How do you know if a career in gerontology is right for you? What opportunities exist in the field? Completely updated to reflect significant changes to policy and management of resources, the second edition of 101 Careers in Gerontology provides a wealth of helpful and timely guidance in this rapidly growing field. Written for all levels of job seekers ranging from community college students to credential-seeking professionals, the book outlines a multitude of opportunities that dovetail with careers ranging from sociologist and home care agency administrator to architect and documentary filmmaker.

Interviews with practitioners provide insight into job particulars and the experience of starting out with a degree versus on-the-job learning. The book describes five emerging gerontology-related fields, updates already existing job profiles including salary scales, and includes many new careers and their education requirements. New interviews are replete with advice and job search tips. Surprising additions to the list of career profiles include financial planner for elders, custom clothier, health coach, social or cultural historian, travel/tourism specialist, senior theater director, and many others. This second edition encompasses career changes and opportunities resulting from the newly created Administration for Community Living, and those influenced by policy changes in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Also new to the second edition are lists of gerontology professional organizations that can be helpful career search resources and links to professional organizations and other websites specific to each career profile.

Changes to the Second Edition Include:

• Many new careers and their education requirements
• Updated job profiles including salary scales
• A description of three types of gerontology career paths and how to prepare for them
• Coverage of such emerging fields as entrepreneurial gerontology, global aging, journalism and aging, and urban gerontology
• Career changes resulting from policy changes in relevant government agencies
• Lists of professional organizations and websites specific to each career profile
• 13 new interviews and 12 interviews updated from first edition
• Information about national, international, and local gerontology organizations including student and new professional member sections
• Updated and expanded glossary of acronyms

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101+ Careers in Gerontology
C. Joanne Grabinski, MA, MA, ABD, FAGHE, was president/educator and consultant for AgeEd (1991–2010) and lecturer, Gerontology Program at Eastern Michigan University (1992–2010). While at Eastern Michigan University, she designed and taught the first Introduction to Careers in Gerontology course in the United States. She also served as the continuing education representative for the Gerontology Program and for the Graduate Certificate Program for two cohorts of students at the Northwestern Michigan College University Center (1993–1997), and served as university liaison for ELDERWISE (Institute for Learning in Retirement) for 18 months. Previously, she was assistant professor and the first director of the Interdisciplinary Gerontology Program (1984–1991) at Central Michigan University, where she also served as director, Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Conditions Caregiver Training Grant Project (1985–1991, 12-county region). Other academic appointments included visiting summer scholar (1998) and visiting adjunct professor, human development: gerontology, at Saint Joseph College in West Hartford, Connecticut (1998–2009) and two 3-year board-approved appointments as adjunct professor, gerontology, at Western Michigan University.

Grabinski earned a BS and did graduate-level coursework in home economics education at Oregon State University, earned MA degrees in educational administration: community leadership and in family relations from Central Michigan University, and completed doctoral work (ABD) in family ecology: adult development and aging, with cognates in gerontology and sociology, at Michigan State University. She has been actively involved in the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), serving on committees for both and as an elected member of the AGHE Executive Committee, and she was a long-standing member of the American Society on Aging (ASA). Grabinski is the recipient of four AGHE honors: Distinguished Teacher (1997), AGHE Fellow in Gerontology and Geriatrics Education (FAGHE, 1999), Part-Time Faculty Certificate of Recognition (2004), and Mildred M. Seltzer Distinguished Service Recognition (2010). She is the author of several book chapters and articles (including book and audiovisual reviews) for professional journals and newsletters. She also coauthored the latest version of AGHE’s Brief Bibliography on Audiovisuals on Aging.
To my husband, Roger, and my son, Larry,
with love through the bumps and
the joys of our journey together.
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In 2007, I was honored with the launch of the first edition of this book at the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) in San Francisco. Now, 7 years later and approximately 2,812 miles away, I will experience the launch of this new second edition at the GSA annual meeting in Washington, DC. While you will find some aspects of the two editions to be similar, this new edition is different in several ways because of the input across those 7 years from gerontology education colleagues, students, and other readers/users of the first edition. Special appreciation goes to Kelly Niles-Yokum and some of her students at York University, who offered very helpful revision ideas, especially about revision and expansion of the interview questionnaire.

So, what is new or different about this second edition of 101+ Careers in Gerontology? Having spent a good portion of the last 7 months sitting in front of computers on behalf of this book, I’m ready to get up and get moving, so let’s take a quick stroll together to find the answers to that question.

In refreshing the Introduction, two new segments were added. The first of these is a brief listing and discussion of some factors that influence the availability of career positions in the field of aging. The second is a brief description of three types of credentials—licensure, certification, and accreditation—commonly found among the career paths that are part of the field of aging, and I am able to share with you some news about the preparation for accreditation currently being undertaken by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), the educational unit of the GSA.

As with the first edition, most of the pages of this edition explore an array of possible career positions and interviews with professionals in some of those positions. I’ve chosen to designate five gerontology-related fields—entrepreneurial gerontology, gerontechnology, global aging, journalism and aging, and urban gerontology—as “emerging fields” with increasing professional visibility, although they are still being defined. Insights into these
emerging fields are offered through interviews with one of the first MetLife Foundation Journalists in Aging Fellows, a doctoral candidate in human computer interactions (a gerontechnology-related degree program), two entrepreneurial gerontologists, and the director of operations for a foundation, a person whose career allows him to practice concurrently in two of these fields—global aging and urban gerontology.

Of the 25 interviews in this edition, 12 offer updates on interviewees from the earlier edition, and 13 are with individuals in career positions that were not represented among the first-edition interviews. These new interviewees include a certified geriatric and consulting pharmacist, a geriatrician, a horticultural therapist, a health system specialist, both a gerontology educator and an educational gerontologist, a traveling occupational therapist, and a music therapist who is the new president-elect of the American Music Therapy Association. All interviews are completely new for this edition, so you will have an opportunity to learn about the career trajectories of those who were interviewed in the first edition and some interesting changes that have occurred.

In the “. . . and More” section, potential positions in 22 different fields add 128 possible career positions for persons with gerontology backgrounds or career interests. All field entries have been updated, and the newest field added is emergency medical services.

“Gerontology and Geriatrics Professional Organizations” is a brand-new section in this edition that includes information about two international organizations, the four key national-level societies/associations (including information about student and new professional member sections), Sigma Phi Omega (national honor society), two regional (multistate) organizations, and state-level associations, societies, and councils that are currently active in 20 states.

The Glossary of Acronyms, both the gerontology-specific and gerontology-related sections, has been updated for accuracy and expanded by many new entries.

Thanks for joining me on the stroll through this new edition, and enjoy using it to explore possibilities and, I hope, to find just the right niche for yourself in this constantly growing and changing professional world in the field of aging.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to:

- Sheri W. Sussman, my editor at Springer Publishing Company, who again wisely guided me through the publication process for this book with your characteristic direct approach, patience, understanding, care, and concern through the bumps along the way. It has been such an unexpected gift to have this second time to work with you.

- Kelly Niles-Yokum for joining me through part of this journey and for helping, directly and indirectly, to make this edition even better for those who will use it, and to your students who offered valuable feedback on the Interview Questionnaire.

- Interviewees, I am honored that you so willingly agreed to share your stories and advice, and I am grateful for your patience as we honed your interviews to allow our readers important glimpses into your various professional worlds.

- Margaret Neal, Tracey Gendron, Ayn Welleford, Julie Brown, Alan De La Torre, and Janet Frank for your assistance in finding excellent interviewees, help in developing some career position profiles, and updating me on the status of AGHE accreditation.

- Colleagues and “bosses” who opened doors for my career as a gerontology educator and program administrator for your confidence in and support of me. Special thanks to Loren Bensley and Bill Theunissen (Central Michigan University), Elizabeth Schuster (Eastern Michigan University), Ellen Page-Robin (Western Michigan University), and Mary Alice Wolf (Saint Joseph College in West Hartford, CT).

- My “three musketeers”—Laurie, Grete, and Dawn—who have been there for me through the challenges that threatened to derail this project and reminded me to keep my “nose to the grindstone” so that I could hurry up and get back to our shared passion for needlepoint. Thank you for the blessing of your friendship.
1 ■ INTRODUCTION

Wanted: gerontology workers, gerontological specialists, and gerontologists for careers now and into the future. Work with, for, and on behalf of the growing population of elders, including centenarians and baby boomers, in a wide variety of settings. Required: training/education in appropriate field and at appropriate level for specific position; specialization in aging studies/gerontology is highly desirable. Ability to rethink one’s concept of old and deconstruct myths about old people and the processes of aging is mandatory. Compensation: income varies by specific type of position held; geographic location of employing agency, facility, or organization; education and experience background of applicant; and willingness to get involved with old people [try it—you might like it!]. Benefits: learn to grow old well yourself as you help to improve the quality of life for others who are aging.

Although this want ad will rarely appear among newspaper classified ads for employment or online career centers/job postings, it does speak to the growing number of career paths available now and in the future for persons interested in working with, for, and on behalf of the fastest growing age segment of the U.S. population. Through the profiles of possible career positions, interviews with professionals in some of these career positions and the “. . . and More” section, this book offers you a taste of the wide variety of career paths in the field of aging and identifies relevant sources to help you explore further those you find intriguing.

WHAT IS GERONTOLOGY?

From an academic perspective, gerontology is the study of the biological, psychological, and sociological aspects of aging. Some recognize gerontology as a discipline or multidisciplinary field of study that draws upon expertise from many disciplines. Others view gerontology as an interdisciplinary field in which two or more disciplines are intertwined to offer more complex insights and understandings about the processes of aging and the elderly population than can be gained through work in just one discipline. Regardless of one’s perspective, the three base disciplines for the field are biology, psychology, and sociology, as is reflected in the design
of gerontology education programs in higher education. Also, the first gerontological researchers emerged out of these disciplines. Over time, more disciplines (e.g., history, anthropology, religion, political science, philosophy) have become involved in gerontology education and research. More recent disciplines to step into the gerontology arena are from the humanities and arts (e.g., literature, language arts, communication, visual arts), as represented by activities of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Humanities and the Arts Committee, including documentary films on aging and discussion with the filmmaker at each annual meeting; the Bo Diddley program track—presentation by and conversation with an elderly blues musician and an evening at a local blues club—at both GSA and American Society on Aging (ASA) annual meetings; and for four volumes (2007 to 2010), publication of the *Journal of Aging, Humanities & the Arts*.

From a professional perspective, medicine, nursing, clinical psychology, and social work were among the first professions to develop aging-specific education and practice orientations to meet the needs of their growing numbers of older adult clients. Today, many other professions—law; occupational, physical, art, and music therapy; home economics/human ecology; nutrition and dietetics; interior design and architecture; business; education; technology and engineering; health administration; and public administration—are entering this realm of research, education, and practice. With this growing interest in aging and the aging/elderly population, gerontology has become the overarching “umbrella” for an ever-expanding number of subfields, including geriatric medicine and dentistry, gerontological social work, gerontological nursing, and professional geropsychology/geriatric psychiatry. Among the newer specializations are educational gerontology, policy and aging, elder law, financial gerontology, geriatric pharmacy, family gerontology, intergenerational studies, and spiritual gerontology. Recently, engineering, technology, and gerontology have merged to create the new field of gerontechnology.

**WHAT CREATED THE INTEREST IN GERONTOLOGY AS A FIELD OF STUDY AND AS A PROFESSION?**

Why this increasing interest in aging research? What has influenced so many disciplinary and professional fields of study to incorporate gerontology as part of their education/training programs? What is behind the growth and diversity of career paths related to aging? It appears that four factors have been of prime importance:
Enactment of aging-specific federal legislation, beginning with the Social Security Act in 1935 and, more significantly, the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 that established what is known as the “formal aging network”—a hierarchical system that includes the Administration on Aging (AoA) at the federal level, state units on aging (such as an Office of Services to the Aging or a Department of Aging), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) at the regional level within states, and direct service agencies (such as county commissions, departments and bureaus on aging) at the county level. With each OAA reauthorization, new types of programs and services are added to meet newly assessed needs of older adults.

