



 | Baylor University
DIANA R. GARLAND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

The MBA of the Helping Professions

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Make a significant impact in the context
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What can you do with an MSW? — Make a significant impact in the context of worldwide service and leadership.

It's not every day that you're prepared to have a significant impact on someone's life, but as a social worker, you'll be prepared to do just that. Most likely, you are considering a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree because you have a strong desire to help others or a personal connection to the profession. The heroic desire to [IFSW Global Definition of Social Work], address life challenges, and enhance well-being is a perfect fit for the practice-based profession and academic discipline of social work.

“ The heroic desire to promote social change and development, social cohesion, empower individuals, address life challenges, and enhance well-being is

a perfect fit for the practice-based profession and academic discipline of social work.”

[IFSW Global Definition of Social Work]

While a bachelor's is a great place to start and can provide access to case management and administrative positions, an MSW provides many more opportunities for direct practice and is the first step in to becoming a Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW) and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Those holding an MSW can also expect several other benefits including higher pay, a greater competitive edge in the job market, and more opportunities for advancement.

In this digital resource, we discuss the various opportunities and advantages of the MSW degree and the social work field. Our goal is to help prospective students understand what the MSW entails. We answer questions, debunk myths, provide a realistic understanding of job outlook, and explore the different sectors of social work — let's get started.

Your Career Possibilities are Endless — Areas of Social Work Practice



Typically a two-year advanced degree, the Master of Social Work degree provides the education, training, and field experience necessary to hold clinical or supervisory roles. This degree also allows graduates to work across a number of different fields including the medical, mental health, and educational fields, providing support as therapists, as well as health care, school, and clinical social workers.

Careers in social work are separated into three areas of practice — micro, mezzo, and macro-level occupations. The distinctions between these levels are in the populations they assist. Micro-level social work occupations are the most common, and they concentrate on helping individuals and families. Macro-level careers are focused on effecting change at larger levels and groups. These careers work with community systems, institutions, and larger groups primarily through government and nonprofit institutions. Mezzo-level social work helps groups that lie between these two levels such as neighborhoods, task forces, and support groups.



“ Social work is anything but a one-size-fits-all profession. With your MSW, the

possibilities are endless! ”



Social work is anything but a *one-size-fits-all* profession. With your MSW, the possibilities are endless! One way to explore the different fields of social work is to look at the various categories and sectors that employ social workers.

Government Sector

Governments and many of their agencies employ social service workers for a variety of reasons. From occupations such as Community Social Workers to Public Policy Social Workers, these professionals care about helping others and making a real difference in the lives of individuals and families. Each state government has a Department of Social Services, which consolidates many of the smaller departments, organizations, and professionals who are invested in assisting vulnerable and needy populations.

Within the government sector, social workers may work in:

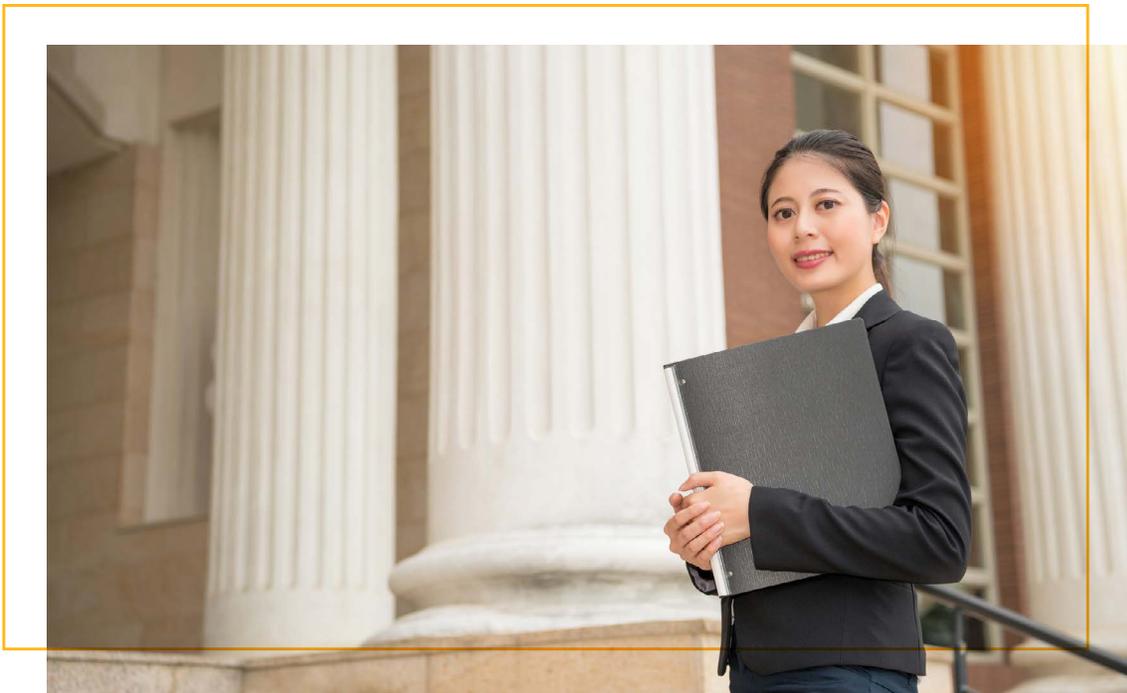
- Adoption
- Adult Services
- Child Care Assistance
- Child Protective Services
- Foster Care

