

Resumes and Cover Letters For Social Workers

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Also consult our guide *Job Search, Networking, and Interviewing Tips for Social Workers*.

Smith College Lazarus Center for Career Development

www.smith.edu/lazaruscenter

413-585-2582

lazarus@smith.edu

A resume and cover letter work together to interest an employer in interviewing you. This important marketing team should always be geared to your specific audience and describe the relevant skills, experience, and accomplishments that qualify you for the position for which you're applying.

Getting Started on Your Resume

Ask yourself what populations and settings interest you. This will help you decide what to include in your resume, what to emphasize, and the appropriate terminology to use.

Research the organizations where you'll be sending your resume. Browse their websites, check out their social media presence, and connect on LinkedIn with Smith alums and others who work there. Learn about an organization's mission, programs, population served, and theory base to find key terms and skills to emphasize in your resume.

Make a master list. Include education, certifications, and licensing; clinical internships; projects (ex: Community Practice Experience, anti-racism work); jobs, non-clinical internships, and volunteer positions; trainings attended and presentations given; research and professional activities (memberships, committee work, conferences); language and computer skills; interests, activities, travel. With all this recorded, you can more easily tailor your resume.

Choosing a Format and Headings

List information in reverse chronological order, from present to past. Employers are most familiar with this format.

Choose headings to emphasize relevant skills and experience. Clinically-focused resumes typically begin with Education followed by Social Work Experience or Clinical Experience. Other background might be called Additional Experience or something more specific such as Teaching, Research, or International Experience.

For macro-level positions other headings may be appropriate such as Human Services Experience, Program Development Experience, Community Outreach Experience, Management Experience, and so forth. To further emphasize the breadth of your skills and experience, you might begin your resume with a profile or skills summary.

Avoid using a template or tables. Template resumes often look alike and are hard to customize. Commonly used Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) may not be able to scan documents with tables.

Describing Your Experience

Use action verb phrases, not sentences (see the action verb list on page 9). Omit personal pronouns and "a," "an," and "the" to achieve a concise style that will be easier—and faster—for employers to read.

Use keywords and details appropriate to your audience. **For clinical positions** include client details such as diagnoses or presenting issues; age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status unless certain your reader knows this; number of clients seen individually/in groups, and length and mode of treatment. Using key words (ex: EMR, CBT/DBT, Spanish, bilingual) helps Applicant Tracking Systems to get your resume to employers.

For macro-level positions stress supervising others, program planning/development, community organizing, fundraising, teamwork, grant writing, and budget management. Include the number of supervisees or amount of money raised. Emphasize transferable skills instead of detailed, clinical language for non-clinical positions.

Stress accomplishments and sequence phrases according to the skills most relevant to your reader. List less relevant information later in your descriptions, condense it, or omit it.

Sections of the Resume

Your contact information. Put your name at the top with your local address (optional), phone number, and email address below. Include a permanent address if relevant to your search. Your Smith email will expire, so use one that won't. You may also include your LinkedIn URL in your header.

A job objective is an optional, brief statement stating the type of position you're seeking. An objective can limit the use of the resume, so we suggest specifying it in the cover letter.

A skills summary or profile may be used at the opening of the resume, but is optional and should be customized.

Education comes first for most students and recent graduates. Start with your School for Social Work degree, followed by your previous degree(s). You may include relevant courses, and committee work.

Foreign language proficiency, computer skills, and progress toward licensure may be included under Education.

Experience categories should be chosen according to the type of position for which you're applying. State that your clinical internships have been full-time, especially for clinical resumes. Volunteer roles may be included. Your Community Practice Experience and anti-racism work may also appear in an experience section.

Personal information such as age, family status, religion, disability, political affiliation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity is not typically on a resume. Include personal information only if it makes you a stronger candidate for a particular job.

Interests are optional unless relevant or important to you and may provide a connection to your interviewer. For example, if you hope to combine your clinical skills with outdoor education, your outdoor skills and certifications are key. Remember: People hire people, and your interests can help an interviewer get to know you.

Professional activities (relevant memberships, awards, trainings/conferences, presentations) may be included.

References typically appear on a separate page, "References for Your Name." Include the name, title, address, phone, and email for each reference, and their relation to you. Get permission from your references to list them, and tell them they may be contacted—by whom, and for what position. Send references only when requested.

Your Resume's Presentation

Your resume's presentation depends on your audience and experience. If you can fit your resume onto one page without crowding, do so. Resumes for clinical positions may be two pages if you have significant previous experience, but make sure it is at least one-and-a-half pages in length. A C.V. (Curriculum Vitae), required for academic, research, and post-doc positions, may be several pages long. Employers who ask for a C.V. may mean a resume.

Your resume must be easy to read and visually attractive. Use margins, headings, caps, bullets, italics, bold, and underlining to direct your reader's attention to important content. Good font choices include Arial, Times Roman, Helvetica, Calibri and Garamond (11 point is typical). For hard copy, use resume paper and a fresh printer cartridge.

Your resume is a reflection of you! Proofread it with care, and make sure information is presented consistently and accurately. If emailing your resume and letter, send them as PDFs labeled with your first and last name (ex: Jane Doe resume.PDF). Send them to yourself first to double-check the format.

The Cover Letter

A cover letter introduces your resume to an employer. It states why you're writing, may say how you learned of the job (ex: from a contact), and highlights your most relevant skills and experience. The cover letter does not repeat the resume. Instead, it shows where the fit is between you, the position, and the organization and explains why you would be excited to have *this* role at *this* organization. Include a cover letter even if not required.

Research the organization and position before writing your letter. Fully explore its website and speak with Smith alums and others familiar with it. If you've been referred by a contact, mention their name (with permission) in the first paragraph unless that individual left the organization under negative circumstances.

When responding to a position with little description, you may email or phone for more information. Be prepared—you could end up speaking with the person doing the hiring.

Address your letter to a person by name, preferably the person with hiring authority. Phone for this information if necessary. If you can't get a name and title, address the letter as indicated in the ad or something like: "Dear Director," "Dear Hiring Manager," "Dear Clinical Director," or "To the Search Committee."

Use business letter format with your name, address, phone number, and email blocked left, right, or as a header. If postal mailing, use the same paper as for your resume and a matching business-size envelope.

Write in an active, conversational style. Instead of "My clinical internship at xxx agency afforded me the opportunity to do xxx," or "I would be honored to work at your agency," say, "During my clinical internship at xxx agency I providing individual psychotherapy to adolescent substance abuse patients I learned xxx," or, "I would bring strong clinical and Spanish language skills to your agency." Be specific.

Keep your letter to one page unless applying for academic, research, or fellowship positions. There's no set number of paragraphs for a cover letter, but make each one concise. Avoid long, dense blocks of text.

Pave the way for an interview by ending your letter with a next step. You might say, "I'll contact you next week to see if we can find a convenient time to meet," If you prefer, offer the best way of contacting you and say that you look forward to hearing from the employer. Summer break may be a good time to meet.

When emailing your resume as an attachment, include your letter as a second attachment. In the body of the email be brief: "Dear Ms. Alon: I am writing to apply for the clinician position advertised on your website. I will be receiving my MSW from the Smith College School for Social Work this August and would bring strong clinical skills and experience with at-risk youth to the position. My cover letter and resume are attached. Please contact me if you have difficulty opening the attachments. I look forward to meeting you. Sincerely, Philip Lakey." In the subject line put "Resume and cover letter for clinician position (include job # if given)" Label your docs with your name whether using Word or PDFs (suggested). Email your docs to yourself and friends to check their format.

Follow up two to three weeks after sending your application. You may email or call unless "No calls, please," is stated. Ask if your application has been received, if you can provide further information, or arrange an interview.

Keep track of your applications and contacts with a spreadsheet, app, or other method so you can take timely and appropriate follow-up steps. Your goal is to keep your application in the employer's mind.

We're happy to assist you in person, by phone/videochat, or email. To set up an appointment, stop by or call during office hours, or self-schedule via Handshake.

PHILIP LAKEY

35 Elmwood Drive, Stoughton, MA 02130 (617) 555-0000 philip.lakey@gmail.com
www.linkedin.com/in/plakey

EDUCATION

Smith College School for Social Work, Northampton, MA

Master of Social Work expected August 2019

Relevant Courses: Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families, Child Development from Infancy to Adolescence, Racism in the United States: Implications for Social Work Practice

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Biology, May 2013

Licensure: LCSW Certification expected Fall 2019

Language Proficiency: Fluent Spanish

Computer Skills: Electronic Medical Records (EMR), Final Cut Pro, iMovie

Other: White Water Instructor Certification, CPR, First Aid (all current)

SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Social Work Intern, CalWORKs Counseling & Pre-Vocational Services, San Francisco, CA, 9/18-5/19

- Provided culturally competent behavioral health services including individual therapy, case management, intakes, and comprehensive initial risk assessments to diverse client population of families with dependent children (full-time position through RAMS, Inc.)
- Co-facilitated psycho-education and process groups on stress reduction and relationship management to promote soft skills building and facilitate client's employability and success
- Implemented mindfulness and meditation into psycho-educational and process groups
- Participated in client outreach activities to further support intensive engagement and retention in CalWORKs program services
- Collaborated in roundtable sessions with multi-disciplinary treatment team members, Human Services Agency staff, and other care/community providers to plan individual's treatment and care goal development and progress; included vocational assessment and rehabilitation, case conferencing, participant progress and improvement reporting, discharge planning, and other services

Social Work Intern, San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, CA, 9/17-6/18

- Provided individual therapy to culturally and socio-economically diverse children and adolescents at elementary and middle school levels (full-time position)
- Taught socio-emotional curriculum (Second Step and Tribes) to 4th and 5th graders
- Co-facilitated student support groups on social skills, conflict resolution, and academic success
- Co-coordinated Mentoring for Success program at school sites: recruited mentors, coordinated monthly activities, and provided program support as needed
- Co-planned and co-led school-wide activities and incentive programs to further support positive school climate and family engagement
- Provided milieu support for drop-in students in school wellness center and in class

RELATED EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH

Group Facilitator, San Mateo High School, San Mateo, CA, 10/18-5/19

- Initiated and facilitated weekly after-school group for GLBTQ Students of Color grades 9-12
- Helped students explore issues of racism and gender identity through writing and video projects

(continued)

Program and Dorm Supervisor, Academy at Swift River, Charlemont, MA, 8/15-5/17

- Supervised five resident counselors in private college preparatory therapeutic boarding school; oversaw training, counseling, treatment, and parent relations
- Initiated outdoor leadership program: implemented individualized student development plans emphasizing trust and bonding activities that resulted improved self-esteem, academic performance, and camaraderie within the dorm
- Supervised dorm floor of 15 boys ages 14 -18; led evening study halls and social activities

Mental Health Worker, Brattleboro Retreat, Brattleboro, VT, 9/14-7/15

- Performed nursing care responsibilities with supervision on adult, co-ed residential substance abuse unit; ensured safe and consistent quality care
- Documented patients' behavior and treatment; initiated supportive interactions around treatment issues; intervened in crisis situations
- Co-led psycho-education group for adult substance abusers in collaboration with social worker
- Provided patient transportation to medical appointments

Assistant Director, Horizons for Youth, Denver, CO, 10/13-6/14

- Co-led after-school program for low-income, at-risk youth; developed and implemented recreational and career-related programs including legal field shadowing program
- Advocated for, received, and administered \$3000 activities and field trip budget
- Met with youths' family members to discuss behavioral goals and objectives

Group Leader, Grant's White River Rafting Company, Boulder, CO, 5-8/13

- Led rafting tours in adventure program for inner city adolescents to help participants build self-esteem and self-reliance
- Trained three junior co-leaders: developed team-building and leadership activities included in program's first staff training manual

TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

Sand Tray Therapy for Teens, Center for Psychological Services, Boston, MA, 2018

The Boston TEE (Total Environmental Education) Party Conference, Boston, MA, 2015

EnvironMentors Training, National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, 2014

AFFILIATIONS

National Association of Social Workers

North American Association for Environmental Educators

National Environmental Education and Training Foundation

INTERESTS

Hiking, white water kayaking, and rock climbing. Have climbed five of the highest peaks in the U.S.

PHILIP LAKEY

35 Elmwood Drive, Stoughton, MA 02130 (617) 555-0000 philip.lakey@gmail.com
www.linkedin.com/in/plakey

June 30, 2019

Ms. Josephine Alon, Director
White Mountain Academy
162 Mountain Street
White Brook, NH 03577

Dear Ms. Alon:

I am writing to apply for the clinician position posted on the White Mountain Academy website. I will be earning my MSW this August from the Smith College School for Social Work and would bring to this opportunity strong clinical skills working with at-risk youth in therapeutic schools and experience in environmental education and leadership training.

During my clinical internship at the San Francisco Unified School District, I provided individual and group therapy to culturally-diverse students similar to the client population at WMA. What interests me most about working with adolescents is how their self-esteem and growth are affected by their success in school, activities, and relationships as they attempt to find their place in the world. My work at SFUSD drew on my flexibility, imagination, and ability to establish and maintain rapport, skills I would be excited to bring to WMA.

I'm particularly attracted to White Mountain's structured, safe, and nurturing residential environment and comprehensive approach to the therapeutic, academic, social, and physical needs of each student. I've found that the small community size stressed by WMA fosters more meaningful relationships, helping students lead lives of curiosity, courage, compassion, and develop friendships that may last a lifetime.

WMA's unique outdoor offerings and leadership training further appeal to me. My experience at the Academy at Swift River initiating an outdoor leadership program for at-risk teens would support my clinical work with your students and contribute to your leadership programming. I've seen firsthand the value of such programs in developing students' self-esteem, academic performance, and long-term commitment to their physical and emotional wellbeing.

