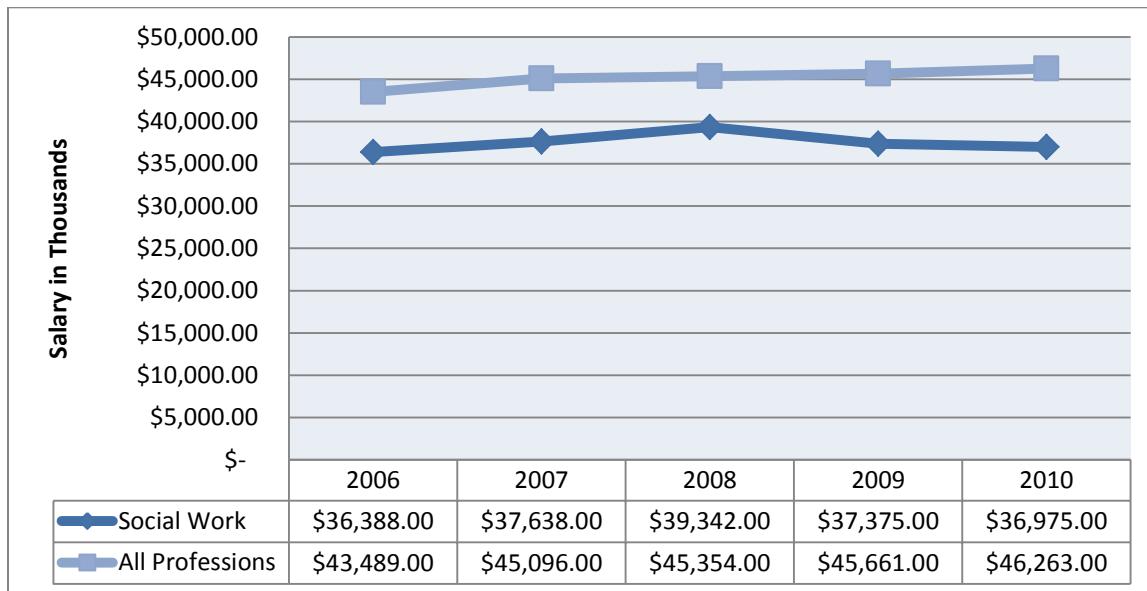


Figure 5. Social work vs. all professions median salaries in Missouri<sup>3</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Social Work License Map. Social work Salaries. Accessed May 4, 2015 at <http://socialworklicensemap.com/social-worker-salary/>.

<sup>8</sup> Center for Workforce Studies. A National Study of Licensed Social Workers. Accessed May 11, 2015 at [http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/nasw\\_06\\_execsummary.pdf](http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/nasw_06_execsummary.pdf).

## Social Work Specialties

Social Workers frequently work with varying client populations.<sup>8</sup> Areas of service consist of psychological, physical and social issues and are often co-occurring (Figure 6).<sup>8</sup> The primary role of licensed social workers is divided among several areas. The majority of work-time is spent providing direct services to patients (Figure 7).<sup>8</sup>

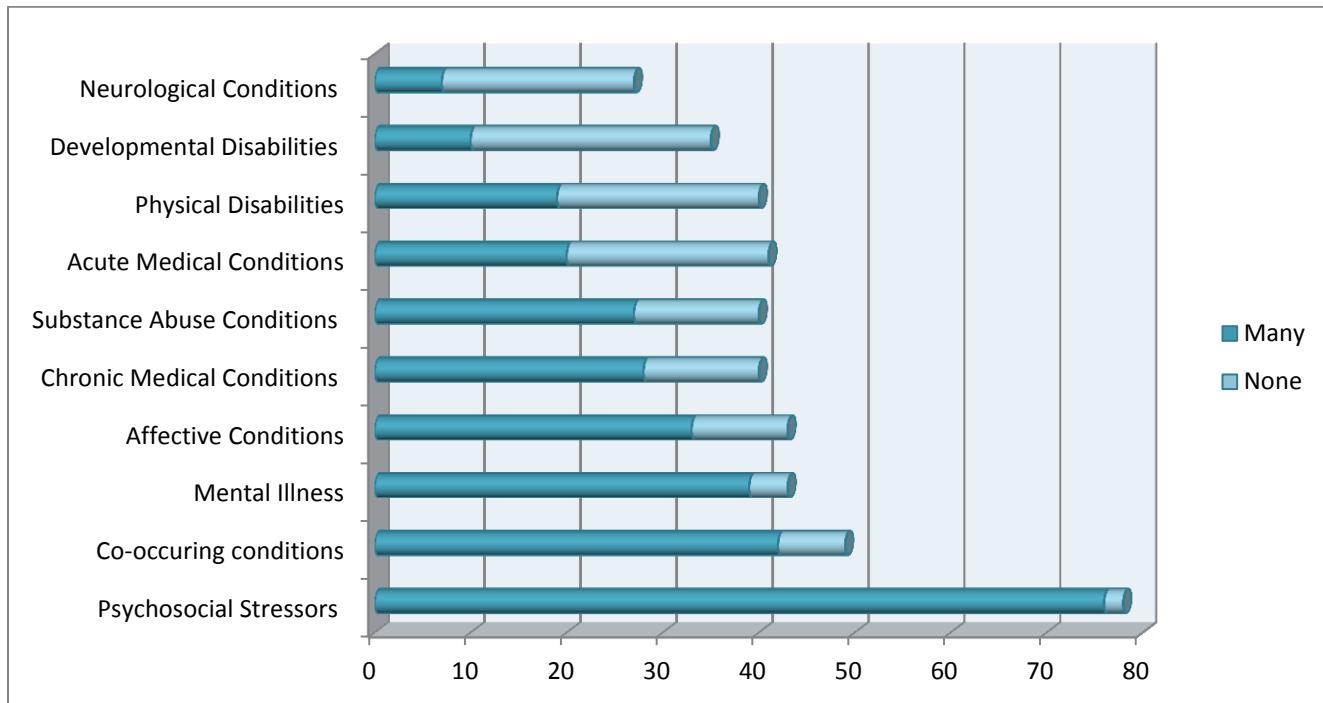


Figure 6. Percentage of Client Reported to Have None or Many of Selected Conditions<sup>8</sup>