- Domestic Violence
- Energy Assistance
- Food Assistance (SNAP, Food Bank, WIC)
- Health and Human Services
- Department of Justice

- Department of Justice
- The Department of Defense
- Social Security Administration
- Veterans Administration

The government also employs social workers to provide community services like mental health and wellness initiatives, assistance with substance abuse, urban and community planning initiatives, ensuring affordable housing, and assisting, advocating, and promoting the inclusion of those with intellectual, physical, or developmental disabilities.

Social workers also have the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives by working in public policy. Public policy social workers engage in policy analysis on large scale projects and issues such as public housing developments, zoning regulations, and public service programs.



School Systems

Social workers can find employment in school systems at all grade levels. Schools employ graduates with an MSW to serve as trained mental health professionals, who can assist students and work with faculty and families to create the best possible environment for students to succeed academically and socially.

School-based social workers work directly with students helping them with conflict resolution and anger management, social interaction skills, and to accept themselves and others. These social workers also assist the students' parents and families, provide services to school personnel and school districts, and work as a school-community liaison.

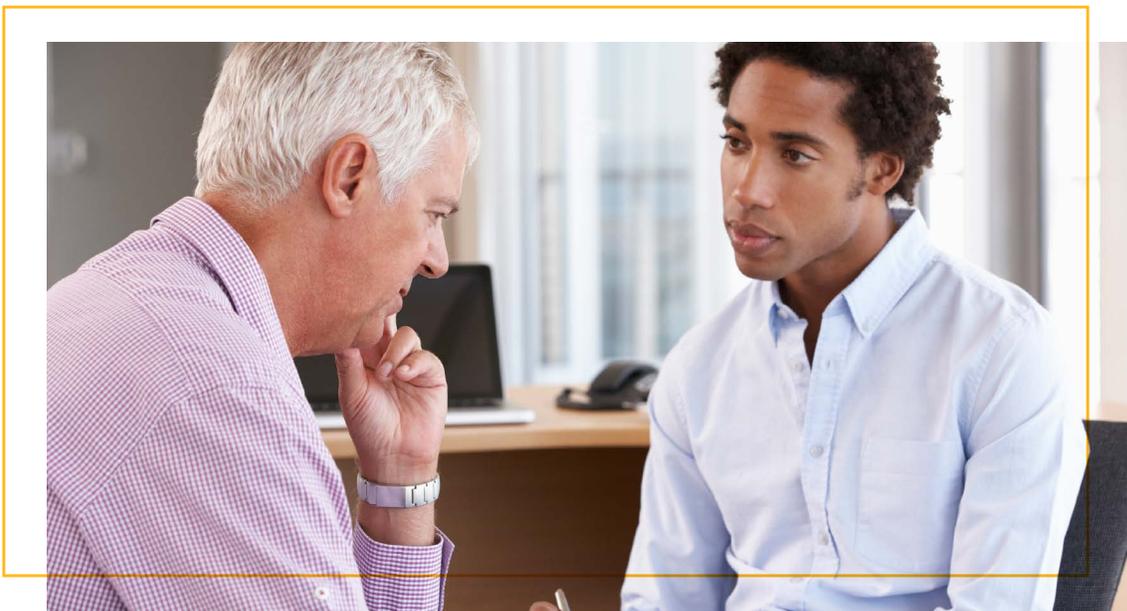


Health Services

The umbrella of healthcare-related social work includes many opportunities for employment in a variety of settings and with several different populations. Health care social workers work with patients from diagnosis through treatment, assisting them with the adjustments necessary as their illness, treatment, and recovery progress. Medical social workers serve both patients and families. They provide patients with Psychological and social support to cope with chronic or terminal illnesses. These social workers collaborate with the patient's family and caregivers by helping them understand and support their loved one while caring for themselves.

