



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

"Strengthening Children, Families and Communities"

Graduate Student Handbook¹ 2007 - 2008

¹ Revised by Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, Graduate Advisor and Marci W. Siegel, LCSW,
Coordinator of Field Education – August 2007

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Graduate Student Handbook – 2007-2008

*Revised by: Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, Graduate Advisor and
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Effective August 27, 2007

Welcome to the graduate program in Social Work at San Diego State University. We hope the years you spend with us will be rewarding. To help make sure that they are as trouble free as possible, we are providing you with this *Handbook*. It may be downloaded from the School of Social Work website at: http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/grad_handbook/.

I. MSW PROGRAM MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the San Diego State University School of Social Work is to “educate students with the knowledge, values, ethics, and skills to become competent professional generalist, direct service, and administrative practitioners. Working primarily in public and non-profit agencies, graduates help diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities recognize their strengths, access needed resources, and empower themselves to reach their goals and potential” (SDSU School of Social Work, Self-Study to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), 2000).

MSW Program Goals:

As per the 2000 Self-Study to CSWE, the goals of the MSW program are:

1. Develop advanced practitioners who can intervene on multiple levels with diverse populations.
2. Educate social workers for leadership positions in the community and profession.
3. Promote as a guiding principle for practice the commitment to social and economic justice.
4. Educate social workers for the full range of practice settings, but particularly for the public and non-profit sector.

MSW Program Objectives:

According to the 2000 Self-Study to CSWE, the objectives of the MSW educational program are to:

1. Prepare advanced social work practitioners who have been grounded in social work knowledge, skills, ethics, and values as they relate to multiple levels of social work intervention;

2. Prepare social workers who use empirical research and are able to critically analyze the appropriateness and effectiveness of the various modes of intervention for assisting diverse vulnerable populations and resolving social problems;
3. Prepare advanced social work practitioners with specialized knowledge and skills in a social work intervention method, whether direct practice or administration, and who demonstrate a high level of professional competency;
4. Prepare advanced social worker practitioners with the ability to assume leadership roles in the community and who strive to influence social policies;
5. Prepare advanced social work practitioners who will approach service delivery from an interdisciplinary and strengths perspective;
6. Prepare social workers who use biopsychosocial approach, and who have specialized knowledge and skills which will enable them to intervene effectively with selected vulnerable populations (i.e., children, youth and families, the mentally ill the elderly and the physically incapacitated);
7. Prepare advanced social work practitioners who are knowledgeable about the value and application of social work practice research, and who will use practice research to improve their own professional practice skills;
8. Prepare advanced social work practitioners committed to social and economic justice and who can intervene to empower oppressed groups to participate more fully and equitably in society.
9. Prepare advanced social work practitioners responsive to the needs of diverse groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, and national origin.
10. Prepare advanced social work practitioners who have a commitment to continuing education, professional growth and lifelong learning.

II. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVISING

Website: www.socialwork.sdsu.edu or www.sdsu.edu (Social Work in Department Directory)

Graduate Advisor: **Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW**

Office: HH-110 / Telephone: 619.594.6459 / Email: lucindarasmussen@cox.net

The Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), is your link to the University and the School of Social Work. Dr. Rasmussen will provide you with academic direction and support, as well as information and counsel on all aspects of program and course requirements and administrative procedures (e.g., scheduling and sequencing of courses, requirements of the MSW program, overall academic progress, concerns about administrative or Faculty decisions, grievance process, and/or other matters of concern).

Please note that Dr. Rasmussen provides academic advising once you have been admitted to the MSW program and have begun your first semester of coursework. Questions related to Admissions, or questions by newly accepted students prior to the beginning of their first semester of coursework should be directed to the Student Affairs Coordinator, Professor [Donna Daly](#). During Dr. Rasmussen's absence from campus (i.e., Winter Break, Summer term), [Dr. Dan Finnegan](#), Associate Director of the School of Social Work, advises graduate students. He can be reached in the Social Work Office (HH 119) at 619-594-6850 or at dfinnega@mail.sdsu.edu. Requests to Dr. Finnegan for advising should pertain to emergent concerns only. Routine requests for advising on non-emergent matters should be directed to Dr. Rasmussen during the academic year (i.e., August 22, 2007 to December 31, 2007 and January 16, 2008 to May 23, 2008).

Documentation

Please Keep A File:

It is extremely important that you keep your own running file of all official actions regarding your status, all copies of documents sent to you by the School of Social Work or by University Graduate Division or Admissions and Records, all grade reports, all important memos from the School regarding requirements, curriculum, field due dates, etc. You may need copies of your course syllabi or Field Intern Evaluations for verification for license requirements five or ten years from now. Please keep these materials. The School does not maintain materials indefinitely due to lack of storage space.

Graduate Bulletin

Please purchase a copy of the current [2007- 2008 Graduate Bulletin](#). You are responsible for all information contained in the Graduate Bulletin whether or not you purchase it. This document, the *Graduate Student Handbook 2007-2008* is meant to supplement the SDSU *2007-2008 Graduate Bulletin* and does not replace it. As a graduate student in the School of Social Work, you are responsible to read and be familiar with the contents of this *Handbook*.

Bulletin Boards

Important information is often posted on the School of Social Work bulletin boards in the glass cases outside the Social Work Office (HH 119). This includes: (a) general information (i.e., class registration, class scheduling, course changes, etc.); and (b) Field Education announcements). Other bulletin boards are allocated to the Graduate Social Work Association, NASW, Society of Clinical Social Work, and student organizations.

Notices may not be posted on School bulletin boards without prior approval of the administration of the School of Social Work. If you have questions related to posting notices on School of Social Work bulletin boards, please contact the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen. *Please note that currently SDSU is making changes to Hepner Hall hallways. As of this writing (August 20, 2007), the School has not been informed as to when the bulletin boards will be replaced.*

Communications Central

All graduate students will have access to a Blackboard website entitled “School of Social Work – Communications Central.” They can post announcements or comments on the website’s Discussion Board. The Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), is the designated instructor for the Blackboard School of Social Work Communications Central website. Students may communicate with other students through email using this site. It is also possible for student organizations to set up their own Discussion Board. If you have questions about Communications Central, please contact Dr. Rasmussen or Dr. Finnegan.

Town Meetings

The School of Social Work holds "forums" or “Town Meetings” each semester for student input on the curriculum, policies and procedures of the School. Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen coordinates these forums. Notice of the Town Meetings will be posted in Hepner Hall and emailed to students as part of Dr. Rasmussen’s Graduate Announcements, as well as posted as an announcement on the Communications Central Blackboard website.

Faculty Mentors

In the first year of your matriculation, you will be assigned a faculty member to serve as your Faculty Mentor. The role of the Faculty Mentor is to be a resource related to social work career counseling. Students are free to contact their assigned mentor about questions they may have about the social work profession and their future career plans. However, questions related to day-to-day concerns that students might have as they go through the MSW Program should be directed to the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#).

The Faculty Mentor is assigned to the student only for the SW 600 level foundation courses. Once the student has passed the Qualifying Exam and been advanced to candidacy, the Faculty Mentor will no longer have a role. Second year (SW 700 level students) should seek mentoring from the Field Faculty member assigned as the instructor of their Field Practicum Lab or from other Faculty with whom they have developed relationships. Students who are interested in research are free to seek mentoring from any faculty member whose area of research is similar to their own research interests.

Near the beginning of the Fall Semester, Dr. Rasmussen will email those who are designated as Faculty Mentors and give them their list of first-year (SW 600 level) students who have been assigned to them for mentoring. The faculty will be encouraged to email the students on their list to inform them that they are their mentor. Dr. Rasmussen will keep a list of students with the assigned mentors on the bulletin board outside her office (HH 110). Students can check this list to find out who has been assigned as their Faculty mentor. Advising related to specific course content or assignments should be sought from the course instructor. The instructor may assist you in overcoming difficulties you may have understanding particular subject matter, designing and conducting research, or conceptualizing and developing frameworks for your future practice in social work.

Faculty Office Hours and Contact Information

Faculty Office Hours are posted in the School of Social Work Main Office, HH-119. For the Faculty Directory, please refer to the SDSU School of Social Work website – <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu>. If you are making a special trip to campus to see a professor you may want to call ahead to ensure that the professor is available.

Contact Information: Updating Student Addresses, Phone Numbers, Email

All students are required to secure an e-mail account and send the address to the Social Work office at socwork@mail.sdsu.edu and Social Work, Field Education swfield@mail.sdsu.edu. Throughout the semester, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor, distributes general advising information and program announcements to all students with a known e-mail account. Announcements will also be posted on the School of Social Work website at <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/announcements.php>. Announcements pertaining to Field Education may be found on the Field Education link at <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/field/>.

Students are expected to keep their contact information current with the Admissions and Records Office of the University and the administration of the School of Social Work. They may update their contact information through Web Portal for the University, but need to notify the School of Social Work directly about changes to their address, telephone number, or email. These changes can be made in person at the Social Work Office (HH 119) or emailed to Angela Long Albert at along@mail.sdsu.edu. Please note that email is the primary means that Faculty and administration of the School of Social Work communicate with students. It is therefore imperative that you make sure that Webportal and the School of Social Work have your current email address.

Suggestion File

A suggestion box (file folder) is located on the bulletin board outside of Hepner Hall, Room 119. Your suggestions on school of social work policies, procedures, curriculum, admissions process, etc. are welcome. Suggestions will be reviewed by the School of Social Work advising faculty. Responses to suggestions will be posted the first Monday of each month in the glass case bulletin board in the hallway by HH-119.

Job Notices

Job notices are posted on the School of Social Work web site. Please also consult with SDSU Career Services. They can assist you with your job search and resume. Each spring the School of Social Work co-sponsors an Agency Fair that provides students information about practicum agencies and career opportunities in social work.

III. UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (SSW) POLICIES

Registration

Registration is done through SDSU Web Portal each semester. You will use your SDSU RED ID number to register. Please refer to the Graduate Bulletin or review the Class Schedule on the SDSU website, <http://chhs.sdsu.edu/sw/current.php> each semester. In addition, the School of Social Work updates its schedule as changes occur. The newest schedule is posted in the glass case bulletin board, outside of the Social Work Office (HH 119). A schedule of classes is also made available at the Aztec Bookstore.

Admissions: Waiver/Proficiency Examinations

The School of Social Work does not have an advanced standing program. Students admitted to the Graduate social work program with a 3.0 GPA may be eligible to take a waiver examination for certain courses (SW 601, 619, and 690).

In order to be eligible to take a Waiver Examination, the following conditions must be met:

- The student must hold a Baccalaureate degree in Social Work from an accredited social work program or a major from a closely related field;
- The student must have achieved a grade of B or better in a course similar to the course in which the Waiver Examination is to be taken (i.e., SW 601 - Social Policy, SW 619 - Human Behavior in the Social Environment, and SW 690 – Social Work Research).
- Students who had majors from closely related fields may take the Waiver Examinations if they have had comparable courses with a grade of B and above. In this case, they need to provide documentation (e.g., syllabus, course outline, etc.) to demonstrate the comparability of the courses and their knowledge and proficiency with the material.

Who Administers the Waiver Examinations?

Applications to take the Waiver Examinations must be submitted to the Student Affairs Coordinator, Professor [Donna Daly](#), who administers the exams. Please contact her at 619-594-0888 or at ddaly@mail.sdsu.edu for the date, time and place of the exams. In the meantime, you should go ahead and register for the courses you are hoping to waive, according to the Registration instructions you have received.

Grading of Waiver Examinations

The Waiver Examinations are primarily in a multiple-choice format, although some exams have a section with short answer essay questions. Students will note their responses to multiple-choice questions on a Scantron (Form 882 ES). A Scantron machine is used to

grade the multiple-choice questions in the exams. Short answer essay questions will be graded by faculty members who teach the course being tested.

Students must receive at least a grade of B to pass the Waiver Examinations. If you are successful in these exams, you will not have to complete these courses (SW 601, 619, and/or 690) in the Graduate program, but will need to take an elective course approved by the Graduate Advisor for each of the courses waived. During the first week of class, you may drop the course(s) that you waived and add the approved elective(s).

Admissions: Conditional Status

Most students admitted to the School of Social Work are given the status of “Classified” upon their admission. Occasionally, students may be admitted under “Conditional” status. This means that certain conditions (e.g., 3.0 GPA in all coursework) must be met within a specified time period (generally 12 units). If conditional students do not meet the specified conditions by the time period indicated, they will not be allowed to continue in the MSW Program, unless the Graduate Advisor grants an extension for the conditions.

Once conditions have been met, the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), will submit a Change of Status form to the Graduate Division, which will change the student’s status to Classified. For questions related to Conditional and Classified Status, please contact Dr. Rasmussen or the Student Affairs Coordinator, Professor Donna Daly (see contact information above).

Transfer of Units

A maximum of 30 graduate units may be transferred from an accredited School of Social Work. Only Social Work courses can be used to substitute for the required coursework in the program. If you have graduate Social Work courses to transfer, you must see [Dr. Finnegan](#) for an evaluation and the submission of the required paper work, and you must make sure that the transcripts of the work are on file with Graduate Admissions. Transfer credit will not be accepted for the advanced practice courses (SW 744, 739, 740, and 745), advanced research courses (SW 791, 797), or the MSW II Advanced Field Practicum course (SW 750).

The School of Social Work does not accept life/work experience as transfer credit, or in lieu of any course requirements or academic credits.

Dropping and Adding Classes

The University provides a program adjustment period when classes may be dropped and/or added. The add/drop period is the first three weeks of the semester. Adding a class (or crashing) requires the acceptance of the instructor. Only the instructor may sign for adding a class. The administration of the School of Social Work discourages instructors from accepting students above the recommended class size for a course section.

The deadline for adding and dropping classes is September 17, 2007 for Fall Semester 2007 and February 11, 2008 for Spring Semester 2008. *Students* may be permitted to add or drop

classes after the deadline but will have to pay a fee to do so, usually \$25. The process for a late drop or add is explained in each semester's class schedule handbook.

Please note that dropping classes after the deadline is considered only with a documented, serious and compelling reason, and generally entails dropping all coursework for the semester, as opposed to a single class. If you find that you have a serious, compelling reason (e.g., severe illness, family emergency) for dropping your coursework, please contact the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), and she will advise you about the necessary procedures.

Leave Of Absence

Graduate Students may stop out of SDSU one semester in a calendar year and maintain continuing student status. If you elect to sit out the subsequent semester, you must file a Leave of Absence through RegLine to maintain continuing student status. It is your responsibility to meet all the necessary application and registration deadlines for the semester in which you intend to resume your courses, including deadlines for applying for a social work field placement (SW 650 or 750). Please be advised that a stop out may delay your timely progression through the program. For example, prerequisites for enrollment in a course must be met. It is your responsibility to notify the Graduate Advisor of your intent to take a leave of absence. If you are in the SW 650 or 750 Field Practicum course or have applied for a field course, you must also notify Professor Marci Siegel, LCSW, Coordinator of Field Education, that you no longer wish a field placement. These notifications should be done in writing (i.e., by email).

Seven Year Rule – Completion of Requirements for the MSW

No course on an Official Program of Study can be accepted that will be more than seven years old on the date of the award of your degree. This is the "Seven Year Rule" observed by almost all graduate schools. This also means that you have seven years from the date of your first course listed on the official program to complete your degree. After seven years your coursework will become invalid. Please contact the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), if you have concerns that any of your previous coursework was completed more than seven years ago.

Graduation Application

Graduation does not occur automatically upon completion of all requirements. You must apply for graduation and pay the required fee by September 17, 2007 for December graduation and February 11, 2008 for May, 2008 graduation. This involves completing the application at the office of the Graduate Division (Room 3320 of Centennial Hall) and paying the required fee of \$35. Please note: students are not allowed to participate in the Commencement Ceremony if they fail to apply for graduation by the designated deadline. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this policy!

The application for graduation is valid for one semester only. Should you fail to graduate in the semester for which you applied, you must reapply for the next semester, and pay an

additional fee. Deadlines for each semester are listed on the Academic Calendar in the Graduate Bulletin. All students who file for graduation will be allowed to participate in the Commencement Ceremony regardless of whether or not they qualify to receive the degree. Graduation information will be mailed to students by the Dean's Office in the College of Health and Human Services. Inquiries about the Commencement Ceremony should be directed to the Dean's Office, 619-594-6151. Announcements related to the Commencement Ceremony will also be posted online on the College of Health and Human Services website (see <http://chhs.sdsu.edu>) and will be sent to students via the graduate announcements sent by the Graduate Advisor.

GRADES

Academic Expectations

Students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average in all coursework in the Graduate program in order to remain in good standing and be eligible to be awarded the MSW. If you receive a C in a course it must be balanced by grades in one or more other courses that raise your overall grade point average to at least 3.0. A grade of C- or below is not acceptable even if a 3.0 average is achieved. A course in which a C- or below is given must be repeated. Graduate students may be permitted with the approval of the Graduate Division to repeat up to one course.

Academic Probation

If your cumulative GPA drops below 2.85 you are automatically placed "on Academic Probation." In the following semester that you are matriculated, you must have a term GPA of at least 2.85, or you will be disqualified from the University by the Graduate Division. "Academic probation will be lifted when the student has attained a 2.85 or better on graduate level work attempted and all work attempted at San Diego State University" (2007-2008 Graduate Bulletin, p. 33). If you fail to achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.85 by the second semester after being placed on Academic Probation, you will be disqualified from the University by the Graduate Division (See Academic Performance section of this Graduate Handbook for more information.)

Consequences for "No Credit" Grades in Field Coursework

The MSW I and MSW II Field Practicums (SW 650 or SW 750 courses) are graded on a Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) basis. Please note that a grade of No Credit (NC) in SW 650 or 750 courses will result in an automatic disqualification from the Social Work program.

School of Social Work Grading Policy

Adopted and approved by SSW Faculty 05/14/2003

Faculty members in the School of Social Work take great care in the assignment of grades. In the Spring of 2003, the Faculty adopted and approved the following grading policy that is currently in effect. The policy is as follows:

The grades at the School of Social Work will reflect the University policy (IV-C-1). No formula for a "curve" is appropriate for all classes, but faculty members are expected to use all grades among academic levels. The grade for average achievement in undergraduate programs is C; the grade for average graduate achievement is B. Graduate grades, as per University policy, are:

- A - Superior performance
- B - Satisfactory performance
- C - Minimally passing
- D - Unacceptable for graduate credit
- F – Failing
- CR – Credit
- NC – No Credit
- RP – Report in Progress

These grades will be further defined by the criteria described below.

Graduate Guidelines:

Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work that not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content, but also shows that the student has (a) undertaken complex tasks, (b) applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or (c) demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The degree to which the student demonstrates these skills determines whether he/she receives an A or an A-.

A grade of B+ is given to work that is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-satisfactory understanding of the material being tested, and has exceeded expectations in the assignment.

A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on the assignment and meets the expectations of the course.

A grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than satisfactory on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and is below expectations.

A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.

Grades between C- and F denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in a student's performance on the assignment.

A grade of Credit in graduate level courses is equivalent to grades that earn 3.0 or more grade points (B and above).

A grade of No Credit in graduate level courses is equivalent to grades that earn less than 3.0 grade points (B- and below).

