Career Map
for Internationally Educated Social Service Workers

Fall 2016
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Fall 2016
Introduction

This Career Map was updated in August 2016 in collaboration with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) (www.ocswssw.org) and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (www.ontarioimmigration.ca). The information is accurate at time of writing. Requirements may have changed by the time you apply. Please refer to the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers website for the latest information and before commencing your application process.

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Overview of the Profession

- **Registration:** The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) (www.ocswssw.org) is the regulatory body for social workers and social service workers in Ontario. The OCSWSSW was established by the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998. You can obtain a free copy of the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, on the Government of Ontario website (www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/98s31). The OCSWSSW’s mandate is to serve and protect the public interest through self-regulation of the professions of social work and social service work. Only registered social service workers are permitted to use the professional designation RSSW (Registered Social Service Worker) after their name in documents related to their practice of social service work.

- Anyone in Ontario who uses the title “social service worker” or “registered social service worker” or an abbreviation of these protected titles, or who holds themselves
out as a social service worker must register with and obtain a certificate of registration from the regulatory body, the OCSWSSW.

- **Roles and responsibilities:** Social service workers in Ontario use specialized knowledge, skills, interventions and strategies to assess, treat and evaluate individual, interpersonal and societal problems and improve the well-being of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations or communities. Social service workers provide direct service and administration within a variety of social assistance programs and community service agencies to help their clients overcome barriers to well-being and achieve optimum social functioning.

- **Job titles:** Social service workers practise using a range of job titles, including “community worker”, “outreach worker”, “addictions worker”, “youth worker”, “crisis intervention worker”, or “family service worker”.

- **Work settings:** Social service workers in Ontario may work in such places as social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, addiction treatment facilities, school boards and correctional facilities.

**Key organizations for Social Service Workers**

- The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) is the provincial regulatory body for two distinct professions in Ontario – social work and social service work. It governs its members in accordance with the professions’ Act, regulations, policies and bylaws. It is not an academic institution and neither offers academic courses nor grants degrees or diplomas. The OCSWSSW was established under Ontario’s *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*, which became law on August 15, 2000.

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<th>Requirements to Register</th>
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You may qualify for a certificate of registration as a social service worker if you have:

- A two-year Social Service Work diploma (4 semesters) from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology in social service work; OR

- A diploma from one of the five programs approved by the OCSWSSW as equivalent to a social service work diploma from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology; OR
• A combination of academic qualifications and experience performing the role of a social service worker that is substantially equivalent to the qualifications required for a diploma in social service work. This is also known as the “equivalency stream”.

• Academic requirements in the equivalency stream may be met if the applicant has a diploma from a two-year program at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology, or an equivalent diploma outside Ontario, or a degree from a university program that is at least two years in length.

• The academic program must be a minimum of 4 academic semesters in duration and must include the academic requirements for general education, vocational learning outcomes, and essential employability skills.

• In the equivalency stream, applicants must also have practised in a situation where they performed the role of a social service worker for at least one year in which a minimum of 650 hours was supervised by a social worker or social service worker. Additional details are available in the Registration Guide on the OCSWSSW website (http://ocswssw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ssw-combo-registration-guide.pdf).

You need to demonstrate to the OCSWSSW that you have achieved the academic qualifications required for membership no matter how much experience you may have in the field of social service work in your home country.

Authorization to work in Canada: You must be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, or be legally authorized to work as a social service worker in Canada.

Language proficiency: You must demonstrate you have the ability to speak and write in either English or French with reasonable fluency by achieving acceptable scores on a language test through the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International Language Testing (IELTS), Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB), CANTest (English), or TestCAN (French). Visit the OCSWSSW website for acceptable language test scores (www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/language-proficiency/).

You do not need a language test if you:

• Communicate primarily in English or French; OR

• Completed your social service work education in English or French; OR
• Provide professional services as a social service worker in English or French.

Recent practice: Within the past 5 years, you must have:

• Completed relevant professional education, OR

• Practised as a social service worker.

If you have not practised within 5 years of the date of application, you can complete a supplemental form to provide additional information for consideration by the OCSWSSW. If the OCSWSSW is satisfied that the other requirements for registration have been met, it may issue a certificate of registration with terms, conditions and limitations – such as a period of supervised practice – provided that you consent to them.

Professional conduct: Your past and present conduct must provide reasonable grounds to show that:

• You are mentally competent to practise social service work;

• You will practise social service work with decency, integrity and honesty and in accordance with the law; and

• You have sufficient knowledge, skill and judgment to practise social service work.

To demonstrate this, you must answer a series of questions on the application form regarding any criminal offences and findings or proceedings in relation to professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

All applicants are subject to the requirements in place when they apply. For the most current information about registration requirements for membership, visit the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org), email, fax or call the OCSWSSW.

