

Master of Social Work, MSW

The Master of Social Work (MSW) program prepares social workers for advanced social work practice and leadership in a wide range of settings. All students develop skills to work with individuals, families, and communities and to advocate for social change. Students select one of two specializations, clinical practice and leadership practice. The clinical specialization teaches students knowledge and skills to work with children, adults, older adults, families, and small groups in clinical settings. The leadership specialization teaches students knowledge and skills for working with communities through relationship building, policy advocacy, and program and organizational development. Students develop competencies to advance the field of social work, create lasting change, and launch impactful careers helping others and improving lives.

The program has been continually accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1951. See the CSWE Assessment of Learning Outcomes for the MSW program on the School of Social Work website.

Programs designed to lead to professional licensure are subject to federal regulations regarding informational disclosures. Please see Professional Licensure Disclosures by Program for further information.

Master in Social Work Program Options

Options are available to complete the MSW full-time or part-time in Iowa City, Des Moines, and online, with applications reviewed annually. The Sioux City program is a three-year, part-time program to which students are admitted every three years. Applicants to any of the options, at any of the centers, complete the same application.

Regular Standing (54 s.h. Option)

Designed for individuals who have completed a degree in a discipline other than a CSWE-accredited social work degree program. Applicants apply for fall admission.

Advanced Standing (36 s.h. Option)

Designed for individuals who have completed the BA in social work or the BSW from a CSWE-accredited social work degree program. Applicants apply for summer admission.

Enduring Understandings

The MSW program was designed around five enduring understandings—concepts that are informed by the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, have lasting value beyond the classroom, and apply to every aspect of social work practice.

- Advance social justice and fight discrimination and inequity.
- Adherence to a high standard of ethics.
- Using a systemic perspective to understand the interconnectedness of people and their environments and the systems in which we operate.
- Critical thinking, where problem-solving, creativity, and innovation are as important as learning facts.

- Self-awareness and effective use of self are crucial to effective relationships at all levels of practice.

Learning Outcomes

The curriculum is designed to address the following nine Council on Social Work Education competencies for both generalist and specialized practitioners, which serve as program learning outcomes:

- demonstrate ethical and professional behavior;
- advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice;
- engage in anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice;
- engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice;
- engage in policy practice;
- engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
- assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
- intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; and
- evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Professional Association

Students and graduates of the social work program are eligible for membership in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world with 132,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers.