

Have you ever noticed how trends come and go only to return again? Many times when they make a return the teenage generation feels that they have created something new. If the past trend is shown to them they will point out some variation that sets the new fad apart. These trends can be in fashions, accessories, hair styles and slang words. In my line of work we see trend go and go also. This surprises some people because I am in social work.

I have been in the social work field long enough that I have seen many trends come, go, and return. The return often has a new twist or spin to it, but it is still a recycled idea. As with cultural trends the people discussing new services do not want to be reminded that this has been around before. In my career I have worked for both government agencies and non profit organizations. Because the government agencies manage changes that the legislature makes them available to the public, that setting is much more political. Non profit organizations can choose which service program areas that will serve; they do not have to provide services for all populations. Government agencies cannot pick and choose. They must provide, or contract with an agency that will, services to all citizens that meet the criteria for the services that are outlined by the legislature. For large metropolitan counties this is not an issue because there are many service providers including non profit organizations that are available to service clients. However for rural areas this gets to be quite difficult. The government social service agencies are smaller and many of the non profit organizations are unable to find staff that is willing or trained to deliver services. The result is that many people in rural areas must travel a great distance to receive services or go without them.

When I worked for government agencies I was paid higher wages, but I also had a great deal of responsibility. I needed to know many areas of social work because I could be asked to change job duties at any time to help the agency meet mandated service areas. In working for the non profit organizations the pace is slower and job duties remain consistent, however the pay is lower. I have found that I would rather have the lower rate of pay and more time to devote to clients rather than having a higher wage and more documentation requirements. It gets frustrating when the law makers bring back programs that have been tried and failed by putting a new name on them and passing their administering as law. I do not miss having to explain to clients why the services they were receiving have changed or are cut. This chore falls to the government workers.