SOCIAL WORK
BSSW PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Southwest Minnesota State University
1501 State Street
Marshall, Minnesota 56258
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Welcome Letter

Dear Student,

Welcome to the Southwest Minnesota State University Social Work Program.

In 1987, the Social Science Department voted to pursue an accredited Social Work Program, and in 1990 a formal proposal was submitted to and approved by both the State University Board and the State's Higher Education Coordinating Board for the Social Work Major. The late Dr. Eric Markussen began the process for accreditation with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the fall of 1990. The Social Work program received its first accreditation in 1996 retroactive to 1992. We successfully reaccredited in 2000, 2008, 2017 and 2025.

As a graduate of our accredited Social Work program, you will meet one of the requirements for social work licensure, which is required to practice Social Work in most settings in Minnesota and throughout the United States. Our graduates are practicing Social Work throughout the southwest Minnesota region as well as the Upper Midwest and across the country.

The SMSU undergraduate Social Work curriculum provides a professional foundation, building a liberal arts base and interdisciplinary coursework. The courses offered by Social Work faculty are designed to introduce generalist skills and knowledge for social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, within a framework of Social Work core values and practice responsibilities. These core values include social justice and client empowerment; generalist practice responsibilities include cultural responsiveness, commitment to professional competence, and the demonstration of practice effectiveness. The required field education component of the program provides options regarding specialization. The program also builds a foundation in which students can pursue graduate education and take advantage of utilizing advanced standing as they graduate from a CSWE accredited bachelor's program.

We have a highly individualized program, and as a result, we get to know students very well and can work with you more effectively to develop the skills and abilities necessary for the beginning Social Work practitioner. We can provide the close contact, individualization, and atmosphere of a small private college program either on the on-campus program or in our fully online program. This handbook is designed to provide you with all the Social Work program information needed as a Social Work Major. We hope that the manual will be of help to you, and we welcome your suggestions as to how the handbook could be improved.

Sincerely,

Amber Kinner-Alahakoon, MSW, LSW (MN)
Assistant Professor
BSSW Program Director

Use of this Handbook

This handbook is intended to familiarize students, faculty, and field instructors with a general introduction to the major, curriculum requirements, and the policies and procedures of the Social Work Program, Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall, Minnesota. This handbook applies to all students in the social work program, online and on campus.

Many of the questions you have regarding the Social Work Program can be answered by reading this handbook. The information is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather it should be used as a reference for basic Social Work Program expectations. Refer to the Southwest Minnesota State University Academic catalog (https://catalog.smsu.edu/) for information regarding SMSU Liberal Education Program, Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, and associated graduation requirements. For further information about university academics information not included in the catalog, services for students, organizations and activities, student rights and responsibilities, student code of conduct, personal safety and security, and university policies and procedures, refer to the SMSU Student Handbook (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/).

All Social Work majors are expected to familiarize themselves with this handbook and to be responsible for relevant academic requirements, policies, and procedures in the Social Work program. Any questions or comments you may have can be directed to your academic faculty advisor.

The information in this handbook is as current as of the date of publication; however, information may be subject to change between editions. Any revisions will take priority over this edition's content and will be given the necessary publicity to acquaint social work students. Notices will be posted and distributed as they occur. It is the responsibility of Social Work students to make notes of such changes.

SMSU Land Acknowledgement Statement

Southwest Minnesota State University sits on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people, collectively known as the Oceti Sakowin, Seven Council Fires. We acknowledge and recognize our sovereign neighbors from the Pezihutaziz Otunwe (Yellow Medicine Village) and Cansayapi Otunwe (Village Where They Mark The Trees Red), and all indigenous people who continue to call this area home. SMSU resides on land ceded by the Dakoda Nation to the United States in the disputed 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux. This land acknowledgement affirms these nations' sovereignty and history, while seeking to hold SMSU accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous people.

SMSU Social Work Program Anti-Racism Statement

The SMSU Social Work Program seeks to produce ethical social work practitioners committee to anti-oppressive practices and the empowerment of all people. As social work educators and advocates, we are determined to educate our students about the oppression that continues to allow racist structures and a culture of white supremacy to permeate our institutions, communities, profession and relationships.

Anti-racism is the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to actively change policies, behaviors and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. Being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life.

We understand that a commitment to anti-racism is not for one moment in time, but rather a journey across our individual and collective lifespans. A commitment to anti-racism requires listening, learning, reflection, discomfort, dialog and action.

We will share our determination to fight for racial equity and justice and invite our communities to join us by:

- Demonstrating social, economic, environmental and racial justice through competent and effective social work education and practice that confronts historical and contemporary injustices
- Acknowledging the existence of racism in the history of our profession and commit to learn from and correct our mistakes
- Exploring and addressing the empathy gap between White social workers and clients of color
- Cultivating an inclusive culture that recruits, supports and retains diverse students, faculty and staff
- Teaching and understanding the history and myths of race, superiority and the creation of differences in society

MISSION STATEMENT,

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

SMSU Social Work Program
Mission Statement

The Southwest Minnesota State University Social Work Program's educational experience prepares professional liberal arts graduates to uphold social work values and ethics to serve, honor, and empower the voices of diverse populations while promoting social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in a continually changing world.

The goal of the program is to prepare students to become culturally competent, ethical social work practitioners in a wide range of settings. The social work program is dedicated to work with vulnerable and marginal populations. It affirms the values of human diversity, self-determination, and social justice. To achieve its goals, the social work program integrates a liberal arts foundation with social work values, skills, and knowledge to prepare students for serves that is reflective, responsible, informed by scholarly knowledge, and responsive to the communities they serve.

