

Searching for a Job in Human Services

Objective

1. To know the steps necessary in conducting your job search
2. To organize and conduct your search
3. To avoid common job search mistakes

Before You Begin, Consider. . .

The job search process takes time.

This is evident in the following statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor. The job search process takes, on average:

- 14-17 weeks for ages 16 & over
- 8.1 weeks for 16 - 19 year olds
- 12.5 weeks for 20 - 24 year olds and
- 15.6 weeks for 25 - 34 year olds.

Don't get discouraged or give up too soon.

Your job search requires you to be active, NOT passive.

Waiting for a job to come to you may not produce the results you are looking for, but an active and persistent approach may help you to have more success in the job search process.

People begin at different places.

Remember that a job search is specific to you. It is important to measure your job search progress by your own progression, and not that of others.

And Finally, Job Searching Involves:
Research, Persistence, and Rejection

Research

Before beginning your job search, be sure to do your research. Ask about specific a field of interest:

- What does a Clinical Social Worker do?
- What are the typical salaries for Clinical Social Workers?
- What are the skills needed to be a Clinical Social Worker?
- Where do Clinical Social Workers work?

Ask about specific employer:

- What services does "Organization A" provide?
- How many staff does "Organization A" employ?
- Where (if any) are other branches of this organization?

The Career Center offers a wide range of resources to help answer your questions, such as our Guide to Researching Employers, databases like O*Net, and books on specific occupations.



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Persistence & Rejection

Don't give up! Be persistent in your job search. On average, a job searcher will receive 10 "NO's" for every "YES." It might be helpful to think of your "NO" responses as bringing you closer to your "YES." Do not take rejection personally—it is part of the process.

Step 1: Know the Product— You

Consider your job search as a marketing plan, and you are the product. If you think of your job search in these terms, it makes sense that you need to know yourself well. You also need to know what market (job) is best for your product (you), and to know how to sell your skills to that market.

Identify your career goals and objectives

The saying “if you aim at nothing, you’ll be sure to hit it” applies to your job searching as well. Identifying and working toward your short and long-term career goals will not only help you better focus your job search, but it will also help you be more successful in your career.

Know your values (what motivates you to work), your interests, and your skills

Review your past work experience, volunteer experience, educational experience, and life experience. What are your interests? What strengths are you bringing to the job search table? What are you looking for in an ideal job? Write these things down. They’ll be important when refining your job search tools, considering what you want to do, networking, and interviewing for jobs. If you have limited experience, consider meeting with a career advisor to explore.

Step 2: Refine Your Job Search Tools

Your job search tools include your resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills. Reflecting on your values, interests, and skills, as well as your strengths, as mentioned above, will help with each of these tools. Your cover letter is the tool used to get people to look at your resume, your resume is the tool used to help you obtain an interview, and your interviewing skills play an important part in getting you the job. If you need assistance with writing your resume or cover letter or practicing your interviewing skills, the Career Center has many resources and services available to help you. Access job search guides through the Career Center website, www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides, or drop by and work with a career advisor. In addition, you can review other resources available on the Internet, or at your nearby community/campus library.

Common Job Search Hang-ups

“I’ll do Anything”

If your job search is not going well, you may have a sense of desperation and think, “I’ll do anything.” Feeling like you have few options and must take whatever is offered can result in a poor career decision. Identifying and exploring multiple options can provide for a better outcome to your job search.

“Wallflower Syndrome”

As previously mentioned, a successful job search campaign requires an active approach. This means using all the resources available to you and engaging in regular job searching strategies. Don’t simply send out one or two resumes then wait for a response. Continue actively engaging in your job search. This includes networking, attending job fairs, and conducting information interviews in addition to applying for jobs.

“Lone Ranger”

Your personal job search journey does not have to be done alone. The FSU Career Center, as well as many other academic, professional, personal, and community resources, are available to help you in the job search process. Don’t be afraid to find out about and use these resources (many of which are free).

