

Transcript Realistic Job Preview: Child Protective Service Worker

https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/media/av/realisticjobpreview_cpsw.htm

Female Narrator: Thank you for interest in applying for a Child Protective Service Worker position, or CPSW, with the New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth, and Families. DCYF is responsible for promoting the safety and wellness of thousands of children, families, and communities across the Granite State each day. DCYF's primary goal is to strengthen families so children can live free from harm and abuse. Our staff works to quickly assess and respond to the changing environments that children and families live, work, play, learn, and grow in every day.

As someone who is considering becoming a Child Protective Services Worker, what will this mean for you? The role of a CPSW is very challenging. Each day you may face difficult situations involving child maltreatment.

However, you will not be alone. CPSW's are part of a larger child and family-serving system in which DCYF, parents, providers, and community members work together to create conditions for strong and thriving families and communities where children are free from harm so they can grow, learn, and play and become healthy adults.

We are excited you are considering becoming part of the DCYF team. We hope you will join us and help achieve our goal of constructing a safer future for all of New Hampshire's children.

Matthew, Family Service Worker: I think that that's the reason why I do it the most, is I wanted a job that would ah give me a purpose in life.

Sherri, Supervisor: Sometimes people underestimate the depth of the problems that our clients have and their, the impact that that's going to have on them. Sometimes people have, you know, depending on their own personal history, um, that they bring to this work they may not ever have had exposure to many of the things that now they're going to have exposure to.

Assessment Worker: So we're not we're not sure of the age of the child.

Assessment Worker: Do you have the name of that child?

Assessment Worker: He lied to the police because he was afraid of getting beaten up?

Female Narrator: All reports of alleged child abuse and neglect in New Hampshire are received through the Central Intake Office. If the report is accepted it is immediately sent to a local office to be assigned an assessment worker so that an investigation into the allegations can begin.

Tammy, Intake Worker: We get all types of types of reports from um, you know, neglect calls, to sexual abuse calls, to physical abuse calls. Um, it fluctuates on the ages of the children. That, you know we get calls on newborns; we get calls up to when the child is up to 18 years of age.

Assessment Worker: Did he say whether or not he's witnessed any other domestic violence with his parents?

Female Narrator: An assessment worker interviews children, parents, and household members. They also talk to doctors, school staff, police, counselors, and others who may be involved with the family. It's short-term and fast-paced to determine what action may be necessary.

Jennifer, Assessment Worker: There is no schedule to my day; honestly every day could be different as an assessment worker. Um, some days I have scheduled appointments and I'm meeting with families. There are some days I don't know what I'm doing until I come in and ah I'm handed an emergency report and I need to go out.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: From the moment I stepped in I loved what I did. And it was fast-paced. Um, it was different every day. Um, you know I wasn't sitting all day, you know I wasn't on the move all day. It was just lots of everything.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: I went up to the home last night and the little boy had scratches over his eye and he had a bruise, ah because of the on-going domestic violence and the little boy will be stepping off the bus probably in about two hours with mom's boyfriend so that is very concerning.

Supervisor: And I did just talk with the police just before you came in and they ah had a call from the neighbor last night. Um, who was concerned because they heard a lot of screaming and banging.

Department Attorney: I think based on the photographs and what you've told me I think we have enough to obtain a court order.

Meaghan, Assessment Worker: It's difficult to say how often you'll go to court, um, because you never know what kind of assessment you're going to receive. Um, so I would say, potentially once a month, it could be three times a month, it could be, um you could go three months without filing a neglect or abuse petition in court.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: Court is never easy. It's something that you have to practice. It's something that you have to watch, you have to shadow. Um, the first few times are not easy, and you have to remember that it's not personal.

Meaghan, Assessment Worker: So you, um, prepare with the attorney. Um, so what happens when you go to court is you file neglect petitions, um as well as other documentation. Um, but CPSWs are typically responsible for the affidavit. Um, and that is the factual information you obtain throughout the assessment.

Department Attorney: The Department would like to call CPSW Amanda Jewel to the stand.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: He has spoken about fighting in the home, lots of screaming and yelling. He's also talked with me about um, physical abuse on his mom.

Department Attorney: Your honor, at this point the Department would request that the court issue an Order of Protection removing Ms. Jones' boyfriend.

District Court Judge: Based on the evidence that I've heard today and the child's disclosures I will be issuing an Order of Protection removing the mom's...

Sherri, Supervisor: We have a really great mentoring program that helps people with that so they are not just sort of thrown in there on their first day, you know, by themselves, by any means.

Matthew, Family Service Worker: The types of trainings that we do are, are intense and very informative and you could come into the job and not really know much about how to do things, um, but in that three to four month period they teach you everything that you need to know.

Meaghan, Assessment Worker: You receive a mentor, right from the beginning, um, so you are assigned to a seasoned CPSW, um, who you are going to shadow, kind of, throughout, um, your first several months with the division. Um, so in addition to mentoring with somebody you're also going through what we call Core Academy, um, which is classroom style training that you are going to go through to learn about the different policies within the division, um, to learn about, um, the court process, to learn about how to interview children, um, to engage with families.

Sherri, Supervisor: We have a lot of training and we have a lot of supports, but even still, at the end of the day, at some point you have to go knock on the door by yourself. And, if you aren't someone who can bring yourself to some level of comfort in doing that, then, this job's not for you.