Growth in the actual numbers of persons who are 65 years of age and older and in the proportion of the total U.S. population that consists of older adults.

Development of gerontology and geriatrics education programs at institutions of higher education. In 2007, more than 500 institutions of higher education (community colleges, colleges, universities, professional schools) offered degree components (concentrations, specializations, minors, cognates, certificates) or majors and degrees in gerontology (Stepp, 2007). Gerontology educators developed the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) curriculum standards and guidelines for gerontology programs at each academic level and for each type of credential. These standards and guidelines are voluntary and intentionally flexible to allow administrators and faculty on each campus to tailor their programs to fit the uniqueness of their institution’s academic programs, students, culture, and environment. Programs that fulfill the standards (14 so far) are eligible to apply for “Program of Merit” status (AGHE’s stamp of approval). Core courses in the biology, psychology, and sociology of aging and a practicum or field experience are commonly required in formal gerontology education programs. Students also may select gerontology elective courses (e.g., on policy, family relationships, nutrition, religion/spirituality, gender, economics, sexuality, recreation, interior design, humanities and the arts, death and dying) that fit their professional and personal interests.

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1This information was based on programs listed in the 8th edition of the AGHE Directory of Educational Programs in Gerontology and Geriatrics, but because the update and conversion to interactive online access are still underway for the 9th edition, current comparable information is not yet available.
Creation of national-level gerontology professional organizations, including the GSA, American Geriatrics Society (AGS), AGHE, ASA, and National Council on Aging (NCOA). Additionally, several other professional organizations have member sections specific to aging (e.g., the American Psychological Association’s Division 20 on Adult Development and Aging or the American Sociological Association’s Aging and the Life Course section). Two regional and 19 state gerontology organizations are currently active; Texas has three regional-in-state organizations (see later section, “Gerontology and Geriatrics Professional Organizations”).

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AVAILABILITY OF CAREER POSITIONS IN THE FIELD OF AGING

As with any field, careers in aging experience fluctuation in the types of career positions that are available at any given time. Factors that influence position availability include:

- Location: Although research findings indicate a greater density of older adults in rural and inner-city neighborhoods, for example, there are fewer programs and services for older adults in those locations and fewer professional staff members available. In this situation, professional staff members may need to wear multiple professional hats, have a heavier client load, and receive lesser pay and fewer benefits, although some report a higher job satisfaction because they feel they are making a real difference in the lives of their clients.

- Shifting priorities in legislation: This is most obvious in each reauthorization of the OAA. The current reauthorization, which expired in September 2011, is still an open process, partially due to the shifting politics of getting it done. As new initiatives emerge and are prioritized, some existing programs and services are restructured, downsized, or disappear. Some survive, however, by being moved to other governmental departments or integrated into “umbrella” programs that are not aging specific. Although it is not yet clear what the priorities will be when the OAA finally gets reauthorized, some programs and services seem to be emerging as priorities: adult protective services, including elder abuse prevention and consumer protection; mental health care; improving the long-term care ombudsman program; women and retirement; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) aging; and new
demonstration projects related to modernizing senior centers, developing new models of care coordination, and creating a national resource center on family caregiving. While some of these initiatives may not end up in the reauthorized Act, they offer clues as to where there might be new or expanded career opportunities, including entrepreneurial niches, for professionals with aging expertise and experience.

- Greater demand in particular sectors: Health care is definitely a hot career field at this time. There is an increased demand for health care professionals (e.g., geriatricians, gerontological nurses, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, audiologists, ophthalmologists, consulting and geriatric pharmacists, geropsychologists, and geriatric psychiatrists) to respond to the health care needs of older adults, and experts agree that this demand will continue for some time into the future. This increased focus also should expand to other health care career paths and allied health professions that respond to physical and mental health concerns for older adults (e.g., emergency medical services, including paramedics and emergency medical technicians; certified nursing assistants; wellness and fitness educators and trainers; community public and mental health service providers; and occupational, physical, and other types of therapies, such as art, music, and dance).

