

FALL 2027
ADMISSIONS

SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK

SDSU

San Diego State
University

Prospective Student Information
Master's of Social Work Program



WELCOME TO OUR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Thank you for your interest in the School of Social Work (SSW) at San Diego State University (SDSU). The field of social work is dedicated to alleviating human distress and addressing inequality, while supporting the social, psychological, and economic well-being of individuals and communities. A central value of the profession is a strong commitment to social justice. While compassion for others is essential, effective practice also requires the knowledge and skills developed through professional training.

To support these goals, the School of Social Work offers a one-year Advanced Standing Program, a two-year full-time program, and three- and four-year part-time program options, with specializations in direct practice/clinical or administration and community development.

This prospective student handbook provides an overview of the SDSU SSW MSW Program at SDSU. Please note that the San Diego campus accepts applications annually, while the Imperial Valley campus admits students once every three years. The next application cycle for the Imperial Valley campus will be in 2028, for a Fall 2029 start date.

MSW Program Mission Statement

The mission of the MSW program is to prepare versatile leaders for professional, ethical, and advanced specialist social work practice. The program focuses on evidence-informed practices, advancing equity and social justice, promoting human rights, and engaging in social action to enhance individual and community well-being. The program prepares graduates to meet the evolving needs of the diverse US-Mexico border-connected region, Tribal and Indigenous communities, and beyond.

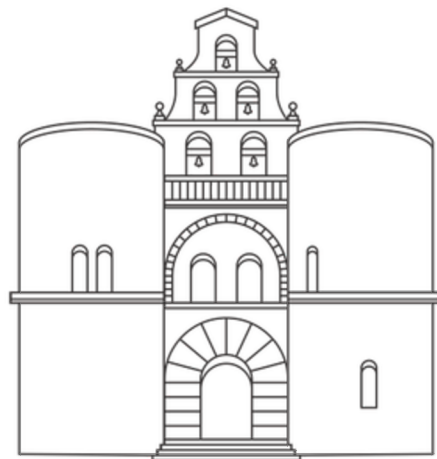
The School of Social Work was founded in 1963 and has been proudly accredited by the Council on Social Work Education since 1966.

The SDSU School of Social Work MSW program offers:

- Education and research programs led by a team of administrators and faculty who are recognized experts in their respective fields.
- A strong commitment to international and multicultural education, including internship opportunities in Tijuana, cross-border conferences, support for student organizations, DEI-integrated coursework, and specialized electives.
- Opportunities for up to 40 paid stipends through the California IV-E Education Program, providing up to \$50,000 over two years for full-time MSW students committed to careers in child welfare and foster care services.
- Partnerships with more than 400 community agencies, offering field practicum experience in direct practice and administration across medical and hospice settings, residential and outpatient mental health facilities, County of San Diego child welfare services, foster care agencies, and K-12 school settings throughout San Diego County.
- Competitive tuition and application fees.

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WHY CHOOSE SAN DIEGO?

Since its founding in 1897, the university has grown to become a leading public research university. SDSU has officially been classified as an R1 research institution, the highest distinction given to doctoral universities in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. It is also a federally-designated Hispanic-serving Institution and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). SDSU provides more than 39,000 students with the opportunity to participate in an academic curriculum distinguished by direct faculty contact and an international emphasis that prepares them for a global future.

A National Reputation for Academic Excellence

San Diego State University has achieved R1 status, signifying its place among the top research universities in the United States. R1 status represents the highest level of research activity and doctorate production, reflecting SDSU's dedication to excellence in both innovation and education.

Research Opportunities

Being an R1 university means more opportunities for students, faculty, and the community. This designation elevates the prestige of SDSU degrees, attracts more leading researchers and industry partners, and strengthens our capacity to solve global challenges through cutting-edge research.

San Diego Community

Known for its near-perfect climate, 70 miles of beaches, over 100 golf courses, the world famous San Diego Zoo and Sea World, and breathtaking deserts to explore, San Diego is also recognized globally as a growing academic and research Mecca. San Diego's geographic location and diverse population help make the area a dynamic international hub.

