

- A. PERSONAL STATEMENT:** The MSW Department Application asks you to write a 3 page personal statement. The personal statement helps reviewers learn about you and your MSW goals. Please see the *Personal Statement Instructions* which outline 3 specific topics.

When you complete the personal statement, follow these guidelines:

1. **Respond to the prompts.** Be sure to respond to the 3 prompts listed in the application.
 2. **Be honest.** Tell us your strengths. If your application has certain weaknesses, address them. For instance, if your GPA is low, explain why.
 3. **Demonstrate college level writing.** Have someone with good editing skills proofread your application. As we read about you, we are also assessing your writing skills, because graduate school and social work require a significant amount of writing. You can consult the following list to help you write with active verbs: <http://www.csueastbay.edu/ace/files/docs/resumes/action-verbs.pdf>
 4. **Describe aspects of your employment and/or volunteer work** that give you experience that is relevant to our program's mission (see the Mission Statement).
 5. **Emphasize any other life experience** you have had in areas directly pertinent to your future social work studies and career objectives.
 6. **Demonstrate your understanding of the social work field with attention to social justice issues,** why they interest you, and what you hope to do with an MSW.
- B. SELECTING A CONCENTRATION:** We have 2 concentrations to select from. Some fields of practice cross over these 2 options, like school social work, medical social work, older adult services, or children's mental health.
- **Children, Youth and Family Services (CYF).** Child welfare, family services, foster care, adoption, at-risk youth, family preservation, older adult services, criminal justice/restorative justice, immigration, community organization, *etc.*
 - **Community Mental Health Services (CMH).** Mental health, integrated behavioral health, integrated behavioral health, community mental health, crisis intervention, substance use/addiction, medical social work, school social work if seeking a clinical emphasis, and other counseling/therapeutic services, across the lifespan. The emphasis is on public sector work, not private practice. A bit more clinical in its focus than CYF.

C. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of Recommendation can be the 'make or break' difference in whether or not you gain admission to a particular graduate program. Here are some suggestions for obtaining the best possible letters.

1. **TIMING:** Make your request early so the referent has time to meet your deadlines; tell them the deadline for them to email the coversheet and letter. It is acceptable to send a follow-up email or make a phone call of gentle reminder if a deadline is coming and you are not sure if it has been submitted. Remember people get very busy in their jobs and writing a recommendation is a courtesy to you and not a requirement for the referent.
2. **MAKING THE REQUESTS.** Some people need to match your name with your face before they remember you, so even a thumbnail photo can help. Be sure your image is appropriate for

professional use. Request letters only from people who have worked with you recently and/or who know your work or will have good reason to remember you (sending faculty a copy of an old paper with their comments on it is useful). You can have a conversation with the referent and inquire whether they feel they can comfortably write a strong recommendation letter.

3. **SELECT REFERENT CAREFULLY.** Select professional referents who know you as a student, employee, colleague, or volunteer. It is usually better to have someone write the letter who has more experience than you have; a supervisor not a supervisee, a professor not a classmate. Do not use personal references such as a friend, your spiritual advisor like a pastor, or a relative.
4. **PROVIDE INFORMATION:** Send a copy of your resume and/or a copy of your personal statement to the referent, and tell them in a well written paragraph why you are applying to the program and why you are asking them for a letter. Send these documents as email attachments. You can remind them of your experiences and work you did in their class or workplace.
5. **EXPLAIN THE PROCEDURES** for the recommendation; they vary from school to school. The CSUEB MSW program needs 3 letters. They must be printed on letterhead, signed emailed with the completed coversheet. If you are applying to several schools, send the paperwork to the referent in a very organized fashion. Mix-ups in letters can be very problematic, such as when we receive recommendations that are written for a different applicant, or refer to a different university or even field of study! DO NOT expect the referent to go searching on websites to find forms or procedures.
6. **GIVE ENOUGH INFORMATION** to help the referent address the issues listed on the Coversheet. They will be asked to rank you on these qualities. SIGN the Coversheet BEFORE you give it to the referent.
7. **WRITE WELL.** Take the time proof your writing and make your request, your resume, and any other materials, look professional. Be sure to address the person with respect, using such as: Dear Ms. , Dr.... , Professor, Dean....., etc.. Also if you have a quirky name for your email, create a **professional sounding email account** (for example: sramirez78@gmail.com instead of sweetypie5@gmail.com).
8. **SEND A NOTE OR EMAIL OF THANKS.** It is also very gratifying for the referent if you let them know what the outcome was concerning your application. Stay in touch with them and let them know your plan.