Community & Social Service Occupations in New Mexico

About 1.8 percent of all jobs in New Mexico are classified as community and social service occupations by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system (as of 2012). Workers in this occupation group are classified within two sub-groups: counselors, social workers, and other community and social service specialists, and religious workers. The majority of community and social service occupations are found in the health care and social assistance and government industries. The large majority of community and social service occupations require at least a bachelor's degree to enter into the field, and, on average, the wage paid is typically more than the all-occupation average.

Employment in this occupation group is fairly small in New Mexico and most other states. There are 18 detailed community and social service occupations. Five of these occupations have employment of over 1,000 workers in New Mexico, and six are projected to have 50 or more job openings each year between 2010 and 2020. Over 99 percent of all workers are employed within the counselors, social workers, and other community and social service specialists occupation sub-group, with fewer than 200 workers in the religious workers sub-group, statewide.

As Exhibit 1 shows, New Mexico's concentration of community and social service workers, of 1.79 percent, exceeds that of all its surrounding states and the U.S as a whole. About 1.44 percent of all workers in the U.S. are employed in a community and social assistance occupation. Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado have similar concentrations as the U.S., while Texas has the smallest concentration of workers (0.94 percent of total employment). Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine, Alaska, and Rhode Island have the largest concentrations of community and social service workers of all U.S. states, with 2 to 3 percent of their workforce employed in community and social service occupations. Interestingly, the Northern Region of New Mexico has the second highest concentration of workers of all nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S., and Los Alamos County is the highest paying nonmetropolitan area in the U.S.

The annual median wage in this occupation group in New Mexico ($37,410) is just below that of the U.S. ($40,400) and only higher than two neighboring states, Oklahoma and Utah. The annual median wages for community and social services workers in Texas and Colorado are higher than that of the nation. The states with the highest wages in this occupational group include the District of Columbia (D.C), New Jersey, California, Connecticut and Maryland; the concentration of workers in these states ranges from 1.5 (Maryland) to 2.0 percent (Connecticut).
Where Workers Are Employed and More Information on Detailed Occupations

Based on 2012 data, around 44 percent of all community and social service workers were located in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)/Central Region. (See Exhibit 2.) Oftentimes, employment is largest in the Central Region due to its large population. The Central Region does not claim the highest concentration of community and social service employment, however. Employment in the Northern Non-MSA area comprises about 14.5 percent of total statewide employment in the occupation group and also claims the highest concentration of workers, with 3.2 percent of total employment. The Las Cruces and Santa Fe MSAs both have higher concentrations than that of the state as a whole (2.3 and 1.8 percent, respectively).

Annual median wages of community and social service occupations are typically higher than the average annual wage across all occupations. As shown in Exhibit 3, in 2012, the annual median wage was $37,410, as compared to $31,430 for all occupations. The Santa Fe MSA is the only substate area in New Mexico that has higher annual median wages for community and social service workers than the nation. In addition, annual median wages in the Northern Non-MSA area ($36,850) trail those of four other substate areas, even though employment concentration is high. The Eastern Region and Farmington MSA have some of the smallest concentrations of community and social service workers in the state, and both pay the lowest wages ($34,970, and 35,410, respectively).

As Exhibit 4 shows, the most common occupation within community and social service is social and human service assistants. These workers typically assist in providing client services in a wide variety of fields, such as psychology, rehabilitation, or social work, including support for families. They may assist clients in identifying and obtaining available benefits and social and community services as well as assisting social workers with developing, organizing, and conducting programs to prevent and resolve problems relevant to substance abuse, human relationships, rehabilitation, or dependent care. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.) This is the most common occupation, but also the lowest paying ($28,240 annual median wage). Educational guidance school and vocational counselors and child family and school social workers follow as the second and third most common jobs, with 11.0 and 10.1 percent of all community and social service workers, respectively, employed in these occupations. Five of the 18 detailed occupations include 5 to 10 percent or more of total employment in the overall occupation, while 10 of the 18 occupations employ less than 5 percent of the total workforce each.

Exhibit 5 provides the median annual wage for community and social service occupations. Ten of the 16 occupations listed have an annual median wage higher than that of all community and social service occupations. Healthcare social workers and educational guidance school and vocational counselors are the highest paying occupations; the median wage for each is more than $50,000 a year. As mentioned above, the annual median wage is lowest for social and human service assistants, the most common occupation.
Community and Social Service Occupations in New Mexico’s Industries

Community and social service occupations can be found in 10 of the 20 major industry sectors, and a large portion is found in government. Keep in mind that industries are defined by their business activities, while occupations are based on work tasks. As of 2010, the health care and social assistance industry employed the largest number of community and social service workers, with about 39.9 percent of total community and social service employment. This was closely followed by government, which employed 38.6 percent. No other major industry, other than educational services, with 11.0 percent of employment, included more than 6 percent of the total community and social service workforce.

Exhibit 7 highlights some of the sub-sectors in which community and social service workers are employed. As of 2010, the sub-sectors with the most community and social service employment included state government, social assistance, and educational services. Each of these sub-sectors employed over 10 percent of all community and social service workers.

Future Community and Social Service Jobs

The 2010-2020 employment projections indicate that employment in community and social service occupations are projected to grow by about 17.3 percent, or approximately 2,800. This rate of growth is faster than the rate of growth for all occupations, combined, of 15.9 percent. Even with a faster growth rate, however, employment in the community and social service occupation group is so small that the occupation group’s share of total employment is not projected to increase significantly.

Exhibit 8 shows the projected job openings for those community and social service occupations that are projected to have 50 or more annual job openings over the projection period. The exhibit also shows the number of openings that are projected to result from job growth versus openings from...
replacement needs (turnover and retirements). Exhibit 9 provides growth information for most of the detailed community and social service occupations. Social and human service assistants—the most common occupation—are projected to see the largest number of annual openings over the period (110), followed by child, family, and school social workers (95) and mental health and substance abuse social workers (80). Only two of the total 18 community and social service occupations—educational, vocational, and school counselors, and health educators—are expected to see a greater number of growth openings than openings due to replacement needs over the 10-year period. These two occupations are also projected to experience the fastest employment growth. While most of the occupations are projected to see employment grow faster than employment across all occupations, many of these future opportunities are likely to be driven by the need to replace existing workers.

Entering into a Community and Social Service Job Education and Job Experience Requirements

Community and social service jobs typically require at least a bachelor’s degree to enter into the occupation. In 2010, over one half of all community and social service jobs required a bachelor’s degree, while about 27 percent required a master’s degree (none of the occupations required more than a master’s). (See Exhibit 10). This is in stark contrast to the other occupations, where over 70 percent of all jobs required a high school degree or less. Social and human service assistants, the most common community and social service occupation, was the only occupation that required less than a bachelor’s degree for entry into the job; it requires a high school diploma or equivalent. Most of the occupations do not require work experience in a related occupation for entry into the occupation, but some require an internship/residency, or short- to moderate-term training to become proficient in the field. The three detailed religious occupations all require a bachelor’s degree, and to enter into the clergy requires moderate on-the-job training.