AREA OF SPECIALIZED PRACTICE

The SDSU MSW Program offers two areas of specialized practice: Direct Practice/Clinical and Administration and Community Development. These specialized courses follow completion of the Generalist Practice coursework and generalist field practicum experience. Nestled within the Direct Practice/Clinical and Administration and Community Development specializations are practice fields: Children, Youth and Families, Mental Health, and Health and Aging. For students to complete the year of specialized training, they must pass either a Comprehensive Exam in their area of specialization or successfully complete a publishable paper or master's thesis.

Both areas of specialized practice extend and enhance the nine social work competencies and corresponding behaviors for each area of specialized practice.

Direct Practice/Clinical

Prepare students with advanced clinical skills and knowledge that promote clients' well-being, particularly in practice with individuals, families, and groups.

Administration & Community Development

Prepares students with advanced practice skills with organizations and communities and knowledge that promotes clients' wellbeing, particularly in practice with organizations and communities.

Please view this video by [Dr. Lianne Urada](#), the Macro Chair, to learn more about this specialization.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

The SDSU MSW Program has four program options:

- 1-Year MSW Advanced Standing Program (ASP)
 - *Please see page 6 for specific program requirements*
- 2-Year Full-Time MSW Program
- 3-Year Part-Time MSW Program
- 4-Year Part-Time MSW Program



In addition, we have a Dual Masters of Social Work and Masters of Public Health degree program. This 3-year full-time program results in two masters degrees upon completion.

- *Please see page 6 for specific program requirements*

ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM

The Advanced Standing Program (ASP) admits approximately 15 students each year. For more information, please review the ASP webpage: <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/academics/graduate/advanced-standing-program>.

All applicants must follow the same application process stated on page 5 with the following stipulations:

Applicants must possess an undergraduate degree in social work that was earned within 5 years of admission to the Advanced Standing program.

Please note that the social work undergraduate degree must come from a program that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The cumulative GPA for social work courses taken must be at least 3.0 or better.

Our last cohort of students admitted to the SDSU MSW ASP program has an average GPA of 3.6.

Of the three required references, they must include:

1. One letter from a Field Instructor and
2. One letter from a Social Work faculty member
3. A person of your choice, preferably someone with social work experience.

Advanced Standing students will begin their program of study in the summer immediately following acceptance.

Students admitted to the Advanced Standing Program will attend an orientation in April prior to beginning the program.

Students not admitted to the Advanced Standing Program may be considered for admission to the standard 60-unit program.



CURRICULUM MAP

Full-Time Program

MSW 2-year program (60 units)

- Year 1
 - Fall 15 units & 16 hours per week internship
 - Spring 16 units & 16 hours per week internship
- Year 2
 - Fall 16 units & 20 hours per week internship
 - Spring 13 units & 20 hours per week internship

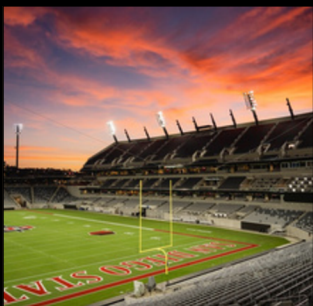
Part-Time Programs

MSW 3-year program (60 units)

- Year 1
 - 6 units Fall and Spring semester
- Year 2
 - 9 units & 16 hours per week internship Fall and Spring semester
- Year 3
 - Fall - 16 units and 20 hours per week internship
 - Spring - 13 units and 20 hours per week internship

MSW 4-year program (60 units)

- Year 1
 - 6 units Fall and Spring semester
- Year 2
 - 9 units & 16 hours per week internship Fall and Spring semester
- Year 3
 - 6 units Fall and Spring semester
- Year 4
 - Fall Semester - 10 units and 20 hours per week internship
 - Spring 7 units and 20 hours per week internship



[MSW Curriculum Link](#)



MSW/MPH DUAL PROGRAM

Full-Time Program

The SDSU School of Social Work and SDSU School of Public Health offer a 3-year, 93-unit **concurrent** graduate program leading to a MPH in Health Management and Policy (HMP) and a Master of Social Work (MSW) with a specialization in Administration and Community Development.

