

Aging and Human Development Paraprofessional/Gerontologist

■ Job Description

The aging and human development paraprofessional is a human services technician who concentrates on the elderly. The paraprofessional must view aging as a normal, developmental process and deal with the major physiological, psychological, and sociological processes that occur with aging. The job includes communicating with older people, assessing their needs and advocating for them, and implementing programs. Someone with advanced training could supervise others working with the elderly and could evaluate programs. Graduates are often activities or housing directors and work under an occupational or recreational therapist.

■ Job Settings

Nursing home activity departments, chore services, foster grandparent programs, retired senior volunteer programs, senior centers, senior housing facilities, retirement communities, adult day care, case management.

■ Projected Need

Both nationally and in Illinois, employment of social and human service assistants is expected to increase much faster than average through 2010. The rapidly growing older population, along with the relative newness of this field, will create job opportunities for a variety of innovative ideas, new products and programs for assisting the elderly.

■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage is \$11.09 per hour. Half of all social and human service assistants earn between \$8.86 and \$13.95 per hour.

In Illinois, the median wage is \$11.00 per hour. Wages in selected cities are given below:

City	Median Hourly Wage
Bloomington-Normal	\$11.71
Champaign-Urbana	\$10.95
Chicago	\$11.32

Decatur	\$11.14
Kankakee	\$10.34
Moline-Rock Island	\$10.69
City	Median Hourly Wage
Peoria-Pekin	\$12.03
Rockford	\$10.39
Springfield	\$12.68
St. Louis	\$ 9.49

■ Related Careers

Occupational therapy assistant, recreational therapy assistant, activity aide, social service agency paraprofessional

■ Differences in Training

A student may study gerontology or a related field of study (e.g., human services) at a two-year college; or may complete a two-year pre-professional program such as presocial work. Certificate and associate degree programs in human services, services for the elderly, or a similar area are available at several community colleges in Illinois. Individuals may also enter the field with a high school diploma, work as program aides or technicians, and, with experience and inservice training, move into assistant director positions. The required training varies widely depending on the program, the institution's personnel policies, and the geographic location.

The following community colleges offer gerontology programs:

College of DuPage - Glen Ellyn
Elgin Community College - Elgin
Lewis and Clark Community College - Godfrey
South Suburban College - South Holland
Wilbur Wright College - Chicago

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Gerontology](#)

[Human Services](#)

[Social Work](#)

■ **Credentials**

Federal regulations require that an activities director in a long-term care facility be a therapeutic recreation specialist, occupational therapist, or occupational therapy assistant; or have two years of experience in a social or recreational program within the last five years, one of which was full-time in an activities program in a health care setting. Other positions are governed by internal agency requirements.

■ **Advanced Training**

A four-year baccalaureate degree in social work, human services administration, management, or counseling is usually required for director or other supervisory positions; some facilities in some regional locations may allow paraprofessionals to work into such positions. A master's degree or doctorate is required to conduct research, serve as a consultant, or teach at a postsecondary institution.

■ **Resources**

Association for Gerontology in Higher Education
1030 15th Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005-1503
Phone: 202.289.9806
Fax: 202.289.9824
E-mail: info@aghe.org
<http://www.aghe.org>
Click on "Student Section." Select "Careers in Aging."

American Geriatrics Society
The Empire State Building
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 801
New York, NY 10118
Phone: 212.308.1414
Fax: 212.832.8646
E-mail: info@americangeriatrics.org
<http://www.americangeriatrics.org>
Click on "Student Section."