

# [Intro to social work essay](https://assignbuster.com/intro-to-social-work-essay/)

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Topic: School Based Social Work Story: During my freshman year at College, I was mad aware of a job opening at a local public school on Staten Island. Some of the college’s students spent their first semester volunteering there for their freshman learning community. By the second semester, all the volunteers left because the atmosphere of the school was challenging. With all of the free help gone, the school put out a flyer for paid after school help positions. I jumped at the opportunity for a paid job in which I only had to work a few hours each day. I had spent time in high volunteering at my neighborhood public school, so I had experience working with children in a school setting. I am also from a low income, ethnically diverse neighborhood, so what my peers deemed as a “ challenging neighborhood” made me feel right at home.

By the spring of 2007, I had been working as an after school tutor and recreations counselor for over a year. My place of employment was Public School Number. The organization I worked for is a non-profit company called, which runs a out of the school. At the same time I was also debating entering the education dual major program, which required me to do student teaching. Within the school I had many roles which made me a visible member of the community. I fell in love with the children I saw everyday. I slowly but surely worked my way up to greater levels of responsibility. I eventually received my own group of children to regularly supervise.

On a Thursday afternoon, one of my children began tugging on my uniform shirt. I immediately turned my attention to the child. She was a first grade student I will call “ Tammy”. Tammy began to cry.

Crying is not unusual in an after school program that deals with children, so I was not alarmed but I did try to calm the child. Tammy was holding her stomach so I asked if she had a tummy ache. She nodded yes. I tried to encourage her to use her voice. I wanted Tammy respond to me by speaking so I ignored the head nod and asked the question again, “ Tammy, does your stomach hurt? Is there anything I can do for you to help? ” Tammy started to calm down and replied, “ Yes, my tummy hurts and I want my mommy. This is not an unusual request. Sometimes after a long day at school, children do not want to stay for the entire after school program. Many times they claim to be ill so that a counselor will call their parents to come pick them up early.

I asked her how long had her stomach been hurting and she told me since yesterday. I followed up by asking if she had told her teacher that her stomach was bothering her during the day. Tammy confirmed that she did tell her teacher and that she was allow to put her head down for awhile and that she took a short nap. I figured that her stomach ache must not have been a huge issue, when she told me that her teacher did not send her to the nurse because she felt better after she awoke. Lots of children fake illness however; Tammy was not one of those children.

I took her hand and we began to walk down the hallway to the office so that I could call her mother. I made conversation in the hopes of trying to understand what was bothering her. I asked Tammy if she ate something that she would not normally eat and she said no. Then I asked if she had any idea why her stomach was hurting so that I would know what to tell her mother when I called her. The child began to cry. This cry was slightly different from the earlier one. It seemed like she I embarrassed. I became confused and was immediately concerned.

No first grade girl would be embarrassed to cry about a stomach ache. I reassured her that she could tell me anything and that everything would be okay. “ Yesterday I spent the night at my friend’s house. We had fun until my friend’s mommy left,” Tammy said with tears still pouring from her eyes.

I asked if the two little girls had been left in the house alone. No,” she replied, “ we stayed in the house with her uncle and he made us play a game I didn’t like. ” My heart sank. I became fearful of what the child might say next.

I knew I had no training for dealing with such a situation. I told myself to keep it together, pay careful attention to whatever she was going to say and refrain from making conclusions. Tammy was still holding her stomach when I knelt down to be eye level with her and asked what was it about the game that she did not like it. Tammy began to recount a story of being made to sit on her friend’s uncle’s lap and play this bouncing game. She told me that it hurt her “ downstairs and tummy” and that the uncle made her cry. She said that the friend’s uncle told her and her friend if they kept it a secret that he would buy them a special treat when he came to pick them up from the after school program later that same evening. I had heard enough.