Health care social workers have the opportunity to work in a variety of settings. From hospitals to in-home care, from rehabilitation centers to assisted living/nursing homes, this particular field of social work is in high demand.

Similarly, as science continues to develop and evolve, more and more of the scientific community is beginning to recognize the importance of mental health and striving for overall well being. Rooted in science and the study of human behavior, social workers offer an extremely valuable professional service to individuals, their families, and their communities.



Entrepreneurial Work

There is a budding avenue for social workers called entrepreneurial social work. This combines the skills of entrepreneurship with the methodology and practice of social work. Entrepreneurs are thought leaders, taking a passion or idea and creating a service or business around it. Entrepreneurs are necessarily invested in their work, and social workers are passionate about the people they help and about their responsibility to bring about justice in the world. Thus, the overlap between social work and entrepreneurship lies in the creativity of individuals to solve problems that exist within society.

With the required training and education, passionate individuals who recognize that it is their responsibility to make the world a better place for those around them are stepping out and acting on their ideas. The solutions are endless, and these social entrepreneurs are excited to do good in creative and innovative ways.



Nonprofit Sector

Not-for-profit or nonprofit charities and organizations take the funds that are raised and use them to pay the salaries of their employees and fund their projects and services. Any additional money that is raised is put back into the organization and used to serve their needs and their mission. Employment opportunities in the nonprofit sector could include a substance abuse counselor, patient counselor, community advocate, or caseworker.

These positions are incredibly mission-driven, and the work itself brings great meaning and purpose to those looking for an impactful career. These jobs also often have more flexible working conditions than for-profit social work jobs.

For-Profit Sector

Some MSW graduates choose to go into or start their own private practice. This means that they typically specialize in assisting a specific population and work from the ground up to establish a client base. Private practices can be as specific or generalized as desired. For example, an LCSW can start a practice to help children and families in general, or they might choose to specialize in assisting children who are struggling with cyberbullying or bullying in other school settings.

How Do I Choose an MSW Program? 5 Things to Keep in Mind

After deciding on a specialization and narrowing it down to the schools that can offer you the opportunity to study that specialty, there are several essential elements to consider when choosing an MSW program.



First, choose a **program that emphasizes research**. In addition to time-tested methods and modalities, programs that rely heavily on the latest statistics and evidence to inform their curriculum are at the cutting edge of 21st-century social work and problem-solving.

Learn More: Our research is contributing to the next generation of ethical social work practice.



It is also important to look for a program that takes an **integrated (or holistic) approach to social work**. Human beings function best when their mind, body, and soul are all healthy and properly integrated. After all, this is one of the goals of social work: to help clients to achieve wellness. Likewise, the best MSW programs prepare students to

ethically integrate their religious faith with social work practice, by teaching and observing this practice in the classroom and field work.



Flexibility is another important trait of top MSW programs. Many students who return for their MSW are also working professionals, some with families. Several MSW programs offer either a fully-online program or a hybrid mix of in-classroom and online learning, allowing students to work at their own pace and in harmony with their many daily obligations.

Learn More: Curious about our curriculum on our Houston and Waco campus? View our on-demand webinars!



Support from **faculty who are experts in the field** should also be an important consideration when picking a program. Faculty with hands-on field experience provide a wealth of practical knowledge and can help students to anticipate the challenges they will face on the job.

Perhaps the most important consideration when choosing an MSW program is the presence of a **field placement** component. Field placement is a supervised internship with an organization that provides social services. **Field placement is a crucial aspect of any MSW program because it provides students with practical tools and experience and teaches them to think and act like social workers.**



Pro-tip: Check out our article [4 Field Placements Available through Baylor's MSW Program](#) to learn more about the kinds of hands-on experiences you can have!

Much of an MSW education consists of this hands-on exposure to field work, and it is important for a student to serve at multiple placements to gain a variety of different experiences and perspectives. Placements are a result of the school's partnerships and relationships with social work groups and organizations, so look for a well-connected and respected MSW program.

Masters in Social Work Careers

Right now is a great time to enter or advance a career in social work. Currently, qualified social workers are in demand, the pay is competitive, and the jobs are secure.

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), between 2019-2029, the overall projected employment for social workers is expected to grow 13 percent, which is much faster than the national average. Particular areas of social work are expected to grow at an even faster rate. For example, the health care social work field is expected to grow an impressive 14 percent, and employment of mental health and substance abuse social workers is projected to grow 17 percent.

The number of available jobs is not the only incentive when considering a career in social work. Social workers can expect an exciting and dynamic career path, competitive salary, and their choice of a variety of employers and career environments.

Employment Growth Rate 2019-2029

4%

National
Growth Rate for
All Occupations

13%

National
Growth Rate for
Social Workers

14%

National
Growth Rate
for Health Care
Social Workers

17%

Growth Rate for
Mental Health &
Substance Abuse
Social Workers

10-Year Career Trajectory

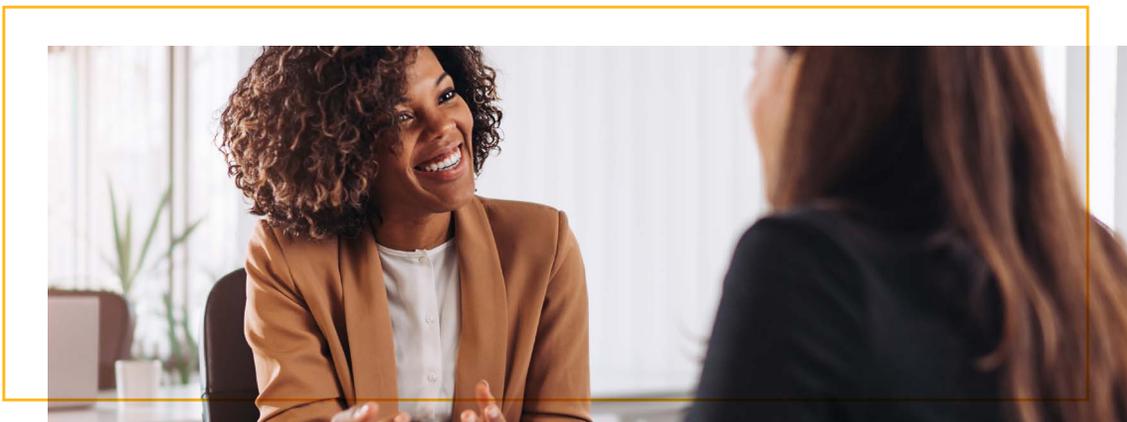
After completing your MSW, and earning the correct professional licenses for your state, what is the next step in your professional social work career? A quick glance at a career “road map” can tell you what to expect one, five, and ten years down the line.

Year 1

After earning your certifications, degree, and landing a social work job, the first year is all about establishing yourself and gaining experience. Typically professionals can expect the first year to be filled with lots of learning by doing, networking, and asking for advice from others. During this first year, draw on your field placement experience and consult with mentors about your next steps.

Year 5

Five years into your professional social work career, you can expect to be settling into your desired specialization and working in the environment and with the population of your choosing. After getting the requisite entry-level experience under your belt, you are able to move into positions that allow you to pursue your specific passion and calling. Continuing to work hard and nurture professional connections will afford you opportunities for promotions and more responsibility.



Year 10

After ten years of experience as a professional social worker, respect and credibility become associated with your name and work ethic. By this time in your career, you can expect to be considered for management positions and might also be expected to oversee and contribute to the formation of new professionals. At this point in your career, it is important to remember and continue the hard work that got you here and to consider paying it forward to first-year or entry-level professionals.

Masters in Social Work Salary

Salary ranges for social workers vary based on the location, setting, and type of service you are providing. These are some of the median annual wages reported by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics as of September 2020](#):

- Healthcare social workers (general) \$56,750
- Local government (excluding education and hospitals) \$55,500
- Mental health and substance abuse social worker \$46,650
- Child, family, and school social workers \$47,390



And in Texas specifically, the average salary for MSW holders is higher than the national average, coming in at \$63,990.

Job Titles

With an MSW, the possibilities for employment as a social worker are endless. Social workers are needed in a variety of different career environments and are needed to serve many unique groups of people. Employment opportunities go far beyond CPS.