Steps in the Registration Process

Step 1: Apply for credentials evaluation

If your diploma or degree requires assessment to determine whether it is equivalent to a two-year program at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology you may apply online for an evaluation of your credentials by a third-party evaluation agency such as World Education Services (WES) (www.wes.org/ca), the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) (www.work.alberta.ca/immigration/international-
qualifications-assessment-service.html) or the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) (www.icascanada.ca/). If you are unsure whether an assessment is required, contact the OCSWSSW.

For a credential assessment, you must ask your academic institution to send your transcript directly to the credentials evaluation agency. When the evaluation is completed, ensure the agency sends your Credential Equivalency/Authentication Report and Course-by-Course Analysis directly to the OCSWSSW.

The evaluation report provided by such an agency will indicate how it has received or authenticated the documents. The report also provides a Canadian equivalency summary and credential analysis such as year awarded, name of institution attended, a major of field of study, all the courses taken, their Canadian credits and grade equivalents. (Note: The documents you submit to the agency will not be returned or released to you.)

If you do not require a third party credential assessment you must ask the academic institution to provide transcripts directly to the OCSWSSW.

If any of your official documents are not in English or French, it is up to you to arrange and pay for a certified translation into either language before submitting them for evaluation.

**Step 2: Apply for registration to the OCSWSSW**

Complete, sign, date and send the Application Form with applicable fees and all required documents (see below) to the OCSWSSW. You may download the application form and registration guide from the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/forms/) or email the OCSWSSW at registration@ocswssw.org.

Ensure that the OCSWSSW receives course outlines or descriptions for all of the courses listed on your transcript that you wish to have considered. Course outlines and descriptions must be for the year(s) in which the courses were taken.

Complete Section 1 of the Length of Practice and Supervision Confirmation Form(s) and send one or more copies to people (current and/or previous employers/supervisors) who will be providing information about your experience in performing the role of a social service worker. They must complete and mail the form directly to the OCSWSSW.
Once you have filled in the Application Form and gathered together all the required documentation, mail it, along with all applicable fees, to the OCSWSSW. A fax or email of your application or a mailed-in photocopy will not be accepted.

When the OCSWSSW receives your application, fees and all required documents, including third-party evaluation if applicable, it will process your application and evaluate your academic qualifications and experience. The OCSWSSW may contact you if more information is required.

**Required documents for OCSWSSW registration**

- Application form (original, not a photocopy, signed and dated)
- Credentials evaluation report sent directly from evaluation agency (e.g. WES, ICAS, IQAS)
- Course outlines or descriptions for the year(s) in which you took the courses
- Description of social service work field practicum description, including setting, client population, and number of hours of field practice
- Certificate of attendance for any university level workshops/seminars (if applicable)
- Length of Practice and Supervision Confirmation Form sent directly from supervisor/employer
- Supplemental Form Regarding Competence to Perform the Role of a Social Service Worker (if you have not practised social service work or did not graduate within the last 5 years)
- Original evidence of private practice, e.g., business card, letterhead, etc. (if applicable)
- Proof of membership in professional social service work organization(s) in another country
- Copy of authorization to work in Canada or work permit, if required
- Certified translation of any non-English/French documents
- Fees
For more information, see the Registration Guide on the OCSWSSW website (http://ocswssw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ssw-combo-registration-guide.pdf) for combined academic qualifications and experience performing the role of a social service worker.

Translation

For non-English/French documents, you must forward with your application to both the credentials evaluation agency and the OCSWSSW your original documents PLUS a precise word-for-word translation in English or French. This must be a certified translation, accompanied by a cover letter from the translator including:

- The exact name of the document(s) which have been translated
- The method by which the translator received the document(s)
- Any comments about the accuracy of your documents
- The date of the translation
- The translator’s identification number and/or seal.

It is up to you to arrange and pay for translation, copying and mailing costs. To find an accredited translator, contact:

- The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) (www.atio.on.ca) at 1-800-234-5030, email info@atio.on.ca.
- COSTI Immigrant Services (www.costi.org) at 416-658-1600, email info@costi.org.

Dual Registration

If you wish, you may apply for registration in both the social service work and social work categories. You need to complete two separate application forms and submit two application fees, but only one registration fee. You can download the appropriate application forms from the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org), email, fax or call the OCSWSSW to request two applications and two registration guides.
OCSWSSW Response

It typically takes 3 to 6 months to process your application once the OCSWSSW has received all your documents. It will take longer if the OCSWSSW requires more information. Once your application has been processed, the OCSWSSW may:

- Issue a Certificate of Registration if you meet all requirements to practise in Ontario, OR
- Issue a Certificate of Registration subject to terms, conditions or limitations, OR
- Propose to refuse to issue a Certificate of Registration because you have not met the requirements.

If the OCSWSSW proposes to refuse your application, it will identify the reasons why and send you a refund of your registration fee, if applicable. You have the option to request a review (www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/registration-appeals/) of the decision of the OCSWSSW. Otherwise, the OCSWSSW will refuse your application. Visit the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org/), email, fax or telephone the OCSWSSW to discuss your situation. You can find information on the Registration Appeals Process on the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/registration-appeals/).