SMSU Social Work Program
Goals and Objectives

1. To prepare student for generalist practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities of diverse backgrounds;
    a. Incorporate diversity in practice
    b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and social environment
    c. Respond to contexts that shape practice
    d. Engage, asses, intervene, evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
2. To promote an identification with responsibility to the values and ethics of the social work profession;
    a. Identify with social work profession
    b. Apply ethical principles in practice
    c. Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
3. To prepare students to be lifelong learners in a changing global social and natural environment;
    a. Apply critical thinking in practice
    b. Engage in informed research
    c. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well being

SMSU BSSW PROGRAM

Continuation in the Major

The social work program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education for entry level professional generalist social work practice. The major is also excellent preparation for graduate school in social work and related fields.

The social work program encourages students from diverse populations and backgrounds to consider the major upon admission to the university. To be a part of the major before formal application (described in the section below), students must meet academic expectations and consistently demonstrate standards of professional behavior that are assessed regularly by the social work faculty. A statement of expected professional behavior can be found in social work course syllabi and include the following:

1. Punctual attendance and participation in classes;
2. Respectful interactions with faculty and students;
3. Willing to reflect on interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities;
4. Compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics;
5. As much as possible, participation in the Student Social Work Association (SSAW)

Further expectations for professional and academic conduct can be found on the social work website: https://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/socialwork/index.html

Students who have difficulties meeting these standards will receive a letter from the program director outlining specific issues that need to be addressed. Behaviors that would warrant such a review are based on the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Minnesota Social Work Practice Act. Examples of unprofessional or unethical behavior include impropriety in personal conduct (such as dishonesty or criminal behavior); exploitive relationships (such as sexual relationships or other behaviors pursued for personal advantage, e.g., with practicum clients); and any form of illegal discrimination or discrimination contrary to Southwest Minnesota State University policy.

Formal Admission Criteria to the Major

To be formally accepted as a major in social work, a student needs to have completed or be in the process of finishing required course expectations. Students must achieve a grade of C- or better in required courses. These criteria are the same for on campus, online and/or transfer students.

Application to the Social Work Major Process

Admission to the Social Work program is a competitive, formal application process. Students typically apply during their junior year while enrolled in **SWRK 340: Human Behavior in the Social Environment**, the program's gateway course.

To be eligible to apply, students must:

- Be a currently enrolled SMSU student.
- Be declared as a Social Work major at SMSU.

- Be enrolled in or completing SWRK 340.
- Have taken or be currently enrolled in an Intro to Social Work Course and Interviewing Course.

Applications are accepted:

- **Fall and Spring semesters** for online students.
- **Fall semester only** for on-campus students.

Application deadlines are communicated through **SWRK 340: Human Behavior in the Social Environment** course and it typically assigned in the beginning of the semester.

Important: Social Work Human Behavior in the Social Environment and Social Work practice courses completed at another institution generally is not accepted towards the Social Work major. If a student believes there is a good reason for petitioning a practice course, please speak to your advisor. Ensure you have a copy of the syllabus and a grade of C- or above when reaching out to your advisor. The Program Director has final decision-making authority.

The Social Work Major Application is available on the Social Work Program website.
(Revised 9/14/26)

Selection Procedures

The program's criteria for selection and admission are a demonstration of the following:

1. Intellectual qualities and academic skills needed for education in social work;
2. Students' overall writing abilities;
3. Understanding and commitment to the NASW Code of Ethics;
4. Commitment to improving the quality of like for those facing a variety of individual and social problems;
5. Concern for issues of social justice and sensitivity towards groups that have experienced discrimination; and,
6. Capacity for self-awareness and self-evaluation.

Application materials are reviewed by faculty and scored using a rubric. All applicants are reviewed by the program. If the materials submitted are insufficient for decision-making, additional information may be requested, and/or an interview scheduled. The focus of the interview is on the applicant's knowledge, skills, and values as they pertain to the social work profession and the NASW Code of Ethics. Interviews may be scheduled upon receipt of all the above-listed materials.

Decisions regarding admission will be made by the Program Director and the social work faculty. Applications will receive notice regarding the decision within twenty (20) business days of the end date of the application deadline. Three decision outcomes are possible:

1. Admitted
2. Admitted on a probationary basis

3. Denied admission

Students admitted on a probationary basis are those who have not met the 2.5 cumulative GPA requirement for graduation or within the social work major. The program may also grant probationary admission if specific academic or professional readiness concerns are identified during the application review or interview process. Progress towards meeting these GPA requirements, or any academic or professional goals identified at the time of admission, will be monitored each semester by the advisor and the student. **While students have up to two semesters to meet the 2.5 cumulative GPA standard, any academic or professional goals set at the time of admission must be met within one semester.** Failure to meet these requirements may result in the dismissal of students who were admitted on a probationary basis.

Those denied admission will be informed in writing of the decision, as well as the reasons for the decision. Students may appeal the decision following the appeal procedures located in this student handbook.

Process for the evaluation of applications

The application process for students is:

1. Complete and submit the "Application for Admission to the Social Work Major" form located on the social work program website: https://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/socialwork/index.html
2. Prepare and submit a typed "Personal Statement," using the personal statement instructions in the application. The personal statement should be a serious reflection on the students' thoughts and feeling about being a social work major.
3. Complete and submit a "Release of Information" form regarding the student's academic performance for the purpose of letters of reference/recommendations.
4. Complete and submit the "checklist" of the course requirement for admission on the social work major

All application materials are available on the social work program webpage as well as sent to students via their SMSU email. Students generally will complete the application process when they are taking SWRK 340: Human Behavior in the Social Environment; this is the gateway course to apply to the program.

Students Returning to School after a Break

The SMSU social work program understands that life circumstances may require students to take breaks from their studies. This policy ensures that students are able to return to the program in a structured, supportive manner that allows them to successfully re-engage in their academic requirements. For any questions or assistance, students are encouraged to contact their academic advisor or the program director.