Total 93 Units over Three Years

<p>1st Year Fall (18 units)</p> <p>SW 601 (Welfare Policy) SW 619 (Human Behav) PH 602 (Biostats) PH 641 (Intro Health Svc) PH 604 (Env Health) PH 742A (Fin Mgt)</p>	<p>1st Year Spring (18 units)</p> <p>SW 620A (Human Behav Soc Env) SW 690 (SW Research) PH 601 (Epi) PH 644A (H Svc Orgs & Mgt) PH 647 (Quant Methods) PH 603 (Health Behav)</p>
<p>2nd Year Fall (15 units)</p> <p>SW 630 (Gen. Practice) SW 650 (Field Pract.) PH 644B (Mgt HC Org) PH 642 (H Ins Fin System) PH 747 (Quality) 16-hour per week internship</p>	<p>2nd Year Spring (16 units)</p> <p>SW 631 (Direct Practice) SW 632 (Admin/CD Practice) SW 650 (Field Pract.) PH 648 (H Policy) PH 797 (Research) *** 16-hour per week internship</p>
<p>3rd Year Fall (16 units)</p> <p>SW 740 (Admin) SW 755 (Adv. Field Pract.) SW 720 (Civic Engagemt) SW 797 (Research)*** PH 645 (H Econ) 20-hour per week internship</p>	<p>3rd Year Spring (10 units)</p> <p>SW 755 (Adv. Field Pract.) PH 748 (Strategy) PH or SW 799A (Thesis) 20-hour per week internship</p>



[MSW/MPH Website](#)



CALIFORNIA IV-E EDUCATION PROGRAM

The California IV-E Education Program provides up to \$50,000 as a taxable stipend to MSW students for educational support toward the Master of Social Work degree. The Cal IV-E program at SDSU is particularly interested in attracting students with a strong social justice value orientation and commitment to address the larger economic, social and political issues impacting children and families in child welfare services.

Motivation to develop strong direct practice knowledge and skills working with families and increasing organizational and community strengths are highly desired :

Full-time MSW students receive \$25,000 per year of their MSW program not exceeding \$50,000 (2 years max).

Part-time MSW students who are concurrent employees of a county or the state Department of Social Services receive reimbursement for tuition, fees, books, and allowable travel reimbursement for the entire duration of their four-year MSW program, The Cal IV-E office pays part-time students' tuition and educational fees directly to SDSU.

The stipend recipient assumes certain responsibilities, including coursework requirements, and the post-graduation employment requirement. See the **MSW Stipend Requirements** page.

Watch this recording from the Cal IV-E Coordinator

Post-Graduation Employment Requirement

Upon graduation, MSW Cal IV-E stipend and educational reimbursement recipients have an employment requirement of two years of full-time employment in a California county or state public child welfare agency.

Indigenous graduates may also complete their employment requirement in a California Reservation Child Welfare Services agency, urban Indian agency in California serving Cal IV-E eligible children and families, or a non-California Reservation Child Welfare Services agency. See the **SERVE** website for more information.

Cal IV-E Project Coordinator

Amalia Hernandez

amalia.hernandez@sdsu.edu

619-594-8709



Pupil Personnel Services Credential Program

Child Welfare & Attendance Specialization

The specialization in school social work program at SDSU prepares students for the practice of social work services in school settings and the education and training necessary to be certified by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to work in public schools. This program meets the requirements for two specializations for Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credentials: (1) School Social Work and (2) Child Welfare and Attendance Services.

The PPS program is integrated into the existing MSW program, with students specializing in Direct Practice. Specific requirements for the School Social Work Specialization are (1) 1000 total clock hours of internship of which 600 are in a public-school setting; and students must take SWORK 758 as their fall elective course, and SWORK 798 for one unit in the spring. Once accepted, students will need to apply for a Certificate of Clearance through the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Instructions are given once a student has been admitted to the MSW PPS Program.

Only Cal IV-E students that are interested in pursuing a PPS Credential will be eligible to complete their foundation year (600-level) internship in an approved school placement, as they are required to do their advanced/specialization year (700-level) internship at Child Family Well Being to meet the Cal IV-E requirements. ASP Students are not eligible for this specialization.

APPLICATION PROCESS

MSW Applicants

If you are interested in this specialization, you will need to indicate so on your supplemental application to the School of Social Work. Enrollment is subject to available capacity and applications will be reviewed by the the PPS Credential Coordinator, [Paul Brazzel](#).