“Expand your Contacts”

When looking for jobs, try to think creatively. Searching in the common places (like want ads or employment agencies) will not provide access to 80% (or more) of all jobs available in the market. Networking is one of the best methods for accessing the job market.

Step 3: Organize & Conduct Your Search

What do you want to do?

The answer to this question is key to making your job search productive and manageable. In considering what you want to do, think about:

Job Families

Example: Social Work

Work Settings

Example: Non-profit agency

Occupational Titles

Example: Case Worker

Job Families

- Aging & Health Care
- Children & Family Services
- Developmental Disabilities
- Education
- Human Services
- Marriage & Family Counseling
- Mental Health
- Law
- Politics
- Public Administration
- School Services

Work Settings

- Adoption services
- Adult day care & respite program
- Area agencies on aging
- Bank trust department
- Chemical dependency treatment center
- Children, family, & school services
- Child day care center
- Child protection services/child welfare
- Children's hospital
- Children's psychiatric hospital
- Community health clinic
- Elder care centers
- Family services
- Foster care services
- Geriatric case management practice
- Gang prevention program
- Hospice program
- Hospitals or medical center
- Residential treatment center
- Private schools
- Public school systems

Macrolevel Services

- Advocacy organization
- Citizen groups
- Community action agency
- Community centers
- Employment project
- Foundation/Fund-raising organization
- Government department (e.g., housing)
- Homeless shelter

Mental Health, Substance Abuse, & Related Direct Services

- Treatment program
- Clubs or programs for chronically mentally ill
- Employee assistance firms
- Community mental health center

- Hospital units
- Corrections facilities
- Manage care company
- Military
- Women's services
- Psychiatric hospital
- Private practice

Non-Profit

- Social services
- Disability services
- Volunteer programs
- Museums
- Professional associations
- Easter Seals

Professions

- Law
- Medicine
- Clergy

Private Enterprise

All forms of individual and private ownership (e.g., private practice, wellness center)

Occupational Titles

- Adoption Coordinator
- Case Manager/Worker
- Child Development Specialist
- Child, Youth, & Family Counselor
- Clinical Director
- Consumer Specialist
- Corrections Officer
- Domestic Violence Counselor
- EAP Counselor
- Executive Director
- Human Resource Specialist
- Human Services Counselor
- Instructor
- Legislator
- Lobbyist
- Intake Counselor
- Marriage & Family Counselor
- Mental Health Worker
- Outreach Program Director
- Program Manager
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Social Worker
- Substance Abuse Counselor
- Therapist
- Victim Advocate

Where do you want to work?

Think about your geographic preferences.

Examples:

- Anywhere
- International
- National
- Southeast
- Florida
- Tampa

In conducting your job search you can expand your geographic preference OR your occupational title. Expanding both may make your job search unmanageable and overwhelming. For example:

In Tampa, I'll consider the following occupational titles:

- Case Worker
- Fundraiser
- Child-life Specialist

OR

I'm looking for a position as a Fundraiser in:

- Tampa
- Atlanta
- Dallas

Establish a record-keeping system

Let's face it—your job search, if done well, could involve a lot of contacts, interviews, letters, phone conversations, etc. It is important to find a good way to keep track of all of these things. Use a good record-keeping system that works for you to keep track of things such as:

- Employers contacted
- Letters sent
- Responses received
- Second interviews
- Follow-up needed

and any other things that may help your job search run more smoothly.

Step 4: Research Your Options!

Identify specific organizations

This is probably one of the most important aspects of a successful job search in the Human Services field. Researching helps you identify what organizations do what you want to do.

There are many job search resources to help you in conducting your research. Examples include:

- Directories of Employers (ex: Nat'l Directory of Children, Youth and Families Services)

Six Hints for Successful Information Interviews:

1. Prior to the meeting, be sure to do your research on the job you are pursuing.
2. Prepare questions prior to setting up the meeting as the interviewee may want to have you begin your interview right over the phone when you call.
3. Inform persons you want to interview that your meeting is for informational purposes only. Mentioning you do not want a job interview will help them be more open and receptive to a meeting.
4. Be courteous, behave in the same manner as you would when interviewing for a job.
5. Try to secure additional contacts in your field of interest from your interviewee to add to your professional network.
6. Send a thank you letter to your interviewee. This will reflect well on you and may help keep you in that person's mind if anything arises in the way of future job openings.

- Career Center
- Academic Departments/Faculty/Staff
- Family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances
- Internet (ex: The New Social Worker - www.socialworker.com)
- Telephone books
- Community Resource Directories
- Professional associations & journals (ex: NASW, American Counseling Association)
- Newspapers
- Strozier library & public libraries
- Employment agencies
- State Workforce Dev. centers/Department of Labor
- FSU alumni
- Chamber of Commerce
- The United Way
- Discussion groups

Research your target organizations

Learn about the organizations you have identified through annual reports, organizational charts, current periodicals, in-house publications, their PR office, local newspapers, and their Web site or the Internet.

Network

The Career Center has information on networking strategies that may help you in the job searching process. In networking you want everyone to be aware of your job search. Be sure to let them know exactly what type of job you are looking for.

Examples of networking resources (people resources) you might use are:

- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Faculty, staff, and former teachers
- Professionals
- School associates and alumni
- Professional Network in Handshake

Conduct information interviews

Informational interviews are another excellent way to network and are similar to “regular” interviews. The difference in an informational interview is that you are the one conducting the interview and asking most of the questions. You can contact an employer or someone who has the type of job in which you are interested and set up a meeting. See the Career Center guide on Information Interviewing at www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.

Step 5: Avoid Common Mistakes

Barriers

There are certain internal and external factors that can inhibit your ability to move forward in the job search process. These factors are considered to be barriers and can include:

- Shyness and/or lack of confidence
- Fear of rejection
- Lack of necessary skills for the job sought
- Procrastination
- Not knowing where to start
- Negative thinking

Being aware of these barriers and thinking about how to overcome them will help your search be more successful. Talk with a career advisor if you are experiencing any of the barriers listed above and need suggestions on how to overcome them.

Ten Job-Hunting Errors

Some errors often made during the job search are:

1. Having a poor resume:
The Career Center has resume writing guides, as well as career advisors who can critique your resume. If you are not located near FSU, you can use the Internet, local bookstores or area libraries to locate helpful resume guides and resources. For resume critiquing, visit a university or college career center near you. Other available resources, which typically cost money, are resume writing services or private career counselors in your area.
2. Failure to network:
As discussed above, networking is critical to finding a majority of the available jobs in the market.
3. Limiting job sources:
Don't stick with just one source for information about job vacancies, use many different ones (e.g. Career fairs/expos, classified ads, department bulletin boards, previous employers, employment agencies, school placement agencies, Internet, e-mailing resumes, and phoning).
4. Using a canned approach:
Although an employer may not have an immediate opening, be genuine and personable with every contact you make by revising your resume and cover letter as needed for a particular job target. By tailoring your job search tools and presenting yourself in a professional manner, you can make a positive impression that may help in securing an interview for a later opening.
5. Inadequate interview preparation:
As stated previously, it is important to do your research prior to the interview. The Career Center has literature on many employers as well as interview preparation guides, which are very useful. You can also access helpful resources on interview preparation by visiting your area library, bookstore, searching the Internet or contacting other career service professionals in your area.

6. **Poor interview techniques:**
In addition to interview preparation guides, the Career Center has other resources available to help you perform well in a job interview, including interviewing workshops, the mock interview program, book resources, CD-ROMS, and videos, to name a few. See a career advisor for more information. Other ways to access helpful information on interview techniques include visiting your area libraries and bookstores or searching the Internet. Colleges and universities, as well as other career service professionals in your area, might also have helpful resources available.
7. **Restricted job search:**
If you confine your geographical preferences for your job search, it may be necessary to expand the occupational titles you will consider, especially if the labor market in your chosen area is flooded (the demand for employees is far less than those seeking work). You could also consider expanding your geographic preferences to include other areas if you wish to stay with one occupational title.
8. **Too little time devoted to search:**
As mentioned in the beginning of this guide, it takes time, effort and persistence to conduct a successful job search. It requires an active approach, not a passive one.
9. **Negative attitude/thinking:**
Although the job search process can be discouraging at times, it is imperative that you not allow the discouragement to develop into a negative attitude. If this occurs, it could negatively affect the way you present yourself to potential employers, in your networking, in your interviewing, in your resume, over the phone, literally in every aspect of your search. If you have trouble with this area, you can get help from trusted friends or career services professionals to overcome or minimize your negative thoughts.

10. **Lack of attention to dress and appearance:** In general, the rule of thumb is to always dress conservatively for an interview. The Career Center has articles and resources regarding appropriate interview attire. Contact a career advisor or search libraries, bookstores, or the Internet to locate these resources.

Some Suggestions & Final Thoughts

The following are suggestions which might be helpful to you in your job search process:

- Get support from friends during your job search
Periodically reward yourself after sending out a certain number of resumes, completing an interview, or making a certain number of contacts. This helps keep you motivated in your job search.
- Take care of yourself physically
In doing so, you will make it easier to cope with any of the stresses that may come with your job search.
- Avoid negative people:
This is especially important during your job search as rejection is often part of the process.
- Keep good records
- Join a job hunter's club or support group
- Consider part-time or temporary work
See the Career Center's Job Hunting in the Temporary Staffing Services Industry guide.

Take advantage of all the Career Center's job search resources. Some of these resources are listed on the following page. Talk with a career advisor if you don't know where to begin. Remember, "The best jobs don't always go to the best qualified, but to the best job hunters."

Selected Career Center Resources

Looking for more information on finding a job in Human Services? Visit The Career Center Library for books and other resources on this topic.

Sample Professional Organizations

More professional organizations can be found in the National Trade & Professional Association Directory

American Public Human Services Assoc.

810 First Street, NE Suite 500

Washington, DC 20002-4267

202.682.0100 • www.aphsa.org

American Association for Marriage/Family Therapy

112 S. Alfred St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

703.838.9808 • www.aamft.org

National Association of Social Workers

750 First St., NE, Ste 700

Washington, DC 20002-4241

800.742.4089 • www.naswdc.org

Selected Web Sites

Philanthropy News Network (links to non-profits)

www.pnnonline.org/jobs

Human Service Careers Network

www.hscareers.com

Health Facility Jobs

www.jobseeker.com

Nation Job Network

www.nationjob.com/hs

State of Florida Jobs

www.myflorida.com

Social Service.com

www.socialservice.com/search.cfm

Mental Health Net

www.mentalhelp.net

Social Service Job Site

www.socialservice.com

Opportunities in Public Affairs

<http://www.opajobs.com/>

Job Search Target Worksheet

Use this worksheet and guide to select a target for your job search.

What do you want to do? (page 2)	Where do you want to work? (page 4)
A. Job Family I wish to work in the following field(s).	1. International I wish to work in the following nation(s).
B. Work Setting I wish to work in the following organization(s).	2. National I wish to work in the following region(s)/state(s).
C. Occupational Title I wish to be considered for these positions.	3. Municipalities I wish to work in the following town(s).
Choice Choose one letter and one number from the above elements to create your job search target (e.g., C. Occupational Title and 3. Municipalities.).	
Your Job Search Target Summarize these elements into your job search target below. (e.g., <i>I want to find a position as a Clinical Social Worker in the Atlanta area.</i>)	



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