These are just a few of the many job titles that social workers hold, to give you an idea of how vast and varied the possibilities really are:

- School Social Worker
- Child and Family Social Worker
- Community Social Worker
- Group Social Worker
- Marriage and Family Therapist

- Health Care Social Worker
- Health Educator
- Hospice Social Worker
- Geriatric Social Worker
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Worker

- Clinical Social Worker
- Environmental Health Worker and Administrator
- Trauma Counselor
- Public Health Administrator
- Public Policy Social Worker
- Psychiatric Social Worker

Social Work for Career Changers

Sometimes after starting out on one career path, many people begin to feel disillusioned—and that’s okay! If you’re thinking about changing careers, social work might be a great career choice for you.

“ By earning your MSW, you are giving yourself an opportunity to take your transferable skills from your previous career and/or education and amplify them through a focused curriculum and field placement experiences. ”

Social work is a great field for career changers because so many of the skills necessary for the job can be brought over from other careers, and an undergraduate degree in social work is not always necessary to begin a master’s program. By earning your MSW, you are giving yourself an opportunity to take your transferable skills from your previous career and/or education and amplify them through a focused curriculum and field placement experiences.

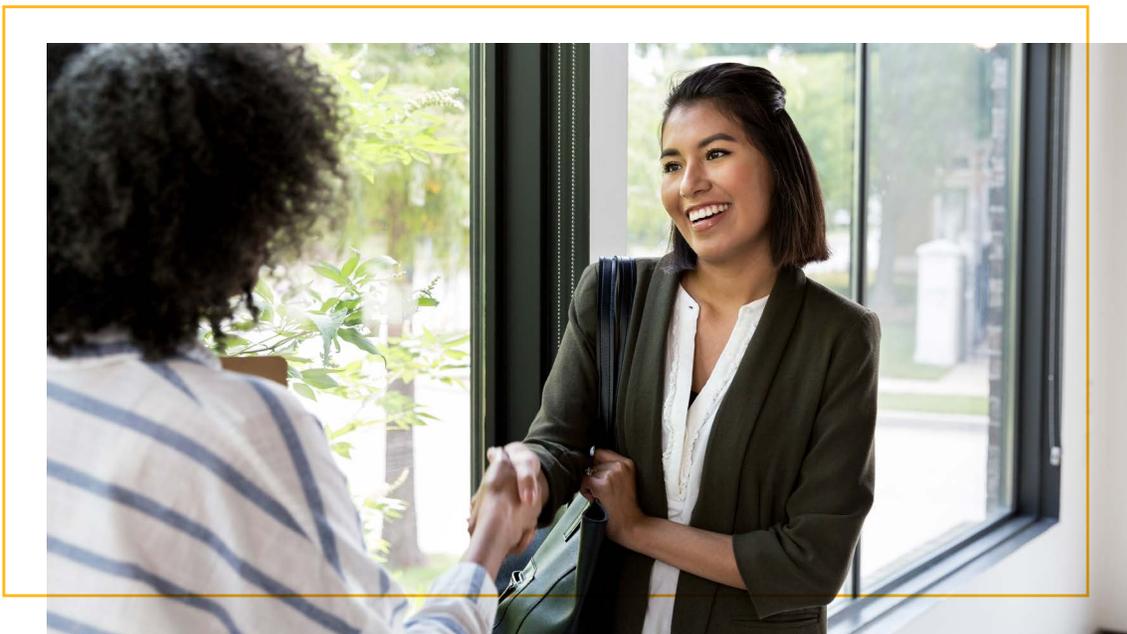
Transferable skills include compassion, active listening, organizational, people, and problem-solving skills. Many career changers choose social work after burn out from a corporate job that didn’t add meaning to their lives and offered little personal fulfillment. They are now searching for a career like social work — one that can add value and purpose to their day-to-day lives.

ACCESS CAREER CHANGERS GUIDE →

Although a degree in social work is not required to begin an MSW program, an undergraduate degree in a related field offers a strong base of prerequisite classes. Related fields such as sociology and psychology complement and can speed up the graduate degree process for a student in an MSW program.

Pro-tip: Which degrees make an excellent launching pad for an MSW? Read our article — 5 Undergraduate Degrees that Will Complement Your MSW — to find out!

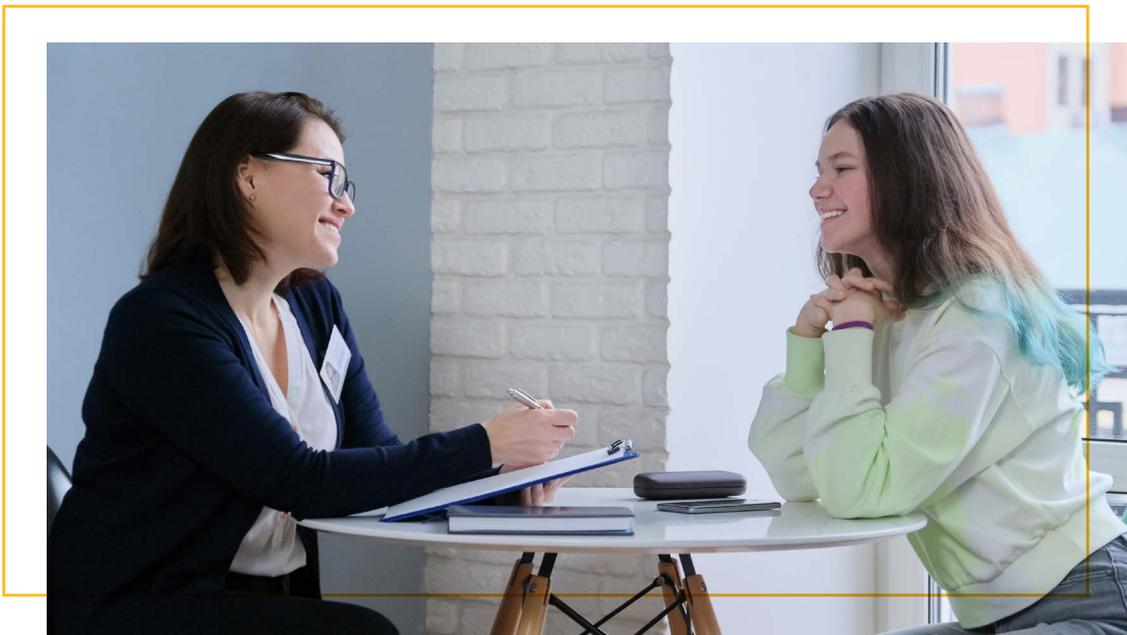
No matter what your undergraduate degree or your previous work experience, an MSW is always an option. All applicable prior work experience and transferable skills will assist you in your graduate studies and help you as you break into the field of social work.



Baylor's Master of Social Work Program

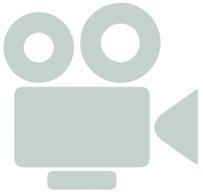
At the Baylor University Diana R. Garland School of Social Work, we strive to educate the next generation of social workers to be compassionate, qualified, and confident to dive into their chosen area of expertise.

Our faculty and student body are one family, made up of individuals who care deeply about helping people. Our mission is to prepare students to be social workers who recognize that their work is about service and justice, the dignity of individuals, and the power of relationships, and who can practice their craft with integrity and competence, ethically integrating faith and social work practice to best serve their clients.



Prepare to Impact Change — Curriculum Overview

The MSW at Baylor is a research-based program that prides itself in having a research-focused faculty with hands-on experience in the field. Being research-driven, the curriculum in the MSW program is the best of both time-tested methodology and cutting edge discovery. Our faculty and staff are the best and the brightest, with a passion for encouraging students and accompanying them as they learn to ethically integrate faith and social work practice.



Watch: Check our out recorded curriculum webinar to hear directly from our Waco MSW program director.

The Garland School of Social Work offers four graduate degree options, two academic specializations, and several concentrations. The standard two-year MSW program offers a strong foundation for direct practice, administration, and community development, as well as practical experience through two year-long internships and numerous courses in a student's chosen specialty. There is also an Advanced Standing program for students with a BSW from an accredited CSWE program earned within the last five years. This program offers students more opportunities for research and more options for field placement.

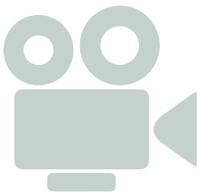
Other graduate degree options include a Master of Divinity/Master of Social Work, Master of Theological Studies/Master of Social Work, and Master of Social Work/Master of Business Administration.

What Social Work Specializations and Concentrations Does Baylor Offer?

Baylor's MSW students can choose to specialize in either Clinical Practice or Community Practice.

Specialization — Clinical Practice

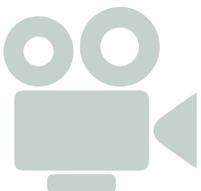
The clinical practice specialization prepares students for advanced social work practice in health care settings working with interdisciplinary teams. Students apply evidence-based practice models in advanced case management and in mental health treatment with a focus on ethics and religious faith and health. Graduates are prepared for direct practice and health care administration and planning roles.



For more information about the Clinical Practice Specialization, [please watch this video.](#)

Specialization — Community Practice

The community practice specialization prepares students for working with public and/or nonprofit organizations, communities, congregations, and religiously affiliated agencies. Students learn to apply evidence-informed and asset-based community practice frameworks and methods of intervention to develop responsive human resource systems, sustainable physical and social environments, and just public and institutional policies.



For more information about the Community Practice Specialization, [please watch this video:](#)

Concentrations

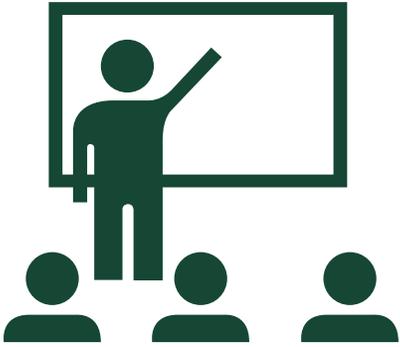
Baylor's MSW concentrations are an option designed to develop a student's knowledge base more comprehensively in one area of social work practice. Concentration options are connected with initiatives and students may choose from the following: Diversity, Gerontology, Congregational Social Work, Trauma, International Social Work, or Integrated Behavioral Health. The concentration will go more in-depth into one of the areas of practice listed above, but it does not replace the clinical practice specialization.



Baylor's Residential MSW degree program is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.



Everything You Need to Know about Earning an MSW at Baylor



The MSW program is comprised of 60-course hours and is offered through both in-person and live online classroom learning. Students at the Baylor Waco campus will experience a full-time, residential, and a more traditional on-campus experience.



Field Placement Office

At Baylor University, we have a dedicated Field Placement Office and faculty because we realize that a student's experience with their field placement can alter the entire course of their social work career, and we want to make sure it is the best possible experience. All of our Field Placement faculty are carefully chosen and dedicated entirely to helping our students with their field education, from placement to completion.

Once accepted to the MSW program, students immediately begin work with a field placement advisor to identify strengths and areas of interest. Students are then matched based on availability and their desired field of study.



Field placement is often a turning point for many MSW candidates because it offers hands-on experience and the opportunity to discover first-hand if this particular concentration or specialization is right for them. Students are placed in concentration-specific field placements and given the opportunity and responsibility to apply the knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom to real-life interactions with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations.

Students begin their field placement internship the first semester of their MSW program. MSW Foundation students intern for 240 hours a semester for a total of 480 hours. MSW Advanced students intern for a total of 550 hours across two semesters. It is also important that an MSW program is capable of securing high-quality field placements for their students. This comes from maintaining good relationships with placement sites.

Baylor's placement sites include private and public agencies, religiously affiliated organizations and non-sectarian settings, generalist and advanced practice settings, and local and distant sites. For instance:

Work in Health Care Settings:

- [Baylor Scott and White Hillcrest Medical Center](#)
- [Central Texas Veteran's Health Care System](#)
- [Providence DePaul Center \(Psychiatric\)](#)
- [Providence Hospice](#)

Work with Children and Families:

- [Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children](#)
- [Communities In Schools of the Heart of Texas](#)
- [Family Abuse Center](#)
- [Waco Center for Youth](#)

Work with Older Adults:

- [Alzheimer's Association](#)
- [Friends for Life](#)
- [Meals on Wheels](#)
- [St. Catherine's/Providence Park](#)

Work in Community Development and Planning:

- [Texas Hunger Initiative](#)
- [Waco Community Development Corporation](#)
- [Waco Habitat for Humanity](#)
- [Waco Regional Baptist Association](#)

Houston Placements:

- [Refugee Services of Texas](#)
- [Shield Bearer](#)
- [Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center](#)
- [Texas Children's Hospital](#)

Distance Placements:

- [Buckner International \(Dallas, TX\)](#)
- [Catholic Charities \(Ft Worth and Houston, TX\)](#)
- [Center for Discovery \(Southern California\)](#)
- [International Justice Mission](#)

MSW Admissions Requirements

While some MSW programs require a related bachelor's degree or a large number of prerequisite classes, the Garland School of Social Work welcomes anyone with an undergraduate degree to apply. There is no requirement for an undergraduate degree in social work or a related field. We feel that this only adds to the intellectual diversity of our classes and contributes to our holistic approach to education.