Post- MSW PPS Credential Applicants

Social workers who already have an MSW may apply to the School Social Work Specialization program. In order to meet eligibility for the PPS Credential as required by the State, the practicum requires the candidate to intern as a School Social Worker in selected schools in the San Diego area for the required hours of supervised experience. This experience should be equivalent to the academic program and therefore requires 20 hours per week – at the school site, during regular school hours. Post MSW applicants must apply via Cal State Apply, Graduate Admissions. Once accepted, students will need to apply for a Certificate of Clearance through the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, instructions are given once a student has been admitted to the Post MSW PPS Program.

Specific requirements for the Post MSW School Social Work Specialization are (1) 600 total hours of internship in a public school setting (SWORK 750); and students must take SWORK 758 (School Social Work) as their fall course, and SWORK 798 for one unit in the spring. Internship hours must be earned by the end of the spring semester. PPS requirements must be completed within 7 years of graduating with your MSW degree.

Applicants are required to submit the Cal State Apply application as well as a supplemental department application for Post-MSW PPSC. Both applications are due by December 1st. [PPS Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Watch this informational recording about the PPSC specialization.](#)

TUITION & FEES

The CSU makes every effort to keep student costs to a minimum. Fees listed in published schedules or student accounts may need to be increased when public funding is inadequate. Therefore, CSU must reserve the right, even after initial fee payments are made, to increase or modify any listed fees, without notice, until the date when instruction for a particular semester or quarter has begun. All CSU-listed fees should be regarded as estimates that are subject to change upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

You must pay Tuition and Fees before you can access the Web registration system. “My Registration,” available at my.SDSU, contains registration and payment information. The registration process is not complete until you are officially enrolled in classes. Payment of fees alone does not constitute registration. All Cashier Holds must be cleared prior to paying for registration. Payments to clear financial holds must be made by cash, debit cards, money order, or certified check. Inquire at Student Account Services for more information. Personal checks or credit cards will NOT be accepted.

Liability for Payment

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of total fees due whether or not an invoice is received. Students with an approved Petition for Late Schedule Adjustment must pay in addition to the \$20.00 late add fee any fees that may be due as a result of the added units. For example, a student enrolled in 6 units has an approved petition to add 3 additional units. In addition to the \$20.00 late fee, the fees for the difference between part-time and full-time fees are due BEFORE the Office of the Registrar will process the add.

Please note: Dropping a class after the schedule adjustment deadline (based on approved petition only) does not reduce your fee liability. If you are enrolled in 6 units and add 3 units and drop 3 units, you will still be liable for full-time Tuition and Fees. Students submitting authorization to bill a third party for their Tuition and Fees will be held responsible for payment if the third party agency fails to pay.

ID Card Fee and Information

All MSW students are required to purchase an SDSU photo identification card, which permits use of campus services, such as student activities, athletic events, library privileges, etc. For additional information, contact the SDSU Card Office at (619) 594-6800.



TUITION

2025-26 Standard Costs for California Residents

Note: Amounts in the table reflect full-time enrollment for the 9-month academic year. Less than full-time enrollment may change amounts listed below. All costs are subject to change without notice.

	Living with parents	Living in university housing	Living off campus
Basic tuition and fees*	\$10,794	\$10,794	\$10,794
Books, supplies	\$970	\$970	\$970
Food, housing	\$9,352	\$23,736**	\$18,406
Transportation	\$2,470	\$1,170	\$2,466
Miscellaneous, personal	\$2,612	\$2,268	\$2,980
Total academic year	\$26,198	\$38,938	\$35,616

For more information please go to <https://bfa.sdsu.edu/financial/student/newstudents>

*Nonresident tuition: Add \$444 per unit to the basic tuition and fees listed above.

** The on-campus food and housing figure is the cost of a double room and a Meals Plus meal plan. Exact costs will vary based on your room type and meal plan selection. For example, the cost of a triple room and Flex 5 meal plan is \$20,365 for freshmen. The cost of a triple room and Flex 5 meal plan is \$15,246 for upper-division apartments. For more information see SDSU's [Housing Rates](#).

