

## Human Services? Psychology? Social Work? What's the difference?!?

Many students are confused by these three overlapping areas of study and career. It is the area of emphasis is what separates each field, even though all three involve counseling and case management. This handout will help you understand the differences.

Regardless of your degree path, an advanced degree is required for therapists. Some areas also require licensure. Human Services, Social Work, and Psychology degrees all provide some level of counseling and case management. Choosing which degree to attain is dependent on what it is you want to do for a career.

**Human Services** is a broad field of study; professionals are able to work with all populations through emphasis areas mentioned below.

### *Emphasis:*

- Addiction Studies
- Domestic Violence Counseling
- High Risk Youth Studies
- Nonprofit Organization Administration

This is a counseling field which includes case management. Human service professionals act as agents to assist and/or empower individuals, groups, families and communities to prevent, alleviate or better cope with crisis, change and stress to enable the function more effectively in all areas of life and living. Human service agents operate in programs or facilities for meeting basic health, welfare and other needs of a society or group as of the poor, sick or elderly. This field is focused. Students in the program choose an area of emphasis. In other words, those whose focus is domestic violence counseling are able to work in that area only, rather than a broad range of counseling areas.

### *Human Service majors can do the following:*

- Counseling
- Outreach work
- Teaching/education
- Advocacy
- Brokering
- Community planning
- Consulting
- Administration
- Research/evaluation

Currently, Human Services only offers a degree up to the Bachelor's level, which equips students to become counselors on a minimal level. Individuals may need to seek advanced degrees and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) certification in order to be therapists.

**Social Work** is a generalist field that serves a diverse population with various issues.

### *Emphasis:*

- Child welfare
- Developmental disabilities
- Early Intervention for children: birth - five
- Child and adolescent mental health
- GLBT issues
- Women
- Ageing

Social workers assess, goal- plan and support the client through a crisis, providing counseling if needed. Social workers provide people in need with social services, helping individuals, communities and groups to enhance or restore their ability for social functioning. Regardless of area of emphasis, Social Work majors are able to work with various issues, in diverse settings. Picking an emphasis simply provides students with more information about that particular population; it does not disqualify a student from working with other populations or issues.

Currently, Metro State's Social Work program offers both a Bachelor's degree (BSW) and a Master's degree (MSW). The MSW would allow a student to conduct therapy sessions, or to start their own organization(s). Some schools also offer doctoral (Ph.D.) programs.

*The fundamental focus areas of social work are:*

- Social change
- Problem-solving in human relationships
- Empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being
- Human rights and social justice
- Advocacy
- Mediation

*Social worker can work in the following settings:*

- Charitable organizations
- Social service centers
- Welfare agencies and agencies serving those in poverty

**Psychology** is the study of the human mind and how it affects human behavior. This field consists of research, statistical analysis and theories.

*Areas of study:*

- Abnormal Psychology
- Biological Psychology
- Cognitive Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Personality Psychology
- Social Psychology

*Area of emphasis/career paths:*

- Clinical Psychology
- Counseling Psychology
- Educational Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Health Psychology
- Career Psychology
- Sports Psychology

Psychologists help clients through issues based on biological and psychological elements via therapy sessions. It is really based on a person's behavior, followed by the question *why?*, which leads to examination of the person's cognition.

Practicing psychologists and psychotherapists require doctoral degrees and state licensure for private practices or to become a professor; however, Psychology majors at a Bachelor's degree level can function under the supervision of an LPC or in a facility or in the physical therapy department of a hospital.