

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

BSW STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Social Work

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Student Handbook for the Social Work Program at the University of South Alabama. This Handbook is intended to provide students with information about specific program policies, information, rights and responsibilities. Another rich source of information for USA students is the University's *The Lowdown*, the institution's student handbook. <http://www.usouthal.edu/lowdown/> Students are encouraged to use both of these documents as resources. Of course, you are always welcome to visit with members of the Social Work faculty for guidance in any student related matter.

Social work is a profession devoted to assisting people in solving problems and affecting social change to improve the quality of their lives. The social worker is guided by a professional code of ethics in assisting people to achieve an effective level of psychosocial functioning and effecting social change to improve the well being of everyone. Social work is founded on the principles of service; social and economic justice; personal dignity and worth; the importance of human relationships; integrity; and competence.

If you are interested in helping others and making your concern for people a career, social work may be the profession for you. Social workers are involved in addressing some of society's most pressing issues such as poverty; abuse and neglect; mental illness; and juvenile crime – to name just a few. The profession can be very rewarding to those who like to make a difference.

USA offers the Bachelor of Social Work program, which prepares students for the entry level practice of social work. Bachelor's level social workers are usually on the front line in social welfare agencies, dealing with a wide range of social problems. The bachelor's degree in social work prepares students for the entry level practice of social work and for membership in professional organizations such as the [National Association of Social Workers](#), and to sit for the state licensing examination (see <http://abswe.state.al.us/> for information on AL).

The BSW program at USA enrolled its first students in the fall of 2005. The program entered Candidacy status with the Council on Social Work Education in February 2006, has maintained candidacy, and is actively pursuing initial accreditation.

MISSION OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

The program mission for Social Work at the University of South Alabama is to prepare competent, effective entry level social work professionals to address the social welfare needs of the Gulf Coast and Southwest Alabama regions. The program has a strong commitment to provide professional leadership to the region in terms of social work education, service to the community and in scholarly endeavors. In order to be attuned to the community context of social work in this region, the program is committed to promoting well being through the exploration of both urban and rural community practice, the foundations of the social work profession, the person-in-environment perspective, liberal arts preparation, diversity, poverty, social and economic justice, and a strong value base for practice.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BSW PROGRAM

The Social Work Program objectives are derived from the program's mission. These goals and objectives are as follows:

Goal 1: Program graduates will be prepared for competent, entry level generalist professional social work with diverse groups and populations-at-risk in both urban and rural communities, and effectiveness in enhancing human well-being.

Objectives:

- 1.1 To prepare entry level social workers, grounded in the liberal arts, who are competent in the application of social work values and ethics in the delivery of generalist practice with systems of all sizes.
- 1.2 To prepare entry level social workers who practice with respect in regard to diverse groups, populations-at-risk and advance social and economic justice to alleviate oppression, and who relate to the strengths and problems of the Gulf Coast and Southwest Alabama regions.
- 1.3 To prepare entry level social workers who can demonstrate effective communication skills with clients, colleagues, and communities.

Goal 2: Program graduates will be able to employ critical thinking skills and research knowledge in order to ethically evaluate policy and practice, and advocate for change in organizations and communities, and add to social work knowledge.

Objectives:

- 2.1 To prepare social work graduates who can demonstrate critical thinking skills and apply research knowledge and skills to relate research findings to practice, evaluate research studies, and evaluate practice.
- 2.2 To prepare social work graduates who can apply the values and ethics of the profession to the analysis, development, and influence of social policy.
- 2.3 To prepare social workers who can identify the history of the profession and the contemporary structures of social welfare institutions.

Goal 3: Program graduates will be capable of integrating social work knowledge, values and skills into entry level ethical social work practice with systems of all sizes with an emphasis on the needs of the Gulf Coast and Southwest Alabama.

Objective:

- 3.1 To prepare entry level social work practitioners who can design assessments and interventions based on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence between persons and systems of all sizes.

Goal 4: Program graduates will have the demonstrated capacity to identify with the profession and take an active role in professional leadership.

Objectives:

- 4.1 To prepare entry level social workers who can effectively demonstrate the ability to function within the structure of organizations, use supervision and consultation appropriately, and pursue organizational change.
- 4.2 To prepare social workers who become members and leaders in appropriate professional organizations and who engage in lifelong learning.