Plan for additional expenses that will increase your cost of attendance. All MSW and MSW/MPH Students are required to hold health insurance (mandatory for ALL students) and is approximately \$1,703 per year.

Imperial Valley Campus: subtract \$1,230 from basic tuition and fees listed above.

All applicants accepted for admission are required to pay a non-refundable registration fee of \$400.00 due by mid-April.

Please note, some field practicum experiences have costs associated with background checks.

View the estimated costs of Education:
[Graduate Cost of Attendance Tables](#)

FINANCIAL AID & STIPENDS

To explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities, please complete the following:

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
- Visit the SDSU Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships website to search for available opportunities: <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/financial-aid/scholarships/sdsu-aztec-scholarships>
- Please note: Some scholarships may require additional background information, including parental income. FAFSA is required for most scholarships, and all students are strongly encouraged to complete it.
- Visit the School of Social Work website for additional scholarships and stipend opportunities: <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/resources/financial-aid>



Current School of Social Work Stipends:

- **California Title IV-E Education Program** (open to incoming students; application must be submitted with the MSW application—see page 13 for details)
- **Public Behavioral Health (PBH) MSW Training Program**
 - One-year commitment; acceptance is determined annually
 - Participation limited to a maximum of two years
 - <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/pbh>
- **Aging & Adult Services (AAS) MSW Training Program**
 - <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/aps>
- **Rural Assistance Center Funding Opportunities**
 - <https://www.raconline.org/funding>
- **Allied Healthcare Scholarship Program**
 - <https://www.oshpd.ca.gov/HPEF/Programs/AHSP.html>
- **Golden State Teacher Grant Program**
 - <https://www.csac.ca.gov/golden-state-teacher-grant-gstg-program>

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

University Requirements

1. Bachelor's Degree

Applicants must hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

2. Grade Point Average (GPA)

Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 2.85. Lower-division courses taken after the award of the baccalaureate degree are not included in this calculation. Applicants with international coursework must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00.

3. Academic Standing

Applicants must be in good standing at the last institution attended.

School of Social Work Minimum Requirements

Minimum requirements for admission to the School of Social Work's master's program are outlined below. Please note that meeting these requirements does not guarantee admission, as the selection process is competitive and based on a comparative review of all applicants.

In accordance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards, the MSW program does not grant academic credit for prior life or work experience.

1. Liberal Arts Foundation

Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree with a liberal arts foundation from an accredited college or university.

2. Grade Point Average (GPA)

Applicants must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0. Candidates with a GPA between 2.85 and 2.99 may be considered for conditional admission through Graduate Admissions.

3. Undergraduate Statistics Course

Applicants must complete a statistics course with a grade of C or better. Examples include SDSU courses such as STATS 119, STATS 250, SOC 201, and PSY 280; however, equivalent statistics courses completed at other accredited institutions, including community colleges, are also acceptable. This requirement may be completed after submitting your application but must be fulfilled before the start of the MSW program.

4. Health and Human Services Experience

Applicants must have at least 1,000 hours of meaningful involvement in health, social service, or community-based settings. This experience may be gained through paid employment, volunteer work, internships, or research. **Please see page XX for more info and examples of relevant experience.**

5. Background Check

All admitted MSW students are required to complete and pass a background check in order to participate in the program. This is to ensure you are eligible to participate in the required field education component of the program. The background check is completed by the placing Agency's and at times this expense will be incurred by the student.

ADDITIONAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Transfer Applicant Requirements

In addition to the standard application requirements, transfer applicants must also submit:

- An official transcript documenting completed MSW coursework
- A field/internship evaluation
- A letter of good standing from the most recent MSW program attended (due by December 1)

Transfer applicants are reviewed through the same competitive admissions process as all other applicants. The School of Social Work may accept up to 18 transfer units from CSWE-accredited MSW programs, provided the coursework aligns with the SDSU curriculum.

Course transferability is not evaluated prior to admission. If admitted, students must submit course syllabi for any classes they wish to have considered for transfer. Please note that transfer of all units is not guaranteed.

