

PRIVATE PRACTICE

The primary focus of private practice is the direct delivery of clinical social work services. Barker (1992), in an NASW publication, named ten criteria to identify a social worker in private practice.

The private practitioner...

1. has the client as the primary obligation
2. determines who the client will be
3. determines the techniques to be used in services to this client
4. determines practice professionally, not bureaucratically
5. receives a fee for services directly from or on behalf of the client
6. is educated as a social worker
7. is a sufficiently experienced social worker
8. adheres to social work values, standards, and ethics
9. is licensed, certified, and registered, where applicable, to engage in private practice
10. is a responsible professional

Specific Knowledge Base:

- Assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of psychopathology
- Crisis Intervention/Suicide Assessment
- Psychotropic medications
- Referral sources for psychopharmacological intervention/hospitalization

Qualifications & Standards:

NASW established minimum standards in 1962, including a master's degree from an accredited school of social work and five years of acceptable, full-time supervised agency employment. Also, participation in post-master's programs for additional training and enhanced personal insight are highly desirable.

Licensing:

All 50 states, as well as Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; and the Virgin Islands, have licensing laws and regulations relative to private practice.

Marketing:

You can promote your practice and secure clients through distribution of business cards and flyers, ads in professional and community publications and outreach by giving lectures or conducting workshops.

Office Space and Setup:

You may choose to establish a solo practice or join a group. Overhead expenses may include, but not be limited to, supplies, furniture, rent/mortgage, taxes, utilities, administration, personnel, health, malpractice and liability insurance.

Fees and Billing:

You and/or the payer will set flat or sliding, global or fee-for-service charges according to the market rates. You may establish a scale. You will have to set up a system for billing, payment, and recovery of unpaid bills.

Personal Considerations:

You may choose to secure individual or peer supervision. Some advantages of a private practice are independence and additional income. Disadvantages include professional and social isolation, fiscal insecurity.

Prepared by the Core Group of the Career Development Directors in Social Work Education, 7/99