



## **Gerontology Careers Outside of Academia: Broadening Your Horizons**

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There are many career opportunities in gerontology beyond academia. Perhaps you want to conduct research but do not want to teach or enter the tenure track system. Maybe you are interested in working in a more applied setting. Your skills may be more oriented to consulting or administration. You may be concerned about work life and family life balance and seek a more 9-to-5 type job. For a number of reasons, your career search may lead you beyond the university setting. If so, there are many options available to you given how multi-disciplinary our field of gerontology is.

### **Teaching**

If you want to teach, but want to do so outside of the demands of achieving tenure, you could think about working as an adjunct lecturer to a college or university, at a community college, or at an extension school. Teaching on-line courses is a growing option as well. Within the clinical setting there also exist a number of opportunities for teaching; look for teaching/educational opportunities within medical schools and programs (e.g., nursing, dental, physical therapy, etc.), hospital grand rounds, or clinical research training programs.

### **Research**

You could work within a university as a research associate in an affiliated research or policy institute. The chance to do research as a living also does not have to occur just within a university's walls. Have you considered the plethora of think tanks that specialize in long-term care (e.g., Alliance for Aging Research) or that include long-term care as one of their many topics of interest (e.g., RAND, Mathematica, etc.)?

### **Direct Care**

If you're interested in working directly with elders and their families, you could consider providing medical, nursing, rehabilitation therapies, psychological and social services, hospice care, or case management in a variety of settings. That could include working within home- and community-based services or long-term care facilities. In addition to such clinical work, you could develop enrichment activities for elders in the community (e.g., intergenerational programs). You could also serve as an advisor to elders on their legal, financial, and living arrangements.

### **Non-Profits**

Non-profit groups represent another source of employment for gerontology experts. Locally-based organizations (e.g., Jewish Family & Children's Service) provide an opportunity to provide clinical and social services to the aging and their relatives, training to the direct care workforce, and advocacy for the elderly. Non-profit membership organizations at the national level for elders (e.g., AARP) and for gerontology professionals (e.g., our very own GSA!) employ staff to promote research, education, policy, and advocacy activities.



### **Government Agencies**

You could be an analyst or an administrator within a government agency. By looking at the Administration on Aging website ([www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)), you can find links for relevant national, state, and local agencies. Other federal agencies to consider for employment would be the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institute on Aging, and the Social Security Administration. On the state and local level, departments of aging could allow you to develop, implement, and assess programs and service delivery systems for elders.

### **Business and Industry**

Perhaps you have not yet considered the possibility of working in the for-profit world. You may thrive in a fast-paced environment where innovation is paramount. You may feel the pressures of needing a relatively higher-paying salary. If so, you may entertain the idea of serving as a researcher or consultant on aging issues for a marketing research firm, a management consulting firm, a pharmaceutical company, a health care corporation, or an insurance company.

### **Product Development**

Another interesting avenue would be applying your skills and knowledge to product development for older adults. With a background in architecture, you could help to advance independent living and home-like environments in long-term care institutions. Some of us are trained appropriately to be able to design products for those with disabilities (e.g., assistive devices for low-vision, for reduced hearing, for mobility issues, etc.).

### **Volunteering**

And, of course, advocacy can naturally take place within your personal life, whether you volunteer in some capacity to serve elders or aid aging family and friends. One volunteering option is to become an ombudsperson within a long-term care facility (for more information, please see: <http://www.ltombudsman.org/about-ombudsmen/becoming-a-volunteer-ombudsman>).

Determining which career option is right for you is a process. You will need to know your own strengths and weaknesses and preferred working environment. Obviously, knowing these comes partially from work experience. But there are further steps you can take to learn what kinds of employment match your personal qualities. Beyond doing research on job types on the Internet, you could take a career placement test, conduct informational interviews with individuals who work in fields you are interested in, and even shadow such individuals while they go through their work day. Such homework on your end will pay off by ensuring a good fit between you and your prospective employment environment and by helping you feel more secure in your decision. Then hit the job search engines — GSA's AgeWork ([www.agework.com](http://www.agework.com)) is a great place to start!