

Professional Social Work Month

March 2022

Celebrating Our Social Workers!

Social Work is a profession with a rich history that has contributed to the lives of diverse populations, often persons in vulnerable or oppressed conditions. Social Work is directed by research and theoretical foundations and practices. Persons who may carry the title of Social Worker have obtained a Bachelors (BSW), Masters (MSW) degree, and/or Doctorate (PhD) in Social Work from an accredited four-year college or university, through a Social Work Department that has met the credentialing standards of the profession. Social Workers serve in various roles and can be found in many settings: government, medical, industry, schools, administration, program leadership, political arenas, and mental health. We are pleased to have one type of Social Worker serving in Keystone Mental Health Services and Our Little Academy Day Treatment Program: that is Clinical Social Workers.

What is a Clinical Social Worker?

Clinical social workers represent the largest group of behavioral health practitioners in the nation. They are often the first to diagnose and treat people with mental disorders and various emotional and behavioral disturbances. Clinical social workers are essential to a

variety of client-centered settings, including community mental health centers, hospitals, substance use treatment and recovery programs, schools, primary health care centers, child welfare agencies, aging services, employee assistance programs, and private practice settings.

Clinical social work has a primary focus on the mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being of individuals, couples, families, and groups. It centers on a holistic approach to psychotherapy and the client's relationship to his or her environment. Clinical social work views the client's relationship with his or her environment as essential to treatment planning.

Clinical social work is a state-regulated professional practice. It is guided by state laws and regulations. In most instances, clinical social workers are required to have the following credentials:

- a Master's degree from a Social Work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education
- a minimum of two years or 3,000 hours of post-master's degree experience in a supervised clinical setting
- a clinical license in the state of practice.

Clinical social work is broadly based and addresses the needs of individuals, families, couples, and groups affected by life changes and challenges, including mental disorders and other behavioral



disturbances. Clinical social workers seek to provide essential services in the environments, communities, and social systems that affect the lives of the people they serve.



What do Clinical Social Workers do at Keystone Mental Health Services and Our Little Academy Day Treatment Services (OLA) - Our Little Haven?

At Keystone and OLA, our Clinical Social Workers are all fully licensed mental health care practitioners who seek to improve the mental health and well-being of our clients. We meet with children, adults, and families to assess and treat many types of difficulties such as depression, trauma reaction, anxiety, school problems, attention problems, disruptive behaviors, family and relationship problems, loss and grief, and parenting needs. We specialize in the treatment of young children and in play therapy. Our clinical services are guided by our clients as we implement practices that adhere to the most up to date research in our field. In fact, we undergo professional development every year in a wide variety of areas to make sure that we are providing the best quality care. We recognize the individual as well as the family system in treatment, and often coordinate with outside systems as well, such as schools, health care professionals, and child welfare systems. We also believe in the importance of maintaining cultural competency and humility as we work with a very diverse clientele. Most importantly, we value the dignity and respect of each client as we adhere to the strict standards of our field regarding client privacy and self-determination. We are committed to providing high quality mental health care to all our clients.

Based on an original article by Shana Blumenthal, MSW, LCSW (May 2021), with updates by Lizette Smith, PhD. for the current Social Work Month (March 2022). Some information from: National Association of Social Workers. (2003). *NASW Standards for Clinical Social Work in Social Work Practice*. Washington DC: NASW Press.

To find out more about Clinical Social Work:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=YOG4qdefLBE%3d&portalid=0>