

Essential Abilities for Social Workers

To provide effective social services, a School of Social Work graduate must possess a multitude of knowledge, skills and abilities. Social work practice includes being able to evaluate information quickly, maintain records and documentation of activities, communicate using verbal and written skills and tolerate ambiguity.

Students who wish to qualify for admission and progression in the social work program must meet both academic and performance requirements. Academic requirements are described in the School's policies on retention. In addition to the academic requirements, an entering student must be aware that the functional abilities and attributes described below are necessary to function as a social worker. If a student has a physical, mental or any other disability and requires special accommodation to meet social work program requirements, the student should contact the University's [Disability Access Services](#) office, 144 Millennium Student Center, 314-516-6554. This office provides the documentation necessary to receive special accommodations.

Once documentation is received, the School will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Essential or functional abilities for social work students may be defined as, but are not limited to:

Functional Ability Categories and Representative Activities/Attributes

Fine Motor Skills

Write with pen or pencil (e.g., write in charts, document activities, take notes)

Key/type (e.g., use a computer)

Physical Endurance

Maintain physical tolerance (e.g., work with clients and colleagues for long stretches of time each day)

Physical Strength

Defend self against combative client

Hearing

Hear normal speaking level sounds (e.g., person-to-person report) or read lips.

Reading

Read and understand written document (e.g., policies, protocols)

Arithmetic Competence

Read and understand columns of information (flow sheet, charts)

Add, subtract, multiply, and/or divide whole numbers

Compute fractions (e.g., to process client and agency budgets)

Emotional Stability

Recognize appropriate personal boundaries
Adapt to changing environment/stress
Deal with the unexpected (e.g., client anger, crisis)
Focus attention on task
Monitor own emotions
Perform multiple responsibilities concurrently
Handle strong emotions (e.g., grief)

Analytical Thinking

Transfer knowledge from one situation to another
Process information (to be able to perform client and other assessments)
Evaluate outcomes
Problem solve
Prioritize tasks
Use long-term memory
Use short-term memory

Critical Thinking

Identify cause-effect relationships
Plan/facilitate activities with others
Synthesize knowledge and skills
Sequence information (e.g., action, behavior, consequence)

Interpersonal Skills

Respect differences in clients
Establish rapport with clients
Establish rapport with co-workers

Communication Skills

Speak audibly and listen actively
Give oral reports (e.g., reports to others on client)
Interact with others (e.g., sharing information with others on team)
Speak on the phone
Influence people (e.g., advocate for client or groups)
Direct activities of others (e.g., supervision, groups)
Convey information through writing (e.g., progress notes, advocacy)

I hereby certify that I have read and understand the essential abilities required for social workers outlined above.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mental Health and Criminal History*

Please indicate by your signature below that you meet the [NASW Code of Ethics](#), Ethical standard below regarding non-impairment and that you have received counseling/therapy for experiences that may impair your performance as a social worker.

NASW ETHICAL STANDARD 4.05: Impairment

(a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

(b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

I understand that if I do not meet NASW Ethical Standard 4.05 listed above and am unable to make appropriate professional judgments or behave professionally, I may be dismissed from the School of Social Work.

I also understand that if I have been convicted of a felony or been convicted of a sex offense against a child in Missouri or in any other jurisdiction outside of Missouri I may not be able to find a practicum placement or be a licensed social worker in Missouri.

Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student ID: _____

***NOTE:**

Acknowledgement of criminal activity, mental/emotional problems, or drug and alcohol abuse is not automatically grounds for denial of the application. The program fully realizes that many people enter fields such as social work after facing and addressing their own personal life issues. The purpose of this section is to ensure that students admitted to the program are not actively dealing with issues, or exhibiting behaviors, that could impair their abilities to (1) succeed in such a rigorous program as social work, (2) work with people as effective, helping professionals, and/or (3) conform to the standards and expectations of the profession.

The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics

“The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers. This Code includes four sections. The first Section, "Preamble," summarizes the social work profession's mission and core values. The second section, "Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics," provides an overview of the Code's main functions and a brief guide for dealing with ethical issues or dilemmas in social work practice. The third section, "Ethical Principles," presents broad ethical principles, based on social work's core values, that inform social work practice. The final section, "Ethical Standards," includes specific ethical standards to guide social workers' conduct and to provide a basis for adjudication.”

(NASW, 2008)

All students in the School of Social Work at UM-St. Louis are expected to abide by the *NASW Code of Ethics*. Please read the entire Code of Ethics found on the following website <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp> and sign on the signature block below to indicate your willingness to follow these guidelines.

I hereby certify that have read, understood, and agree to abide by the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics. I acknowledge that failure to abide by this code may result in discipline and dismissal from the program.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____