Additionally, students are not required to take the GRE to apply to the MSW program. Students will need to complete the following requirements for application to the program:



- [GoGarland online application](#)
- \$45 Application Fee
- [GSSW financial aid form](#)
- [Free application for Federal Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or [CSS International](#)
- Profile for international applicants
- 3 letters of recommendation
- Transcripts from all previous institutions

**ACCESS OUR GUIDE TO GAIN INSIDER INFORMATION
TO A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION**



Becoming a Licensed Master Social Worker

The LMSW is the second level of licensure recognized in the state of Texas and comes with a higher pay scale and increased responsibilities. After completing a Master or Doctorate of Social Work degree from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited university or college, you will need to complete the following steps to become licensed:

1. Apply for pre-authorization with ASWB
 - a. Submit pre-authorization fee of \$60
2. Register to take the exam after receiving authorization from ASWB
 - a. Register online and pay the fee of \$230
3. Jurisprudence exam
 - a. Exam Fee: \$39
4. Schedule exam
5. Once the applicant passes, they submit an application and supporting documents to BHEC
6. Create an account with BHEC

Licenses in the state of Texas must be renewed every two years in order to remain active and for social workers to continue to legally practice. To renew your license, you must have successfully completed 30 clock hours of continuing education.

WE'RE READY TO CHAT! BOOK A MEETING TO SPEAK WITH AN MSW STUDENT AMBASSADOR



Financing Your Baylor Education

We know that funding a graduate degree is a challenge for many people, but we also understand the value that an MSW can add to your professional career as a social worker. At Baylor, we are committed to subsidizing student costs in order to make it more affordable to obtain your MSW.

To help you get the largest amount of financial assistance, we recommend that you apply early. Due to a limited number of scholarships and financial aid options at Baylor, the order in which applications are received helps us to determine who and how much funding can be given.



Join: Attend a Financial Aid 101 live webinar to learn more about our competitive funding opportunities

As part of every application, students are required to complete the FAFSA. This application helps both the Federal and State government, as well as our financial aid department to determine a student's ability to pay for their degree. By weighing several factors, such as family income, size, obligations, assets, debts, and liabilities, FAFSA calculates what a student can contribute to their own education and recommends amounts that the government and other institutions can contribute to funding their degree.



Other options for financing your MSW degree at Baylor University include applying for grants, loans, and other merit-based scholarships. Students are considered for all of these options simply by completing the application process.



Grants are free gifts of money that do not need to be repaid upon completion of your degree. In addition to applying for federal financial aid and applying for financial assistance from the school, grants are the next best option for financing your education. Grants are often need-based, meaning that the student must demonstrate a need for financial assistance, which is primarily determined by the FAFSA. Grants can come from the federal and state government, the college or university, or other private and non-profit organizations.



After applying for grants, the next best source of funding comes from **merit-based scholarships**. These are generally supported by individual institutions (both public and private), as well as non-profit organizations. Merit-based scholarships are awarded based on a student's academic or other achievements. Like grants, these do not need to be repaid. There are thousands of scholarships students can apply for and several websites that can help you determine which scholarships you can apply for, but the best practice is to begin applying early and apply to as many as you can.



A **loan** is money that is given to a student to be used for tuition and other academic expenses but is expected to be repaid with interest upon completion of a student's degree. If you have no other options, loans can be a great way to get started with your graduate degree, but be aware that you will need to have a plan in place to begin paying the borrowed money back as soon as you receive your diploma. Also, make sure that you look into the terms and conditions of the loan before signing. Compare which loans offer you the best interest rate and what their repayment options include.

Start Your Journey

Your desire to do good through helping others is a gift worth sharing. Because of people like you, individuals and communities in our world who are struggling are able to find hope and support. To be the best possible advocate that you can be, it is important to arm yourself with the best education and tools. At Baylor University, our Master of Social Work degree is grounded in research, supported by expert faculty, and flexible enough for the busiest working professional.

The resources offered through one of our degree programs will help you to become the most effective advocate you can be for those you wish to serve. We can't wait to meet you and help you get started on your path to bettering the world.

LIVE AND RECORDED WEBINARS

CHAT WITH A STUDENT AMBASSADOR

APPLY NOW

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES