

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Community organizing is the process of building consensus around community issues. It can involve raising the public consciousness about a matter of concern, gathering people together to work for a common goal or to receive specialized services. Community Organizers gather information, educate the public, introduce neighbors, train new leaders, and bring people together.

Where do community organizers work?

Generally, they work in grassroots organizations such as community development agencies, community coalitions, advocacy, minority, and religious representation groups, or small business collaborations. Often these are community-located, senior communities (NORC: Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) and empowerment areas are examples.

Social work community organizers should have a strong knowledge base in:

- Psychology of individuals and groups
- Politics, government, law, and the legislative process
- Policy analysis/development
- Economics and finance
- Housing and zoning
- Employment laws

Social work community organizers should possess skills or experience in:

- Advocacy
- Negotiation
- Conflict management
- Consensus building
- Fundraising
- Communications
 - Media relations
 - Group facilitation
 - Training or teaching

Social Workers can gain valuable experience relevant to community organizing by:

- Volunteering for grassroots neighborhood groups
- Joining political campaigns
- Interning with/for community development groups

What personal qualities does a social worker in a community organization have?

- Commitment to social justice
- Caring for others and curiosity about the experiences of others
- Passion, enthusiasm, and energy

What should you do to develop yourself once you have the job?

- Develop a positive reputation by being visible and useful
- Volunteer for additional committees or projects
- Build your skills by attending workshops on advocacy, training, conflict management, or lobbying

Prepared by the Core Group of the Career Development Directors in Social Work Education, 7/99
Edited by Madeleine L. Dale, 12/18/00