Timelines

The OCSWSSW and credentials evaluation agencies begin work on your application only when they have received all required documents and your payment for applicable fees has been accepted by the bank.

Before you submit your application to the OCSWSSW, give yourself enough time to collect documents and arrange verification and evaluation of your academic qualifications and translation as needed. It can take several weeks for some academic institutions to provide transcripts.

In general, the application processing time for:

- Credentials evaluation (WES/ICAS/IQAS) takes 1-12 weeks
- The OCSWSSW assessment can take 3 to 6 months

Things that can slow down the process:
Incomplete applications

Transcripts not sent directly from educational institution

Transcripts missing information

Not sending official course descriptions

Sending additional documents that have not been translated.

Keep in mind that, if required, upgrading your qualifications in Canada will take additional time.

Fees

For information about fees and related costs, please visit the OCSWSSW website (www.ocswssw.org).

In addition to the OCSWSSW fees, you will have to pay the costs for:

- Transcripts and other documents related to your academic qualifications, as required
- Certified translation of your documents, if required
- Language assessment tests, if required
- Tuition for further upgrading at university or college, if required.

Before You Arrive in Canada

Before you arrive in Canada, you can have your credentials evaluated by a third party evaluation agency such as WES or ICAS and have the evaluation report submitted to the OCSWSSW.

You can also send your application form and required documentation to the OCSWSSW and have it evaluate your qualifications.

You can become registered if:

- You have a valid work permit, and
- You do not need a language test, or you can do a language test overseas, and
• You meet all other registration requirements.

### Once You Arrive

Once you arrive in Ontario, you can take courses or programs to upgrade your skills, as required.

**Attaining Your Academic Qualifications:** If you need to take courses or a program, you can go to the [OCSWSSW website](http://www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/list-of-social-work-programs/) for links to social service work programs in Ontario offered at one of Ontario’s Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. You can write directly to the institution’s Office of Admissions and ask for detailed application information and forms. The Office of Admissions will advise you on your documentation, translation, and visa requirements.

### Labour Market Information

If you are planning to settle in Ontario, it is a good idea to get familiar with the local labour market in your destination community. This information will give you a detailed description of your profession and a good sense of the job prospects in your field to help you make informed decisions about your employment search.

Here is a list of resources that provide Ontario labour market information, including current industry trends, job salaries and work conditions, where to find employers, and what skills and training employers are looking for:

- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development [Labour Market Information](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/labourmarket/)
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development [Ontario Job Futures](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/labourmarket/ojf/)
- Settlement.org [Labour Market Information](http://settlement.org/ontario/employment/working-in-canada/labour-market-information/)
For more information on registration requirements in Ontario, contact:

**Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW)**
250 Bloor Street East, Suite 1000
Toronto, ON M4W 1E6
CANADA
Telephone: 416-972-9882
Toll-free: 1-877-828-9380
Fax: 416-972-1512
Email: info@ocswssw.org
Website: [www.ocswssw.org](http://www.ocswssw.org)

For English and French language proficiency testing, contact:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
Website: [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)
Website: [www.melabsuccess.com](http://www.melabsuccess.com)

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
Website: [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

CanTest/TestCan
Website: [www.cantest.uottawa.ca](http://www.cantest.uottawa.ca)

The [Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials website](http://www.cicic.ca) (www.cicic.ca) website provides a listing of Canada’s universities, colleges and other recognized postsecondary institutions in its Study in Canada section.

For information on how to find an accredited translator, contact:

**Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO)**
Telephone: 613-241-2846
Toll-free: 1-800-234-5030
Email: info@atio.on.ca
Website: [www.atio.on.ca](http://www.atio.on.ca)
For information about the **occupational skills** social workers require on the job in **Ontario**, search for social worker in the occupations database at:

**The Ontario Skills Passport, Ontario Ministry of Education**  
[www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/Welcome.xhtml](http://www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/Welcome.xhtml)

For government contacts on **accessing professions and trades** in Ontario, contact:

**Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration**  
Global Experience Ontario (GEO)  
Telephone: 416-327-9694 or 1-866-670-4094  
TTY: 416-327-9710 or 1-866-388-2262  
Email: GEO@ontario.ca  
Website(s): [www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/geo/index.htm](http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/geo/index.htm)  
or [www.ontario.ca/globalexperience](http://www.ontario.ca/globalexperience)

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### Getting Help

There are many programs and services designed to help internationally educated professionals work in their field in Ontario, such as internship and mentoring programs, bridge training programs and language training programs. For more information, please visit the [Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration website](http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/working/index.htm).

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### Questions and Answers

To view the most common questions and responses for applicants, please visit the [Frequently Asked Questions section of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) website](http://www.ocswssw.org/registration-section/faqs/).

You may have additional questions about the registration process for social service workers in Ontario. For more information, please visit the [Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) website](http://www.ocswssw.org).