Transfer applicants must meet with the graduate advisor prior to applying. To schedule an appointment, please email mswadmissions@sdsu.edu

International Applicant Requirements

International applicants must meet both SDSU Graduate Admissions requirements outlined in the University Catalog and the specific requirements of the MSW program.

A minimum U.S. equivalent GPA of 3.0 (B or approximately 80%) is required for consideration. Applicants must have earned, or be in the process of earning, a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or one recognized by a Ministry of Education prior to enrollment.

Applicants with a completed three-year baccalaureate degree from an international institution may be considered for admission; however, applicants who have not yet completed their three-year degree at the time of application are not eligible.

All international students must maintain F-1 visa status by enrolling in a full-time course load of at least 9 units per semester.

For additional information about applying to graduate school, please contact the SDSU International Student Center: <https://www.sdsu.edu/international-student-center>

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must complete each step in the application process—including two separate online applications and the submission of transcripts—in the required order to be considered for admission to the Master of Social Work (MSW) program.

STEP 1: Apply to SDSU Graduate Admissions (Cal State Apply)

Deadline: December 1, 2026

Complete and submit the Cal State Apply application at: <https://www.calstate.edu/apply/graduate>

This step must be completed first.

STEP 2: Submit Official Transcripts and Test Scores (if applicable)

Deadline: December 15, 2026

All official transcripts and any required test scores must be submitted to the SDSU Graduate Admissions Office by this deadline. Please note: The GRE is not required for the MSW or MSW/MPH programs. TOEFL scores (if applicable) must be received by the deadline above.

You cannot begin this step until Step 1 is completed.

STEP 3: Complete the SDSU School of Social Work Supplemental Application (Slate)

Deadline: December 15, 2026

After submitting your Cal State Apply application, you will receive an email within approximately 72 hours with instructions to access and complete the Slate supplemental application.

You cannot begin this step until Step 1 is completed. Please see page XX for application requirements

For questions, email mswadmissions@sdsu.edu

After submitting your Cal State Apply application, you will receive an email with your SDSUid and instructions to set up your my.SDSU.edu account. Applicants should use this portal to check their application status and complete any required tasks.

For more information regarding the SDSU application please view this link:

<https://admissions.sdsu.edu/graduate/steps-apply>.

**Graduate Admissions
San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-7416**

**Electronic transcripts may be emailed to
transcripts@sdsu.edu**

**For questions regarding official transcripts
email admissions@sdsu.edu**

It is critical that you submit your Cal State Apply application PRIOR to:

- 1.) completing your supplemental application**
- 2.) sending your transcripts or test scores to the SDSU Graduate Admissions Office**

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

SDSU School of Social Work Supplemental Application (Slate) components:

1. **Statement of purpose** - Includes a written portion and a video portion.

- **Written Portion.** *Please see the Statement of Purpose written portion template found [here](#).*
 - You must use this template exactly as provided, do not add headings or sections. Applications will be considered incomplete and not reviewed if the template is not used or any prompts are not addressed. Statements of Purpose must be double-spaced, in 12-point font, and no longer than 1,000 words (about three pages).
- **Video Portion.** *Please see the Statement of Purpose video prompt and instructions found [here](#).*
 - As part of the application process, you are required to submit a 1-2-minute video response to the prompt. This allows us to assess your verbal communication skills, critical thinking, and professional presence- skills that are central to success in social work education and practice. The video also helps ensure that your submission reflects your own voice and authentic engagement with the prompt.

2. **Resume/CV**

- Please see the Resume/CV template found [here](#). You must use this template as is. Not using the Resume/CV template will be considered an incomplete submission. Your resume/CV must not exceed three pages. Successful applicants will document all required, relevant information in one to three pages.

3. **Professional References**

- You must provide three (3) professional references who can speak to your readiness and potential for success in the MSW program. Acceptable references include professors or supervisors from paid or volunteer experiences.
- You will enter each reference's name and email into Slate, which will contact them to complete a form with approximately 12 Likert-scale and two open-ended questions. Inform your references that they will be asked to provide specific examples of your skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors relevant to graduate-level social work.
- It is your responsibility to follow up with references to ensure completion. Applications without three complete professional references will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.
- Note: Personal references (e.g., friends, colleagues, co-workers, therapists) are not accepted and will result in an incomplete application.