I did not want to alarm the child, I reassured her that everything would be okay and it was a good thing that she confided in me. I continued to walk the child to the office where I sat her down in a chair, gave her a glass of water and a lollipop. I pulled er file and asked my boss to step out into the hallway with me. I told him verbatim everything that transpired. Immediately he called to school social worker downstairs to sit with myself and Tammy as my boss followed the school protocol. The parents were notified and well as the authorities. The Children’s Services Instant Response Team was at the school in what seemed like minutes.

Tammy was taken to the hospital for an examination with her parents while I sat in the office with the social worker and wrote out my official statement of the story for my job, the school and the police. Undercover police waited at the school for the gentleman to arrive with his intention of picking up the two little girls. Once I finished making my statement the social worker, I began to weep. I never had to deal with suspected child abuse before. The social worker began to informally counsel me.

She reassured me that I handle the situation extremely well for a person with no training. Although I had never met the social worker before, I had seen her around the school over the course of the year that I worked there. The social worker understood me and the rush of emotions and feelings I had.

She made me feel like I could truly open up to her. She gave me advice on how to cope with the situation and how this experience would only help me be more competent as a teacher in the future. In retrospect, if I was not sensitive enough to notice the slight abnormalities in Tammy’s behavior, this story would have been a lot different. Without even knowing it, I displayed some of the personality traits that a social worker as a professional helper should have such as warmth, courage, sensitivity, listening and collaboration skills. Introduction: Social welfare addresses the enhancement of human general well-being, helping to meet the basic needs of individuals and the universal needs of a population, while paying special attention to the vulnerable, oppressed and poor people (DiNitto, p3).

Social welfare institutions are comprised of the groups that address the physical, economic, religious and political needs of citizens, fulfill human needs and resolve social problems (Dubois, p 18). In today’s world, social work is not a well noticed profession. Many people do not realize the scope and impact of the social work profession in the United States and the world. Social work as any profession is an occupation that requires extensive systematic knowledge and training in the art of social work.

An occupation must also be bound to a code of ethic and an accrediting agency, both of with the profession of social work in the United States has. For this profession to exists, we must acknowledge society. Looking at human beings as an animal species, one of our adaptations was the concept of society.

When two or more individuals live together and share culture and values for their mutual benefit, a society will develop. This is important because with living in societies comes with the responsibility for all members by all members, which is a “ client in situation focus” that recognizes that personal problems have social implications. The idea of a binding but unwritten social contract among men has been theorized by many of the great sociologist in history. There are two ways in which we can look at this responsibility, when using the lens of social welfare. The consensus model and conflict model are the two such ways. The consensus model’s goal is to resolve conflicts and tensions, to socialize people label “ deviant,” and to create harmony between people and their environment through their mutual adaptation. In contrast, the conflict model focuses on power issues and holds that social problems result from unequal distributions of power and authority” (DuBois, p22).

Within this social contract there seems to be an underlying understanding that there is something called “ quality of life” and that all people within a society are entitled to it. Every person should have the ability and opportunity to meet their basic needs of living such as food, water, shelter, freedom, safety, access to education, socialization, intimacy, healthcare, or employment. In response to these needs the society puts in place “ institutions” to address these needs. Examples of these institutions are the healthcare system, housing initiatives, the criminal justice system, legislative system, educational system, marriage, social clubs, churches and food programs. Social welfare developed when people recognized that sometimes these institutions failed at executing their mission, and regardless of the reason, a response was seen as necessary. The response in correcting these failures had different motives, which is illustrated in the philosophies that are at the root of social welfare practice, the Social Gospel and Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism “ originated with Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher, who used Darwin’s theory of evolutionary to explain how our society should treat its members who are not successfully meeting their wn needs (DuBois, p 149). Survival of the fittest was the motto and it was thought that it was not society’s fault that the institutions that were set up failed the individual.

As a species bound to the laws of nature, there are supposed to be unsuccessful individuals. When this idea was related to social welfare, people thought that aid should be given because as humans we have a conscience and we should not allow others to endure unnecessary suffering but only enough should be given so that the individuals could survive not flourish/succeed. Social Darwinism became the philosophy behind the COS (Charity Organization Society Movement).

The COS organized the charities in an area to help record with people were accessing the aid services. The goal was to help prevent abuse by aid seekers. They did not want individuals going from one charity to the next collecting aid. Accessing multiple forms of aid was seen as being a successful individual off the generosity of others which was not a good thing. The COS sent out staff members known as friendly visitors to oversee people who accessed the assistance.

They not only prevented abuse of the system, the friendly visitors helped the people they served manage the benefits they received, so that why were used in the most efficient way possible. Friendly visitors made sure benefits were spent on specific essentials and positive members of society. These friendly visitors are the precursors for the people we call the case workers of today. The other philosophy at the basis of social welfare practice is called the Social Gospel. The Social Gospel was based on the religious teaching of European Christianity from seventeenth and eighteenth century. Based on the teaching of Jesus Christ, this philosophy does not only want to help the recipients survive, it allows for them to succeed. This movement was based on the idea of helping to uplift the poor through the community organizations.

An example of one such organization is the Chicago Hull House. Such places provide opportunities to learn skills through job training and healthcare. The Hull House is what was known as a settlement house “ that combined social advocacy and social services to respond to social disorganization” (DuBois, p32). This help was open to anyone in the community, which helped to develop the idea of group workers and community organizers.

Social welfare took a leap towards becoming a full fledged profession when in 1917 Mary Richmond, the foundress of social welfare practice, published her book called “ Social Diagnostics. ” It became the official textbook for all social work education. Through the years, social work practice continued to positively develop with each reform. In 1929 at the Milford Conference, case work was chosen as the main method of delivery for social work.

In 1935 the Social Security Act was passed and in 1952 the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) was formed. It is the national agency that sets the social work curriculum and serves as the national accrediting agency. In 1955 the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was formed. The NASW is the agency that provides recognized licenses for the social work profession. There are two types of licenses a student of social work can receive from the NASW. The first one is the Certified Social Worker license (CSW), which is a state license and the Academy of Social Work license (ACSW), which is the national license.

Both licenses are equal in terms of describing the person level of education on content competence. The purposeful distinction is if one person was looking for employment and they want to work on either a national or state level. There are three different types of traditional styles/methods taught in social work education. Each method has its pros and cons, as well as certain situations and clients that help the social worker determine with method would be most effective in achieving their goal. The three methods are casework, group work and community organization. Casework is a process in which one social worker is helps an individual, one at a time. The goal of casework is to recognize the importance of context in understanding behavior, the impact of family and other social roles on mental well-being.

Skills exemplified through casework during the interviewing process include objectivity, empathy, utilization of the individual’s strengths, and the interaction of personality and social environment. Group work focuses on group dynamics and how to help create a cohesive unit. A common example of group work is family therapy. The third method is community organization practice which “ involves a range of activities, including community organizing, organizational development, and social reform by encouraging the involvement of community leaders, including government units; corporation boards; union; foundations and other funding bodies ”(DuBois, p77). Public Health work is an example of common community organizational activities. Today, social workers to no find themselves bound to use of one method or another.

Most contemporary social workers are categories as either a generalist or specialist. Both make use of all three methods mention above. Specialist are called such because then tend to focus on using an in depth approach to a particular problem . Social workers also have the responsibility of determining what type of social functioning level the client is using. The three recognized types of social functioning are adaptive, at risk and maladaptive functioning.

Just as it sounds adaptive functioning is using positive coping skills, maladaptive is use of negative coping skills and at-risk functioning is when an individual is on the borderline fro developing maladaptive behaviors for dealing with trials and tribulations in life. Social workers have three types of client levels that they use to distinguish the size of the group they are working with. The three levels are micro, which is for individuals, mid, which is business or group size and macro, which is community or nation wide. Do to the nature of the work social workers engage in, values are stressed among its members. To be effective a social worker must be trusted. Values and ethic must be strict and followed to encourage the type of disclosure between the professional and their client. Social work espouses democratic values.