A grade of RP (Report in Progress) is used in courses that extend more than one term. It indicates that work is in progress, has been evaluated, and is satisfactory to date. In assigning grades, the assumption will be that the student has completed the assignment at an average level of achievement (B for graduate students; C for undergraduate students). Students who demonstrate higher or lower performance levels will receive grades consistent with the guidelines provided, including plus and minus grades.

Incompletes

A grade of Incomplete (I) indicates that a portion of the required coursework has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time period due to unforeseen, but fully justified, reasons (e.g., personal illnesses, disabling accidents, or family emergencies). If you find that you must resort to an incomplete because of an emergency situation, see your instructor. If he or she agrees that an emergency situation exists he or she will determine with you the means by which the remaining course requirements will be completed.

An incomplete not made up within a one year automatically converts to an incomplete charged (IC). An IC grade counts as an F in the calculation of Your GPA. Remember an incomplete is the decision of the instructor. Please note that a grade of Incomplete in the field practicum courses must be made up before the next semester field course begins.

Please be advised that a grade of Incomplete may interfere with your timely progression through the program. A course with a grade of (I) does not fulfill the prerequisite requirements of another course. You will not be eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam if you have any outstanding grades of Incomplete.

Academic Performance

The Graduate Advisor of the School of Social Work has responsibility for periodic review and evaluation of all graduate students' progress in achieving the Master's of Social Work Degree. In keeping with the requirement of the Graduate School that all graduate students remain in good academic standing during the course of their study, the performance of any student not maintaining a cumulative overall average grade of 3.0 or better throughout their matriculation is of serious concern to the School of Social Work.

A 3.0 GPA needed to be in good academic standing in the School of Social Work. Having a GPA of at least 3.0 is necessary in order for the Graduate Advisor to file a student's Official Program of Study with the Graduate Division. Students cannot be advanced to candidacy for the MSW degree unless they have: (a) taken and passed the Qualifying Exam (see section below on Qualifying Exam); and (b) have an Official Program of Study on file with the Graduate Division. Furthermore, students are not allowed to sit for the Comprehensive Exam

or complete a thesis committee form unless they have been advanced to candidacy and have a GPA of 3.0 in both their overall GPA and the social work courses on their Official Program of Study. The University does not confer a graduate degree to students who finish their Official Program of Study with a GPA of less than 3.0. Failure to achieve the 3.0 GPA could result in being disqualified from the MSW program.

The Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#) reviews the academic performance of all students at the end of each semester and sends notices to those students whose GPA is below the required 3.0, or who have other problems in their Official Program of Study (i.e., courses that need to be retaken, outstanding grades of Incomplete, or other situations that stop their academic progress and/or impact their eligibility to take the Qualifying and Comprehensive Exams, or to graduate). If you receive a notice from the Graduate Advisor, you should contact her and make an appointment to discuss your academic performance.

SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS)

The School of Social Work abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students who have disabilities that can potentially impact their academic performance may request special accommodations by contacting the SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS) and having an evaluation. If a student suspects he or she may have a disability, they should contact SDS and request an informational session with a SDS counselor. If the counselor agrees that the student's concerns may reflect a disability, the counselor will refer the student for an evaluation.

If a SDS evaluation determines that a student has a disability and is eligible for academic accommodations (e.g., extended time for taking exams), it is the student's responsibility to inform their instructors. He/she should meet with their instructors and provide the necessary paperwork from SDS for appropriate academic accommodations. Please note that your graduate advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen is available to expedite a student's referral to SDSU SDS. Refer to the SDSU Student Disability Services web site at www.sa.sdsu.edu/sds for additional information.

Students who are requesting academic accommodations for the SW 650 and 750 Field Practicum courses need to follow these procedures:

1. Before the student field practicum application due date, contact SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS) for an evaluation.
2. Obtain a letter from SDS stating the requested appropriate academic accommodations.
3. Obtain and provide a copy of the completed Release of Information form SDSU SDS for the Coordinator of Field Education, Field Faculty, and Field Instructor for consultation with SDSU SDS.
4. Inform the Field Instructor / agency field practicum directly or provide written authorization/documentation. Written authorization should include your signature and date, indicating you are authorizing Coordinator of Field Education or Field Faculty to inform the Field Instructor /agency field practicum of the requested reasonable academic accommodations.

Reasonable academic accommodations need to be requested through SDSU SDS before coursework is completed. Course instructors and Field faculty are not responsible to provide

these accommodations after the fact (e.g. student informing faculty after exams, papers, presentations, at the end of the semester, etc.).

For the Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam, students who have disabilities should bring their SDS paperwork to Dr. Dan Finnegan to complete. He will arrange with SDS for appropriate academic accommodations for the student to take the Qualifying Exam or Comprehensive Exam.

IV. MSW COURSEWORK – UNIVERSITY & SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK POLICIES:

All graduate study at San Diego State comes under the supervision of the University's [Graduate Division](#) which establishes the general requirements for admission, graduate status and changes of status, probation, disqualification, advancement to candidacy, graduation, and ultimately the awarding of advanced degrees. For the student this means understanding the processes involved, filing the proper forms on time, and fulfilling certain responsibilities. It is strongly recommended that you read the sections of the SDSU Graduate Bulletin 2007-2008 related to the requirements of a Master's degree, with special attention to the section related to the School of Social Work.

Program of Study

The School of Social Work offers several accredited academic programs of study at the master's level:

- Master of Social Work Degree (MSW) – 2 Year, 3-Year, 4-Year Options
- Master of Social Work Degree and Master of Public Health Degree (MSW/MPH) - concurrent degrees
- Master of Social Work Degree and Juris Doctor Degree (MSW/JD) – concurrent degrees

Information specific to the Master's in Social Work (MSW) degree is presented below. Information specific to either of the concurrent programs can be secured by contacting the Graduate Advisor or using the hyperlinks on the School of Social Work website at <http://chhs.sdsu.edu/sw/programs.php>.

The MSW program is a 60 unit program of study that is organized around two distinct method concentrations. Each student develops an **Official Program of Study** that identifies their concentrations of study: Direct Practice or Administrative Practice. The order in which these courses should be taken is shown at the following url: <http://chhs.sdsu.edu/sw/sequence.php>

Within each concentration, students may design their own program of study according to their interest in various service areas in social work (e.g., child welfare, mental health practice, health and aging, school social work). They may select electives that correspond with their interests.

The following is a brief summary of the **“Steps to Graduation,”** which are discussed in detail in the various sections of this Graduate Student Handbook:

1. Achieve Classified status in the MSW program.
2. Maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or above.
3. Pass all SW 600 level courses with a grade of at least a C.
4. Take and pass the Qualifying Exam.
5. Choose either the Direct Practice or Administrative Practice as the concentration for your Official Program of Study (the choice is determined by the type of agency that accepts you for your second year Field placement).
6. Have Official Program of Study filed with the Graduate Division. (This is done by the Graduate Advisor). The Official Program of Study cannot be filed if a student has a grade of C- or below on any of the courses needed for the Official Program.
7. Be Advanced to Candidacy. This takes place during Summer term between finishing SW 600 level courses and beginning SW 700 level courses.
8. Pass all SW 700 level courses with a grade of at least a C.
9. File for Graduation with the Graduate Division.
10. Take and pass the Comprehensive Exam, or complete and defend a Thesis.

Course Sequencing

Sequence of courses for the MSW Program is outlined in the following table and is also posted on the School of Social Work website at: <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/>. If you have questions related to the sequencing of your coursework, please contact the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#).

Please refer to Course Sequence Table below:

Sequencing of Courses taken under Options permitted MSW Graduate students.							
		2 year option		3 year option		4 year option	
		Direct	Admin	Direct	Admin	Direct	Admin
1st year	Policy	SW 601		SW 601		SW 601	
	HBSE	SW 619		SW 619		SW 619	
Fall	Practice	SW 630					
	Research	SW 690					
	Field	SW 650					

1st year Spring	HBSE Practice Research Field	SW 620A SW 631 & SW 632 SW 610 SW 650		SW 620A SW 690	SW 620A SW 690	
2nd year Fall	Practice Research Field HBSE Elective	SW 744 SW 791 SW 750A SW 720 Elective	SW 740 SW 791 SW 750B SW 720 Elective	SW 630 SW 610 SW 650	SW 630 SW 610 SW 650	
2nd year Spring	Policy Practice Field Elective	SW 702 SW 739 SW 750A Elective	SW 702 SW 745 SW 750B Elective	SW 631 & SW 632 SW 650	SW 631 & SW 632 SW 650	
3rd year Fall	Practice Research Field HBSE Elective		SW 744 SW 791 SW 750A SW 720 Elective	SW 740 SW 791 SW 750B SW 720 Elective	SW 720 Elective	SW 720 Elective
3rd year Spring	Policy Practice Field Elective		SW 702 SW 739 SW 750A Elective	SW 702 SW 745 SW 750B Elective	SW 702 Elective	SW 702 Elective
4th year Fall	Practice Research Field				SW 744 SW 791 SW 750A	SW 740 SW 791 SW 750
4th year Spring	Practice Field				SW 739 SW 750A	SW 745 SW 750B

GRADUATE FIELD EDUCATION

Field Education is an integral part of the curriculum and a core requirement for the MSW program. Each field course includes two major components: the practicum agency internship and the school-based practicum labs. The field practicum provides the social work student an opportunity to integrate and apply course theoretical knowledge and engage in social work practice in a community-based agency setting with supervised field learning experience. Field instruction prepares the students for professional practice and competence in social work by helping them develop the values, knowledge, and skills they will need to assume a range of professional roles (e.g., case manager, therapist, program manager, etc.).