4. **HHS Experience Form** *add relevant form link*

- In your application, you will be required to describe specifically how your experience(s) are related to enhancing or supporting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in need.
- All hours will be reviewed and evaluated by the Admissions Committee.

5. **Unofficial Transcripts**

- In addition to sending your official transcripts to the Graduate Admissions office, you are required to also upload your unofficial transcripts (PDF) to your supplemental Slate application. A failure to upload transcripts within expected timelines results in an incomplete application which will not be reviewed.



FAQ

About the MSW Program

1. Why should I pursue a master's degree in social work from SDSU?

For over 60 years, the SDSU School of Social Work has been committed to excellence in all aspects of professional social work education and training with a long history of community engagement and involvement. We have excellent faculty who strive to make your educational experience a good one. Our academic program is rigorous, exhilarating and absorbing. Students have many opportunities to examine, consider and challenge their ideas and capabilities.

2. How long will it take to earn my MSW degree?

We offer four curriculum plans, allowing you to complete the MSW program at your own pace.

Refer to the course sequence on our website at www.socialwork.sdsu.edu for the different program plans.



3. Why should I attend SDSU for my MSW degree?

SDSU provides an environment that fosters advanced training and original scholarship across all disciplines. It offers prospective graduate students the opportunity to engage in the highest caliber graduate training, academic scholarship and research, in one of the most beautiful and diverse settings in our nation.

SDSU has been described by the Carnegie Foundation as a “research university with high research activity” a statement reflecting the strength and commitment of the campus to its Masters programs. Our programs emphasize a low student-to-faculty ratio, which provides opportunities to get to know faculty.

The University is a world-class institution, recognized not only for its distinguished academic scholarship but also for its commitment to and success in attracting a diverse cohort.

San Diego State University is one of the most ethnically diverse universities in California. The student body at SDSU is composed of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. SDSU embraces the rich diversity of its student body and recognizes that this diversity is an integral component to furthering our academic excellence.

<https://www.collegevine.com/faq/83383/demographic-s-at-san-diego-state-university>

4. Is there a dual degree program offered?

Yes, the MSW/MPH program is being offered for the upcoming admission cycle - Academic Year 27/28. [See the Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health \(MSW/MPH\) website for more details.](#)

FAQ



5. Do you offer the MSW program at locations other than San Diego?

Yes, we offer a program at the Imperial Valley SDSU Campus that begins once every three years. For additional information about this program contact: mswadmissions@sdsu.edu. The next MSW admission cycle that will be offered at the Imperial Valley Campus will be in the Fall of 2028 for admission in Summer 2029.

6. Do you offer an online program?

No, we do not have an online or hybrid option, we are accredited as in-person program. We do offer a three-year and a four-year curriculum plan that allow students to complete the program at their preferred pace. All programs are only offered in-person.

7. What orientation activities does the school provide for new students?

We require all new students to attend an incoming orientation session that will introduce the program, curriculum, field instruction, student organizations and campus resources, which generally takes place one week before classes start. Additionally, we encourage students to set up a campus tour through SDSU Prospective Student Services that will provide an introduction to other campus resources and support services, <http://sdsu.edu/campustours>. The SDSU International Student Center is also available to help foreign students become oriented to the school, <http://www.isc.sdsu.edu>.

8. Do I need to complete a thesis?

All MSW/MPH students must complete a thesis. For all other MSW students, you have the option to complete a thesis (SWORK 799A, Plan A) or the Plan B option (comprehensive exam or publishable paper). Completing a thesis is not required for those who choose Plan B.

About Applying for MSW Admission

9. What type of experience counts toward the 1,000-hour requirement?

Applicants must have at least 1,000 hours of meaningful experience in health, social service, or community-based settings through paid work, volunteer service, internships, or research. This can include experience in settings such as hospitals, mental health centers, schools, nonprofit organizations, advocacy programs, community organizations, and similar environments. Experiences may involve work at the micro (individual), mezzo (families/groups), or macro (policy/administration) level, and should demonstrate engagement with or support of individuals, families, or communities in need.

