

History and Evolution of Social Work

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(A concise, structured overview for quick study)

1. Roots & Early Precursors (Pre-19th Century)

Period	Key Developments	Representative Figures / Movements
Ancient societies (e.g., Egypt, Greece, Rome)	Mutual aid, charitable temples, guilds that cared for widows, orphans, the sick	<i>Philanthropy</i> in religious and civic life
Middle Ages (5th-15th c.)	Monastic hospitals, almsgiving, poor laws in Europe	St. Francis of Assisi; medieval “hospital orders”
Early modern era (16th-18th c.)	Poor relief statutes (e.g., England’s 1601 Poor Law), charitable societies in the U.S.	<i>Charity organization societies</i> (e.g., New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 1843)

2. Institutional Foundations (Mid-19th to Early 20th Century)

Decade	Milestones	Significance
1840s–1850s	Settlement house movement (e.g., Hull House , Chicago, 1889)	First systematic community-based service; integrated education, health, and recreation for immigrants
1860s–1870s	Emergence of charitable institutions (orphanages, asylums)	Shift from mere relief to organized care
1890s	Professional training begins: 1898 – First school of social work (London School of Economics); 1904 – New York School of Philanthropy (now Columbia School of Social Work)	Formal education creates a distinct professional identity
1910s	Child welfare laws (U.S. Children’s Bureau, 1912)	Recognition of children as a specific client group

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Decade	Milestones	Significance
1920s	Community organization and public health focus; establishment of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (later, 1955)	Broader scope beyond charity; advocacy begins

3. The Professional Era (1930s–1960s)

3.1. The Great Depression & New Deal (1930s)

- **Federal Relief Programs** (e.g., *Civilian Conservation Corps*, *Works Progress Administration*) employed social workers for case management and community planning.
- **Social Security Act (1935)** codified assistance for the elderly, unemployed, and families—providing a legal framework for practice.

3.2. World War?II & Post?War Expansion (1940s–1950s)

- Social workers staffed **Veterans Administration**, **military hospitals**, and **rehabilitation programs**.
- **Community mental health movement** (e.g., 1946 *National Mental Health Act*) integrated social work into psychiatry.

3.3. The 1960s – “Great Society” & Anti?Poverty Initiatives

- **War on Poverty** (1964) created **Community Action Agencies**; social workers became key organizers.
 - **Civil Rights Movement** expanded the profession’s commitment to social justice and anti?discrimination advocacy.
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4. The Modern & Contemporary Period (1970s–Present)

Era	Core Themes	Landmark Developments
1970s	<i>Deinstitutionalization</i> of mental health; rise of **community mental health	