This policy applies to all students who have been formally accepted into the SMSU social work program (see Application to the Social Work Major Process in the Handbook) who have taken a

leave of absence or a break from their studies for one semester or longer. Students returning to the program after a break will:

- undergo a review process, including an interview with faculty advisor and the program director, to assess their readiness to resume studies
- depending on the reason for the break and the student's previous academic performance, readmission may be contingent upon meeting specific conditions, such as completing a certain number of courses, achieving a specific GPA, or addressing any outstanding issues

The program director will relay any conditions as well as expectations to the student in a letter within five business days after the meeting with the student's advisor and program director. Students who are returning to the program are highly encouraged to:

- meet with their faculty advisor before the start of the semester to review their academic progress, discuss course sequencing, and plan for any additional academic or field placement requirements
- students returning after a break are encouraged to take advantage of services through the Deeann Griebel Student Success Center, Mental Health Counseling Center or other student supports through the University

NOTE: Students who take a break from school may experience changes in the normal sequence of courses. This may impact their anticipated program completion date. Advisors will assist students in understanding how their break may affect their ability to complete the program within the expected timeframe.

Requirements for Admission to the Social Work Field Practicum

Students apply for admission to the field practicum during the fall, spring, or summer semesters while enrolled in SWRK 484, Pre-Field Practicum Seminar. The application materials as well as the Field Manual can be found on the program's website:
https://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/socialwork/index.html

For admission to SWRK 499 Field Practicum and SWRK 485 Social Work Field Practicum Seminar (for full-time practicum students) or SWRK 497/498 Field Practicum I and II, and SWRK 487/488 Social Work Field Practicum Seminar I and II (for part-time practicum students) a student must have:

1. Completed, completing or has a plan to complete all required courses for the social work major during the semester or application for field instruction.
2. A minimum cumulative grade of GPA of 2.5;
3. Earned a grade of C- or better in all social work courses required for the major;
4. Demonstrated the values and ethics of the profession, and
5. Students must have completed SWRK 342: Generalist Social Work Practice I and SWRK 343: Generalist Social Work practice II BEFORE they can begin their practicum. Students can be in the process of completing SWRK 344: Generalist Social Work Practice III during their practicum.

Admission to field practicum is the decision of the Director of Field Education. A student will not be admitted to SWRK 499 Field Practicum or SWRK 497/498 without meeting the above academic and professional criteria. Students denied admission will be informed in writing of the decision, and the reason(s) for the decision.

Students who are admitted to field Practicum complete 440 hours of field practicum in an agency. Students concurrently register for SWRK 485 for full-time practicum students and SWRK 487/488 for part-time practicum students. Full-time practicum students complete about 32 hours per week at their practicum agency and part-time practicum students complete about 15 hours per week at their practicum agency.

NOTE: students must have completed SWRK 342: Generalist Social Work Practice I and SWRK 343: Generalist Social Work Practice II BEFORE they can begin their practicum. Students can be in the process of completing SWRK 344: Generalist Social Work Practice III during their practicum.

All students will work with the Director of Field Education on a plan to find a practicum placement that will satisfy the needs of the program as well as be an educational learning opportunity for the student. Students **CANNOT** complete their practicum by doing their current job. Students who are interested in completing their practicum at their place of employment (but not their current role) need to work with the Director of Field Education to ensure learning will take place as part of the practicum experience.

Social Work Major Course Requirements

The social work program's BSSW curriculum is organized around SMSU's Liberal Education Program (LEP), interdisciplinary courses, and professional foundation courses which include content on social work values and ethics, diversity, social and economic justice, populations-at-risk, human behavior and the social environment, social welfare policy, social work practice, research, and field practicum.

Liberal Education Foundation (MnTC) (12 credits)

PHIL 103	Ethics	3
POL 220	American National Government	3
PSYC 101	General Psychology	3
SOCI 101	Introduction to Sociology	3

Interdisciplinary Foundation (16 credits)

INDS XXX	any Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies course	3
PSYC 200	Statistics for the Behavioral sciences	3
PSYC 200L	Stats for Behavioral Sciences Lab	1
PSYC 235	Abnormal Psychology	3
PSYC 260	Developmental Psychology	3
SOCI 315	Applied Social Research	3

Professional Social Work Foundation (24 credits)

SWRK 234	Introduction to Social Work & Social Welfare	3

SWRK 330	Basic Interview Skills	3
SWRK 340	Human Behavior in the Social Environment	3
SWRK 342	Generalist Social Work Practice I	3
SWRK 342	Generalist Social Work Practice II	3
SWRK 344	Generalist Social Work Practice III	3
SWRK 351	Diverse and At-Risk Populations	3
SWRK 402	Social Welfare Policy	3

NOTE: For Social Work Methods Sequence (SWRK 342, SWRK 343, and SWRK 344) admission to the major is required

Field Practicum (13 credits)

SWRK 484	Pre-field Practicum	1
Full-time Practicum Students		
SWRK 485	Social Work Field Seminar	4
SWRK 499	Field Practicum	8
Part-time Practicum Students		
SWRK 487	Social Work Field Seminar I	2
SWRK 488	Social Work Field Seminar II	2
SWRK 497	Field Practicum I	4
SWRK 498	Field Practicum II	4

Transfer Students

Transfer students applying for admission to the SMSU social work program must complete the following process:

1. The Admissions Office makes decisions regarding admission to the University. Transfer credit is evaluated by the Transfer Specialist in the Registration and Records Office. Students will receive confirmations indicating the total number of transfer credits they will be transferring and how these credits apply to the Liberal Education Program (LEP) and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC).
2. The program Director makes any final decisions regarding acceptance of transfer courses in the major.
3. A number of non-social work courses are required for the liberal arts foundation for the major courses that are accepted for transfer credit as core or elective courses will generally be granted credit for the social work program; however, the faculty academic advisor reviews these courses on an induvial basis. In some cases, additional information (such as Couse description, syllabi, texts, etc.) may be required to further assess the course and grant equivalency credit.
4. All social work courses with a grade of C- or better from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education may be applied to the major. Practice courses may be accepted through transfer but are evaluated on an individual basis by the program.