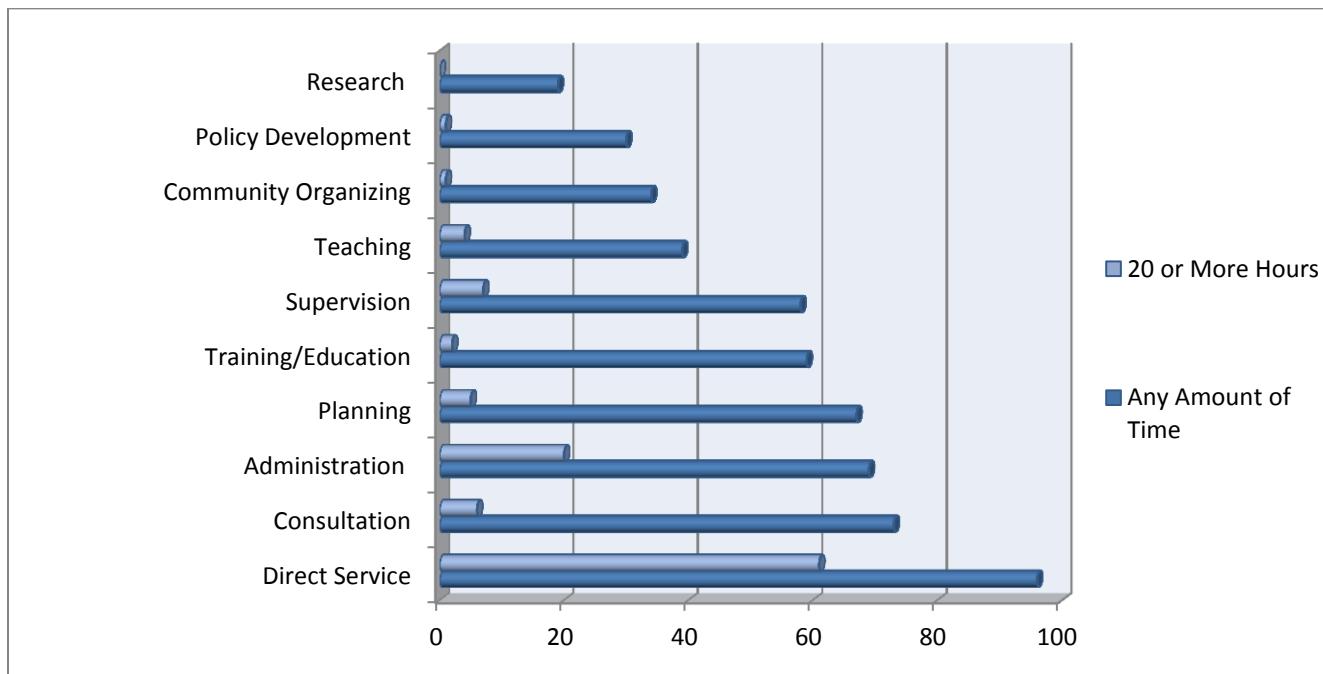


Figure 7. Percentage of Social Workers Spending Any Time or 20 Hours per Week on Varying Roles<sup>8</sup>

## **Social Work Industries**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that social workers held approximately 607,300 jobs in 2012.<sup>9</sup> The industries employing the most mental health substance abuse social workers were:

Ambulatory health care services	27%
