

# 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**

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**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 with Smith alums and others who work there. Learn about an organization's mission, programs, population served, and theory base.

**Make a master list of all your experiences and skills.** Include education, certifications, and licensing; field placements; projects (community, anti-racism); jobs, internships, and volunteer positions; trainings attended and presentations given; research (thesis); and professional activities (memberships, committee work, conferences); language and computer skills; interests, activities, and 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 or Clinical Experience. Other background 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, Community Outreach Experience, Administrative 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.** Template resumes often look alike and are hard for most users to modify.

## 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 details about your client population such as diagnoses or presenting issues, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status unless certain your reader knows this. Other details: the number of clients seen individually or in groups, and length and type of treatment.

**For macro-level positions** stress skills such as supervising others, program development, community organizing, fundraising, teamwork, grant writing, and budget management. Include the number of people you've supervised or amount of money raised. Use more familiar 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.

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## Sections of the Resume

**Your contact information.** Put your name at the top with your address, phone number, and email address below. Include a permanent address if relevant to your search.

**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 also optional.

**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, your thesis, community and anti-racism projects (these may be presented elsewhere), 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 field placements have been full-time, especially for clinical resumes. You may include volunteer work or internships.

**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 they're relevant. For example, if you hope to combine your clinical skills with outdoor education, your outdoor skills and certifications are important.

**Professional activities** such as relevant memberships, awards, trainings and conferences attended, and presentations given should 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.

## 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, 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.

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## The Cover Letter

**A cover letter introduces your resume to an employer.** It states why you're writing, often says how you learned of the position, 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 the position. Include a cover letter with your resume, 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 her/his name (with permission) in the first paragraph.

**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," "To the Search Committee," or "To Whom it May Concern."

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

**Write in an active, conversational style.** Instead of saying, "My placement at xxx agency afforded me the opportunity to do xxx," or "I would be honored to work at your agency," say, "During my placement at xxx agency I provided individual psychotherapy to adolescent substance abuse patients," or, "I would bring strong clinical and administrative 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.

**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." Label your PDFs with your name, and whether using a Word doc or PDF, send it to yourself first and to friends with different computers to double-check its format.

**Follow up after sending your letter and resume,** unless an ad says, "No calls, please." 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 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.

**Consult us for help any time.** We're happy to assist you in person, by phone, or via email!

# PHILIP LAKEY

35 Elmwood Drive, Stoughton, MA 02130 (617) 555-0000 philip.lakey@gmail.com

## EDUCATION

### **Smith College School for Social Work**, Northampton, MA

Master of Social Work expected August 2016

*Thesis:* Father-Daughter Relationships: The Impact of Divorce on Adolescent Girls

*Courses include:* The Adolescent in Context: Dynamics and Treatment Issues; Group Treatment for Children and Young Adolescents; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identities: Developmental and Treatment Considerations; Clinical Practice With Traumatized Children and Families

### **University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Biology, May 2009

**Licensure:** LCSW Certification expected Fall 2016

**Language Proficiency:** Fluent Spanish

**Computer Skills:** Microsoft Office, Final Cut Pro, iMovie

**Other:** White Water Instructor Certification, CPR, First Aid

## SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

### **Social Work Intern**, Cambridge City Hospital, Cambridge, MA

Full-time field placement, September 2015 - April 2016

#### **Outpatient Psychiatry Department**

- Provided individual assessment, treatment planning, and psychotherapy services to socio-culturally diverse adult population diagnosed with depression, PTSD, and other affective disorders
- Provided crisis intervention and emergency services; co-led bereavement group
- Participated in family therapy seminar, grand rounds, and hospital-wide in-service training
- Served as department representative to Hospital Diversity Committee

### **Social Work Intern**, San Mateo Mental Health, Serramonte Therapeutic Day School, Daly City, CA

Full-time field placement, September 2014 - April 2015

#### **Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program**

- Provided individual and group psychotherapy services to culturally-diverse adolescents ages 12-18 diagnosed with major psychiatric disorders, attention disturbances, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse; services provided in Spanish and English
- Collaborated with treatment team of clinical social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and rehabilitation counselors to develop individualized treatment plans
- Led daily psychotherapy groups using multi-modal approaches: cognitive therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, psycho-educational, and expressive arts

### **Community Project**, San Mateo High School, San Mateo, CA, 2012 - 2013

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

## ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

### **Program and Dorm Supervisor**, Academy at Swift River, Charlemont, MA, 2011 - 2012

- 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 outdoor activities and resulting in improved self-esteem, behavior, and academics
- Supervised dorm floor of 15 boys ages 14 -18; led evening study halls and social activities

