Social policy relates to the guidelines for changing, maintaining or creating a society that is conducive to human welfare. By focusing on social issues such as poverty, welfare, homelessness, public access to social programs, etc., social policy hopes to shape the distribution of and access to goods and resources. Opportunities for graduates exist across all sectors and include work on a federal, state, or local level. Additionally, graduates may choose to work for a nonprofit organization, a lobbying or advocacy group or a consulting organization. Students interested in a career in social policy should narrow their focus to address a specific topic and seek to build focused skills in knowledge through their selection of coursework, internship, capstone, etc.

**WHAT IS SOCIAL POLICY?**

**KEY SKILLS NEED**

- Passionate for serving those in need
- Specific policy knowledge and experience
- Knowledge of the legislative process
- Strong analytical, statistical and evaluations skills
- Strong advocacy and written/oral communication skills
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to listen to and understand a variety of perspectives
- Ability to facilitate and work with various parties who may have differing viewpoints
- Strong project management skills
- Budget and financial management
- Well developed problem solving skills
- Superior leadership, collaboration and teamwork skills

**TYPES OF GOVERNMENT POSITIONS**

**Federal**

To gain experience and the skills highly sought after in the public sector, some graduates select to start their careers on Capitol Hill. Some positions to seek include: *Legislative Correspondent, Legislative Assistant, Legislative Director, Press Secretary/Communications,* and *Committee Staff (or Professional Staff).* The best way to land a job on Capitol Hill is through networking.

Other opportunities to get a start in the Federal Government that will allow you to develop specific policy knowledge include:

- **The White House Internship Program**—A public service leadership program that provides a unique opportunity to gain valuable professional experience and build leadership skills.

- **The White House jobs**—The site lists staff economists and research assistant positions.

- **The Presidential Management Program**—The very competitive PMF program is a two–year leadership development program at the entry level for advanced degree candidates that can jumpstart a recent graduates public service career as well as assist them in gaining expertise in a specific policy area.

- **US Department of Education**—Good starting positions with the office are as a Program Analysts and Grant Management Specialists. Best way to apply is through the Pathways Internship Program or the Pathways Recent Graduate program.
• **US Health and Human Services**—The agency provides effective health and human services by fostering advances in medicine, public health, and social services. The Pathways program is the best way to gain entry way and additionally, Career & Alumni Services has contacts with the Kansas City office for unpaid internships.

• **US Department of Labor**—Fosters, promotes and develops the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the US by improving working conditions, advancing opportunities for profitable employment, and assuring work-related benefits and rights. The Pathways program is the best way to gain entry way into the agency.

• **USAJobs.gov**—Specific section of the website for recent grads and interns.

• **USA.gov**—A directory of US Government departments and agencies that will assist you in determining was agencies to target for your particular social policy interest.

• **Go Government**—This website has great information about working for the government and how to navigate the application process.

**State**

On the state level, graduates could work for the legislature, on a legislative committee, in the governor’s office or in a specific department. The types of jobs graduates might do include: conducting research, reviewing grants, implementing policies, or direct service delivery. We post state positions on TSPAcareers and the Office of Career & Alumni Services has contacts in most offices. Below is an incomplete list of offices that are interested in the skills that MPA graduates have:

• **Governor’s Committee to End Homelessness**—Housing is a right, not a privilege. This Committee seeks to provide the right to safe, affordable housing in healthy communities with access to a network of supportive services.

• **Missouri Commission on Human Rights**—This Commission develops, recommends, and implements ways to prevent and eliminate discrimination and to provide fair and timely resolutions of discrimination claims.

• **Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**—Their mission is to guarantee the superior preparation and performance of every child in school and in life.

• **Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services**—This department has several divisions including Community and Public Health, and Senior and Disability Services.

• **Missouri Department of Higher Education**—This department realizes that higher education is the gateway to an improved standard of living for Missouri’s residents.

• **Missouri Department of Mental Health**—The mission of the office is the prevention, treatment, and promotion of a public understanding regarding mental illness, developmental disabilities, and addictions.

• **Missouri Department of Social Services**—This department is responsible for coordinating programs to provide public assistance to children and their parents, access to health care, child support enforcement assistance and to provide specialized assistance to troubled youth.

• **Missouri Division of Youth Services**—DYS is the state agency charged with the care and treatment of delinquent youth committed to its custody by one of the 45 Missouri juvenile courts.

• **Missouri Housing Development Commission**—This commission administers and provides financing for the construction of affordable housing.

• **Missouri Office of Child Advocate**—The OCA serves as the third party reviewer to Children’s Division and its contractors.

**Local**

• **City of Columbia**—This site lists local city positions.

• **Boone County**—This site lists local positions in the county.
• **Cole County**—This site lists local positions in the county.
• **Jefferson City**—This site lists local city positions.

## NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

### Think Tanks

Think Tanks also hire graduates interested in social policy. Starting at a Think Tank is difficult and having a personal recommendation from a faculty member is almost essential. Develop relationships with TSPA faculty members and let them know of your policy interests areas.

- **American Enterprise Institute**—AEI is dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics and social welfare.
- **Brookings Institution**—Through high-quality, independent research, Brookings hopes to foster economic and social welfare, security and opportunity for all Americans.
- **Cato Institute**—The Institute is a public policy research organization dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace.
- **Center for American Progress**—The Center is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, through bold, progressive ideas.
- **Heritage Foundation**—Their mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.
- **RAND Corporation**—Their mission is to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis.
- **Urban Institute**—The Institute contributes objective analysis and expertise to important economic and social policy conversations.

### Nonprofit Service Organizations

Graduates could work in many areas within a nonprofit. Listed below are a few local and national organizations.

- **American Immigration Council**—AIC’s legal, education, policy and exchange programs work to strengthen America by honoring U.S. immigrant history and shaping how Americans think and act towards immigration now.
- **Big Brother Big Sisters of Central Missouri**—This agency helps children reach their potential through professionally supported one-to-one relationships with proven results.
- **Children International**—This agency based in Kansas City, provides critical assistance to children and families struggling in poverty.
- **Harvesters**—A community food network out of Kansas City that provides food and works to end hunger.
- **Heart of Missouri United Way**—This agency works to improve lives of people in need by mobilizing and coordinating the caring power of community resources in Mid-Missouri.
- **Kansas City Anti-Violence Project**—This organization provides domestic violence, sexual assault and hate crimes advocacy and education about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community.
- **Kingdom House**—A nonprofit in St. Louis believes in transformation from the inside out providing holistic programs and services that promote empowerment and growth in individuals and families.
- **Migrant & Immigrant Community Action Project**—The philosophy of MICA is to not only be a resource but a part of the community focusing their efforts on the promotion of human dignity through a variety of strategies.
- **Missouri Association of Community Action**—Their mission is to advocate for low-income Missourians and help people reach self sufficiency.
Missouri Juvenile Justice Association—MJJA envisions a future in which the public is aware and supportive of the delivery of quality juvenile justice services to the child of Missouri.

National Network to End Domestic Violence—NNEDV is a social change organization dedicated to creating a social, political and economic environment in which violence or discrimination against women no longer exists.

National Coalition for the Homeless—National nonprofit that advocates for fair housing for everyone and works to end homelessness.

Raven Non-Violence Education—Founded in St. Louis, RAVEN is recognized nationally as a key part of the movement to end the cycle of violence in families and communities.

Sheffield Place—Their mission is to empower homeless mothers and their children to heal from their trauma and to become self-sufficient.

SOURCES: Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Office of Career Advancement handout on Social Policy; University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, Policy Area Guidebook; Government and nonprofit websites.