Social Assistance	21%
Nursing and residential care facilities	15%
Hospital, state, local and private	15%

Industries employing the most child, family, and school social workers were:

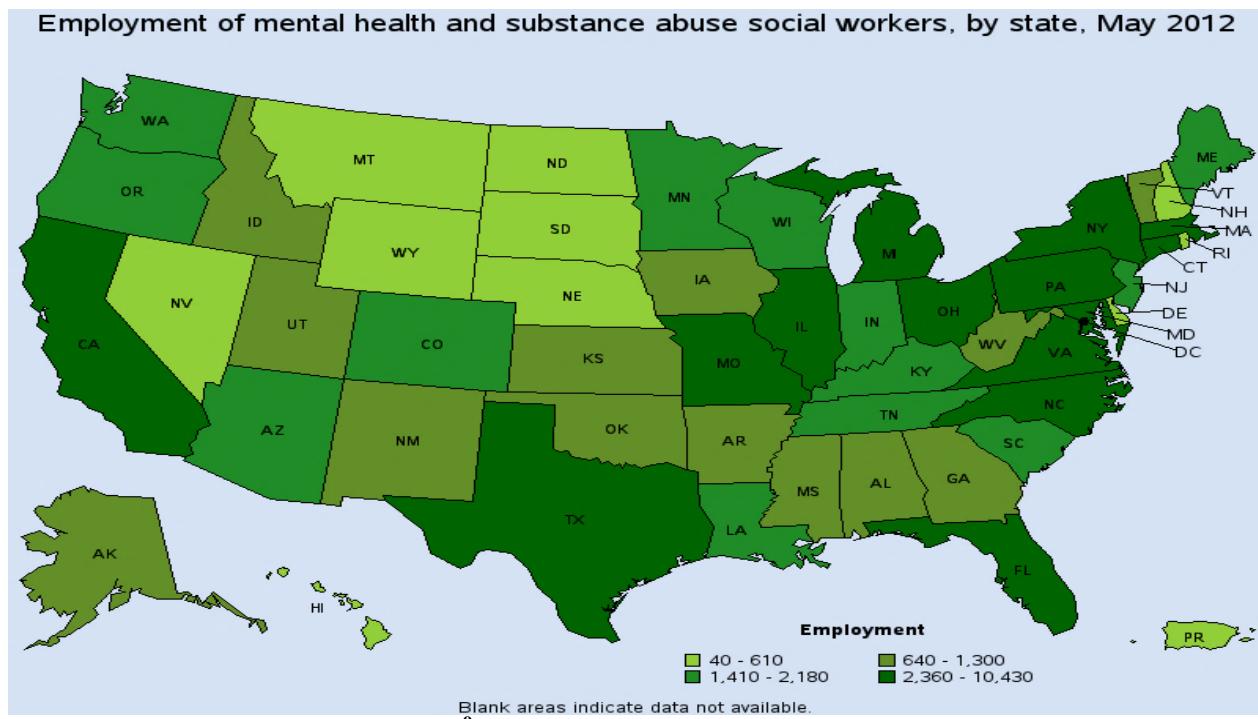
State and local government, excluding education and hospitals	41%
Health care and social assistance	36%
Educational services; state, local, and private	15%
Religious, grant making, civic, professional, etc.	5%

