

Clinical Social Work at MSU

The School of Social Work has a long and proud history of training social workers for clinical practice, stretching back to post World War II when social work curricula were emerging nationally. The School's reputation as a leader in clinical casework training highlighted a curriculum aimed at graduating social work practitioners who would be employed in direct casework practice with children, families, individuals, and groups. This *social casework* orientation quickly provided the main emphasis of the graduate curriculum.

Over the years, curricular changes have been made to strengthen, but not alter, the School's mission of preparing social workers for direct practice. During the 1960s, *casework* was reformulated into a *clinical* emphasis informed by psychodynamic principles and theory. Ultimately, the School's reputation as a clinical stronghold has highlighted a curriculum aimed at graduating social work practitioners competent in evidence-informed practice. Field education experiences and strong relationships with the practice community have consistently supported bringing clinical work to life by integrating theory and practice.

Why study clinical social work?

An evidence-informed social work education is grounded within ten required professional competencies and is an excellent preparation for a career in clinical practice. Students will graduate with competency in ethical and professional behavior, including the importance of relationships, reflective practice, and a professional sense of self; diversity and difference within a social context; social justice and human rights, including human dignity and self-determination; practice-informed research and research-informed practice; policy practice; and competency in engagement, assessment intervention, and evaluation in the service of our clients.

Why come to MSU School of Social Work?

Michigan State University as a learning environment brings together the best of a research-intensive university with the service mission of a land grant institution. The MSU School of Social Work presents one of the strongest clinical programs in social work in the United States today, primarily related to the high quality of its faculty members who in addition to outstanding academic preparation, have extensive clinical practice experience in agency-based and private settings. Our clinical concentration in the MSW program draws upon multiple theories and approaches utilizing practice wisdom and evidence-informed interventions.

Small classroom size is combined with a nationally recognized Field Education program located in more than 250 sites in 87 cities and towns across the state of Michigan. The School's dedicated advisors, field liaison faculty, and field instructors work together to graduate MSW clinicians who are prepared to provide outstanding clinical service to clients in times of ongoing societal change.

Thus, the MSU School of Social Work has a strong commitment to clinical practice. We pride ourselves on research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research. Students train with experienced clinicians in a practice-guided, application-focused curriculum. State-of-the-art classroom instruction and field education are supported by the state's leading social work continuing education program for lifelong learning.

What is clinical social work?

Clinical social work—also known as direct practice with individuals, couples, families, and small groups—is a concentration within the practice of graduate social work and builds upon the profession's values and ethics and a strengths-based, person-in-environment perspective.

The practice of clinical social work is relational in nature and applies specialized knowledge and skills in the prevention, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and evaluation of psychosocial functioning concentrated upon developing emotional, mental, and behavioral health.

Clinical social work requires the use of evidence-informed practice methods combined with critical thinking and reflective practice in the professional use of self.

Culturally informed, client-centered interventions are applied within the context of the therapeutic relationship and are monitored through professional supervision and consultation.

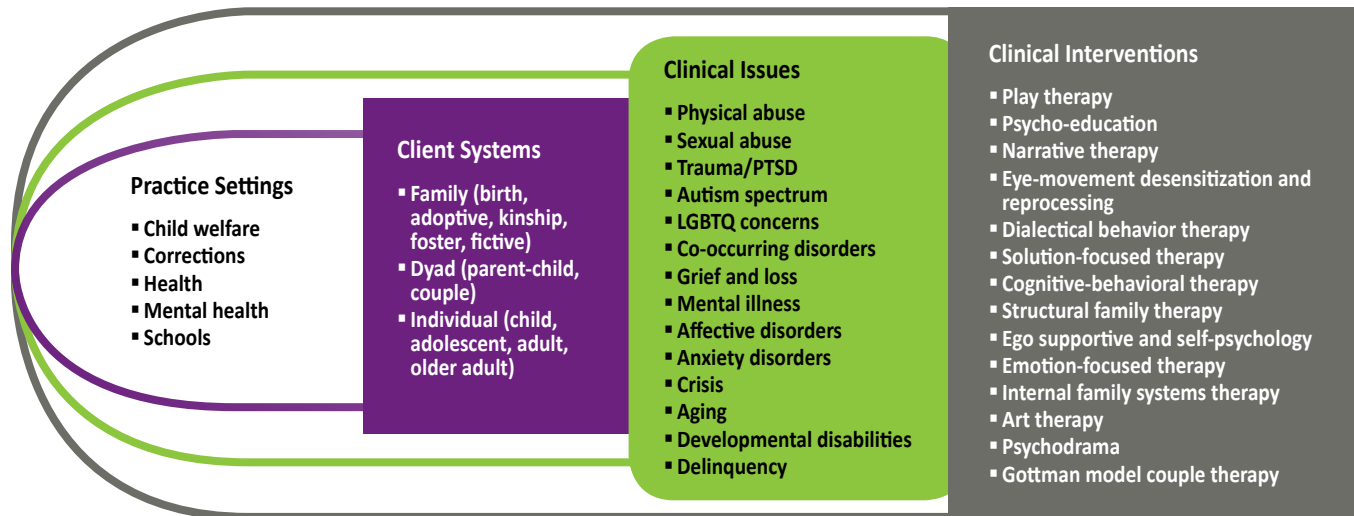
Our clinical faculty

The School has a strong team of 28 clinical faculty members. They average more than 20 years of post-MSW practice, for a total of more than 500 years of clinical work. Thirteen have doctoral degrees, and others have additional degrees in nursing, law, business, and public health.

In addition, they have received advanced training and post-degree credentials and certifications in a wide variety of theoretical orientations and treatment models relevant to a broad

Continued on next page

Examples of Faculty Expertise in Clinical Social Work Practice



range of practice settings and a large variety of populations. They bring their depth of experience in a variety of approaches, theoretical orientations, models, and specific techniques used to address serious psycho-social problems to the classroom, allowing them to present multiple perspectives and an extensive tool set.

Individual faculty members' specialties and expertise are indicated in their directory listings and CVs. Examples are depicted in the diagram above.

Our field instructors and liaisons

For more than ten years, the **Field Education** program has utilized a unique liaison/seminar model that provides topical learning, reflection,

and interpersonal support for students in statewide seminar groups located geographically close to their homes. Students meet throughout the academic year in groups of seven to ten student colleagues that monitor their placements, allow for enriched discussion, and encourage accountability. All of our nearly 60 paid field liaison faculty are licensed MSW community practitioners, averaging more than eight years of service to the School and more than 20 years of practice experience within the community. In addition, specialized field placements are provided to students who are working to demonstrate competence particular to a direct practice area: school social work, clinical social work with families, gerontology, evidence-based trauma treatment, and addictions.

Clinical social work at MSU is supported by our state-of-the-art **Continuing Education** program. In Fall 2013, there were five programs on general clinical practice topics, seven on children and families, and three on ethics offered, for a total of 15 programs over a 15-week period. Three of these presentations were given by full-time School of Social Work faculty and the remainder by practice experts—local, statewide, national, and international. In addition, the School currently offers eight continuing education programs online on topics relevant to direct practice. **S**

Historical information adapted from notes by Dr. John Herrick.

Enthusiastic reactions from four perspectives...

"MSU MSW students demonstrate a strong commitment to learning, exhibit a high level of professionalism, and articulate a clear understanding of ethics. Students display sound skills in client assessment, are able to adjust interventions to meet client need and effectively focus on the strengths of clients."

—Agency director

"We are always impressed with the level of commitment and energy displayed by the MSU social work interns, as well as their willingness to learn and to tackle challenging cases and tasks. The MSU social work faculty and staff are very helpful, efficient, and organized in setting up and supporting placements of their interns. This is a great benefit to both the agencies and the interns!"

—Field instructor

"The field education program showcases how decades of community involvement at the state and local level have produced graduates that have the professional toolsets needed by our state agencies and local mental health professional organizations. The social workers that emerge from the MSU social work program are smart, hard working, and use evidence based treatments to achieve desired outcomes."

—Clinical practitioner

"You know you are in good hands when you are in the clinical program at MSU's School of Social Work. The professors and field placement supervisors I worked with were constantly teaching me and challenging me, providing me with endless opportunities to learn and grow as a professional. It is an honor to have worked with the faculty and to have received my Master's in Social Work from this program."

—MSW graduate