Assessment Worker: I am always nervous knocking on doors. Um, that moment when you're knocking and waiting to see if someone's going to respond. I'm always nervous, you know, no matter how many times I do it. Um, you don't know what's... what's behind the door.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: I've never been greeted by a parent that was happy to see me. So, um, um, in, initially when I first started, that's, that's uncomfortable. Um, and it's, it can be pretty intense.

Amanda, Assessment Worker: Um, I'm here to talk with you about your son. Um, he's okay but we have a concern about, um, his safety and a concern about yours as well. Um, we have a court order to remove your boyfriend, ah David, from the home. Is he here right now?

Parent: Yes, but what right do you have to come into my home and remove him out of the home...

Amanda, Assessment Worker: What we do isn't easy, but we also have a lot of support and there's a lot of ah, tools we have to utilize that support and, um, great people to work with. Lots of services.

Sherri, Supervisor: It's not something you can pick up a book and read it and say okay it says here that I need to do this so this is how I'm going to do it. It's not that kind of a job. It's, there, there's much more gray than that there's much more need to think, to be able to generalize from general instructions to the specific situation.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: There is no, um, typical day. And, and, it's very, very fast paced. There's a lot of pressure and you need to, you need to become adept at, um, at juggling and reprioritizing. Um, you know, ah, sometimes, uh, hourly.

Sherri, Supervisor: We've got an urgent report that we're going to need to go out on this afternoon.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: Ok

Kyle, Assessment Worker: Is there a reason that someone might be worried about you or your brothers or your sisters?

Child: Uh-uh

Kyle, Assessment Worker: No?

Kyle, Assessment Worker: It's powerful to, to sit down with a child and, and to let them know that – I believe you – and that – What, what's happening to you, I, I do not think that's okay.

Female Narrator: The Family Service Worker's job involves determining what services might help a family get where they need to be in order to have their children safely at home. This is longer-term involvement that builds a relationship with the family.

Jason, Supervisor: It really comes down to identifying what the family needs are and identifying what service is best suited to meet that family's need. Um, some families have more needs than other families. Some families have higher risk and, ah, more risk factors to deal with than other families, but really, the Family Service Worker, um, is there to help identify and coordinate and manage those services and monitor the quality of that service delivery. And, to make sure that that family's needs are being met effectively.

Heather, Family Service Worker: It's definitely important that you be able to put aside your own biases. Um, I think that, going into this, uh field, um, I think it's perfectly normal to think that there must be something different about these parents.

Meaghan, Assessment Worker: You may not have grown up in a home that, um had dishes piled up in the sink, or clothes scattered on the floor, garbage overflowing, um, but is that a safety concern? No. Um, so you need to put that own judgement and bias aside.

Matthew, Family Service Worker: You'll have uncomfortable conversations where you have to talk, ah, to a parent about their child having been physically abused by a family member, and they don't want to believe that, um, but you have to have those conversations.

Candace, Family Service Worker: I remember having to tell a five and seven year old that the judge decided that instead of going home to their birth family that they are going to be adopted by the family they are living with now.

Adele, Family Service Worker: No one person decides anything like that for the children. It's generally a group decision where a kids, a child's placed initially, with the child needs to be moved. Should visits be supervised or not? You know what degree is appropriate for them seeing their parents? A lot of it is a group decision which I think protects the agency as well as the children, because no one person's personal beliefs or judgement, or you know any of that, is what decides the fate of a child.

Family Service Worker: We are reviewing Hannah for today's PPT.

Family Service Worker: And the foster mom is, ah, coming with me to visit the biological parents in jail and start that connection and start getting them um...

Adele, Family Service Worker: Children will always love their parents. And they will always want to know in one way or another where they are or what had happened. There will always be something of that, and you need to respect that.

Matthew, Family Service Worker: There's, there's some parents that are not going to be willing to work with you. There's some parents that are gonna fight you every step of the way, um, for a year plus, and you're going to have to terminate their parental rights.

Family Service Worker: The things that parents have sort of forced their children to endure, that some of it is, it's horrific. And there's no other word for it, but you can't, you can't judge the, the parents for that. You can't look at the children simply as victims, you keep those things in mind, but they're still people who, that you want to help prepare to make it out there in the world.

Kyle, Assessment Worker: Are you worried about me talking to your mom and dad about anything?

Child: Uh uh

Candace, Family Service Worker: A person who should take this job should have a passion, and a heart, and a desire to um, make change, in, in this world, in your community.

Sherri, Supervisor: This is not a part time position, it's, it's actually a more than full time position is that way that I phrase it to them and I think that that's very accurate. This, I mean certainly there are hours and you know, you're not going to be worked to death, but um this is not a, this is a position that will be a huge part of your life. This is not someplace you go and then leave it there and come home at 4:30.

Adele, Family Service Worker: There's definitely days that I go home and I curse my job up and down, um, but I would say more often than not, um, yes, I like my job. I am happy with the work that I do.

Heather, Family Service Worker: We do make a difference. There's days I forget that, but we do. We help children and we help families. The best feeling in the world is when after the day is done and we've done all of this tremendous amount of work and all of this documentation, a child gets to go home and live safely with their parents.

Meaghan, Assessment Worker: If you are passionate, um, if you want to help children, if you want to support the families, if you want to better your community, um, this job's for you. If you can think on the fly, work as a team, um, if you are energized and organized, this job's for you.