5. Transfer credit is not granted from the Social Work Practicum; the requirement of the practicum experience must be completed through SMSU.
6. Academic credit for life experiments and previous work experience will **not be given**, in whole or in part, in lieu of the field practicum or any of the courses required for the major as stipulated by the Council on Social Work Education. The SMSU social work program does not offer Credit by Examination – Department Credit by Examination (general examination courses equivalencies) for professional foundation courses, credit for prior Learning, nor does it accept CLEP subject examinations as substitutions for professional foundation courses. However, students may test-out for some Liberal Arts Program (LAP) courses if the particular academic unit authorizes such examinations. Professional foundation courses and prerequisite courses taken over seven years ago are not generally accepted in transfer to meet social work major course requirements but students with this situation should contact their faculty academic advisor.
7. In addition to the above criteria, students transferring credits from international institutions have their courses evaluated by the Registration and Records Office. There are special circumstances that involve international students, who have already completed some courses or a 3-year degree abroad in social work (usually around 90 credits hours) but needs a 4-year degree for graduate social work study in the United States. In such cases, the SMSU social work program strongly advises the student to complete the international Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service (ISWDEWS) procedures offered via the Council on Social Work Education's website: http://www.cswe.org/accreditation/scopeandservices/international-degree-review/

SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Student Social Work Association

The Student Social Work Association (SSWA), or Social Work Club, was established in 1992, and is an organization for all students interested in the field of social work. All social work majors, on campus and online, are automatically members of the SSWA. Members are encouraged to be active participants in campus and community activities.

This association offers peer support, community service activities, educational programs, fundraising events, teaching, and academic advising. All students are invited to observe and evaluate presentations by potential social work faculty. These experiences form a base for entering into the professional field of social work.

All are encouraged to join. The SSWA clubroom is located in Charter Hall (CH) 110. It is a gathering center for study groups, meeting and making friends. All social work students receive invitations to events and meetings though the year.

Student Advisory Council

The social work program's Student Advisory Council (SAC) was established in 2001, and it comprised of two students: the president of SSWA and a student elected from the social work majors at large. Both members of the SAC are open to any social work major, regardless of academic year, program option, or other standing within the university. SAC members act as formal liaisons between the students and the program faculty; the purpose of the SAC is to provide a formal means for students to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs as well as improving the explicit curriculum within the program and advising. The SAC provides planned and ad hoc exchanges between social work students and the social work program. While advisory in nature, SAC input is used by the program for purposes of program review and evaluation and the modification or program policy, curriculum, and goals and objectives. The primary concerns and activities of SAC are to:

- Review social work program assessment data;
- Review and make recommendations to the social work program relative to program policy;
- Review and make recommendations to the social work program relative to program curriculum;
- Review and make recommendations to the social work program relative to program goals and objectives;
- Maintain healthy social work student – faculty relations;
- identify and make recommendations on University-wide issues that directly affect social work students;
- Provide support to SSWA; and
- Identify and make recommendations on other issues and concerns that are deemed appropriate by social work students and faculty.

Issues of concern and suggested recommendations may be discussed during SSWA executive or regular membership meeting – in the absence of the social work advisor. The SAC

representatives can, then, bring forth these concerns or suggestions to the social work Program Director for further deliberation and decision-making.

National Association of Social Workers

Students may join the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as a student member at a reduced rate. Application forms are available at www.socialworkers.org

Student Governance

Social work students are encouraged to participate in university government activities and to play an active role on its various committees. The SMSU Student Association is the student organization recognized to represent the interests of the student body in the University's governance structure and is the communications vehicle to convey student views to the University administration relative to policy decisions (Student Senate) and educational programs and activities (Student Activities Committee). The Student Association is also comprised of a Public Relations Committee that works with community projects such as the Red Cross Blood Drive and the Student Judicial Board (a major component of the University Community Expectations program).

Participation in student government is an opportunity to represent social work students and social work interests on campus. Refer to the SMSU Student Handbook for information on how to get involved or call 507–537–6140.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Ethical Social Work Practice and Undergraduate Academy

Each year the question arises: What is the responsibility of the social worker as faculty in the academy of professional gatekeeping? As in any professional area of practice, and the academy is one of those areas, the question is raised as to whom do we serve? Is it the profession of social work? Is it the academy? Is it the academy and its emphasis on retention of students, or is it the profession? And when is it inappropriate to retain a student enrolled in a social work program that is unable or unwilling to conduct them self according to the ethical standards of practice by the profession?

The literature is quite clear on a social work program's responsibility to gatekeep, and that is to ensure that students who graduate have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for beginning social work practice; can demonstrate the values of the social work profession; as well as demonstrate self-awareness, maturity, and responsibility. These professional values are codified in the National Association Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Social work practice is as much an expression of values and ethics as it is of knowledge and skills. Values and ethics must not be separated from our practice models, professional behavior, and academic performance standards in social work education.

All SMSU social work majors are expected to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics, and students admitted to the program sign a pledge to conduct themselves according to the Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics can be found at: https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

Social Work Program Policy on Expected Academic Behavior

The following is a summary of expected classroom behavior, both in person and online. The full policy can be found at: https://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/socialwork/index.html. Click on "Resources/Links."

