



Social Work FAQs

1. I don't really know much about social work. What is it?

Social work is recognized as a critical part of health and well-being for individuals, communities, and society. Social workers are people who care about people, who want to make things better, who want to work directly with individuals, families, and communities, and, who want their work to make a difference. We prepare you to become a licensed professional, equipped to work in direct practice with children or adults, groups, and organizations, and as an advocate for policies to advance the common good. Our graduates are committed to social justice and to helping people make positive changes in their lives.

The need for social workers is growing. Employment in social work is expected to grow faster than average for all occupations over the next decade. Health care social work, along with mental health and substance abuse social work are among the fastest growing areas, while opportunities to work with children, families and schools are also growing faster than average. With a bachelor's degree in social work, you can begin work upon graduation or enter the Master of Social Work (MSW) program as an "advanced standing" student and save a year of time and investment achieving your MSW. St. Thomas BSW students interested in clinical social work can apply through an [accelerated admissions](#) process to complete the school's nationally-ranked [Master of Social Work](#) degree program in as little as one year, having completed 18 hours of foundation-level coursework.

With our BSW degree, you'll be prepared to work with diverse populations across a wide variety of settings such as health systems, schools, correction centers and social services agencies. You will gain real-world practice experience during approximately [500 hours of fieldwork](#) (internships), and graduate prepared to take the bachelors-level [social work licensure](#) exam in any state.

2. What is a field placement?

A social work field placement is an intensive mentored and credit-bearing internship. All social work majors complete approximately 500 hours of supervised field education (75-100 hours as a Junior and 400 hours as a Senior). These internships are completed with our partner agencies- private, public, and nonprofit- throughout the Twin Cities. Field placements are integrated into our curriculum- they are really the heart of social work education. We have full-time faculty who administer our field program- don't worry, we will be there to support you every step of the way!

Examples of the kinds of places students might complete field placements include hospitals, schools, child welfare agencies, disability services, child advocacy organizations, intimate

partner violence shelters, nursing homes and assisted living, community-based nonprofits, and supportive, transitional, and emergency housing shelters, among many others.

3. Can I still study abroad if I major in social work?

Absolutely! There are two social work study abroad programs- Mexico and Botswana. Social Work students have also completed study abroad opportunities in Rome, South Africa, Ireland, Spain, France, Nepal, and many other countries. We believe that study abroad experiences can be an integral part of your time at St. Thomas and will work with you to find a way to integrate them into your program of study. Your social work advisor will help you plan so that you are able to study abroad and complete your degree on time.

4. What classes should I take in the fall if I want to learn more about social work and what social workers do?

In your first year at St. Thomas, you ideally would take SOWK 181: Introduction to Social Work. This course is offered both fall and spring semesters. You should also consider taking at least one of our allied requirements:

- General Psychology (PSYC 111)
- Human Biology (BIO 105) or Women, Medicine, & Biology (BIO 106) or General Biology (BIO 101)
- Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 100)

If you are interested in learning more about social work and the social work major, please contact Dr. Melissa Lundquist, BSW Interim Director (651-962-5813; lund1429@stthomas.edu) or Dr. Ande Nesmith, School of Social Work Interim Director. (651-962-5805; nesm3326@stthomas.edu).