I look forward to discussing my interest in this position, perhaps during my July 8-12 summer break. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Philip Lakey

SUSAN G. EVANS

5 Wood Street, Amherst, MA 01002 413-000-1234 susan.g.evans@gmail.com www.linkedin.com/in/susangevans

EDUCATION

Smith College School for Social Work, Northampton, MA M.S.W. (expected 8/2019)

Relevant Coursework: Child Development from Infancy to Adolescence

Licensure: LCSW Certification expected Fall 2019

George Jones University, Newton, OR B.S. in Social Work and B.A. in Writing/Literature (5/2016)

Skills: Electronic Medical Records (EMR), Children and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS)

CLINICAL AND RELATED EXPERIENCE

McClendon Center, Washington, DC

Social Work Intern (30 hours/week, 9/2018-4/2019)

- Provided individual, couples, and group psychotherapy services to socio-culturally diverse population of adults with chronic mental illness including bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, OCD, and PTSD
- Completed diagnostic assessments and psychosocial evaluations of clients; delivered crisis intervention as needed
- Served as therapy consultant to rehabilitation and home health case managers; consulted with psychiatrists
- Wrote clinical summaries and discharged clients from agency medical record system; entered session notes into system within documentation timelines

Alameda County Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, Berkeley, CA

Social Work Intern (30 hours/week, 9/2017-4/2018)

- Provided individual psychotherapy to culturally diverse children ages 11-18 and their families impacted by poverty, violence, and loss of loved ones at REALM Charter Middle and High Schools
- Formulated treatment plans and utilized Children and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) tool to reduce impact of trauma and social inequities
- Conducted intakes, assessments, and tracking of outcomes on Alameda County Gateway in compliance with HIPAA
- Collaborated with clinicians, teachers, and caregivers to develop case plans and meet clients' individual needs

Youth Guidance Association, Portland, OR

School Liaison and Residential Counselor (6/2015-5/2016)

- Supervised at-risk youth in residential treatment home and public school settings struggling with school adjustment
- Provided case management; maintained relationships between faculty and treatment home staff
- Organized and led after-school study groups and weekly therapy sessions on anger management and stress reduction
- Responded to students' education and career goals: attended IEP meetings, helped them apply for jobs and college

George Jones University, Department of Social Sciences, Newton, OR

Research Assistant (6/2014-5/2015)

- Researched adolescent substance abusers' school retention; used Excel to enter data from transcribed interviews

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Preschool Teacher, Salvation Army Little People Daycare, Seattle, WA (12/2016-5/2017)

- Created and taught curriculum once weekly to 18 low-income children ages 3-5
- Supervised class during play and recess activities; led music and art projects

Summer Job Coach, Idaho Independent Living Services, Boise, ID (6-8/2012 and 2013)

- Assisted two young adults with developmental disabilities search for summer job; supervised activities and outings

Outreach Volunteer, Youth with a Mission Summer of Service Program, Amsterdam, Netherlands (6-8/2011)

- Built relationships with homeless youth, served food, and assisted with needle exchange program

Summer Staff/Camp Counselor, Quaker Hill Summer Camp, McCall, ID (6-8/2010)

- Led field trips, ropes courses, crafts, and music for campers ages 10-17, many away from home for the first time

Action Verb List

The verbs listed below are only a few of the many you can use in describing your experience and accomplishments. Make sure you have an action verb for each entry in your resume's "Experience" section.

accelerated	demonstrated	instructed	re-established
accomplished	designed	interpreted	regulated
achieved	determined	introduced	rehearsed
adapted	developed	launched	reinforced
adjusted	devised	led	renegotiated
aided	devoted	lectured	reorganized
allocated	diagnosed	listed	reported
amplified	diagrammed	maintained	researched
analyzed	directed	managed	reshaped
answered	displayed	modified	restored
applied	distributed	molded	revamped
appointed	edited	monitored	reviewed
approved	effected	motivated	revised
arbitrated	eliminated	negotiated	scheduled
arranged	employed	observed	selected
assisted	encouraged	operated	set up
assumed	enlisted	orchestrated	simplified
attained	established	organized	solved
augmented	estimated	oriented	specialized
awarded	evaluated	originated	stimulated
began	examined	oversaw	streamlined
brought	expanded	overhauled	structured
built	expedited	participated	substituted
catalogued	extended	performed	suggested
chaired	facilitated	persuaded	summarized
co-led	focused	planned	supervised
compared	forecast	pinpointed	supported
compiled	fortified	prepared	systematized
completed	founded	presented	teamed
conceived	generated	preserved	trained
conducted	guided	produced	treated
constructed	handled	programmed	tutored
consulted	headed	promoted	unified
contracted	helped	proposed	updated
contrived	implemented	proved	used
controlled	improved	provided	utilized
cooperated	incorporated	ran	volunteered
coordinated	increased	received	widened
counseled	influenced	recommended	wrote
created	initiated	reconciled	
dealt	inspected	recorded	
defined	installed	recruited	
delegated	instituted	reduced	