In your application, you will be asked to clearly describe how your experiences contribute to enhancing well-being in social service settings. All hours are reviewed by the Admissions Committee. It is strongly recommended that the 1,000 hours be completed prior to applying. However, if you are currently in a position, you may project hours through May 2027 if they are guaranteed (e.g., a BSW internship with a set number of required hours).

Please see the MSW Admissions webpage for examples of relevant experience.



FAQ

10. What type of undergraduate degree do I need?

A liberal arts background, spanning both social and biological sciences, is the ideal preparation for the MSW program, but you are encouraged to apply even if your bachelor's degree was not in the liberal arts. We accept all majors.

11. Do I need to take the GRE and when should I take it?

No, applicants are not required to submit a GRE score.

12. Do I need to take the TOEFL? (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

Yes, if your medium of instruction was in a language other than English. Test scores are reported to the Graduate Division and the School of Social Work by the Education Testing Service, SDSU Institution Code 4682. It generally takes 3-4 weeks for scores to be reported

13. What are the requirements for international applicants?

Applicants with international coursework must submit official transcripts and proof of degree in the original language, along with certified English translations. Documents should be sent directly by the school or a certified translator. Applicants from institutions where instruction was not in English must also provide proof of English proficiency. For details on required documents and accepted tests, visit the SDSU Graduate Admissions website: <https://admissions.sdsu.edu/graduate/steps-apply>.

14. How many students are accepted?

Out of roughly 700 applicants we enroll approximately 110 new students in the MSW programs each fall.

15. When will I hear whether I am accepted?

Decision letters are emailed between March and June. Wait-list students will be notified by the first week of June of the decision to offer admission or not.

16. What is the MSW program application deadline?*

The application includes 3 steps and the final deadline for all MSW applications is **December 15**.

Step 1: Apply to SDSU Graduate Admissions (Cal State Apply) — *December 1, 2026*

Step 2: Submit transcripts and test scores (if applicable) — *December 15, 2026*

Step 3: Complete the School of Social Work supplemental application — *December 15, 2026*



FAQ

17. Can I transfer credits from other graduate programs?

Yes, with certain restrictions. Transfer applicants must have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average at their original institution. Class credit will be evaluated and allowed on a case-by-case basis. A maximum of 18 credit hours may be transferred. Please contact [mswadmissions@sdsu.edu](mailto:mwadmissions@sdsu.edu).

18. Do you offer graduate assistantships?

Yes. Please request a Graduate Assistant (GA) application from <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/ga-application.pdf>, then submit your completed GA application with your resume to socwork@sdsu.edu

19. Can I apply to the MSW program if I've also applied to another graduate program at SDSU in the same application cycle?

Cal State Apply only allows one application per university per term, meaning you can typically apply to only one graduate program at SDSU. If you would like to apply to the MSW program in addition to another SDSU graduate program, you must request approval from the School of Social Work Admissions Team. Please email [mswadmissions@sdsu.edu](mailto:mwadmissions@sdsu.edu) to request a special code/link. This is required because the MSW supplemental (Slate) application is tied to your Cal State Apply submission, and access to an secondary application link must be approved in advance.

20. Is student housing available?

Yes. SDSU Housing Services offers a wide variety of housing options for graduate students, from residence halls to apartments. Most MSW students do not live in university housing since the San Diego area has numerous interesting communities to live in,, many within a reasonable commuting distance from SDSU. Housing applications may only be submitted once you have been admitted to SDSU. Please see the SDSU Housing website <http://housing.sdsu.edu> for more information.

21. Are International Students allowed to apply for the three or four year program?

No, all international students must enroll in a full course load every semester (9-units for graduates, 12 for undergraduates) to maintain their F-1 status. If they plan to take less than a full load of study, they must complete the [Application for Reduced Course Load \(ARCL\)](#) form every semester while they are under-enrolled to maintain their F-1 status. If an international student fails to submit the ARCL form and is not enrolled in a full course load status, they have voided their F-1 status and their SEVIS record will be terminated.



LET'S WORK
TOGETHER

SDSU

San Diego State
University

School of Social Work

MSW Admissions

619-594-1480

mwadmissions@sdsu.edu

Hepner Hall 119

San Diego State University

5500 Campanile Drive

San Diego, California 92182-4119

<http://socialwork.sdsu.edu>