Industries employing the most healthcare social workers were:

Hospitals; state, local, and private	31%
Ambulatory health care services	21%
Nursing and residential facilities	15%
Social Assistance	15%

## **Regional Variations**

The BLS provides statistics for three specific types of social workers based upon the focus of their work: Mental Health and Substance Abuse social workers, Child, Family, and School social workers, and Healthcare social workers. As displayed in Figures 8, 9, 10, Missouri is among the states with the highest employment of all three categories of social workers.



**Figure 8. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>9</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Social Workers, Accessed May 1, 2015 at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm>.

### Employment of child, family, and school social workers, by state, May 2012

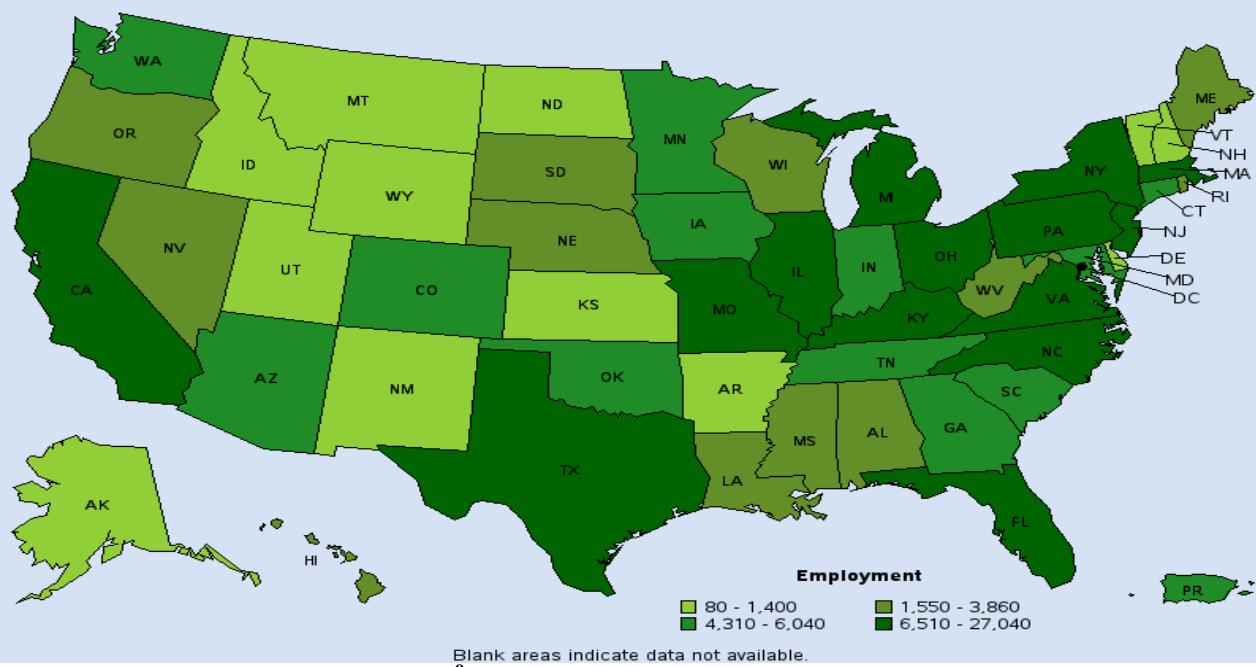


Figure 9. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>9</sup>

### Employment of healthcare social workers, by state, May 2012

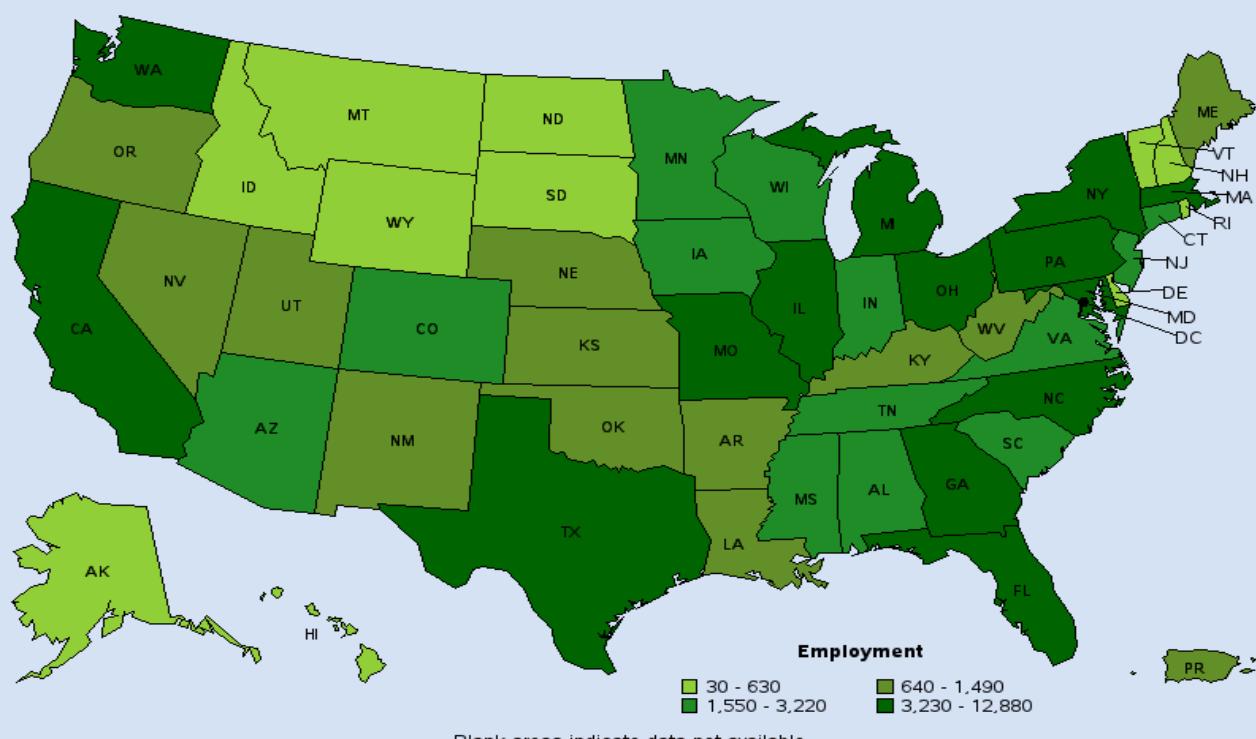


Figure 10. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>9</sup>