

# Program Description

The Department of Social Work offers graduate study courses leading to the Degree of Masters of Social Work (MSW). The program is designed to prepare students for a career in the field of social work—a growing profession with extensive opportunities for employment. Social workers have over a hundred years of history of working with oppressed and vulnerable populations. As we continue into the 21st century, social workers will maintain their key role as change agents assisting those in need to meet the challenges of living in an increasingly complex multicultural and multiracial society.

The MSW Program admits students only in the Fall Quarter. Two concentrations of study are offered: Children, Youth and Family Services (CYF) and Community Mental Health Services (CMH).

## Children, Youth and Families Concentration

### **Purpose:**

Our CYF concentration prepares students for practice with children, youth and families facing barriers in diverse urban communities. The concentration examines these barriers that result from social disparities in health, mental health, education, & public safety. Students will develop skills for helping clients reduce and overcome these barriers in their families, communities and institutions.

CYF students develop an understanding of how child development and family functioning may be impacted by multiple issues including poverty, social injustice, unemployment, mental illness, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, community violence, substance abuse, immigration issues, or grief and loss. Students are asked to apply evidence-based practices to identify and apply empirically sound approaches to bringing about the desired change at the individual, family, community, or policy levels.

Some of our CYF students are preparing to work in the field of child welfare. By its broadest definition, child welfare is the set of public and private agencies that provide and advocate for social services to children and their families. It is a continuum of services designed to ensure that children are safe and that families have the necessary support to successfully care for their children. Although it is often assumed to refer primarily to child protective services (CPS), the domain of child welfare also includes policy, day care and foster home licensing, parenting classes, and coordination of behavioral health services. Child welfare agencies typically:

- Support or coordinate services to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Provide services to families that need help protecting and caring for their children
- Receive and investigate reports of possible child abuse and neglect; assess child and family needs, strengths, and resources
- Arrange for children to live with kin (i.e., relatives) or with foster families when safety cannot be ensured at home
- Support the well-being of children living with relatives or foster families, including ensuring that their educational needs are addressed

- Work with the children, youth, and families to achieve family reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children and youth leaving foster care

### **Learning Areas & Curriculum:**

The concentration exposes students to a framework of knowledge, values and skills to prepare for generalist practice with children, youth, multigenerational families, including aging adults. CYF focuses on advocacy, prevention, crisis intervention, treatment, and/or case management for children, youth, and families, in a variety of systems including public child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and behavioral health.

The curriculum builds competency in child welfare, as well as general practice with individuals, families and communities. The program blends theory with best practice and emphasizes core social work values as the bridge between the two. CYF students are prepared to work in a wide range of settings including child welfare and other public institutions, educational & health settings, non-profit & community based organizations, and public policy and government.

## **Community Mental Health Concentration**

### **Purpose:**

The CMH concentration prepares students to work in community health and mental health agencies with consumers across the lifespan. Consumers of mental health services include children, adolescents, adults, and older adults. Students will learn to operate within a recovery, wellness and consumer empowerment framework, engage in collaboration with inter-disciplinary teams, advocate for access to quality mental health services, offer crisis intervention services, and provide care coordination with individuals who have or are at risk of having mental health conditions.

Most of our CMH students are preparing to work in the field of public mental health. By its broadest definition, public mental health is the set of government and private agencies that provide and advocate for services to children, adults, and older adults who have a diagnosed mental health condition, or are at risk of developing a mental health condition. These services are typically provided to people who meet certain eligibility criteria, including income restrictions and/or functional impairments. Although it is often assumed to refer primarily to individual psychotherapy, the domain of public mental health also includes work at the family, group, organizational, community, and policy levels. Public mental health agencies typically:

- Offer a range of services that may include, but is not limited to, short- and long-term clinical case coordination, evidence-based therapeutic services, medication management, financial management, vocational counseling, and/or housing support to children, adults, and older adults who meet eligibility criteria
- Coordinate care across multiple social service systems and with the natural supports in the individual's life
- Meet with consumers and their families in office and/or community-based settings, depending on the needs of the consumer and focus of the agency.
- Partner with consumers and their families to assist consumers in achieving their self-identified goals, which may include working, volunteering, living independently or with family in the community, building a strong network of social support, and/or developing skills for coping with symptoms of a mental health condition.

### **Learning Areas & Curriculum:**

Students enrolled in this concentration will take a set of courses and a supporting field placement in their second or advanced year of study that focus specifically on community mental health. Learning during this advanced year will be focused on applying culturally responsive evidence-based practices. Some of the evidence-based practices students learn include cognitive behavioral theory, motivational interviewing and dialectical behavioral therapy. CMH students are prepared to work in a wide range of settings, including community mental health clinics, psychiatric hospitals, day treatment programs, community-based health and educational settings, substance abuse treatment facilities, specialized nursing care facilities for individuals with chronic illness, supportive services for older adults, and intensive rehabilitation and/or hospice care services.