That means that social worker respect the right of all human people to determine their future and to participate actively in every sphere of human activity” (DiNitto, p22). To maintain this outlook on the client a code of ethic to reinforce such values was essential. In 1999 the code of ethics for social work was adopted by the NASW. The codes are as follows: •Social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems •Social workers challenge social injustice Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person •Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationship •Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner •Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise rs (such as speech pathology/speech improvement, guidance, social work, school psychology, and attendance teachers) and other support staff.

Interview: What school did you attend? What is the area of your specialty? Child Abuse, Behavioral problems, family dysfunction, sexual abuse and multicultural issues. What made you choose social work? I was always a counselor. Growing up my friends always came to me for advice. When I got to college I wasn’t sure if I wanted to be a teacher or a therapist, after a few social work classes, I fell in love. What made you choose your specialty? I kind of fell into it. After graduation I was working in a hospital and I was placed on the pediatrics.

I love the children but not the setting, so I moved over to a school setting. I love it here. What is the primary task of your agency? Well if you want to describe the agency as the school, then I would say to teach. That put my job in a new light, I mean I help the students who are having problems manage their problems, so that they don’t become distractions to their learning. I like that, it sounds nice and important. I take my job very seriously and I think it is very important. I mean some of the kids here, they really have no one advocating for them.

So I step up and I am genuinely in their corner. How many employees work there? There are about 35 staff members I would say. Can you explain to me the administrative setup? Well I report to the principal in the school setting but I work collaboratively with lots of other people. It all depends on the needs of the child.

Now that I understand the school atmosphere, Can you tell me the age group and the needs of the majority of your clients? The children in this school are aged six to twelve but also their parents. I’ve dealt with a variety of issues you wouldn’t even think ten year olds should have to deal with. The majority of the children are dealing with issues related to their poverty. Working in the public school system, all children are entitled to a free and appropriate education, so I have worked with many special needs children and children who have suffered neglect and abuse.

Some children have learning disabilities and their parents don’t know what to do or where to go when they get news like that. I hear to be an active listener for the parents and the child. What is the nature of your work? Counseling, community referrals, liaison work, child abuse reporting, crisis intervention and child (but when I cay child I also mean family) advocacy. Describe what a typical day on the job is like for you. Basically, I come in review cases, track down people that can help my clients, meet with clients and things like that, but this is a small school.

I like to be a visible; I am always walking around with a ton of projects to do. Believe me I always have something to do. Are you happy about a being a social worker? I could say yes with a bigger smile on my face and mean it more. I really really really love my job. Sometimes it’s a challenge. Some of the tougher cases just break my heart. But I know that I’m doing my best to help them and I don’t stop until something changes for them.

It might not always be what I would like to see happen but something always gets done. Finally, What is your message to me as a student of social work? Try everything! You never know what your going to fall into and fall in love with. When it comes to social work, put your all into your work, that goes for everything but especially when it comes to this. My caution is not to wear your heart on your sleeve literally but all be available emotional for your clients. They can tell the difference. I‘ ve seen the difference. Goals: The phone interview went very well. She seemed to be a very happy bubbly person.

I can see why she wanted to work with kids. I learned a lot but I do not think writing up the interview stresses the major point she wanted to make. talked about loving the challenge of her job and how each case was different.

The job is interesting to her and keeps her busy, motivated and happy. Analysis/Conclusion: Social work is a very old but interesting professional. It requires time, knowledge and dedication. Unlike other jobs, this is not something everyone can do.

I now believe that social work is very unrated when it comes to prestige. Social workers work hard but they live very fulfilled lives because they all have the passion to help others. The development of social work into what it is today, shows that society is behind such work and that it benefits everyone. No matter the methods or setting social workers are like doctors and they try the best the can to cure the ill of society, one person, one group, one nation at a time.