The field practicum process is organized, sequential, selective, and individualized within the framework of a specified social work agency, and in congruence with the goals, requirements, and expectations of the School. Over the course of a two-year period, Graduate field education is expected to include:

1. direct practice interventions with individuals, families, and groups;
2. indirect practice interventions focusing on community, organizational, and/or institutional change;

3. a diversity of modalities, populations, treatment issues; and
4. a range of theoretical and teaching methodologies and practice models.

All these are to be presented and practiced within an environment of professional social work values and ethics, and competence and sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity.

Concurrent Field Education and Curriculum Integration

The Field Education curriculum begins only in the Fall semester and continues to the Spring semester for one academic year. Through the field practicum internship and practicum labs, students engage in selected and organized activities and apply the social work skills, knowledge, and values learned in the classroom.

To foster the integration process, all students in the field practicum must be concurrently enrolled in, and must satisfactorily complete the appropriate practice classes during the first and second years of field instruction (i.e., SW 650 students will be enrolled in SW 630, 631, and 632; SW 750-A will be enrolled in SW 744 and 739; SW 750-B will be enrolled in SW 740 and 745). Students must have a “C” or better in each practice class to continue the field education process.

Integration is a two-way process. The field practicum is expected to provide “in vivo” experiences relevant to academic content, and the student is expected to apply this content to his/her activities in the field. Also, the student is expected to share course information with his/her field instructor for purposes of planning, integration, and to meet course requirements. On the other hand, the student is expected to utilize relevant field material in his/her course work through class discussion and case presentation.

Field Practicum Agencies

Field instruction takes place in selected and approved agencies, located throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties only. These agencies represent a complete range of social services, and are approved based on the quality of their professional practice, their commitment to addressing social problems, their interest in participating in professional education, and their ability to make personnel and material resources available.

The School is affiliated with more than 350 agencies. The agencies must be pre-approved and confirmed by the School. Field instructors, employed and recommended by their agency, are responsible for teaching students in their field practicums. These instructors must also receive prior approval and confirmation by the School and are required to complete a one-semester Field Instructor Training Course. Each academic year, there are approximately 250 approved social work professionals who serve as active field instructors for our SDSU School of Social Work students. Students receive 1-2 hours per week of supervision from a qualified field instructor, which includes a minimum of one-hour per week of formalized, individualized, face-to-face, field instruction.

The Field Placement Process

All graduate students must meet the eligibility requirements before they are enrolled in the required field practicum course. Each field practicum assignment is made on an individual basis and takes the following into consideration: (a) professional educational assessment of the student's future goals and professional interests; (b) the student's previous internship, volunteer, and/or work experiences; (c) educational background, geographic location, the learning provided by the agency; and (d) academic accommodations, if a student requests and is found eligible through SDSU SDS. Though field experience varies with agency specific circumstances, school curriculum, course criteria, expectations and requirements must be met.

The field placement process begins in February for graduate students, prior to enrolling in the MSW I, Foundation Year Field Practicum (SW 650 course) for the fall semester. For MSW II, Advanced Year Field Practicum students (SW 750A or SW 750B course), the field placement planning process is initiated at the beginning of the Spring semester only.

In order to be placed in a field agency, a student will complete the following:

1. Attend field placement orientation/planning meeting;
2. Complete and submit the course field application materials by the due date, along with the liability insurance fee;
3. Select (for SW 750 students only) a field practicum selection and being referred for the agency interview;
4. Participate and pass all additional required agency screenings (e.g., security clearance evaluations, fingerprinting check, health, immunization, and TB screenings, and/or random drug testing), required by the Agency for final confirmation;
5. Be confirmed by the School of Social Work as placed in the selected field agency; and
6. Attend the required Field Practicum Orientation Lab (held one week prior to the beginning of the Fall Semester).

The field practicum placement process takes place within the time frame designated by the School of Social Work, mid-January until June, with students meeting the required deadlines. All field practicum assignments are arranged by the Field Education Faculty Placement Committee only. The Coordinator of Field Education is administratively responsible for the final field practicum assignments.

The Field Education Structure

The field practicum year-long course begins only at the start of the Fall semester and continues through to the end of the Spring semester. Placements extend over the Academic Year, excluding University break periods.

Foundation Year and Advanced Year field practicum placements must be in different agencies, each of which must meet the criteria and objectives for that year of field instruction. Students are assigned to the MSW I Foundation Year practicum that exposes them to a generalist experience, including micro, mezzo, and macro practice and a broad range of clientele. The MSW II Advanced Year practicum is coordinated with a student's choice of concentration and specialization.

Each field practicum course is divided into two required components:

1. Field Practicum Agency Internship
2. Field Practicum Labs

Please refer to the Master Field Course Syllabus for additional requirements and information.

Field Practicum Agency Internship

The graduate field practicum consists of 1050 hours of field practicum, divided into two years of study, the first consisting of 460 hours and the second of 590 hours. Students in either the three-year or four-year part-time and/or dual degree programs complete their field education in either the second and third years or second and fourth years. *Please refer to the Curriculum Course Sequence requirements for further information.*

The first year of field education is approximately 10 hours per week for the first two weeks, and then 16 hours per week for the remainder of the academic year, for a total of seven units (3 units in the fall, 4 units in the spring). For the advanced field practicum, students are required to spend 20 hours per week during the academic year, for a total of 8 course units (4 units per semester). In the MSW II Advanced Field Practicum year, dual degree program students only (MSW/MPH or MSW/JD) conduct their practicum for 16 hours per week, for a total of 480 hours.

Field practicum hours must coincide with regular agency hours. Weeknights and/or weekend field placement hours are not allowed and are not made available, although a small portion of practicum hours may take place after regular agency hours (e.g., a weeknight), provided there is appropriate professional supervision and learning experiences at the agency. The student's practicum agency schedule is determined by his/her coursework schedule, including the practicum labs, and the agency schedule. Students shall be in their field practicum for a minimum of a 4-hour block of time.

Field Practicum Labs

All students in field practicum courses attend and participate in regularly scheduled labs that meet on a class day throughout the academic year. These labs are a major component of each 3 or 4 unit field course. They are taught by the student's assigned field faculty instructor, who also serves as the student's School of Social Work liaison to the practicum. The labs introduce the student to professional social work, professional values, ethics, use of professional self, client intervention strategies and techniques, evidence-based practice models, etc. Students in the labs: (a) explore issues of diversity and culturally sensitive practice; (b) apply theory to actual work with clients through case presentations, role-plays and case discussions; (c) practice skill application and development; and (d) discuss personal and professional values and transference and countertransference issues. Field labs consist of group process and learning experiences, encourage professional self-examination, and provide problem-solving activities.

Since the lab sections are agency-driven, students are assigned their lab units, including the lab course times and Field faculty instructors. Students are informed of their Field Course Lab Schedule before they register for Fall semester classes so they will have time to plan their classes and internship schedules.

Legal and Ethical Standards / Professional Student Responsibility

Student interns shall be professional and act in accordance and compliance with laws, social work values, ethics, and SDSU academic standards, including the NASW Code of Ethics-1999 revised (www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code) (which governs social work practice).

Depending on the severity, duration, time frame, and type, felony / misdemeanor convictions can lead to: (a) an academic year delay in field placement or (b) immediate field practicum ineligibility; and/or disqualification from the School. Each case is reviewed in relationship to the requirements of the SDSU School of Social Work policies, curriculum requirements, laws, ethics and values directing the standards in the social work profession. Misrepresentation and/or omission statements related to previous or current convictions will be considered for immediate ineligibility for the SDSU SW Field Education courses. During the academic year, field practicum agencies may check for recent arrests, convictions, and violations of NASW Ethical Codes. Please note that agency policy and/or legal issues may be cause for termination from the field practicum and thus, the field practicum course.

Liability and Worker's Compensation Insurance

Each student enrolled in the field practicum course is required to participate in the School of Social Work Professional Student Liability Insurance policy each year for a modest fee. During the field placement process, students are required to submit a check or money order for the insurance policy fee, along with their completed field applications, by the application due date. Field applications are not considered complete and will not be processed unless the insurance policy fee is met.

Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage is provided for the student by San Diego State University at no additional charge. This coverage exists during regular University semester periods only.

Additional Field Education Information

Stipends:

A limited number of stipends are offered by the field practicum agencies, and vary from year to year. A few MSW I agencies offer training stipends and additional stipends may be available for MSW II students. MSW students are encouraged to review the stipend special programs available on the SDSU School of Social Work web site.

Field Practicum Internships at Employment Sites:

Only in special circumstances can a graduate student have an internship assignment where the student is employed. Students who wish to be considered for internship in their place of employment must complete additional field application materials and submit to the Coordinator of Field Education by the due date for review. Approval must be granted by the Coordinator Field Education and will be obtained only if certain conditions are met and the situation is educationally sound and appropriate for the particular student. MSW students, who are possibly planning to request their field practicum internship at their employment site,

should consult with the Coordinator of Field Education in mid-Fall semester for early planning. Please note that the graduate student can apply for only one year for his/her field practicum to be at the employment site.

For a list of criteria, please refer to the "Field Practicum Internship at Employment Site Application" which is distributed at the beginning of the spring semester.

Agency Locations:

Please note that San Diego and Imperial Counties comprise an extensive geographical area, and public transportation is a limited resource. Therefore it is strongly encouraged for students to have daily access to a dependable automobile to commute to field practicum agencies and to carry out assignments required by the field practicum agency. Students should plan and expect up to an average driving time of one-hour each way between their residence and the field practicum site.

Obtaining Additional Field Education Information:

For current information pertaining to Graduate Field Education, please refer to the SDSU School of Social Work, Field Education web site at <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/field> and the Graduate Bulletin Board (glass encased board), located next to HH-119.