CLASS ATTENDANCE: Students are responsible for arriving to class on time and for communicating ahead of time (whenever possible) if they expect to be late. Online students are expected to be active in their D2L classroom and respond to all assignments and posts in a timely manner.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: Students are expected to avoid all side conversations –either in sign, pass notes, wireless communication devices, or voice. Virtual classrooms and live zoom sessions also have the same expectation of professionalism when working with other students and faculty.

ELECTONIC DEVICES: Students are responsible for deactivating all cell phones or other wireless communication devices during class. Students are expected not to have any technology that will distract them from the course content (ear buds, headphones, etc.) **Students are not allowed to record other students, faculty, or the course content without the instructor's permission.**

E-MAIL: Students will be expected to use and maintain their free SMSU e-mail address. **Students are expected to check their SMSU email regularly, as this is the only way for faculty to contact students.**

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES: Assignments are due as outlined in the course syllabus. No extensions or changes to assignments or test due dates will happen unless agreed upon by the course instructor. If extensions are given, students are expected to complete all work by the new due date.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE: All large language models (such as ChatGPT, Claude and Copilot) still tend to make up facts and fake citations. Artificial intelligence models tend to produce inaccurate outputs and image generators can occasionally produce highly offensive products. Students are responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, or otherwise unethical content you submit regardless of whatever it originally comes from you or an AI tool.

Generally, in the social work program, all work submitted must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else, including AI sources, must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used. Failure to do so violates SMSU's Academic Honesty Policy. Each course and instructor may have other information on use of AI tools for a specific assignment or course. Students are responsible for clarifying this information with a course instructor.

FINALS WEEK: Students are expected to be available through the last day of final exam week.

There are many other issues (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, violence, harassment) that are covered in the SMSU student handbook. Students are expected to be familiar with the handbook and/or have a copy available for reference.

Guidelines for Termination for Academic and Professional Reasons

The social work program recognizes that there may be mitigating circumstances which influence a student's ability to function satisfactorily as it relates to likely performance as a social work practitioner. In such cases, at the request of a student, faculty field liaison, field instructor, or faculty members, the social work program will review the student's status and act regarding continuance in the program. This could include, for example, a recommendation for study skills development or referral to other resources for resolving academic or personal problems. Knowledge, skills, and value expectations are all important in a professional program as they relate to a student's likely performance as a social work practitioner.

A student in the social work major is expected to maintain the standards established by the social work program regarding continuation in the major. Under ordinary circumstances, failure to meet the standards established by the social work program shall result in discontinuance from the major. Many aspects of a student's performance, including non-academic problems, are reviewed when a decision is made to recommend discontinuance. Discontinuance can occur during any period of registration in the major.

Social workers frequently work with individuals having various personal and emotional difficulties. The demands of the social work role require that students have the emotional, psychological, and intellectual resources to render effective assistance to those in need. The social Work student will be evaluated not only academic, but also on professional attitudes, skills, and behaviors based on the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers and the Minnesota Social Work Practice Act, Social Work Laws, and Rules, 148B.26 (https://www.mn.gov/boards/social-work/lawsandregulations/). All students will be held to this standard regardless of where they live while in the program.

The Code of Ethics has placed further responsibility on social work programs to ensure that social work graduates are able to engage themselves with their clients in the practice of social work. Specifically, 4. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibly as Professionals: 4.05 Impairment states:

a) "Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility."

b) "Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others."

The social work graduate is a professional prepared to work with people in a variety of human service settings. Therefore, the social work program has established academic and professional performance expectations. Failure to meet academic requirements or to demonstrate professional conduct and relationship skills and behavior consistent with the values and ethics of the profession can result in discontinuance in the social work major.

Final authority regarding student continuation in the program rests with the program Director of the social work Program. Social work faculty will meet to discuss and review the issue, and this information is held in confidence until the final decision is made known to the student.

Academic Criteria for Discontinuance in the Social Work Major

Students are in academic difficulty if their grade point average drops below 2.5 upon completion of one-half the total credits required in the major. Students may be advised to withdraw from the major if their cumulative grade point average falls to 2.5. The social work faculty reviews criteria 1, 2, and 3 at the time of application to the social work major:

1. Grade point average overall of 2.5 for all courses completed in the last seven years.
2. Grade point average overall of 2.5 for all courses required for the social work major.
3. Students must demonstrate competency in knowledge and understanding of social work theory, ethics and methods prior to admission to the field instruction course which is taken in the senior year.

Other Reasons for Discontinuance

While there are no rigid guidelines for assessing a student's lack of professional development and/or self-awareness which could result in a recommendation for discontinuance from the major, some of the examples of behavior which the social work program reviews and evaluates in this process are the following:

- Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Ability to relate to people with warmth and empathy, communicating feelings appropriately.
- Capacity for an accepting attitude towards one's total self, including responsibility for meeting one's physical and emotional needs.
- Openness to change in oneself and others.
- Recognition of the essential worth and dignity of all human beings.
- Ability to respect and work with different people (race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion/spiritual beliefs, gender, value system, disability, or political affiliation).
- Ability to identify personal strengths, limitations, and motivations, especially as related to a decision to work with people.
- Ability to express thoughts with clarity in both written and oral form.
- Ability to ensure that one's personal, religious, sexual, and political preferences are not imposed on clients.

Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity, or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, inappropriate or disruptive behavior towards colleagues, faculty, or staff (at school or field placement) can result in discontinuance from the social work major.

Discontinuance from Field Instruction

All students receive adequate information about ethical and legal boundaries related to practice prior to entering Field Practicum. Violation of these boundaries results in immediate discontinuance from Field Practicum:

1. Substantiated complaints in either of the following areas will result in immediate suspension from field instruction:
    a. Violation of clients or agency confidentiality.
    b. Violation of professional relationship boundaries including physical contact with clients, harassment, or dual relationships.
2. Substantiated complaints in either of the following areas will result in immediate suspension from field instruction:
    a. Evidence of current drug abuse including alcohol.
    b. Evidence of mental/emotional instability which, in the judgment of the Field Supervisor/Instructor and Director of Field Education, jeopardizes client's interests.
3. Substantiated complaints in either of the following areas will result in immediate expulsion from field instruction and termination from the social work program:
    a. Evidence of sexual activity or sexual contact with client, or with client's relatives.

b. Felony charges that reflect personal behaviors incompatible with expected behaviors or ethics of professional social workers.

Flagrant documented violation of the NASW Code of Ethics will result in termination from the Social Work Program.

Decisions made to discontinue an individual from field instruction have a profound effect on a person's future career; therefore, these decisions are not made based on allegations or unverified circumstance. In any situation of potential discontinuance for professional reasons, there must be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as verification that the social work program and field instructor have discussed these with the student and attempted to better the issues.

Refer to the additional information on unprofessional conduct that is grounds for disciplinary and corrective action in the Minnesota Social Work Practice Act.

Faculty/Student Reconsideration Plan

In the event that a student demonstrates emotional or mental instability, inadequate communication skills, insufficient academic ability, lacks the level of self-awareness necessary to pursue a social work career, or is suspended from Field Instruction, the following process will ensure:

1. Social work faculty will document reason for concern.
2. Social work faculty will meet with the student and discuss how the skills or behaviors demonstrating a concern are negatively affecting the student's progress in the social work program. The faculty team, with the student's input, will recommend a plan to improve skills and/or behaviors. If the student refuses the reconsideration proposal, the faculty will document and remind the student that:
    a. Continuation in the social work program is dependent upon the previous academic and behavioral performance;
    b. The student is responsible for meeting the academic, attitudinal, and behavioral standards of the social work program and;
    c. Failure of the student to meet the program standards will result in discontinuance in the social work major.
3. If the student accepts the reconsideration proposal, a written contract with completion date will be signed by the student and the faculty team. The completion date may be renegotiated.
4. The reconsideration contract will be a part of the student's social work program file, unless the student requests in writing that the plan to be confidential; then the plan will be kept separate from the student's social work program file. (See the discussion of Confidentiality of Records below.)
5. Continuation in the social work major is dependent upon completion of the reconsideration plan. In some cases, students will continue course work; in other cases, students will interrupt their progress and courses and/or field instruction pending completion of the reconsideration plan. An example might be if a student exhibits unstable and unreliable behaviors in a class and a plan is developed to regain stability, the student delays completing major coursework and/or field instruction.

6. The social work faculty and students will evaluate if the reconsideration plan objectives have been met in a timely fashion. The faculty may recommend the following options:
    a. Continuation of the reconsideration plan of a specific period of time with expected outcomes written into an amended reconsideration plan;
    b. Successful completion of plan, with recommendation that the student continue course and practicum requirements towards graduation; or
    c. Documented failure to meet the objectives of the plan and dismissal from the social work program and major.

The faculty will inform the student of their right to appeal any social work program actions to institution.

Confidentiality of Records

All written deliberations shall be considered confidential and placed in the student's program file in the social work office unless the student requests otherwise. All materials submitted by students who are denied admission, withdrawn, or are dismissed from the program are placed in the program file and will be kept for one year and then destroyed. Faculty members may retain copies of letters and memoranda written in the course of their interactions with students.

Right of Appeal

Applicants to the social work program who are denied admission or are suspended, discontinued, or terminated from the program will have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal and grievance procedures are specified in the SMSU Student Handbook.

Procedures of Adjudication of Grievances of Appeals

(**NOTE**: The SMSU catalog and the SMSU Student Handbook contain discussions of the various committees in the University that have been established to review student appeals concerning academic or disciplinary decisions, including grades.)

Students who believe that their rights have been violated or denied, who desire to appeals a decision by social work faculty, or who desire to appeal a decision for denial of admission to the social work program or suspensions/dismissal from the social work program:

1. The student may appeal the decision in writing by sending a written request for reconsideration to the social work Program Director within (ten) 10 business days of the decision. The written appeal must specify the basis for the appeal.
2. The written appeal will be reviewed by all social work program faculty, and the student will be given an opportunity to orally present their case in a hearing before all the social work faculty.
3. The student will be notified in writing of the faculty's decision within (ten) 10 business days of written notification of the appeal.
4. If the student remains dissatisfied with the decision, the student has the right to take the appeal to appropriate individuals and committees, as specified in the SMSU catalog, and in the SMSU Student Handbook, in the sections regarding student appeals.

Inclusive Non-Sexist Language

In keeping with the commitment to nondiscrimination, the social work program expects that in written and spoken communication all faculty members and students will use non-sexist, inclusive language, unless the gender is relevant to the focus and intent of the communication. Attention should be given to this policy for all levels of communication, including writing assignments and oral presentations in classes.

Academic Advising

All declared and admitted social work majors are assigned a social work faculty advisor. You may request any of the social work faculty to serve as your advisor. If you wish to change advisors, an advisor change form is available in the student's eservices.

Advising is mandatory prior to each semester's registration. The dates and time periods for advising are noted on the SMSU Academic Calendar, and students are expected to plan ahead in order to avoid scheduling confects with these advising sessions.

The advisor assists students with curriculum and schedule planning as long as the student is a declared social work major and/or has completed the formal social work admission's process. Each semester, the advisor reviews and approves the student's courses during the registration process, providing advisees with their unique registration access codes. It is the advisor's responsibility to:

1. Assist the student with course selection and schedule planning;
2. Assist students with career planning, including such issues as graduate school, volunteering, field placement setting preferences, resume preparation and employment;
3. Communicate information about employment and graduate education opportunities to students.

Professional Advising

All social work faculty also conduct professional advising for all social work students. This may happen as part of the student's academic advising, during class or outside of class times throughout the student's time at SMSU. Professional advising also occurs often during field seminar courses when students are in their practicum. Professional advising is focused on post-graduation preparation for students to provide an understanding of employment, further education, supervisor for licensure and other important issues that students may face in the field.

Grading

Students have the right to know the objectives of a course in which they are enrolled and the criteria that will be used in evaluating performance in a course. There will be a clear statement of grading criteria on all syllabi for the courses taught by social work faculty. A student may initiate a grade appeal if they have grounds to believe that:

1. The course objectives were significantly changed in a manner so as to create unfair treatment; or

2. The criteria for evaluations were significantly changed in a manner so as to create unfair treatment; or
3. Evaluation was arbitrary or capricious.

If a student had grounds to appeal for a grade, they should present their case to the faculty member who awarded the grade. If the meeting of the faculty member and student fails to resolve the student's complaint, they may appeal to Academic Appeals Committee. Please refer to the SMSU Student handbook, under grade appeals, for further instructions on completing a Student Grade Appeal Form.

Student Files

Students have two electronic files maintained by the Social Work program. The Social Sciences Administrative Assistant maintains the electronic admission application to the program. Field education–related documents are maintained in Lumivero. Additional records relevant to the student's educational career may also be maintained as required. These files are maintained by the social work faculty or appropriate staff. Student workers are not allowed to access these files.

A student had the right to review their own file, in accordance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. A student may review their file with a social work advisor. They may use the grievance process as stated in the SMSU Social Work Student Handbook Procedures for Adjudication of Student Grievance or Appeals to remove any inaccurate material from the file.

Standards of Performance and Progress

The SMSU social work program defines good academic standing as a student who maintains a minimum grade point average of 2.50 (on a 4.0 scale).

A student who receives an incomplete or in progress in any course in the social work major must complete the course before the end of the next semester in which they are enrolled. If course requirements are not completed by that time, the "I" or "IP" will be changed to an "F" if graded the A-F system or to an "NC" if graded on the Credit/No Credit system. The instructor may extend the "I" grade for one semester.

A social work major must be a student in good academic standing, have completed all courses required in the social work major and have applied for admission to field instruction in SWRK 484 Pre-Field Practicum Seminar before beginning SWRK 499 if a full-time practicum is being completed or SWRK 497/498 if a part-time practicum is being completed.

Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F or NC for the entire course. Information on academic dishonesty can be found in the SMSU Student Handbook and in SMSU Policy A-032.

As stated in the policy "Guidelines for Termination for Academic and Professional Reasons," a student in the social work program is expected to exhibit the following behaviors:

- Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.

- Ability to relate to people with warmth and empathy, communicating feelings appropriately.
- Capacity for an accepting attitude towards one's total self, including responsibility for meeting one's physical and emotional needs.
- Openness to change in oneself and others.
- Recognition of the essential worth and dignity of all human beings.
- Ability to respect and work with differences in people (race, class, culture, ethnicity sexual orientation, religion/spiritual beliefs, gender value system, disability, or political affiliation).
- Ability to develop self-confidence and initiative in working with people.
- Ability to identify personal strengths, limitations, and motivations, especially as related to a decision to work with people.
- Ability to express thoughts with clarity in both written and oral form.
- Ability to ensure that one's own personal, religious, sexual, and political preferences are not imposed on clients.
- Ability to use sound judgement, for example to seek help for medical, emotional, or alcohol/ chemical use problems.
- Conformance with the SMSU Student Code of Conduct, including plagiarism and cheating on examinations.

Written Class Assignments

The ability to communicate effectively in writing is essential to professional social work practice. The social work program expects and requires papers, and other written class assignments, to be in good English and conform to accepted rules and conventions of good writing. Students should know and are expected to use APA formatting for all social work papers, unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

Poor writing detracts from the quality of a paper, even though a student may have mastered the subject matter. If the paper contains misspelled words, errors in grammar and improper documentation, or if the paper is poorly prepared, the student's performance suffers accordingly. Professional effectiveness may also be adversely affected by poor writing because professional social workers are constantly communicating in writing through case records, reports, and letters to clients, supervisors, administrators, and other staff, legislators and other members of the community. Although individual instructors may establish more specific guidelines and requirements, in general the following rules or format should be followed:

- Written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 8 ½ x 11 paper, with one-inch margins
- Papers should be headed by a title, should be properly documented and, where appropriate, must include section and subsection headings and/or a reference list
- Papers should be carefully proofread to correct misspellings, errors in grammar and punctuation, and confusing sentences

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of words, thoughts, and ideas of someone else as your own, such misrepresentations of words thoughts, and ideas constitutes a form of theft. It is viewed by the social work program faculty as a major violation of ethical social work practice. Students found involved in plagiarism face the following possible penalties depending on the faculty member's perception of seriousness of the problem:

- Failure in the course
- Petition to remove that student from the program
- suspension from the University (see SMSU Student Handbook)

Artificial Intelligence Use

All large language models (such as ChatGPT, Claude and Copilot) still tend to makeup facts and fake citations. Artificial intelligence models tend to produce inaccurate outputs and image generators can occasionally produce highly offensive products. Students are responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, or otherwise unethical content you submit regardless of whether it originally comes for you or an AI tool.

SMSU Code of Conduct

Social work students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the university's policies governing student behavior.

Non-Discrimination in Employment & Educational Opportunity

The Minnesota State College and Universities Board of Trustees' 1B.1 Nondiscrimination in Employment and Educational Opportunity Policy states: "No person shall be discriminated against in the terms and conditions of employment, personal practices, or access to and participation in, programs, services, and activities with regard to race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regards to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission as defined by law." The Minnesota State College and Universities Board of Trustees' 1B.1.1 Report/ Complaint of Discrimination/harassment procedure is available to all members of Southwest Minnesota State University.

Inquiries regarding the compliance may be directed to the Affirmative Action Officer, BA 257, Southwest Minnesota State University, 1501 State Street, Marshall, MN 56258, (507) 537-7500.

Social Work Pre-Field Practicum Policy

Course Requirement

The Pre-Field Practicum is a prerequisite course that must be successfully completed in the semester immediately preceding the social work internship. It is designed to prepare students for placement by engaging them in the process of securing and preparing for their internship experience and have all completed documents uploaded to the SW Field Portfolio.

Communication and Engagement Expectations

To ensure a successful placement process, students enrolled in the Pre-Field Practicum course are required to:

1. Maintain Regular Communication
    a. Respond promptly to all emails and communications from the Director or Field Education
    b. Check university email at least three times per week during the semester
2. Actively Participate in Placement Preparation
    a. Engage in all steps of the placement process, including submitting required documents, attending online synchronous meetings, and participating in interviews or site visits as scheduled.
    b. Collaborate with the Director of Field Education to identify and secure an appropriate internship site
    c. Submit and upload all required documents

Non-Compliance

Failure to maintain communication or engage in the placement process will result in administrative action.

Lack of Response:

- If a student fails to respond to communications from the Director of Field Education within seven (7) calendar days, they will receive a written warning by email to the students SMSU email account

Continued Non-Engagement:

- If the student does not respond or engage after the warning, they will be dropped from the Pre-Field Practicum course and required to re-enroll in the following semester

Field Experience Delay

If a student delays starting their field experience for one semester (either spring or fall) after completing the pre-field practicum, they will be required to alert the Director of Field Education when the student is ready to begin searching for a placement. **It is the student's responsibility to contact the Director of Field Education when they are ready to return to school and begin searching for placement.**

Appeals Process

Students who are dropped from the course may submit a written appeal to the Director of Field Education within five (5) business days of notification. Appeals will be reviewed by the social work program committee.

SMSU Remote/Virtual Practicum Placement Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines expectations for students participating in remote or virtual practicum placements. While in-person placements are preferred, remote options may be available to support flexible learning and service delivery.

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for a remote practicum, students must:

- Demonstrate independent learning and time management skills
- Have prior experience in social work or a related field
- Be proficient with technology (e.g., Zoom, case management software)
- Have reliable high-speed internet access
- Show professionalism and ethical decision-making
- Limit to one fully virtual practicum
- Complete the self-assessment and review your score with the Director of Field Education

Placement Formats

Virtual placements are not guaranteed. The Director of Field Education will assist in evaluating and setting up appropriate virtual sites.

Student Responsibilities

- Meet all CSWE competencies and learning goals
- Follow NASW Code of Ethics and confidentiality standards
- Communicate regularly with supervisors
- Use digital tools effectively for client work and supervision
- Attend required trainings
- Maintain a private, professional workspace

Supervision & Support

- Clear onboarding and training
- Weekly supervision plans
- Systems for tracking hours and communication
- Opportunities to engage with agency staff
- Emergency support procedures

Evaluation Criteria

- Competency achievement
- Professional behavior
- Engagement in remote practice
- Supervisor feedback and self-assessments

NOTE: Remote placements offer flexibility but require strong self-motivation, tech skills, and ethical practice. Students must be prepared to meet high standards in virtual environments.

APPENDICES

Social Work Licensure
Minnesota Statues 2005, Chapter 148D

The Minnesota Social Work Practice Act is the law enacted by the Minnesota Legislature which governs the licensure and regulation of social workers in the State of Minnesota. The regulations prohibit practicing social work, and the use of a title incorporating words social work or social workers unless the individual holds either a temporary permit or a license as a licensed social worker. A BSSW student from an accredited social work program is eligible to complete an application to the Board of Social Work within six months of graduation, and upon approval, schedule the examination.

The Minnesota Social Work Practice Act defines the practice of social work as:
"practice of social work" means working to maintain, restore, or improve behavioral, cognitive, emotional, mental, or social functioning of clients, in a manner that applies accepted professional social work knowledge, skills, and values, including the person-in-environments perspective, by providing in person or through telephone, video conferencing, or electronic means one or more of the social work services described in clauses (1) to (3). Social work services may address conditions include, but are not limited to, the following: abuse, and neglect of children or vulnerable adults, addictions, developmental disorders, disabilities, discrimination, illness, injuries, poverty, and trauma. Social work services include:

1. Providing assessment and intervention through direct contact with clients, developing a plan based on information from an assessment, and providing services which include, but not limited to assessment, case management, client-centered, advocacy, client education, consultation, counseling, crisis intervention, and referral;
2. Providing for the direct or indirect benefits of clients through administrative, educational, policy, or research services including, but not limited to:
    i. Advocating for policies, programs, or services to improve the well-being of clients;
    ii. Conducting research related to social work services;
    iii. Developing and administering programs which provide social work services;
    iv. Engaging in community organization to address problems through planned collective action;
    v. Supervising individuals who provide social service to clients;
    vi. Supervising social workers in order to comply with supervised practice requirements specified in sections 148D.100 to 148D.125; and
    vii. Engaging in clinical practice.

For further information contact:
Minnesota Board of Social Work
335 Randolph Avenue, Suite 245
St, Paul, MN 55102-5502
https://mn.gov/boards/social-work/
(612) 617-2100 or social.work@state.mn.us

NASW

CODE OF ETHICS

Code of Ethics

Of the National Association of Social Workers

https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

National Association of Social Workers
750 First Street NE, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20002
www.socialworkers.org

APPLICATION TO THE MAJOR

Application to the Social Work Major

https://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/socialwork/index.html