Goal 5: The program faculty will be active in service to the broader Mobile and Southwest Alabama community and social work profession and contribute to the knowledge base of the profession, particularly in relation to regional issues.

Objective:

- 5.1 To provide a learning environment in which faculty demonstrate leadership to the profession, service to the community, and contribute to the social work knowledge base, particularly with regard to the issues and problems of the greater Mobile area and Southwest Alabama region.

BSW PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW) offered by University of South Alabama is a four-year, 128 credit hour degree. Students may pursue the degree on either a full or part-time basis. The program does not give academic credit for any course work or field instruction based on students' prior life, volunteer, or work experiences.

The BSW program curriculum consists of general education courses, courses in the professional foundation (Social Work major), courses for the minor, and electives. The Social Work professional foundation courses include content in the following areas: Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Work Policy and Services, Generalist Social Work Practice, Research Methods, and agency based Field Instruction.

FOCUS OF CURRICULUM: GENERALIST SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Undergraduate social workers are generalists in that they are called on to work with multiple systems in order to assist others. Thus, the generalist method of practice is critical to effectively preparing students as professionals for undergraduate practice.

The baccalaureate social work program at the University of South Alabama's definition of generalist practice is consistent with the principles of generalist social work practice found in the literature, the needs of the Greater Mobile and Southwest Alabama Region, and the goals and objectives of the social work program.

The BSW program at USA's definition of generalist practice is:

Generalist practice in social work is multi-system, involving the promotion of human well-being through work with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. This method is based on a problem solving framework and is multi-theory in that it bases the practice approach on an analysis of problems and situations, thus basing interventions on the problem(s). Generalist practice stems from a strong base of social work, knowledge, values, ethics, and skills. It is based on a person-in environment perspective and is sensitive to diversity, the community, and issues of social and economic justice.

FIELD INSTRUCTION

The USA Social Work Field Instruction program provides an educationally directed practical experience in a social service agency or program. Students are expected to demonstrate that they can apply classroom concepts, ethics and skills under professional social work supervision and guidance.

Field Instruction (SW 412) is an intensive and demanding experience, consisting of 436 clock hours during the semester. The Field Experience is taken concurrently with the Senior Seminar (SW 414) that assists the students with integration of academic and professional content. Since Field Instruction is a capstone experience, it may not be taken until all prerequisites are met and must be taken with the Senior Seminar.

Students must apply for a Field Instruction placement prior to the semester in which they enroll for the course. Policies and procedures relating to Field Instruction and the application for an agency placement may be found in the USA Field Instruction Manual <http://www.southalabama.edu/syansw/pdf/field-instruction-manual.pdf> . Students are encouraged to visit with the Social Work Field Coordinator and faculty members about their interests in field prior to the time they make application to Field Instruction. While students may indicate preferences for specific placements in agencies, the final decision on the approved placement rests with the Social Work program.

Students who do not successfully complete Field Instruction (other than withdrawals) may apply to repeat Field Instruction. Field Instruction may be repeated only once. Relevant policies and procedures are found in the USA Field Instruction Manual.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM COURSES TAKEN OUTSIDE USA

Students who have completed courses at other collegiate institutions may transfer credits under the policies of the University of South Alabama. Students must complete a minimum of 24 hours of social work including SW 310, SW 401, SW 402, SW 412, and SW 414 at the University of South Alabama in order to receive the BSW. Transfer students must also meet all of the USA requirements for graduation.

Social Work faculty advisors evaluate any social work courses for transfer credit and equivalency and make a determination which ones may be accepted as equivalent to required

social work courses at USA. Only social work courses from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education will be accepted as equivalent for required professional social work courses. Advisors will make the best match between transfer courses and USA curriculum in order to minimize repetition of content.

The BSW program does not award credit to students for life experience. Prior work experience will not be considered for academic credit within the program and will not be credited towards social work field instruction hours or credit.

University of South Alabama
Bachelor of Social Work Program
Four Year Curriculum for the Social Work Program (Effective Fall 2007)

FALL

Freshman Year:

EH 101 or exemption
 CA 110 Oral Communication
 Foreign Language *
 CAS 100 (2)
 Biology (BY101)
Semester Cred. Hrs.: 15

Sophomore Year:

Math (3 or 4 cr)*
 Literature *
 HY135 Amer. Hist.
 AN 100 Intro to Cultural AN
 SW 200 Intro to Social Work
 SY 112 Social Problems
Semester Cred Hrs.: 18

Junior Year:

SW201 HB& SE I
 SY 381 Soc Research Meth I
 SW 301 Social Welfare Policy
 AFR 101* or Humanities
 PSY 120
Semester Cred Hrs.: 15

Senior Year:

SW 402 Generalist Practice II
 Electives (6-8 cr)
 SY 445 Maj/Min Relations
 SW Field of Practice Elective
Semester Cred Hrs.: 15-17
Total Semester Cred Hrs.: 128

SPRING

EH 102
 Fine Arts*
 Foreign Language*
 SY 109 Intr. SY
 Bio. (BY 102)
Semester Cred Hrs.: 16

PHL 131 * Intro Ethics
 HY136 Amer. Hist.
 Statistics 210
 SW 212 Int. Soc. Wel.
 PSC130 US Govt
 SW 214 Field Exp (2)
Semester Cred Hrs.: 17

SW 302 H B & SE II
 SY 382 Soc Res Meth II
 SW 401 Gen. Pract I
 SW 310 Comm. Context
 SY 220 Marriage & Fam
Semester Cred Hrs.: 15

SW 412 Field Instr (12 cr)
 SW 414 Senior Semin.
 Elective (2-3)
Semester Cred Hrs.: 15-17

Computer Technology _____

Writing Courses _____

*General Education requirements: see College of Arts and Sciences section of the Bulletin for acceptable courses.

** Students completing BSW requirements automatically complete the requirements for a minor in Sociology. Students must meet college computer proficiency.

STUDENT ADVISEMENT

Full-time members of the social work faculty serve as student advisors and maintain a minimum of six office hours per week to meet with students. Social work advising consists of addressing both professional and academic issues and students are strongly encouraged to contact their advisor at least once per semester prior to registration. Visit with social work advisors will help to avoid delays in graduation. Social work faculty members maintain regularly scheduled, posted office hours and are available at other times by appointment.

Student advisement is a critical part of professional social work education and the Social Work program at USA. The professional relationship developed between a student and the faculty advisor helps each student progress through the program, to be socialized into the social work profession, and to complete the BSW. Once a student has enrolled in the pre-professional social work major, a full-time social work faculty member is assigned as the student's advisor. Advisors are full-time members of the Social Work faculty. The student continues to have an assigned social work faculty advisor for the duration of enrollment in the program. The duties of the faculty advisor are joint assessment with the student of aptitude and motivation for a social work career, facilitating adjustment to the university, and assistance in selection and scheduling of course work.

In addition to the assessment of a student's academic work, faculty advisors may discuss student-related problems that interfere with academic performance or other problems for which the student requests help from a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor helps the student assess the problem and suggests possible resources that may be helpful.

Through socialization and interaction, faculty advisors assist students with decision about career interests and field placements in social work. This aspect of student advising is a valuable resource that students should use. Advisors may assist pre-professional social work students in applying for the social work major. Advisors also help students in developing degree plans and applying for graduation.

Students majoring in social work should not drop or add any course without discussing the implications of changes with their advisor. Courses in the social work major are carefully sequenced to maximize student learning. Dropping a course that is a pre-requisite for another course may negatively affect the student's ability to progress smoothly through the program.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Final course grades are intended to measure student achievement of course objectives. Each course syllabus provides a listing of course objectives, readings, assignments, and the points that may be earned for each course assignment. The syllabus also lists the grading scale for total points for the course and explains the grading criteria. In evaluating student performance the following general criteria are used:

100% - 90% = A
89% - 80% = B
79% - 70% = C
69% - 60% = D
> 60% = F

Point values are identified on tests and methods of evaluation identified on student writing assignments. The evaluation and grading criteria for Field Instruction are outlined in the Field Instruction Manual.

Field evaluations provide measures of competency in practice situations that are evaluated by the field coordinator and faculty field liaisons. The grading scale of points measures level of performance assigned in the learning contract between the field instruction agency and the Social Work Program. Students' ability to integrate social work knowledge, skills, and values into practice situations are integrated into the field evaluation.

Students and their assigned faculty advisors periodically review academic status at which time a discussion may take place regarding ways the students may enhance their academic performance if necessary.

Social Work education requires students to take initiative and assume responsibility for learning the knowledge, values, and skills for professional social work. It is important for students to attend classes regularly, come to class prepared, and participate in class activities and discussions. Irregular class attendance or lack of preparation is likely to result in grades that are unsatisfactory. Many social work classes have class attendance policies that may affect a student's overall grade.

CONTINUATION AS A MAJOR IN THE BSW PROGRAM

Once the student is admitted to the major continued academic and professional performance is expected. The program will initiate a change of major from Pre-professional Social Work to Social Work for the student. The student will then need to meet with his/her advisor to sign off on a form indicating student understanding of the criteria for continuation as a social work major. The criteria for continuation as a major include:

- Maintain a 2.50 grade point average in social work courses.
- Maintain an overall 2.50 grade point average at USA.
- Demonstrate acceptable professional conduct, personal integrity and emotional stability requisite for effective social work practice.
- Demonstrate identification with the profession of social work
- Demonstrate behavior consistent with Code of Ethics for the National Association of Social Workers.

If any of these criteria are not met, the USA Social Work program will notify the student in writing. If the issue is a GPA below 2.5 the Social Work program will give the student a letter indicating that he/she is on probation for the major. Students who are placed on probation in this matter will have one semester to raise the GPA above 2.5 or they will be removed from the Social Work major. Other issues and behaviors may also result in termination from the major. Students should read the program policy on Termination from the BSW Program for Professional reasons listed below.

GRADE GRIEVANCE

Students concerned about a final grade received for a completed course work may pursue a grade grievance under the policies of USA. Specific information on the grade grievance process may be found in the student handbook [The Lowdown](#) at:

<http://www.southalabama.edu/lowdown/studentgrievances.pdf>

TERMINATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE BSW PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL REASONS

Professionally appropriate conduct and behavior in accordance with the principles of social work ethics is essential to maintain the integrity and high standards of the profession, and to maintain the public trust. Undergraduate students enrolled in the BSW program are given special status as social workers, are eligible for membership in professional organizations, and are given exemptions from licensing requirements.

Social Work students will conduct themselves as professionals and follow the principles of the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. Students must understand that the grades earned are not the only indication of the students' ability to become professional social workers. Since ethical behavior is at the core of social work competency, behavior that appears to violate the Code of Ethics will initiate a review by the Social Work faculty. The information necessary to start a review may come from any source however reports from anonymous sources will not be considered. Self-reporting is permitted. Students who know of ethical issues have an ethical obligation to discuss this with program faculty.

As matters of student behaviors that conflict with professional principles arise, the Social Work Program Director will convene the program faculty to conduct a review. In this review, persons with relevant knowledge may be interviewed and relevant documents examined. The review should be concluded and written findings submitted to the student and Program Director within ten working days. Should the faculty find violations of the Code of Ethics, recommendations for action may include:

- 1) a letter of censure
- 2) appropriate corrective action

3) dismissal from the Social Work major

Students may appeal the findings of the faculty review within five working days. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Social Work Program Director and be based on errors of fact. The Program Director will inform the student in writing within five working days of the decision on the appeal.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION

The Social Work Student Organization (SWSO) is the student organization recognized by student government as representing Social Work students at USA. The SWSO's statement of purpose is:

The USA Social Work Student Organization works to support the Social Work program and students. The SWSO provides a mechanism for student input into the Social Work program, offers an opportunity to explore common interests in Social Work, serves as a resource for students, and participates in community service projects. Anyone with an interest in the profession is encouraged to join the organization. SWSW officers are elected by the membership from declared Social Work majors.

The SWSO has an assigned faculty advisor. The organization provides networking and socialization among Social Work students. Each year, SWSO members choose service projects and organize attendance at professional meetings that enhance learning and commitment to the values of the social work profession.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Students are encouraged to participate in the ongoing process of governance, program evaluation, and policy development for the Social Work Program. The Social Work Student Organization (SWSO) provides the forum for selecting student representatives and communicating with the program.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The University of South Alabama and the Social Work Program are committed to the policy of non-discrimination. The University policy states:

The University of South Alabama and its colleges and subdivisions follow a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, race, and disability in admission policies and practices, educational programs, activities, and employment practices according to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The University of South Alabama provides equal educational opportunities to and is open and accessible to all qualified students without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or qualified handicap/ disability, with respect to all of its programs and activities. The University of South Alabama does not discriminate on the basis of disability. No otherwise qualified person with a disability, solely on the basis of such disability, will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in the administration of any educational program or

activity including admission or access thereto or in treatment or employment therein by the University of South Alabama.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The University of South Alabama maintains the Office of Disabled Student Services in the Division of Student Affairs. <http://www.southalabama.edu/dss/>
This office provides students who have a documented disability with assistance to facilitate their learning. According to the Office of Special Students Student Services:

“Disabled Student Services' philosophy is to provide an education for individuals with disabilities through equal access, empowerment, support, resources, advocacy, collaboration and outreach throughout the University and community. In addition to providing services and accommodations to students with disabilities as mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Disabled Student Services works closely with faculty and staff in an advisory capacity and assists in the development of reasonable accommodations that allow students with disabilities to fully participate in all of the programs offered on campus.”

This office assists with the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and maintains confidentiality about their condition. The Office of Special Student Services offers information, counseling, and referral for students related to appropriate documentation of and qualification for disability accommodations.

The assistive services provided by the Office of Special Student Services include offering students priority registration, with counseling, and advocacy. This office may offer students assistance with technology in the form of:

- 1) Assistive computer technology including an accessible lab, text-to voice software, text scanning equipment, screen readers, and magnifiers
- 2) Enlargements for the visually impaired
- 3) Interpreters for the deaf
- 4) Assistance in obtaining recordings for the blind
- 5) Books on tape
- 6) Tape recording class lectures
- 7) Testing including extra time, Braille or orally administered tests
- 8) Assisting with physical accommodations in and out of the classroom as covered under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Disabled Student Services delivers training for faculty and staff regarding their services and accommodations. Information regarding disability services is made available in the USA Advising Manual <http://www.southalabama.edu/advisingmanual/disabledss.html>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (NASW)

NASW is a national professional association serving the diverse needs of social workers and is the largest professional membership organization for social workers in the country. Students are strongly encouraged to join NASW, and students may join at a reduced membership rate. Application forms for NASW membership and information on NASW is available from Social Work faculty members.

NASW provides a wide variety of services designed to help students achieve their potential as social workers and to be socialized into the profession. The services provided by NASW include: professional publications, (including the annual subscription to the NASW journal Social Work); offering conferences and educational opportunities, and providing networking opportunities for NASW members. NASW is significant force in promoting social and economic justice through lobbying efforts for clients and social workers at the state and national levels.

SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE

Upon graduation from the Social Work program at USA, alumni may be eligible for social work licensure in Alabama or other states. Licensing regulations and categories vary considerably across states and specific rules may have to be consulted.

In Alabama, BSWs may be eligible for a social work license as a LBSW. Licensing requires submission of an application, verification of information such as transcripts, and a passing grade on a licensing examination. For more specific information consult the Alabama State Board of Social Work Examiners at:

<http://abswe.state.al.us/applications.htm>

SOCIAL WORK ETHICS

Ethical behavior is critical to the effective practice of social work. Social work students are expected to read, understand and act in accordance with appropriate professional codes of ethics. Web addresses for the three most relevant of these codes are listed below. While students are held most directly responsible for adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics, the Code of Ethics of the Alabama State Board of Social Work Examiners and the National Association of Black Social Workers are important for students to understand.

NASW CODE OF ETHICS

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics may be found at:

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

The Code of Ethics for the Alabama State Board of Social Work Examiners is the relevant code for the state's social work licensing entity and may be found at:

http://www.abswe.state.al.us/pdfs/st_conduct_ethics.pdf

NABSW CODE OF ETHICS

The Code of Ethics for the National Association of Black Social workers is located at:

<http://www.nabsw.org/mserver/CodeofEthics.aspx?menuContext=720>