MSW Field Education consultation is available with Professor Marci W. Siegel, LCSW, Coordinator of Field Education, or for the Title IV-E MSW students with Professor Linda Newell, LCSW, Associate Coordinator of Field Education. Students may also consult with Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, Graduate Advisor.

Qualifying Exam

Students in the MSW program are required to successfully pass a written Qualifying Examination before being advanced to candidacy and allowed to enroll in the Social Work 700 level courses. Students take the Qualifying Exam at the end of the Spring semester during the final exam period.

Students are eligible to sit for the Qualifying Exam if they will have completed or are enrolled in 31 units of Social Work 600 level coursework by the end of the Spring Semester 2007 with a grade of at least a C in each course tested on the exam. The Qualifying Exam tests students' knowledge of the coursework in the SW 600 (foundation level) courses (SW 601, 610, 619, 620, 630, 631, 632, and 690). Topics for the Exam are listed in the Master Syllabus for each of the above courses. A Study Guide for the Exam is posted on the School of Social Work website at the beginning of Spring Semester.

The Qualifying Exam is multiple-choice; students will note their responses on a Scantron (Form 882 ES). A Scantron machine is used to grade the exams. Students must achieve a grade of 75% in order to pass the Exam.

Students who pass the Qualifying Exam will be advanced to candidacy. The paperwork to advance students to candidacy will be filed with the Graduate **Division** by Dr. Dan Finnegan during the summer after the student passes the Qualifying Exam. Students will receive notification from the Graduate Division that they have been advanced to candidacy.

Questions about Advancement to Candidacy should be directed to [Dr. Finnegan](#) or to the Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#).

Students are offered two opportunities to pass the Qualifying Examination. Students who fail to achieve a grade of 75% on their first attempt on the Qualifying Exam will have an opportunity to retake the Exam in July. At that time, they will be given the option of retaking the Qualifying Exam in the multiple-choice format, or taking it in short-answer essay format. Students who fail to pass the Qualifying Exam in two attempts will be disqualified from the MSW program.

Electives and Out of Department Electives

Students are not allowed to take elective courses until they have completed the SW 600 level coursework and taken and passed the Qualifying Exam. The foundation courses are considered prerequisites for the SW 700 level coursework, including elective courses. Exception is made for students who pass Waiver Exams for SW 601, 619, and/or 690, or who have transfer credit. The Graduate Advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, may approve these students to take electives, even though they have not yet finished the SW 600 foundation level coursework or taken the Qualifying Exam.

Six units of electives (or two courses) may be taken in other departments with the approval of the Graduate Advisor. Although we offer a variety of electives in the Social Work Program, students may wish to take some elective units in another department at San Diego State University. A Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirement for the Master's Degree approval form signed by the Graduate Advisor must be filed and accepted by the Graduate Division. All such courses must be related to social work and must be approved prior to enrollment by the Graduate Advisor. If you wish to take an out-of-department elective, you should email [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#) and provide a description of the course and a statement about why you wish to take it. Approval will be based on the Graduate Advisor's determination that the course is relevant to your Official Program of Study and that similar content taught from a social work perspective could not be obtained by taking an elective in the School of Social Work.

Students wishing to pursue California LCSW licensure after graduation should check with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (<http://www.bbs.ca.gov>) to see what coursework is currently required for eligibility to take the LCSW examinations. Please note that the California Business and Professions Code (California Board of Behavioral Sciences – BBS Statutes and Regulations) require pre-licensure coursework in child abuse, human sexuality, substance abuse and domestic violence to be eligible for the California State Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Some courses in the Social Work department fulfill these requirements (i.e., SW 758 Seminar in Substance Abuse Intervention (substance abuse) and SW 780 Advanced Seminar in Family Violence (domestic violence)). The following courses offered in other departments have met this requirement in the past: (a) Family Studies and Consumer Sciences 537 Child Abuse, (b) Community Health Education 574 Habit-forming Substances, and (c) Counseling and School Psychology 585A Human Sexuality for Counselors. Out-of-department courses may be taken to fulfill the LCSW requirement for licensure. However, they will not be approved for the student's Official Program of Study (unless the course is approved by the Graduate Advisor as an out-of-department elective that meets the eligibility criteria described above). Students should check with BBS to see if a

particular School of Social Work or University course might be accepted to fulfill LCSW pre-licensure requirements.

Thesis or Comprehensive Exam

In addition to completing the courses listed on their Official Program of Study and passing the Qualifying Exam, all students must complete and successfully defend a Thesis or pass a Comprehensive Exam to meet all academic requirements for graduation. The Thesis or Comprehensive Exam fulfills the University requirement of an “integrative experience” for a Master’s degree. When a student is admitted into the MSW program, she or he is admitted with the agreement that they will follow one of the two options outlined below. You have a choice of either doing a Thesis or taking the Comprehensive Exam as a requirement for your MSW. The decision is made when you register for classes in your last semester of the program.

Thesis

If you are planning to do a Thesis, you should have your ideas and procedures worked out long before your last semester, when your choice to do a Thesis becomes official. Information on the requirements and conduct of a Thesis will be discussed in the SW 690 Research class and can be found in a University guide to the conduct of a Thesis at SDSU. Please see: <http://gra.sdsu.edu/index.php?areaid=1§ionid=6&subsectionid=107>.

If you decide to pursue the Thesis option, we recommend that you take SW 797 as one of your electives and SW 799A as the second elective of your Official Program of Study. The steps for completing a Thesis are briefly summarized below:

1. Identify a research topic that you are interested in.
2. Contact Faculty who are currently doing research related to your topic of interest.
3. Form a Thesis Committee (a Chair, plus two other Faculty members). One Faculty member must be from outside the School of Social Work.
4. Complete the Thesis form; obtain signatures from your Thesis Chair and other Committee members and the Graduate Advisor (either Dr. Rasmussen or Dr. Finnegan). Submit the Thesis form to the Graduate Division.
5. Begin literature review. (Ideally, this should be done during the summer term before beginning SW 700 level coursework).
6. Work with Thesis Chair to formulate the research questions and methodology of the study.
7. Enroll in SW 797 Thesis course (Fall Semester after beginning SW 700 level coursework).
8. Write up first three chapters of Thesis (i.e., Statement of the Problem, Review of Literature, and Methodology)

9. Submit proposal to the SDSU Institutional Review Board and obtain their approval to conduct the study.
10. Gather the data for the study. Enroll in SW 799 for each semester that you are working on the Thesis.
11. Input the data, complete statistical analyses, and analyze the findings.
12. Write up the last two chapters of Thesis (i.e., Findings and Discussion).
13. Submit draft of Thesis to Thesis Chair and committee members for their review.
14. Present and defend the Thesis. Obtain signatures from Thesis Committee indicating they approve the Thesis.
15. Submit completed Thesis to the Graduate Division.

Comprehensive Exam

If you choose the Comprehensive Exam, you will take it in your final Spring semester, not before. It is usually given in early April. The exam is scheduled again before the end of the Spring Semester for those students who failed the first time, or were not eligible to take the exam at the time that the Associate Director of the School of Social Work determined students' eligibility (early March), but have since become eligible. If the administration of the School of Social Work determines that there is a need to schedule the exam a third time, it will be given during the following Fall semester. You must take the Comprehensive Exam during one of the scheduled times; it is not possible to arrange a different date to take the exam.

To be eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam, students must:

1. Complete all first year classes (31 units) and SW 744 or 740, SW 791 or SW 797, and 750 A or 750B. All grades must be C or above for graded courses, and SP or CR for CR/NC courses.
2. Be advanced to candidacy.
3. Have a cumulative 3.0 GPA
4. Have no grades of Incomplete
5. Have filed for May graduation or be eligible to graduate in August or December

You will be provided with full information and a comprehensive study guide at the beginning of the Spring Semester. The Comprehensive Exam Study Guide will be posted on the School of Social Work website.

Students are given three opportunities to pass the Comprehensive Examination. For students that fail the exam on the first attempt, another test date is scheduled before the end of Spring Semester. Students who fail the second exam are required to successfully implement a plan of study which gives the student a reasonable chance of passing the exam. The plan and its implementation must be reviewed and approved by the School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee. The third exam cannot be taken until the Student Affairs Committee has recommended that the student be allowed to make an additional attempt.

Students who do not successfully pass the exam in three attempts will be disqualified from the MSW Program and will not be recommended to be awarded the MSW degree.

Changing from Thesis to Comprehensive Exam

Students may be allowed to switch from the Thesis option to the Comprehensive Exam, and vice versa, but only with the approval of the Graduate Advisor. If you wish to change options, please meet with the Graduate Advisor. If the change is approved, the Graduate Advisor will submit a Change of Program form to the Graduate Division. However, a switch from one option to the other is permitted only if you have not defended the Thesis or sat for the [Comprehensive Exam](#).

SDSU School Social Work Specialization Education, Training, And Certification Requirements

Pupil Personnel Services Credentials:

Please refer to the SSW PPS Credential Website: <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/pupil.php>

The School Social Work Specialization program at SDSU prepares students for the practice of social work services in school settings, providing the education and training necessary to be certified by the State of California to work in public schools. This program meets the requirements for two specializations for Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credentials: (a) School of Social Work and (b) Child Welfare and Attendance Services.

The program is integrated into the existing MSW program, with students selecting the direct practice concentration. Specific requirements include:

- SWORK 750A (Field Practicum in an approved School Social Work setting -- 8 units)
- SWORK 758 (Seminar in School Social Work)
- SWORK 758 (Social Work Practice in the Educational Arena)
- SWORK 720 (Psychosocial Development of Vulnerable Children)
- SWORK 702 (Advanced Policy focused on children and/or families and disadvantaged communities)

California PPS Certification Requirements:

Supervised Experience Requirements

(Note: the requirements below of supervised experience fall within the number of **field** hours required of all second-year MSW students.)

School Social Work Specialization

1. Completion of 450 hours of supervised experience working in a public school. This experience must include at least 100 hours of work at each of 2 school levels: elementary, middle-school, high school.

2. At least 100 clock hours of practice with at least 10 pupils of a racial/ethnic background different from that of the credential candidate.

Child Welfare and Attendance Specialization

Completion of an additional 150 contact hours of supervised experience focused on assessment and program development in the area of attendance problems. Thus, if one is working toward both certificates there will be a total of 600 hours of school-based experience.

V. STUDENT RIGHTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Student Files

Student files are the property of the School of Social Work. It is the University's policy not to remove any materials from a student's file. Students may examine their own files at any time, but cannot remove the file or its contents from the Social Work Office in HH 119. Faculty submitting letters or other documents to a student file or to the Graduate Advisor must send the student a copy of that letter or document.

Students who wish to view the contents of their student file must make a written request to the Director of the School of Social Work. Copies can be requested; the fee for copies is 25 cents per page. For additional information about what is accessible, please refer to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Steps in the Grievance Process

The Student Affairs Committee is the designated entity in the School of Social Work for responding to student grievances. The Chair of the Student Affairs Committee is the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen. A student that is dissatisfied with the decisions or recommendations made by the Graduate Advisor, the Coordinator of Field Education, or other administrative officers of the School of Social Work may appeal the actions to the School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee. Additionally, if a student believes that a Professor's treatment is grossly unfair or that a Professor's behavior is clearly unprofessional, the student may bring the complaint to the proper University authorities and official reviewing bodies by following the Procedures for Handling Student Grievances Against Members of the Faculty, adopted by the Faculty Senate.

Within the School of Social Work the grievance procedures are summarized below:

1. The first step in the process should be a conference with the faculty involved.
2. If the issue is still not resolved, then a conference with the Graduate Advisor is next. The Graduate Advisor will work with the student to try to resolve the situation with the particular faculty member.

3. In cases where the complaint cannot be settled informally, the Graduate Advisor will refer the case to the Student Affairs Committee. If a member of the Committee is involved in the situation, the Committee member will not participate in the Committee's deliberation in the case, but may provide testimony before members of the Committee. If the student's grievance is against the Graduate Advisor, the Associate Director of the School of Social Work will take on the role of the Graduate Advisor in resolving the grievance as noted above. When the grievance reaches the Student Affairs Committee, the Graduate Advisor (who chairs the Student Affairs Committee) will appoint another member of the Committee to act as chair while the grievance is being discussed. If doing so would mean that a quorum of the Committee would not be achieved, the Associate Director of the School of Social Work will chair the meeting. As noted above, the Graduate Advisor will not participate in the deliberation of the case, but might provide testimony before members of the Committee.
4. Once a case is referred to the Student Affairs Committee, the Graduate Advisor/Chair of the Committee will provide at least ten working days' notice to the student that the Student Affairs Committee will be considering his or her situation. The student will be given opportunity to examine all written materials pertinent to the Student Affairs Committee's consideration.
5. A student referred to the Student Affairs Committee will be given the opportunity to provide an oral presentation to the SAC and/or may choose to provide written materials for the Committee's review. However, these materials must be given to the Graduate Advisor at least five working days prior to the scheduled Student Affairs Committee meeting in order to allow for the materials to be copied and distributed to Committee members for their review prior to the meeting.
6. The Student Affairs Committee is charged with conducting a full, fair, careful and objective investigation of the situation, and making every effort to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all concerned without taking the matter further. A student may be present when facts about the student's appeal are being presented to the Committee. The student may also elect to have a person along for support. However, the person may not speak to the Committee, nor may the person be a legal representative of the student.
7. After deliberating and considering the facts presented, the Student Affairs Committee makes their decision and recommends to the Director of the School what action should be taken. Please note that the role of the Student Affairs Committee is to assure that decisions made by the Graduate Advisor, the Coordinator of Field Education, or other administrative officers of the School of Social Work have been made in accordance with the policies and procedures of the School of Social Work. The Student Affairs Committee does not overturn decisions that were made in accordance with the policies and procedures of the School of Social Work.
8. The student will be notified in writing of the recommendation of the Committee within five working days. The student may appeal the recommendation of the Committee directly to the Director of the School of Social Work.

9. If after appealing to the Director of the School of Social Work, the student still does not feel the situation is resolved, he/she may appeal the Director's decision to the Assistant Dean in the College of Health and Human Services.
10. The student may appeal the decision of the Assistant Dean of the College of Health and Human Services to the University Ombudsman.
11. The student may contact the University Ombudsman at any time during the grievance process, but the Ombudsman will generally not take action until he/she is sure that every effort has been taken to solve the problem at the departmental or College level.

Please note that the Student Affairs Committee does not hear grade appeals. If a student is concerned that a grade given by a Faculty member is unfair, he or she should first consult with the Graduate Advisor. If the student then decides to appeal the grade, he or she needs to set up an appointment with Dr. Anita Harbert, Director of the School of Social Work, to discuss the grade. The student may also consult with the University Ombudsman.

Suspension, Disqualification from the Program, and Other Disciplinary Actions

Academic Misconduct and Dismissal

Social work education requires continuous evaluation of the student. This evaluation includes periodic objective evaluations such as grades, performance, and field work. Continuation in social work education is contingent upon positive ongoing faculty evaluation of the student's grades, professional attributes, and performance in real or simulated professional situations. A student may be suspended or dismissed from the social work program for deficiencies in any of the foregoing. In addition, social work students are bound by the social work [Code of Ethics](http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp) (<http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>). Students may be academically suspended or dismissed from the social work program for violation of the professional Code of Ethics (see section on Student Situation Report).

Students in the MSW program are expected to avoid all forms of academic misconduct including: cheating, plagiarizing, stealing course examinations, asking another student to sign the roll for them when they are not going to be attending class, falsifying data, violating copyright laws, and/or intentionally assisting another individual in any of those actions. Please note the following definitions and policies:

- 1. Cheating** includes (a) giving or taking exam answers to or from another student, (b) copying another student's paper (in part or in its entirety), and (c) falsifying one's own or another student's class attendance.
- 2. Plagiarism** is "formal work publicly misrepresented as original; it is any activity wherein one person knowingly, directly and for lucre, status, recognition, or any public gain resorts to the published or unpublished work of another in order to represent it as one's own. Work shall be deemed plagiarism (1) when prior work of another has been demonstrated as the accessible source; (2) when substantial or material parts of the source have been literally or evasively appropriated (substance denoting quantity; matter denoting qualitative format or style); and (3) when the work lacks sufficient or unequivocal citation so as to indicate or imply that the work was neither a copy nor an imitation. This definition comprises oral, written, and

crafted pieces. In short, if one purports to present an original piece but copies ideas word for word or by paraphrase, these ideas should be duly noted” (Lindey, as cited in the Bulletin of the Graduate Division, SDSU, 2000-2001, p. 40).

3. Giving authorship credit. The social work Code of Ethics states that social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed. Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others (NASW, 1996). Students should be careful to give appropriate authorship credit to anyone from whom they have obtained information for written assignments and class presentations, including citing books, journal articles, Internet websites, class lectures, professional colleagues, and/or classmates. Student should consult their instructors if they have questions or are unclear about how to incorporate and cite the work of others.

4. Consequences for academic misconduct. Academic misconduct will be handled according to University policy. Students who are found plagiarizing the works of others or committing other forms of academic misconduct will be subject to standards set forth by the University. Such action could result in failing an assignment, failing the class, or being expelled from the University. Please see Bulletin of the Graduate Division. A student who is found cheating or plagiarizing will be asked to meet with the instructor of the course. The instructor may inform the Graduate Advisor in determining the consequences to be implemented.

Student Situation Report Policy:

Adopted and approved by SSW Faculty on March 16, 2005.

The following procedures and policy are listed below:

Students are expected to be professional when enrolled in the SDSU School of Social Work. This entails both behavioral and ethical appropriateness in all interactions. The School requires continuous monitoring of the student by faculty. Optimal social work education is contingent upon positive ongoing faculty evaluation of the student’s grades, professional attributes and performance in real or simulated professional situations.

By enrolling in the SDSU School of Social Work, students are expected to be professional and act in accordance and compliance with social work ethics, values, and academic standards set forth by the University and the School. The SDSU School of Social Work has adopted the [NASW Code of Ethics 1999 revised](#), as its academic standard. Students are responsible as adult learners to abide by ethical standards 1-6 of the NASW Code.

The NASW Code of Ethics -1999 revised, <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>, which governs social work practice, is included in the SDSU School of Social Work academic standards, which specifies Ethical Standards 1-6 as relevant to professional behavior for a student in the MSW program.

Examples of behaviors or situations that are not consistent with these ethical standards are listed below:

1. Applying practice and/or service delivery outside the scope of social work practice.

2. Violating the social worker's ethical responsibility to clients, colleagues, the agency setting, and the social work profession.
3. Misrepresenting self as other than a social work student or an intern while in School program.
4. Being disrespectful to colleagues and supervisors in an internship by verbal and non-verbal communication, (e.g. language used in email and written work, voice tone, volume, etc.).
5. Attending an internship under the influence of drugs and exhibiting acting-out behavior. Professional and ethical behavior requires students to be free of substance abuse.

Procedures

When a faculty member considers the actions of a MSW or BASW student to be inconsistent with Ethical Standards 1-6 of the NASW Code of Ethics (see examples above), the faculty member may implement the following procedure:

1. The faculty member will meet individually with the student to discuss the situation.
2. The faculty member may elect to informally discuss the situation with the Undergraduate/ Graduate Advisor (hereafter to be "Advisor").
3. If the faculty member or the Advisor decides the situation should be documented, the faculty member will complete the Student Situation Report in its entirety within three days of the incident. Some activities that occur on campus property that may be disruptive may warrant a step in addition to a situation report. These incidents should also be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities <http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/index.html>. If the Advisor is the faculty member involved, he or she may elect to go to the Associate Director to implement the same procedure.
4. The faculty member will immediately forward the report to the Undergraduate Advisor for undergraduate students and the Graduate Advisor for graduate students.
5. The Advisor will forward the report to the student and keep a copy. The student will be encouraged to meet with the Advisor to discuss the report. The student may elect to submit a written response that will be attached to advisor's copy.
6. The Advisor will be responsible for compiling and tracking student situations. These reports will be kept confidential, unless the advisor recommends the student for review by the Student Affairs Committee. Once the student has left the University by graduation or otherwise, any situation reports held by the Advisor will be destroyed.
7. The Advisor will inform the School's Associate Director of each student report and the Associate Director shall apprise the Director.

8. Depending on the Advisor's evaluation of the action reported, the Advisor may immediately recommend the discontinuance of the student in the social work program. If three Situation Reports are recorded on an individual student, the advisor will recommend that the Student Affairs Committee review the student's academic standing. The Student Affairs Committee will make a recommendation to the Graduate or Undergraduate Advisor on the student's continuing status. In its deliberations, the Student Affairs Committee will be provided all situation reports regarding the student.
9. The advisor will evaluate the situation as it relates to university and school policies and report back to the instructor.

Policy

If a student receives three Situation Reports during his/her course of study in the School of Social Work, the student will be immediately referred to the Student Affairs Committee for academic review. If the Advisor determines that the report involves a serious infraction of the NASW Code of Ethics, the student may be referred to the Student Affairs Committee after one report. The Student Affairs Committee will make a recommendation regarding the student's continuance/discontinuance in the undergraduate or graduate School of Social Work program.

Disciplinary Disqualification

The School of Social Work defines student misconduct as student behavior that is in violation of regulations established by the Board of Trustees, of college/university regulations, and of rules governing residence on college/university property. Social work students, as citizens, are subject to all federal and state laws in addition to all college/university regulations governing student conduct and responsibility. A student may be suspended or disqualified from the social work program for violating laws, rules, or regulations. Students may appeal their disqualification to the Student Affairs Committee (see section of this Handbook on "Grievances" above).

Reinstatement of Academically Disqualified Students

Students who have been disqualified from further attendance at the University may not attend SDSU for one full semester. They must file an application for readmission and file a \$55 readmission fee (see Graduate Bulletin, 2007-2008, p. 33). The Graduate Division will send them a Petition for Reinstatement. To return to the MSW program, they must file an application for re-admission.

The Student Affairs Committee will review the application for re-admission of any previously disqualified students and determine whether they should be readmitted to the MSW program. Students who have applied for re-admission may appear before the Student Affairs Committee and give an oral statement before the Committee stating the reasons they wish to be readmitted. They may also provide to the Committee any written documentation to support their application for readmission. If the Committee decides to readmit a disqualified

student they may make recommendations regarding actions the student can take to ensure future success in the program.

Felony/Misdemeanor Conviction

Students with a felony or misdemeanor conviction should be aware that they may not be able to receive the clinical license in social work in the State of California (LCSW) and may also be excluded from certain jobs, field practicum internship sites, and/or the MSW program. This is stated in the SDSU School of Social Work MSW Admissions Application.

Campus Procedures for Harassment and Discrimination Complaints Filed By Students:

SDSU Office of Compliance and Policy Analysis Sexual Harassment Defined

The California Education Code at section 212.5 states in part that "sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from or in the work or educational setting under any of the following conditions:

1. Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic status or progress.
2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by the individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual.
3. The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.

Sexual harassment is a violation of several state and federal laws including the California Education Code, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Sexual harassment is specifically prohibited in the California State University system by Executive Order 345 which became effective in 1981.

If Repeated, Pervasive, or Sufficiently Severe, the Following May Constitute Sexual Harassment:

- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures
- Derogatory comments of a sexual nature
- Slurs of a sexual nature
- Impeding or blocking movements
- Unwelcome touching
- Displaying sexually suggestive pictures or objects
- Graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body

What to Do If You Have Been Sexually Harassed?

Students who think that they have been sexually harassed may file a Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Complaint Form at the Office of the Ombudsmen. A preliminary review of the complaint will commence immediately. All students who have been sexually harassed are strongly encouraged to file formal complaints. However, students who are not ready to file formally, but who wish to discuss incidents of sexual harassment in a confidential setting, may do so with a counselor from Counseling and Psychological Services (619-594-5220) or Student Health Services (594-5281).

Retaliation Is Prohibited

It is illegal to retaliate against anyone reporting or thought to have reported sexual harassment or who is a witness or otherwise is involved in a sexual harassment proceeding. Encouraging others to retaliate also is illegal. Examples include, but are not limited to, retaliatory grading, evaluation, assignment or ridicule, threats and withholding information to which a person is entitled.

Sanctions

Sanctions imposed for sexual harassment or retaliatory behavior by a faculty or staff member include, but are not limited to, reprimand, suspension, demotion, and dismissal (loss of tenure). The sanctions imposed for sexual harassment or retaliatory behavior by a student include, but are not limited to, probation, suspension, and expulsion. Furthermore, harassers have been held by courts to be personally liable to pay millions of dollars in damages.

Workshops

If your department or campus organization would like to participate in a Sexual Harassment Prevention Workshop, please contact the Office of Compliance and Policy Analysis at the number listed below. The Office of the Ombudsmen is also a resource, should students have questions or concerns related to sexual harassment.

Office of the Ombudsmen
Division of Student Affairs
San Diego, California 92182-7437
(619) 594-6578

Office of Compliance and Policy Analysis
Division of Student Affairs
San Diego, California 92182-7430
(619) 594-5211

Examples of Sexual Harassment

The following examples of specific behavior may assist in establishing what constitutes sexual harassment at San Diego State University:

- A teacher offers you a better grade, extra help, or an academic opportunity in return for your sexual attention or threatens action against you for refusal;
- A person supervising your campus job, academic, or off-campus field placement makes repeated sexual comments that interfere with your work or learning experiences;
- An advisor or counselor asks questions of a sexual nature inappropriate to the topic at hand that offend you or make you uncomfortable.

Negative Impact of Sexual Harassment

Below are some examples of the negative impact of harassment and/or sexual harassment on students. They may experience sexual harassment as demeaning and it may:

- Discourage their classroom participation,
- Prevent them from seeking advice or assistance outside of class,
- Cause them to drop or avoid certain classes, to change majors or specialties within majors, and even to leave the University,
- Minimize their development and inhibit collegial relationships with faculty,
- Impede and dampen academic and career aspirations,
- Undermine self-confidence,
- Affect grades, and limit their capacity for full intellectual development and professional success.

VI. STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

All graduate students are members of the Graduate Social Work Association (GSWA). Officers of this organization (i.e., the GSWA Executive Board) are typically elected during the Spring Semester and serve for the academic year following their election. The GSWA interfaces between the student body and the administration and faculty of the School of Social Work. GSWA officers make efforts to identify the needs and concerns of students and bring those issues to the attention of the faculty. They may develop and conduct surveys to gain student feedback about their overall experience in the MSW program and then report the results of those surveys to students and faculty.

The extent of the GSWA's activities depends upon the degree of student involvement, which varies from year to year. When there is a high degree of student involvement, GSWA officers recommend students to the chairs of faculty committees in the School of Social Work (i.e., Curriculum, Student Affairs, and Diversity Committees) to serve as Student Representatives. The chairs interview these students prior to their appointment as Student Representatives. Student Representatives serve throughout the academic year. They are expected to attend the monthly meetings and participate as a member of their assigned committee. They may:

(a) provide input to the committee process from the GSWA Executive Board and graduate student body, and (b) communicate decisions made in the committee back to the GSWA Executive Board and the graduate student body.

The GSWA activities vary from year, but usually include both academic and social activities for graduate students. The GSWA may sponsor study sessions for the Qualifying and Comprehensive Exams. They may also sponsor various social activities for graduate students throughout the year, including a Bar-B-Que at the MSW Orientation in August. GSWA officers for the 2007-2008 academic year have not yet been elected. Typically, the officers consist of a President and Vice President and a team of officers, each of whom have assigned functions (e.g., activities coordinator, part-time student representative). Announcements from the GSWA will be communicated to the student body through "Communications Central". The Graduate Advisor, [Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen](#), is the designated faculty advisor to the GSWA.

The GSWA also interfaces with other student organizations in the School of Social Work including the:

- Asian and Pacific Islander Social Work Association (APISWA)
- Black Social Work Caucus (BSWC)
- Latino Student Social Work Network (LSSWN)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Social Work and Allies Group
- Social Action Committee (SAC)
- Student Social Work Network (SSSN)

Students are encouraged to consider being involved in the GSWA, as well as one or more of these student organizations. Such involvement can enhance their overall experience in the School of Social Work and provide opportunities for collegiality and professional networking.

VII. SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students must take care of the following:

1. Make sure all official transcripts are in and the GRE score is on file.
2. Make sure all conditions are met to change your status from Conditional or Unclassified to Classified within the time period established when conditional status was granted.
3. Officially add or drop classes within the established time lines.
4. Keep your overall GPA at 3.0 or above.
5. Pass a Qualifying Examination at the end of the semester you are completing all of the 600 level courses required for the MSW degree.
6. Notify the School of Social Work and University Admissions and Records of any changes in name, address, and email.

7. Seek out your Thesis Committee (if you choose the Thesis option) and complete all required paperwork. (If you have questions, ask your Research instructors or the Graduate Advisor).
8. Pass the Comprehensive Exam (if you select the Comprehensive Examination option, instead of the Thesis).
9. Follow the Field Course Instructor / Coordinator of Field Education instructions as to field practicum meetings, field placement process timelines, field application deadlines, practicum orientation labs, etc.
10. Obtain approval for transfer units from other schools.
11. Obtain the Graduate Advisor's approval to change your Official Program of Study.
12. File for Graduation in a timely fashion.

The Graduate Division will do the following and let you know by mail:

1. Advance you to Candidacy when you have completed 24 units and been recommended for advancement by the Graduate Advisor. You need not fill out any forms but your Official Program and GRE score must be on file.
2. Inform you of any discrepancies, changes, deficiencies etc. that may bear on your progress through the University.
3. Evaluate you for graduation after you file for it. They will let you know what you still need to complete for the degree. They will remind you that no degree can be awarded until grades of incomplete are removed, all requirements are met, and you have a 3.0 or better GPA. The School of Social Work can only recommend you for the degree. San Diego State University awards it to you.

The School of Social Work will:

1. Complete and file the proper paperwork to change your status from conditional to classified.
2. Forward your Official Program of Study to the Graduate Division, and sign/verify your advancement to candidacy. [Dr. Dan Finnegan](#) handles all the formal paperwork for the School of Social Work and can help you if there is a problem.

VIII. GRADUATE ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Anita S. Harbert, Director, School of Social Work
Dr. Daniel J. Finnegan, Associate Director
Dr. Loring Jones, Coordinator of MSW Program
Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, Graduate Advisor
Professor Marci W. Siegel, Coordinator of Field Education
Professor Linda L. Newell, Title IV-E Associate Coordinator of Field Education

IX. STIPENDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND SDSU RESOURCES

Information on scholarships, stipends, and financial aid are available on the University web site: www.sdsu.edu. To find it click on Financial Aid in the alphabetical listing of departments. Information is also available on the School of Social Work web site: <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/> under Current Students.

Scholarship Stipends and Campus Resources for Social Work Students is a publication available for a small fee in the Social Work section of the Aztec Book Store. This publication also includes information on professional organizations and the Alumni Mentor Program.

Appendices:

- **Appendix A: See NASW Code of Ethics, Available at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>**
- **Appendix B: Maintaining Client Confidentiality**
- **Appendix C: Change of MSW Program Status Form (From 2-year to 3 or 4-year MSW Program)**

Graduate Student Handbook, Revised August 27, 2007 by Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, Graduate Advisor; and Marci W. Siegel, LCSW, Coordinator of Field Education, San Diego State University School of Social Work

**SDSU School of Social Work Policy and Guidelines
On Maintaining Client Confidentiality**

**Marjorie Milstein, LCSW
Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D.
May 2000**

**SDSU School of Social Work Policy on
Maintaining Client Confidentiality**

Students will maintain *at all times* the confidentiality of clients assigned to them in their field placement. They will protect the confidentiality of their clients when writing papers for their classes and when presenting cases in classes or in integrative seminars by changing clients' names and disguising all identifying information. Please refer to the School of Social Work Guidelines for Maintaining Client Confidentiality for guidelines on how to protect and maintain client confidentiality and for suggestions on how to appropriately disguise identifying information.

**SDSU School of Social Work Guidelines on
Maintaining Client Confidentiality**

Although we need to practice in accordance with the law and the NASW Code of Ethics in regard to confidentiality, the most compelling reason to maintain confidentiality should be out of respect for our clients. Veteran social work educator Alfred Kadushin advised that we should think of client information as a valuable possession of the client's temporarily lent to us. In fact, we need to remember that ownership of client information *always* resides with the client.

Though most mental health professionals are conscientious and intend to maintain the confidentiality of their clients, in fact many make unintentional mistakes throughout the course of their careers. The complexities involved in maintaining confidentiality are not a simple matter, and there are many challenges to our best intentions once we get out in the field and begin to practice.

Students are advised to carefully read the confidentiality policy of their field agency so that they are absolutely clear about with whom they may speak after the client agrees to receiving services from their agency.

Violations of Confidentiality

The following is a list of some common mistakes that practitioners or students may make that jeopardize clients' confidentiality:

- Leaving a message (other than just your name) for a client with someone other than the client or on a common answering machine.
- Accidentally running into a client in public and inadvertently revealing the nature of your relationship to others who happen to be around.
- Needing to share or just blow off steam and talking to a friend or family member about your day, and thus discussing client information.
- A family member of a client calls to get a message to your client and you agree to deliver it, thereby revealing the fact that you are seeing the client.
- A caring, concerned family member of your client calls wanting to know how she can help, or to share some information with you about the client, and you either inadvertently acknowledge that you are seeing the client and/or engage with the family member in a discussion about the client. In this example the client is not a minor, is not in danger of hurting self or another, and is oriented to person, place, and time.
- Feeling you need to answer a question regarding a client from someone with some authority, without a release (e.g., an emergency-room doctor, a lawyer, an insurance company representative, probation officer, etc.).
- A friend or colleague refers a client to you, wants to know if he or she called and how things are going, and you say yes and share a few things. Likewise, you call to thank a colleague for a referral without the client's permission.
- You run into a referral source who would like to know how things are going with a case, and you share a few things without a release from the client, or in a public place where the information can be overheard.
- A friend enthusiastically says she hears you are seeing someone she knows and that you are really helping. You acknowledge that you are in fact seeing the client.

Guidelines for Maintaining Confidentiality

Client information can be communicated verbally, nonverbally, or in written form, and all types of information need to be protected. The following are some suggestions for protecting client information:

- Get all necessary releases of information/informed consent in written form. If due to some pressing necessity you can only obtain it verbally, document that the client gave you the permission and then follow-up with a written release as soon as possible.
- Should you need to discuss a case or consult with another professional in the classroom or with an outside supervisor to obtain help with the care of your client, make sure you have adequately disguised all identifying information so the client is not recognizable. (See guidelines for disguising client information.)
- Should you ever recognize a client being discussed in an agency, classroom, etc., or with a person with whom you have some social or otherwise nonprofessional relationship and who is not aware that you may be privy to private information about that client, you should excuse yourself from the discussion and leave the room. (This is an ethical matter not a legal one.)
- Client information of any kind should not be transported out of the agency without explicit consent of the agency supervisor.
- Client information should always be locked up or otherwise protected. Don't leave papers with lists, appointment books, or documents with confidential information unattended (even if you are physically present). This includes writing case notes in public areas where others might see.
- It is your responsibility to educate or otherwise inform other nonprofessional personnel if you feel that they are in any way inadvertently exposing client information (e.g., leaving unfinished reports on the computer screen during lunch or speaking about clients in earshot of other people).
- When faxing information about a client, make sure you include a statement indicating the confidential nature of transmitted information on cover sheets.
- Client information must be adequately disguised when used for class assignments. Process recordings should be shredded after use, as well as papers containing client information when no longer needed for educational purposes.

Senate bill 19, sec. 56.101 reads, "Every provider of health care, health care service plan, or contractor who creates, maintains, preserves, stores, abandons, or destroys medical records shall do so in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the information contained therein. Any provider of health care, health care service plan, or contractor who negligently disposes, abandons, or destroys medical records shall be subject to the provisions of this part."

Guidelines for Disguising Client Information

Regarding the disguising of confidential information, Senate Bill 19, section 56.05f states, “Medical information means any individually identifiable information, in electronic or physical form, in possession of or derived from a provider of health care or health care service plan regarding a patient’s medical history, mental or physical condition or treatment.”

“Individually identifiable means that the medical information includes or contains any element of personal identifying information sufficient to allow identification of the individual such as the patient’s address, electronic mail address, telephone number or social security number, or other information that, alone or in combination with other publicly available information, reveals the individual’s identity.”

When preparing case material for classroom discussion or assignments, all identifying information must be deleted and disguised so as to maintain, with certainty, the confidentiality of the client. However, students should not change the essential character of the case so that the analysis is affected. To ensure that legal compliance with confidentiality, students should check with their field instructor to make sure that they have disguised case information adequately.

The following are suggestions for disguising client information:

- Disguise ages of all individuals discussed, though keep within the same developmental stage or subphase.
- Disguise all names and clearly indicate in the paper that names have been changed.
- Give no exact dates, including birthdates, referral dates, marriage dates, divorce dates.
- Give no specific places, including place of employment, birthplace, neighborhood, etc. Describe and disguise in general terms (e.g., client grew up on the west coast in a mid-size city, in a poor neighborhood).
- Disguise exact occupations, describe in a general way (e.g., works in the helping profession, works in a blue collar job, etc.).
- Disguise all numbers (e.g., exact years of education, exact years of marriage, etc.).
- Consider other aspects of the case that you can change without compromising the integrity of the case analysis:
 - o Could you change or not state the specific drug to which an individual is addicted?
 - o Could you change the exact nature of a physical problem?

San Diego State University - School of Social Work
Requesting Change in MSW Graduate Program Status

Please Print

NAME: _____

Red ID: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL _____

I am/will be currently enrolled in the:

- _____ 2 Yr Program
- _____ 3 Yr Program
- _____ 4 Yr. Program

I am requesting to officially change my MSW Program Status to:

- _____ 2 Yr. Program
- _____ 3 Yr. Program
- _____ 4 Yr. Program

In accordance with the School policy, I understand that my:

- 1) Request for Program Status form must be completed in its entirety; and
- 2) Be approved and confirmed by the Student Affairs Coordinator or the Graduate Student Advisor before my status changes officially.

Signature

Date

For SDSU School of Social Work Office Use Only

MSW Graduate Program Status Change -
Approved for the above named student.

Signature

Date

Student Affairs Coordinator/Graduate Advisor

cc: Field Education Coordinator & Graduate Advisor