

Youth Worker

You are the adult who keeps showing up for kids and teens in group homes, after school programs and shelters. Some jobs hire you at 18, the better paid ones want a degree.

TYPICAL PAY

\$59,550

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$96k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Group homes, after school programs, shelters, school districts

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Finish the diploma and turn 18. Volunteer or work at a camp, a tutoring program or a youth sports league. That experience is what gets you the first paid shift.
- 2 First paid job** Right away
 Residential counselor, after school program staff, shelter overnight staff, camp counselor. A diploma, a clean background check and a driver's license are usually the whole requirement.
- 3 A degree while you work** 2 to 4 years
 An associate degree in human services gets you off the overnight shift. A bachelor's in youth development, human services, social work or psychology is what salaried and school district jobs want.
- 4 Internship or field placement** Built into the degree
 Degree programs build one in. Rhode Island College, for instance, requires a 180 hour internship before you graduate. This is where most people get hired.
- 5 National certification** After a year or two of work
 The Child and Youth Care Certification Board runs a credential at entry, associate and professional levels. The professional level needs a portfolio and an exam.

Pros and cons

- + You can start at 18 with a diploma and a background check
- + Real relationships with young people who have very few adults left
- + Work exists in every city and town, and agencies are always hiring
- The pay is low for the responsibility, especially in the first few years
- Verbal abuse, physical restraints and runaways are part of residential work
- Overnights, weekends and holidays, and short staffing that eats your days off

Good to know

The job has no code of its own

Federal statisticians file youth workers under Child, Family, and School Social Workers, next to adoption workers and child protective services staff. That is why a single median figure for this job is always...

There is a federal website just for youth programs

youth.gov exists to help people build and run youth programs. It covers 25 topic areas and has a Map My Community tool that shows which federally funded youth organizations already operate in a give...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Child, Family, and School Social Workers (21-1021.00)
 Child and Youth Care Certification Board: levels, exams and fees
 National Association for Child and Youth Care Professionals
 Rhode Island College: Youth Development bachelor's degree

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/youth-worker>



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