



RECRUITING AND RETAINING SOCIAL WORKERS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

The New Brunswick Association of Social Workers surveyed its members to inform the development of a Social Work Recruitment and Retention Strategy for New Brunswick.

804 social workers responded to the survey. 89% of respondents identified as female, and 60% were between the ages of 26 and 45. Of those surveyed, 80% work for the province of New Brunswick (44% with Social Development, 27% with RHAs).

Here's what the survey told us:

- ▶ It's essential to start work now to avoid a future crisis in the recruitment and retention of social workers.
- ▶ There is a shortage now; without a proper strategy, it will get worse, with hundreds of vacancies already projected by the end of the decade.
- ▶ Social workers do critical, essential work, with close to half of the 800 social workers surveyed working for the Department of Social Development, the majority of whom work in child welfare.
- ▶ Training more professionals requires increasing the number of Bachelor of Social Work seats in New Brunswick universities to fill current and projected gaps.
- ▶ The survey shows a relatively young workforce of social workers who take great pride in their work. We would like to start the work now to maintain this sense of pride.
- ▶ Approximately 74% of social workers identify stress and burnout and a high number of caseloads as key issues that may lead them to consider leaving their jobs.
- ▶ 84% of social workers say they have, at least occasionally, experienced unmanageable stress during the past year, with 52% of those surveyed frequently dealing with unmanageable stress.
- ▶ 45% of those surveyed say they are nearing or experiencing burnout.
- ▶ Reducing administrative duties is seen as the best way to help recruit new workers, along with providing paid field placements and employment bonuses and incentives.
- ▶ Lowering caseloads and increasing compensation are identified as the best ways to retain existing social workers.
- ▶ It is clear that social workers need more support now and in the coming years to maintain a vibrant and healthy workforce.
- ▶ To protect our most vulnerable now and in the future, change is needed, and it is needed now.