There is increasing federal, state and local interest in the youth work domain and the professional and academic development of this important workforce. Youth workers work with children and young people in out-of-school time programs, clubs and community centers focusing on their personal, social and educational development as they transition to adulthood. In 2003, Harold Washington College partnered with the Chicago Area Project and the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services to provide the Youth Development Practitioner Certification Program (YDPCP). This program now forms the initial stage of the new degree concentration in youth work. Enrollment in the program is open to anyone employed working with children and young people in out-of-school time and youth work programs, e.g. after-school instructors, school-age workers, grassroots youth workers, community activists, outreach workers, probation officers, prevention specialists, teen reach workers, managers and supervisors.

What is youth work and who are youth workers?

Youth workers and out-of-school program staff work with children and young people, often between the ages of 8 and 21, to learn about themselves, others and society, through non-formal educational activities. These programs offer a mix of leisure, enjoyment, challenge,
learning and achievement. Youth workers and after-school workers use a range of methods including work with individuals, with small groups and learning through activities. Youth and out-of-school programs provide important supports and opportunities for children and young people to build positive relationships and activity: friendship, fun and challenge. These contribute in particular to citizenship, academic success, and raising aspirations and achievements. Programs frequently provide key structured activities designed to attract young people to places they choose to attend. In these places and programs youth build positive connections with their peers and with youth workers. Some youth work may also be targeted towards specific groups of young people or towards particular neighborhoods where it is most needed. Some young people are also mandated to attend programs. Specialized programs provide support and opportunities for these children and young people to build relationships with those who do not pre-judge them, to receive intensive attention and guidance, and have their learning and achievements recognized.

**Career & Employment Possibilities**

Youth workers and out-of-school program staff work in very diverse settings and across a range of both small and large-scale organizations. Many work for community-based organizations while others work for familiar large providers such as the Y.M.C.A. and local Boys and Girls Clubs. Many work in partnership with schools providing after-school programming. Most organizations employing youth and out-of-school program staff are in the non-profit sector.

Most people start working at the frontline level delivering programs to children and youth, some specialize in working with teens, while others work across the age range. There are opportunities for progression into more management and supervisory roles as experience, expertise and qualifications improve.

Salaries can vary widely with larger organizations offering strongest opportunities for increasing roles, responsibilities and earnings. Around 40% of the workforce is part-time where terms and conditions are less than those in full time employment. A recent national survey of youth workers (2006) found the median range for salaried youth workers, at the frontline level was $25,000 - $29,999. Managers and supervisors can earn considerably more.

The field of youth work is professionalizing, which means more and more employers expect relevant professional and academic qualifications. The state of Illinois is working on a statewide credential for youth workers and school-age staff. Since 2003, Harold Washington College has partnered with Chicago Area Project to provide the Youth Development Practitioner Certification Program which is wrapped around Social Service 248 and Social Service 215. This is well respected in the city and beyond and this has now been complemented by new degree and certificate programs in youth work.

**Degree and Certificate Programs**

**SOCIAL WORK: YOUTH WORK**
**Associate in Applied Science (AAS)**

(Minimum 63 credit hours) (0370)

**Required Courses: (Recommended Order)**

- Social Service 248: Principles of Youth and Group Work (YDPCP I) 3
- Social Service 215: Social Problems and Social Action (YDPCP II) 3
- Child Development 101: Human Growth and Development (I) 4
- Child Development 102: Human Growth and Development (II) 3
- Social Service 249: Practicum in Youth Work 6
- Social Service 212: Introduction to Group Process 3
- Mental Health 223: Introduction to Addiction Studies 3
- Social Service 109: Report Writing in Social Work 3
- Business 268: Introduction to Microcomputers 3
- Psychology 211: Social Psychology 3

**General Education courses for AAS degree**

- Social Science 101: Introduction to the Scientific Study of Society 3
- Humanities 123 or any other 200 level course: 3
- Mathematics 118 (or above): General Education Mathematics 4
- English 101: Composition 3
- Natural Science 3

**Recommended Elective Course(s) if needed to meet minimum credit hours requirement for the degree.**

- Computer Information Systems 120: Introduction to Microcomputers 3
- Social Science 102: General Course II 3
- Humanities 145: Introduction to Diversity/Ethnic Studies 3
- Sociology 210: Diverse Cultures in a Global Age 3

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**YOUTH WORK** – The Associate in Arts (AA) degree with a Youth Work concentration provides basic liberal arts and introductory courses for students who intend to transfer to another college or university’s school of social work in preparation for careers in social work with an emphasis on youth work.

**Associate in Arts Degree**

(62 credit hours)

- General Education courses 38
- In General Education Area II, Humanities, take:
  - Art 103: Art Appreciation or
  - Music 121: Introduction to Music or
  Any Literature or Philosophy Course 3
- Sociology 210: Diverse Cultures in a Global Age 3
- In General Education Area IV, Mathematics take:
  - Mathematics 125: Introductory Statistics 4
- Recommended concentration courses for AA degree candidates (24 credit hours)
  - Anthropology 202: Cultural Anthropology 3
  - Computer Information Systems 120: Introduction to Microcomputers.. 3
  - Psychology 201: General Psychology 3
  - Economics 201: Principles of Economics I or
  - History 111: History of the American People to 1865 3
  - History 112: History of the American People from 1865 3
  - Mental Health 223: Introduction to Addictions Studies 3
  - Political Science 201: The National Government 3
  - Social Service 101: Introduction to Social Work 3
  - Social Service 248: Principles of Youth and Group Work 3

**Advanced Certificate (AC)**

(28 Credit Hours) (0371)

- Social Service 248: Principles of Youth and Group Work (YDPCP I) 3
- Social Service 215: Social Problems and Social Action (YDPCP II) 3
- Child Development 101: Human Growth and Development (I) 4
- Child Development 102: Human Growth and Development (II) 3
- Social Service 249: Practicum in Youth Work 6
- Social Service 212: Introduction to Group Process 3
- Mental Health 223: Introduction to Addictions Studies 3
- Social Service 109: Report Writing in Social Work 3

**Basic Certificate (BC)**

(15 Credit Hours) (0372)

- Social Service 248: Principles of Youth and Group Work (YDPCP I) 3
- Social Service 215: Social Problems and Social Action (YDPCP II) 3
- Social Service 249: Practicum in Youth Work 6
- Social Service 109: Report Writing in Social Work 3
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Nikki Hale,
Coordinator of Training Unit (312) 588-3847 or
Joy Hernandez
(312) 588-3845.