**Mental Health Worker**, Brattleboro Retreat, Brattleboro, VT, 2010 - 2011

- 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-educational group for adult substance abusers in collaboration with social worker
- Provided patient transportation to medical appointments

**Assistant Director**, Horizons for Youth, Denver, CO, 2009 - 2010

- 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, Summer 2009

- 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, 2015

The Boston TEE (Total Environmental Education) Party Conference, Boston, MA, 2012

EnvironMentors Training, National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, 2011

**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

July 2, 2016

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 placement at the Serramonte Therapeutic Day School, I provided individual and group therapy to a culturally diverse adolescent population similar to yours at WMA, experience that built on my prior role as a program and dorm supervisor at the Academy at Swift River, a therapeutic boarding school. What I find most interesting about this age group 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. Developing individual treatment plans for adolescents at Serramonte 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 your board member Malcolm Gladwell 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 Swift River initiating an outdoor leadership program for at-risk teens would, I believe, 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, and I will call shortly to see about arranging a meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Philip Lakey

## SUSAN GILMORE-EVANS

5 Woodstone Avenue, Amherst, MA 01002 413-000-1234 susan.gilmore-evans@gmail.com

### EDUCATION

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**Smith College School for Social Work**, Northampton, MA M.S.W. (expected 8/2016)

*Relevant Coursework:* Beginning Treatment of Children, Clinical Practice with Traumatized Children and Families, Family Therapy, Child Development from Infancy to Adolescence

*Licensure:* LCSW Certification expected Fall 2016

**George Jones University**, Newton, OR B.S. in Social Work and B.A. in Writing/Literature (5/2013)

*Study Abroad:* Oxford University Honors Program

*Honors and Awards:* Social Work Major of the Year, Steinfeld Peace Scholar, Quaker Leadership Program

### SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

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*Social Work Intern, Aurora Mental Health Clinic*, Aurora, CO (full-time field placement, 9/2015-4/2016)

- Provided individual, home-based, group, case management, and crisis intervention services to diverse population of children and their families in Early Childhood and Family Center; clinical issues included trauma, loss, and wide range of mental health issues often compounded by developmental disorders
- Provided consultation services to teachers, foster care families, and other community service providers
- Participated in multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and case managers
- Completed 10-week training on attachment theory and 2-day training on developmental disorders of infancy and early childhood

*Social Work Intern, Asian Counseling and Referral Services*, Seattle, WA (full-time field placement, 9/2014-4/2015)

- Provided clinical assessment and long- and short-term treatment to primarily Asian Pacific adult population including immigrants, refugees, and American-born clients
- Co-facilitated weekly art therapy groups in day treatment program for severely and persistently mentally ill clients; led psycho-educational group for clients recovering from substance abuse
- Provided outreach services to local community center

*School Liaison and Residential Counselor, Youth Guidance Association*, Portland, OR (6/2012-5/2013)

- Supervised at-risk youth in residential treatment home and public school settings
- Provided basic case management; maintained relationships between faculty and treatment home staff
- Organized and led after-school study groups and weekly therapy groups
- Responded to residents' educational and vocational needs: attended IEP meetings, helped clients find and apply for summer jobs, and assisted clients with college searches

*Research Assistant, George Jones University, Department of Social Sciences*, Newton, OR (6/2011-5/2012)

- Assisted PhD candidate with research on adolescent substance abusers
- Transcribed interviews and entered data using Excel

### ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

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*Preschool Teacher, Salvation Army Little People Daycare*, Seattle, WA (12/2013-5/2014)

- Created and taught curriculum one day per week 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 (6-8/2009 and 2010)

- Assisted two young adults with developmental disabilities in their summer jobs
- Supervised activities and outings with clients

*Outreach Volunteer, Youth with a Mission Summer of Service Program*, Amsterdam, Netherlands (6-8/2008)

- Worked with street youth, served food to homeless, and assisted with needle exchange program

*Summer Staff/Camp Counselor, Quaker Hill Summer Camp*, McCall, ID (6-8/2007)

- Led camps, ropes courses, crafts, and music for campers ages 10-17

## 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	harmonized	promoted	unified
contracted	headed	proposed	updated
contrived	implemented	proved	used
controlled	improved	provided	utilized
cooperated	incorporated	ran	volunteered
coordinated	increased	received	widened
counseled	influenced	recommended	worked
created	initiated	reconciled	wrote
dealt	inspected	recorded	
defined	installed	recruited	
delegated	instituted	reduced	