- The economy: The economy affects both the availability of programs and services for older adults and their ability to utilize the programs and services that are offered. Older adults are more likely to be living on fixed incomes. In a good economy, they are more likely to avail themselves of not only basic needs services but also other programs that support a higher quality of life (e.g., travel, hospitality, entertainment, educational opportunities), and this concurrently creates more opportunities for gerontology specialists and gerontology workers.

- Funding: Certainly, for those who work in government-based organizations, funding of legislated programs and services is critical in relation to job availability and stability at all levels of government, although the impact may be more obvious and more challenging at the local (city or county) level. Full funding of a mandated service can lead, for example, to the hiring of more staff members, lower client loads, and a more positive work environment. Limited funding may mean layoffs, each staff member taking on more job roles/tasks, longer work hours, and increased stress levels. Another way that funding affects career path visibility and support relates to
funding that comes from foundations and other nongovernmental sources. Several foundations, sometimes in collaboration with higher education institutions or professional organizations, support fellowship and other programs that increase the level of accurate aging knowledge for professionals in fields where gerontology most likely was not included in degree programs (e.g., MetLife Foundation’s collaboration with GSA to create the Journalists in Aging Fellows program is increasing the number of journalists/multimedia journalists and documentary filmmakers who focus on aging and GSA’s joint sponsorship with the John A. Hartford Foundation to support the Journalism in Aging & Health Fellows program). This Hartford Foundation also funds several initiatives to increase the size of gerontology- and geriatric-specific workforces in nursing and social work. The Atlantic Philanthropies support a broad and quite diverse array of initiatives specific to aging, including the Lifelong Access Libraries Summer Institute Fellows program and the recently announced Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program. With the increased visibility of aging at the center of grant and fellowship programs funded by foundations, it is likely that there will be some positive spillover to enhance career path opportunities for individuals interested in working with, for, and on behalf of older adults.

- Size of the elderly population: Both the real and the projected growth in the size of the elderly population here and around the world imply a comparable growth in the number and type of aging-related career positions and paths. This newly enlarged population, however, is also a very diverse population and “one size fits all” will no longer suffice, which means there may be a need for creation or replication of programs for specific subgroups (e.g., centenarians, boomers, active agers, frail elders), with one end result being more aging-related jobs.

- Globalization of aging: Working with international organizations and corporations to address the needs and interests of older adults worldwide is among the newest career paths in the field of aging. AGHE’s Global Aging Committee (GAC) is intent on shaping new opportunities for faculty members and students to expand their cross-cultural knowledge base and to be involved in gerontology/geriatrics education and research projects in many other countries. More colleges and universities now offer international courses and service-learning opportunities specific to aging. These efforts potentially will help to create some new global aging career path options.

- Entrepreneurship: With downsizing and funding cuts in many traditional career fields, it appears that the field of aging is especially
intriguing to individuals seeking mid-career changes that will allow them more control over the work they do and a better balance between work and other aspects of their lives. Younger and newer students are being exposed earlier in their degree programs to gerontology as a field of study, especially through volunteer, service-learning, and internship or practicum experiences that allow them to try out one or more possible professional path(s). Don't forget the many retirees, regardless of age, who are not ready to disengage and settle into a more sedate retirement; they are seeking out what is often labeled “encore careers” that allow them to continue working in their lifelong fields but in a different way, or they are doing something entirely different. Mix in expanding attention to “the entrepreneurial spirit” and encouragement to find or create a unique niche. The field of aging is ripe with potential for those who find this an appealing idea.

WHAT IS A GERONTOLOGIST?
Until recently that has been a difficult question to answer. Now, a proposed schema makes it possible to organize those who work with or on behalf of elders into three categories:

- **Gerontology workers** have no formal gerontology education or training even though they work directly with or on behalf of elderly clients or in an aging-specific organization or facility. They may work in paraprofessional roles (such as certified nurse assistants in a nursing home or a receptionist for a county commission on aging) or as professionals who are fully credentialed in fields other than gerontology (such as social workers who are discharge planners in a hospital or a family practice physician whose practice in a rural medical clinic includes many elderly patients).

- **Gerontological specialists** have completed at least one degree in a discipline or professional field that is not gerontology-specific but includes a formal gerontology degree component (e.g., minor, certificate, cognate, or specialization in gerontology), or they obtained specialized postgraduate gerontology training (perhaps through a freestanding credit or noncredit certificate program in gerontology; a profession-specific certification or registration process; continuing education coursework, workshops, or other training programs; or a postdoctoral fellowship) that complements or enhances the field of study in which they received their degree(s). For example, an interior designer–gerontological specialist holds
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a degree with a major in interior design and a minor or cognate in gerontology; a director of an older adult library program has a degree in library science to which gerontology expertise has been added through participation in a summer institute on lifelong libraries or completion of an online certificate in gerontology; and a recreational, occupational, or physical therapist obtains gerontology/geriatric certification according to standards set by relevant professional organizations or their accrediting bodies.

Gerontologists have earned degrees for which gerontology, aging studies, or geriatrics was the primary, not secondary, field of study. This relatively new category of gerontology professionals is the result of an increasing number of degree programs in gerontology, aging studies, or a similarly titled degree label. By 2005, approximately 126 gerontology-specific degree programs were in existence (18 associate, 41 bachelor’s, 58 master’s, and 9 doctoral).²

Currently, it appears that the majority of gerontology-specific and -related paraprofessional and professional positions are held by persons who are either gerontology workers or gerontology specialists. This is changing as more persons complete formal gerontology education, so for the purposes of this book, the career position profiles and interviews focus on professionals who are gerontological specialists or gerontologists. While this delineation of three types of career positions in gerontology is helpful in thinking about where you might fit in this growing professional field, please keep in mind that this schema is not yet commonly used by either educators or employers.

WHAT TYPES OF JOBS ARE AVAILABLE IN GERONTOLOGY?

According to Peterson, Douglass, and Lobenstine Whittington (2004), seven types of job roles exist for gerontological specialists, and this role delineation also works well for gerontologists:

- Advocate
- Direct service provider
- Educator/trainer
- Manager/administrator
- Marketer and product developer

²According to information provided by Derek Stepp, who was AGHE’s executive director in 2007. Updated information will be available in the 9th edition of AGHE’s Directory of Educational Programs in Gerontology and Geriatrics.
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- Program planner and evaluator
- Researcher

Each of these roles is represented among the career position profiles and interviews in this book. Although this listing is not intended to be hierarchical, you may find it useful in prioritizing the type of job roles that do or do not interest you. Keep in mind also that many professionals carry out two or more of these roles, with equal or equitable attention to each, as they fulfill their job responsibilities. Some job roles, such as recruiter and counselor/advisor, are not visible in this listing, so it should not be seen as exhaustive of all job roles that exist or are possible. Finally, in some professional sectors, such as health care, there is a need for professionals with aging expertise and skills specific to each of these job roles.

WHERE DO GERONTOLOGICAL SPECIALISTS AND GERONTOLOGISTS WORK?

The array of specific places where gerontological specialists and gerontologists are employed is too extensive to list here, although it is possible to suggest some of the most common types of work settings:

- Educational settings (public and private): community and junior colleges, 4-year colleges, universities, technical/vocational and professional schools, seminaries; community and professional organizations, programs, and foundations that focus on aging and provide educational programs and services for older adults; adult education and older learner programs; libraries and information centers; employee training/education divisions in industry and corporate settings; patient education services in medical centers/clinics; and community-based agencies related to physical and mental health

- Organizations: professional organization conference management and training programs; chronic disease/disorders organizations, associations, and foundations; race/ethnicity-specific councils on aging; gender-specific organizations and initiatives; membership organizations for older persons

- Medical care, rehabilitation and residential settings: adult day programs, long-term care and assisted living centers; hospitals/medical centers; mental health facilities; Veterans Affairs hospitals; rehabilitation centers; in-home care agencies and services; private practice
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- Residential communities and facilities: retirement communities, including continuing care retirement centers (CCRCs) and other types of senior living residences; kinship care housing centers; corrections facilities; cohousing for elders; age-friendly neighborhoods, communities, and cities
- Religious and spiritual settings: churches, synagogues, mosques; religious retreat centers; interfaith/interdenominational organizations; faith-based outreach programs
- Governmental agencies: county commissions, divisions, or bureaus on aging; AAAs; state aging services offices and departments; federal Administration on Aging; Social Security Administration offices; Medicare and Medicaid service centers and assistance programs; prescription assistance and counseling programs; public health departments; National Institutes of Health, including National Institute on Aging
- Corporate, industry, and business settings: banks, financial planning firms and services; investment firms and brokerages; law firms and legal assistance services; insurance industry; retail stores and chains; restaurant and hotel chains; trade associations and unions; manufacturing firms
- Self-employment, including freelance work and entrepreneurial ventures

As with the listing of job roles, the preceding listing is not exhaustive.

**CREDENTIALING OF GERONTOLOGY PROFESSIONALS**

Credentialing of workers in any field implies that the workers have met certain standards of quality in their preparation to work in the field and offers some sense of safety and security to employers and to those who receive services from the worker. Currently, no credentials are mandated for gerontology workers, specialists, or gerontologists because of the gerontological/geriatric nature of their professional roles. For those who wish to practice under the umbrella of another profession, however, some do need to meet standards and regulations governing those other professions. Three types of credentials are most relevant:

- **Licensure** is most frequently issued by the state government in the state in which the professional or paraprofessional worker wishes to practice and, for some professions and in some states, there is a state board specific to a profession (e.g., audiology, nursing, clinical
psychology) that is the license-granting body. The professions that require licensing are primarily those in which workers will provide direct service to clients. Some national-level professional organizations also grant licensure to qualified members of their profession.

- **Certification** of professionals with an educational background or professional practice orientation to aging and work with older adults is most commonly granted in two ways. The first way is based on completion of a set course of study (e.g., an undergraduate minor in gerontology that is equivalent to certification when it is formally entered on a college transcript or a graduate certificate in gerontology, similarly noted on a transcript but also often accompanied by award of a certificate of achievement). The second way is through successfully passing a certification examination that is administered by a national professional organization once individuals have completed relevant degree work, more often at graduate level. For example, the Certification Board for Music Therapists administers the Board Certification Examination for Music Therapists and grants Music Therapist–Board Certified (MT-BC) credentials to those who pass it.

- **Accreditation** is designed to ensure that an educational program offered by an institution of higher education meets certain standards of quality. It is different from licensure and certification in that it is granted to an institution rather than an individual. While some geriatric medicine programs, including those for geriatric psychiatry, are accredited through the Association Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), no comparable accreditation is available currently for gerontology education programs. AGHE’s Program of Merit (POM) is an effort to indicate a level of quality and professionalism of the gerontology programs that earn this designation, but it is neither an accreditation process nor a formal step on the path toward accreditation. In 2011, AGHE leaders actively started exploring accreditation. As the educational unit of GSA, approval at each step of the accreditation process must come from both the AGHE Executive Committee and the GSA Council. AGHE’s Accreditation Task Force has proposed establishment of the Accreditation for Gerontological Education Council (AGEC) as its accreditation body and prepared a set of gerontology program competencies and standards that are congruent with accreditation processes. In November 2013, the GSA Council approved a
motion in support of AGHE’s development of a programmatic accreditation process for gerontology education programs, with the contingency that AGHE must secure external funding to support the multiyear process necessary to establish the accreditation. As of late March 2014, the competencies and standards were out for review by and input from both AGHE and GSA members. These are early steps in a long and complex process that requires reviews and approvals at many steps along the way, so it is likely to be several years before accreditation for at least some gerontology degree programs (and, perhaps, some certificate programs) is in place.

LET YOUR SEARCH BEGIN

With this information to help you better understand what you find along the way as you explore potential career paths in the field of aging, let your search to find your niche within the field begin. Best wishes and welcome to the exciting, dynamic, and ever-expanding professional world of gerontology!

REFERENCES
